

# *The Story of Redemption*



God Reaching Out to Restore **COMMUNITY**  
through the cross of Jesus Christ

**The Resurrection**

**Part 8: Taking Hold of the New Life**

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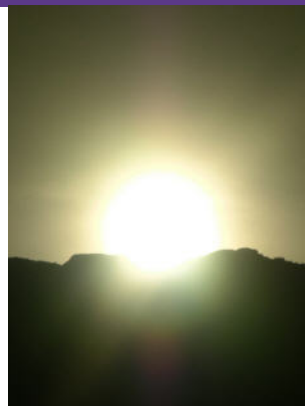
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# The Story of Redemption

## The Resurrection

### Part 8: Taking Hold of the New Life

Have you ever wanted to start life over, undoing the mistakes of the past? Most of us have felt that way at some time or another. While the past can't be undone, the future can be changed. Christians believe and know that life can be better than it has ever been. This new and better life is made possible through Jesus and the resurrection.



#### 1. THE DEATH OF JESUS.

In the last part of the story, we saw how Jesus willingly gave up his spirit and died upon the cross for our sins.

The mighty death of the Son of God would not go unnoticed by the universe. When Jesus died,

*51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. 52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life . . . 54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Mt. 27:51-52, 54).*

These strange and wondrous events point towards the monumental significance of Jesus' death. Rather than being portrayed as a tragedy, the overwhelming emphasis of Scripture is that Christ's death was a triumph, making possible our salvation (see below). In addition, each of these specific events were filled with future significance:

#### The Savings Effects of Christ's Death

- Christ's love for us was demonstrated, drawing all humanity to him (Jn. 12:32).
- Satan and his evil forces were defeated (Col. 2:15).
- Our sins were taken away, as he bore them in his body (1 Pet. 2:24).
- We receive righteousness and are reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:21).

- **The tearing of the temple curtain**—This curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, where only the high priest could enter. This was where God was specially located, and the tearing of the curtain showed that this access to God would soon be available to all.
- **The shaking of the earth and splitting of rocks**—What else could be expected at the death of the Son of God?
- **The breaking open of tombs and raising of the dead**—Those who

were raised from the dead would die again, since they were not *resurrected* as Jesus was. Still, this amazing event points towards the resurrection.

- **The confession that Jesus is the Son of God**—Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God was one of the things for which he was sentenced to death. Ironically, it is a Roman centurion, not one of the Jewish people, who recognizes who Jesus is. Later many Gentiles (non-Jews) would do the same.

*Which of these events do you think was most significant?*

## 2. THE BURIAL OF JESUS.

Normally a person who was crucified by the Romans would not receive a burial. He would be left to hang on his cross after his death, with the carrion-picked body serving as a deterrent to others who might be contemplating rebellion against Rome. Jesus’ body, however, would not suffer this fate.

*<sup>57</sup> As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. <sup>58</sup> Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. <sup>59</sup> Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, <sup>60</sup> and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. <sup>61</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb (Mt. 28:57-61).*

The chief priests and Pharisees, however, were not satisfied that Jesus now lay dead and buried in a tomb with a large rock covering the entrance. They were aware of Jesus’ prediction that he would rise from the dead after three days, and they thought that Jesus’ disciples would steal his body to make this prediction come true. So they went to Pilate and asked him to secure the tomb.

*<sup>65</sup> “Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.” <sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard (Mt. 28:65-66).*

The tomb was well secured.

Jesus’ tomb was now guarded by the fierce Roman soldiers, sealed with a seal that would ensure the death of anyone who broke it.

## 3. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

The religious leaders tried to keep Jesus in his tomb, but no one could stop the power of God. Note the wondrous events of that Sunday morning.

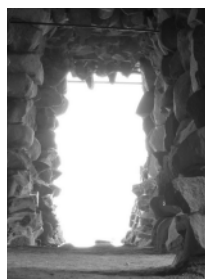
*<sup>1</sup> After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.*

*<sup>2</sup> There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. <sup>4</sup> The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.*

*<sup>5</sup> The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for*

Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

<sup>8</sup> So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Mt. 28:1-10).



The tomb where Jesus was laid was empty.

Jesus was suddenly alive again! The tomb was found empty; death could not keep him in the ground. With joy Jesus would be reunited with his disciples.

Why was Jesus' resurrection so significant? It was not just because he was raised from the dead. Jesus' resurrection was significant because he was raised from the dead to *never die again!* His resurrection points to the resurrection that all of us will one day experience, and it is the basis for the Christian faith.

Some have wondered if this resurrection story is really true. Here are a few of the reasons why ancient and modern-day Christians believe in this event.

## Reasons to Believe in the Resurrection

### 1. What else accounts for the empty tomb?

Many theories have been proposed to deal with the inescapable fact that the tomb was found empty. Here are a couple of those theories.

- *The "Swoon" Theory*—This theory says that Jesus didn't really die, but that he only appeared to do so. But did the Romans, who had crucified thousands of people, really not know how to kill people? And where did Jesus go after this?
- *The "Disciples Stole the Body" Theory*—This theory, is that the disciples snuck past the Roman guards in the middle of the night and stole the body. But how could the disciples move away the huge stone without waking up the guards? And is it likely that the guards, who would have been executed for falling asleep, all failed in their duty?

### 2. What else accounts for the disciples' willingness to die for their belief?

In a short amount of time, Christians would be hunted down, crucified, burned alive, and torn apart by lions because of their belief. Some people believe enough in a cause to die for it, but who dies for a lie?

All the disciples had to do was renounce their faith in Jesus and the resurrection, and they would be spared. But they continued to believe and speak out about their faith until their dying breath. Why?

### 3. What else accounts for the disciples' belief that they had seen Jesus?

What is interesting about the above alternative theories is that they are no longer believed even by people who reject the resurrection. Most all scholars now concede that the disciples sincerely believed that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Some have proposed that this belief in the resurrection was due to some type of group hallucination. Is this likely?

As we have seen, there are good reasons to believe in the resurrection. It accounts for the empty tomb, the eyewitness accounts, and the disciples' transformation. Ultimately, though, the resurrection must be accepted by faith.

*What do you believe best accounts for all of these things?*

#### 4. THE RESURRECTION AND THE GOSPEL.

One of the people to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection was the apostle Paul. In one of his letters to the church in the city of Corinth, Paul would remind the believers there of the “gospel” (which means “good news”).

*<sup>1</sup> Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

*<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time . . . (1 Cor. 15:1-6).*

At the gospel's core are three of the things that Paul mentions.

1. **Christ died for our sins.**
2. **He was buried.**
3. **Christ was raised from the dead on the third day.**



Christ's death, burial, and resurrection makes it possible for our sins to be forgiven. This is good news! Paul goes on to tell us more why this is good news.

#### Why the Resurrection is Good News

1. *Because Christ was resurrected, we will be resurrected (1 Cor. 15:20-23).*
2. *When we are resurrected, our bodies will be transformed into imperishable, incorruptible spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-43).* With this transformation, cancer, diabetes, deformity, and every other human ailment will be eliminated. The world itself and all of creation will be redeemed (Rom. 8:18f). How wonderful!
3. *When we are resurrected, we will be “like Christ”--sinless (1 Cor. 15:47-49).* Not only has God become like us through Jesus' incarnation, someday we will become like Christ, living with him as brothers. And because our bodies will be fully filled with God's Holy Spirit, we will no longer have the tendency to sin. We will then truly be like our sinless Savior.
4. *When we are resurrected, Christ's victory over death will be complete (1 Cor. 15:50-56).* When Adam and Eve sinned, death entered into the world. By being

raised from the dead, Christ showed that he has power over death:

<sup>55</sup> “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55-56).

Because of the resurrection, we can have life eternal—not just living forever, but living life to the fullest now and in the future in a new, Spirit-filled body.

*Which of these blessings do you most look forward to?*

## 5. TAKING HOLD OF THE NEW LIFE.

At this point you may be asking, How do I respond to the gospel? How do I participate in the resurrection life? Once again, Paul gives us the answer in another one of his letters. In his letter to the Romans he responds to the idea that because God forgives us we can go on sinning. Note what he says:

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life (Rom. 6:1-4).*

**Paul says that baptism is:**

1. A baptism into Christ's death.
2. A burial with Christ.
3. A resurrection from the dead so that we might live a new life.

Does this sound familiar? When we place our faith (trust) in Christ and we are baptized (immersed), we participate in the gospel story of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Through our submission to God in the act of baptism, we do not earn our salvation. We accept it by faith as a gracious gift from God. Baptism is an expression of this faith. It is at this point that the new life begins—a life free from sin and its slavery (Rom. 6:5-14). A life with all of the blessings that are spoken of above. And when the sin that separates us is gone, community with God and others is restored.

*Do you want to take hold of this new life? What do you think you need do?*

### Saving faith is expressed by

- living a life in which we *believe* in the power of God --power that raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 10:9f).
- living a changed life in which we *repent* of trying to live our way and decide to live for God (Acts 2:38).
- living a life in which we freely *confess* that Jesus is the Lord of our life (Rom. 10:9f).
- living a life in which we die to ourselves, *being baptized* into Christ for forgiveness of sins and to receive the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

## Remember the Story of Redemption . . .

**Part 1:** When God created Adam and Eve, *they lived together in loving community with God and each other* in the Garden of Eden. This community was lost when they failed to trust God.

⇒ **We learn that we are created for community (Eph. 2:13-22).**

**Part 2:** *God showed his grace (undeserved, free gift) to Adam and Eve, Cain, and Noah's world* by sparing their lives when they sinned . . . But the tower of Babel showed that a greater gift of grace would be needed to break the cycle of sin.

⇒ **We learn that we need God's grace (Eph. 2:8-10).**

**Part 3:** *Abraham, the father of faith, trusted God and went where he told him to go*, and God credited it to him as righteousness. God revealed his plan to redeem all of humanity through one of his descendants--Jesus, the ultimate gift of grace.

⇒ **We learn that we must trust God/have faith in him (Rom. 10:9-10).**

**Part 4:** *God fulfilled his promise by sending by his son Jesus Christ into the world.* Conceived by the Holy Spirit but born of Mary, he is both human and divine. Though he was sinless, he submitted to the Father in baptism, receiving the Holy Spirit to empower him and to help him overcome temptation.

⇒ **We learn that we too need the Holy Spirit in our lives (Acts 2:38).**

**Part 5:** In his ministry, *Jesus called a group of followers to be his disciples.* (A disciple is one who attaches himself or herself to a teacher and seeks to become like him.) Becoming like Christ means becoming holy and loving.

⇒ **We learn that Christ calls us to radical lives of obedience (Rom. 6:5-12).**

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**Part 6 & 7:** Jesus began the long road to the cross, going to Jerusalem where there *he would lay down his life as a ransom for our sins.* (A ransom is the price required to free someone who is held captive.) Jesus is captured, put on trial, found to be guilty of claiming to be the Son of God, and led away to be crucified. But through the cross, Christ made possible our salvation.

⇒ **We learn that Christ's death redeems us from sin (Rom. 6:5-12).**

**Part 8:** God raised Jesus from the dead on Sunday, three days later. Through his death and resurrection, Christ triumphed over sin, death, and the forces of evil. Through the resurrection, we, like Christ, will put on Spiritual bodies.

⇒ **We learn that we take hold of the new, resurrection life and receive forgiveness of sins and God's Spirit in baptism, an immersion into Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-4).**

**Please check the following if it applies:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I want to be baptized into Christ and be a part of the story!

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like further study!