Resurrection Assurances

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INTRODUCTION

At this Easter season, thousands of letters from radio listeners have poured into our church office. Nothing would give more pleasure than to be able to write a personal and grateful word in reply to each one. But the number far exceeds this possibility.

However, this little brochure on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is in itself the expression of personal faith—my own and yours, if you are a believer in the One “who died and rose again”—and it is sent forth with the earnest desire that these foundational truths of the Word of God may come to mean more and more to each of us as the coming of the Lord draws near.

Mrs. Talbot joins me in extending Easter greetings and in prayer that “the Lord . . . will preserve [you] unto his heavenly kingdom” and that “he might present [you, with all the redeemed] to himself . . . not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (2 Tim. 4:18; Eph. 5:27).

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Before a shop window in Cairo, Egypt, a small boy stood gazing at a picture of the crucifixion of Christ. The boy’s parents had been brought to the Lord Jesus Christ from Mohammedanism, and he himself was a believer. A stranger approached and stood beside him.

“What do you think the picture means?” the man asked him.

The boy told him how Jesus came into the world at Bethlehem, and how after teaching who God is, became our Sin-Bearer and died on the cross.

The stranger asked a few questions and then went on his way. When he had walked a distance, he heard the lad calling him. On turning around, he saw that the boy was running toward him as fast as he could.

When he caught up with the stranger, he panted, “Oh—Mister—I forgot to tell you that HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD!”

The little fellow had the conviction that he had left out of his story the crowning event. And he was right.

If the seal that had been placed on the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea had remained unbroken, we would have had no Gospel, and death would have been to us an endless separation from God. “But now is Christ risen from the dead.” Christ is the “first-fruits of them that slept,” and of them that are asleep; and, because He lives, we, too, shall live.

It is not my plan to deal with the proofs of Christ’s resurrection. There is no other event more thoroughly authenticated than the resurrection of Christ. The Word speaks of those “to whom . . . he
shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

It is always stimulating to faith to dwell on those “infallible proofs.”

But for our present study, we would put before you four great facts that are assured to believers because of the resurrection of Christ.

I. The Resurrection Certifies the Divine Origin and Authority of the Scriptures.

The greatest question of the hour with many is this, “Is the Bible the Word of God?” The resurrection of Christ furnishes that knowledge and establishes that fact. Hundreds of years before Christ came into the world, the Holy Spirit drew portraits of the Person and ministry of the Son of God.

One of the disciples of John the Baptist said of Christ: “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.” This we know, all the writers of the New Testament demonstrated that Jesus was He of whom all the prophets gave testimony. They also quoted a great many Old Testament passages to prove that fact.

The Lord Jesus Himself, after His resurrection, in speaking of His passion, said unto them, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is writ-ten, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day” (Luke 24:44-46).

David by the pen of inspiration wrote in the sixteenth Psalm that the flesh of Christ would not see corruption; and Peter appealed to this ancient prophecy of the holy Scripture to support his argument concerning the resurrection of Christ. (See Acts 2:27; 13:35.)

Thus it is clear that the Old Testament Scriptures testify to Christ; to His character, His ministry, His death, and His resurrection.

Now, with Christ risen from the dead, these Scriptures stand as certified truth. But if Christ is not risen from the dead, then they are not true.

Hear the triumphant words of Scripture: “But now is Christ risen from the dead” (I Cor. 15:20). This fact sets the seal of God upon the truth of all of the Scriptures, including promises fulfilled and those that are yet to be realized.

Let us think for a moment what this means to us. Somebody has counted the promises made by God to man, as recorded in the Word of God, and has found them to number more than ten thousand. There are covenants and promises well nigh unlimited in their scope; there are promises of the forgiveness of sins; there are promises of the creation of a new heart and of help in time of trouble; there are promises for this life and for the life to come; there are promises of heaven and immortality and of the recognition in heaven of loved ones who have gone on before; there are promises of glad reunions in the city of God, and of many mansions which the Lord our God has gone to prepare for those who trust in Him.
How real are these blessed assurances when read in the light of fulfilled promises in connection with the resurrection of Christ from the dead! They are like so many checks drawn upon the bank of God’s riches, all signed with His name and guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

No wonder multitudes of God’s people, in the midst of intense sufferings, have gone out of this world without a questioning doubt in their hearts concerning the provision for time and eternity which has been made for them by their Saviour and Lord. The Book of God was a rock beneath their feet, and the promises of God were their assurance all the way. The Scriptures will have a new meaning if we read them always in the light of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

II. The Resurrection Certifies the Eternal Deity of Jesus Christ and Settles Forever the Question: “Who Is He?”

Dr. J. C. Massee, former pastor of the Tremont Temple, Boston, many years ago told a story I shall never forget. He said that, while attending a convention of preachers in Brooklyn, Rabbi Silverman, a man of gracious personality and glowing eloquence, was invited to address the ministers. For one hour, Dr. Silverman pleaded with his auditors to do away with prejudices and to join with his people, the Jews, in helping to bear the burden of a troubled world.

The noted rabbi said in part: “Men and brethren, let us cast aside our differences; let us lay our hands to a common task, and take on our shoulders the common burden; for, after all, the only thing that separates Christians and Jews is a theological dogma, and not an essential evil.”

Most of the ministers applauded loudly. But when Rabbi Silverman sat down, and after the chairman of the meeting had expressed his appreciation of the remarks made, Dr. Massee asked permission to speak.

“Rabbi Silverman,” he began, “I accord you every courtesy at this hour. I have listened with burning heart to your appeal, as you pictured the tragedy of the earth. Had you been content to ask us to share with you the burden of the world, I would have said, ‘Yes, gladly.’ But when you say that the only difference between you and me is a theological dogma, I must remind you that that difference puts Christ on the cross so far as the world is concerned; and, in my heart, it puts Christ on the throne. That is the difference—a difference for time and for eternity. There is no middle ground.”

In plain statements Jesus proclaimed His oneness with God the Father. For example, He declared: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). If you want to see the deep suggestiveness of that statement, put another name in place of the name of Jesus. Let it read like this: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Simon Peter, whom thou hast sent.” One recoils at the thought of associating any human name in this way. But there is no revulsion of the soul from the assertion made by Jesus.

He not merely associated Himself with the Father; He also plainly affirmed that He was and is God. He said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Yes, and further yet, Jesus Christ accepted the homage of the soul, a homage that alone belongs to God.
When men bowed down to worship Paul, the apostle said: "Why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you" (Acts 14:14-15). However Thomas cried, "My Lord and my God," and Jesus accepted the worship, telling Thomas that he was "blessed" for thus worshiping.

Remember, too, that Jesus placed Himself in the center of the Trinity when He commanded His disciples to go and baptize believers, in the "name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Jesus also declared Himself as being absolutely essential to the salvation of the soul, when He said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). Suppose I believe on the Father, but not the Son of God. Then, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Jesus Christ changed the very structure of sin itself. Did you ever notice that while the Old Testament says that sin is this, and sin is that, and declares, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," Jesus Christ said—now listen—"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Mark 16:16).

Thus a sin—unbelief in Christ as Saviour—that had no expressed existence until Christ came, became the one great damning sin, after His coming. Remember how Christ said to believers: "I will send him [the Holy Spirit] unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin . . . because they believe not on me" (John 16:7-9).

When one places these passages of Scripture, and many others, side by side, one is faced with but one conclusion: Jesus Christ was either the world's greatest religious impostor, or else He was the eternal Son of the eternal God.

How are we to know which of these alternatives is true? The resurrection of Christ is the assured answer.

Paul proclaimed in Romans 1:4 that Jesus Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead."

When the scribes and Pharisees charged our Lord with speaking blasphemy, because He had claimed oneness with the Father, His answer was: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jno. 2:19). These words He spoke of His body (cf. John 2:21). His resurrection, then, was the test of the truth of His claims to deity, and on the third day after His death, He demonstrated that He was the eternal Son of the eternal God.

Once again when the Jews said, "Master, we would see a sign from thee," the Lord replied, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:38-40).

Thus our Lord staked His deity once again on His resurrection.

My Christian friends, this is the reason Christianity has power, indeed, the power of God. Mohammed is dead; Buddha is dead; Confucius is dead; other religious leaders are dead. Jesus Christ alone is eternally alive, and being alive, He has assured forever that all the claims He made for Himself were the truth of God, and that He Himself is God.
III. The Resurrection of Christ Certifies the Sufficiency of His Great Atoning Sacrifice.

The price of man's redemption was the blood of Christ. But how do we know the sacrifice was sufficient to expiate sin? The answer is the empty tomb.

However sincere the Lord Jesus Christ may have been, however holy in His conduct, however willing He was to lay down His life for us; if, after all, death had held Him under its power, then it is manifest that His death could not expiate our sin. If He could not recover His own soul, and body from death and the grave, then He could not recover ours.

The spectacle of a dead Christ has in it nothing of hope for sinners. If Christ had not risen, His life and death would have been, for those who knew Him, no more than a precious and a tragic memory; a memory that would not have warranted any sin-burdened soul in saying, "His death atoned for my sins; His blood redeemed me."

There is a beautiful passage in the Gospel of John, in which our Lord tells us: "I am the good shepherd, . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep . . . No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:14, 15, 18). The Greek word translated "lay down" may properly be rendered "to pay down."

The death of Christ was not the involuntary sacrifice of His life, as a good shepherd might give his life in fighting wild beasts in the defense of his flock. No! No! It was the voluntary giving up of His life, by laying it down in accordance with the covenant of grace—laying it down as a price paid for our redemption. This is exactly what He did, redeeming us not with silver and with gold, but with His own precious blood.

A certain Oriental custom well illustrates what the Lord Jesus Christ did in His work of redemption—of "buying back" those who were enslaved to sin. In the market place in Bible lands it is customary for the purchaser and seller to bargain back and forth to determine the price of an object or piece of goods offered for sale. The buyer lays his coins before the owner, and only when the seller picks up the money—literally, lifts the price, signifying his full satisfaction with the price paid—is the transaction recognized as complete. He was "delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

Jesus paid down His life, and God, by raising Him from the dead, pledged that the price had been accepted. We know that redemption has been accomplished, and we are free to accept all the fulness of its benefits.

At the close of a great evangelistic meeting some years ago in Scotland, a poor little girl, clad in soiled and tattered garments, came to the minister and told him in a whisper that she wanted "to get saved." Interested in the little girl, and in her eager face, he, nevertheless, replied rather abruptly: "Do you think I can save you?"

"No, man, you cannot save me, but Jesus can."

"How can He save you? What has He done for you?"

"Oh, sir, He died for me."

To this the preacher replied, "Then He is dead, is He? And if He is dead, how can He save you? A dead man cannot do anything for you."

"Oh, Sir," came the plaintive, distressed voice again, "He is not dead. He died for me, but, Sir, God
raised Him from the dead. He is yonder in the presence of God, and He can save me."
That girl of thirteen years had found the secret. Is it not plain that without the resurrection of Christ from the dead, we are yet in our sins? Is it not as plain that if God raised Him from the dead, then God has accepted His great sacrifice, as being sufficient to justify the ungodly? Some one has said, "Christ's death is sufficient for all, deficient to none, and efficient for those only who believe."

IV. The Resurrection of Christ from the Dead Certifies and Assures Life and Immortality for Us.

The Apostle Paul deals with this subject in detail in 1 Corinthians 15. Read the whole chapter carefully, for therein the Holy Ghost declares that Christ's resurrection certifies and assures the resurrection of every human body in the world. He was the firstfruits; and we, at His coming, are the subsequent fruit; then, a thousand years later, all the wicked dead will be raised (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23-24 with Rev. 20:4-5). I speak reverently when I say that God would not and the Devil cannot keep my body and yours from being raised up again. If death should come to me before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His own, I do not care what you do with my body. You may burn it; you may bury it, and with it nurture the forests; you may cast it into the sea, and with it feed the fishes. However, when the Bridegroom comes, and at the call of His voice, the dead in Christ, and I, with them, shall rise. There is no power to prevent Christ from bringing that body back, a glorified body.

Scientists tell us that God makes our bodies anew every seven years; that is, by the gradual replacement of tissues and cells, an entirely new body is formed every seven years. Why, then, cannot God make our bodies over again, glorified, even after the soul has left them?

Years ago, one of the students, studying under the great chemist, Faraday, accidentally allowed a silver cup to fall into a vessel of acid. The acid at once dissolved the metal as sugar is dissolved in a tumbler of water.

Professor Faraday took other chemicals, and put them into the acid in which the silver had disappeared. As soon as these chemicals came together, the acid began to release the silver, and, particle by particle, the silver settled to the bottom of the vessel. The acid was then poured off, the silver was carefully gathered and sent to the silversmith who melted it and made it anew into a cup of the same form, design, and pattern as the one that had been destroyed. Likewise, my body may combine with the elements, but at the resurrection it shall be raised, immortal, and the Spirit will again enter it. In glorified bodies, we who are Christ's will live with Him for evermore. This is the hope we have through the resurrection of the Son of God.

Peter alludes to this hope in I Peter 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath gotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

My friends, have you this resurrection hope? Colonel Robert Ingersoll, the most brilliant of all modern agnostics, went up and down the country
proclaiming: "Christianity casts a shadow over the cradle and a gloom over the grave." When he himself came to die, his poor distracted wife and daughter could not bear to have that loved form taken away from the home to be buried or cremated; for they had no hope of seeing him again. Hope, for them, ended with death.

Here is a different story: When D. L. Moody's granddaughter, the darling of his heart, passed away, every word spoken beside the casket was a word of hope and gladness, and when the little form was lowered into the grave, songs of triumph were sung beside it. Later, when Mr. Moody himself died (that is to say, when his body died, and his spirit departed to be with Christ) again the scene was a triumphant one. The services were held at Northfield in the presence of a large crowd. The casket lay open between the platform and the assembled people. Right in front sat Mrs. Moody, and then came the sons, and only daughter. Suddenly the sun against the window made a shadow of a cross directly over the great evangelist's body. Mrs. Moody told Dr. C. I. Scofield: "This is my husband's coronation day." They sang at her request Mr. Moody's favorite hymn: "There'll Be no Dark Valley, When Jesus Comes."

In the light of the striking contrast between the funeral of the greatest agnostic of the age and the funeral of the greatest evangelist of the century, let me ask: Is it Christianity or is it unbelief that casts a gloom over the grave?

Faith in Christ—the One who will raise us from the dead—floods even the grave with sunlight. Those who die trusting in the atoning work of Christ the Saviour are at once "Absent from the body . . . present with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8). We lay the bodies of our believing loved ones away for the night to sleep, but we shall meet them again in the morning, clad in new and unfaded glory and in eternal beauty.

This, then, is our assurance. These poor bodies, humiliated by age and disease, shall rise out of their weakness and dishonor. Ours shall be glorious bodies, fashioned like unto the body of Christ. And so we say to our dear ones who believe in Christ, "One day there shall be no more sickness, no more pain, no more tottering limbs, no more blind eyes." As we part let us say, "Good-bye, we shall see you on the resurrection morn."

I have said it several times to those whom I have "loved and lost a while": "Good-bye, my father, . . . Good-bye, my mother, . . . Good-bye, my brothers; we shall meet again in the morning."

So, beloved, be of good comfort. By the resurrection, the Scriptures are guaranteed to you; Jesus Christ the Son of God, mighty to save, is guaranteed to you; the redemption wrought at Calvary is guaranteed to you; immortality for the body is guaranteed to you—all by this great fact:

CHRIST IS RISEN!
LORD’S DAY BROADCASTS
11:00-12:30 a.m., KFAC (1330 kilocycles)
3:00-4:00 p.m., KMTR (570 kilocycles)
8:00-9:00 p.m., KFAC (1330 kilocycles)

WEEK DAY BROADCASTS
Monday through Saturday
11:00-11:30 a.m., KMTR (570 kilocycles)