

STANDARD A: WHO IS JESUS AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW HIM?

Lesson 2: What Is Important About Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection?

Introduction

When Jesus was still a young man, His enemies killed him. They did this by crucifying Him on a cross. After Jesus had suffered very much, He died. This is called the Crucifixion. A friend of Jesus owned a new tomb where no one had been buried. The friend placed Jesus' dead body in the new tomb. Jesus' disciples were now afraid for their own lives. So they hid in fear. They thought that they had seen the end of Jesus.

But Jesus' Heavenly Father had other plans for His Son. On the third day after Jesus' enemies had crucified Him, some female friends of Jesus came to His grave. They intended to finish the burial process. They brought spices to put on Jesus' body. They wondered who would roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb.

But when the women came to the tomb, Jesus was not there. The stone had been rolled away, and Jesus' body was gone. What had happened? God had raised Jesus to new life. Two angels reminded the women of what Jesus had told them. Jesus had also told them He would be crucified and would rise again. God was the one who raised His Son from the grave. This is called the Resurrection.

A. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection Unlock the Meaning of Christian Life.

The Crucifixion and the Resurrection are the source of our salvation. They are the cause for Christian faith, peace, hope, and joy. Jesus' early disciples sought for the meaning of His death and resurrection. Christian faith is faith in Jesus who was crucified and who now lives. It is Easter faith. Salvation comes through the crucified and resurrected Jesus of Nazareth. That is what the New Testament declares and explains.

God approved of Jesus forgiving sins. One time Jesus forgave a man of his sins. Then He healed the man. If God had not approved of Jesus' forgiving sins, then God could have refused to heal the man. Jesus spoke for and acted on behalf of His Heavenly Father.

What did the Father think of all this? Did He approve of what Jesus was saying and doing in the Father's name? Yes, without a doubt. How do we know this? We know this because the Father raised His Son from the grave. In Jesus' resurrection, the Father confirmed Jesus' entire ministry and His claims to be God's Son and Messiah. In the Resurrection the Father says He is well pleased with the testimony and obedience of His Son. The resurrection of Jesus was a testament to the Father's faithfulness to His Son. It was also a testimony to the Son's faithfulness to His Father. Later, Peter said God raised Jesus from the grave and all Christians bear witness to this fact. The Father then exalted Christ to the Father's right hand in heaven (Acts 2:32).

Question: What is important about the Resurrection?

Question: How can people have Resurrection power in their lives today?

B. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection Demonstrate God's Power over Evil.

In Christ's resurrection the Father completely demonstrates His authority over every power that stands against His reign as King (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). In the death and resurrection of His Son, the Father defeated – put to flight – all the powers of evil. Our Lord is victor, and He shares His victory with all His disciples (Colossians 2:13-15). The Book of Acts says it was impossible for the Son of God to be held in the power of death (Acts 2:24). Even today the powers of evil take many forms and try to exalt themselves above God. But the resurrection of Christ settled the issue forever. The powers of evil must and will always finally yield to their conqueror, who is the resurrected Lord. God put His great power to work when He raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at His right hand (Ephesians 1:20).

Question: Who has more authority, Jesus or evil powers? Why?

Question: How did Jesus win over the powers of evil?

C. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection Provide Forgiveness of Sins.

On the Cross and in the Resurrection, Christ made it possible for God to forgive our sins (Colossians 2:14). He made it possible for us to live new lives that are changed by God. The New Testament tells us when the resurrected Christ comes to live in us He does away with the old life. In the old life we gave ourselves to sin's power. We made ourselves the slaves of sin (Romans 6:15-19). We were dead in our sins and guilty before God. By ourselves we could not change our sinful condition and patterns. We could not worship and serve God. We could not love what God loves. We could not love our neighbors, our families, or our enemies. We could not show the kind of love God shows to all persons.

But through faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ, the old life passes away. Through the resurrection power of God, our old selves that once were given to sin have now been crucified with Christ. The old life died. Our service to sin died. Now through Jesus Christ we have been raised to new life just as God raised Jesus from the dead. The same resurrection power of God that brought Jesus from the grave now works in us (Romans 6:1-4). This is like being born again (John 3:3-7). The new birth is something that God gives us from above. Through Jesus the old life of sin passes away and a new life comes to be. All things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

Question: Who can forgive our sins?

Question: What does it mean to forgive?

D. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection Bring New Life in Christ.

When we follow Christ, He becomes the center of our life. Indeed, He is our life. Once we served sin and the power of evil. But this is no longer true. Now Christ works in us to direct our whole life toward love for God and love for our neighbors. This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The change happens only because the resurrected Christ lives in us. We completely place our trust in Him. He gives us peace with God and sets up God's reign as King in us. This happens because of God's love and grace. The crucified and resurrected One now actually empowers us to live in ways that please God. He actually changes us.

Once we were owned by evil. But in the new life all the parts of our lives begin to praise God. The New Testament describes this as giving ourselves to righteousness (Romans 6:19). This is another way of saying we serve the Holy and loving God. More and more God changes us. Freed from the power of sin, we are now free to serve God and our neighbor. More and more we love all that God loves. The New Testament says this new life in Christ is eternal life. This means the new life is actually the life of the resurrected Christ now living in us. The life that comes from Him will never end or grow old (Romans 6:20-23).

Question: What is the difference between the old life and the new life in Christ?

Question: How can we do away with our old selves and have a new life?

Conclusion

The Heavenly Father did not permit death to have the last word about Jesus. On the third day God raised His Son from the dead. And Jesus' resurrection gives us new life in Him. This is eternal life now and forever.

Activity: Tell someone in your discipleship group what the Crucifixion and Resurrection mean.