



## Dead men don't rise, do they? 1 Cor 15:12-24

DEAD MEN DON'T RISE do they? That's the issue of the resurrection. One unavoidable truth about life is death. Someone once said that life is 100% fatal. We are born, we die. It demonstrates to us authority of God over creation. We as human beings were given dominion over this world and we as a race do clever things. We like to play around with the essence of life. We understand DNA, we have medical technology, we are capable of in-vitro fertilisation, we can extend life. But what we can't do is cheat death. It comes to us all and without Christ, death is a mystery. To some they just say with BERTRAND RUSSELL: "When I die, I rot" (he didn't rot actually because he was cremated!). For others, they speculate about life after death.

*Theos Survey 2009 on UK beliefs A survey of 2,060 people showed 53 per cent believe in life after death, 55 per cent believe in heaven and 70 per cent believe in the human soul.*

*The study carried out between October and November last year for the public theology think tank Theos also showed nearly four in 10, or 39 per cent, believe in ghosts and more than a quarter (27 per cent) believe in reincarnation.*

*A further 22 per cent believe in astrology or horoscopes and 15 per cent believe in fortune telling or Tarot, the research revealed. Daily Telegraph 13/4/2009*

**G K Chesterton** *When people don't believe in God, they don't believe nothing, they believe anything"*

The rise of people believing anything is a reflection of the move away from traditional Christian values in the last 50 years. Part of that was a move towards the rationalism of people like Russell. But in the last 20 years or so people have moved away from the confidence in science that people in the 50s and 60s had. There have been too many let-downs. The disaster at Fukushima is symptomatic of people's cynicism about science - WHAT, AGAIN?

Interestingly, most people believe in life after death still, but you'd be surprised who doesn't

ATHEISTS - it's no surprise people like these don't believe in life after death. To them, this is one life and that's it.

SPIRITUALISTS - these believe people are transferred to the "other side" - to the spirit world and communicate back through mediums. There is no resurrection to these people. It's not necessary. You'll realised from the last reading this evening that it's not Christian either. There is no such thing as a "Christian Spiritualist". Dabbling with the spirits of the departed or the demonic is expressly forbidden in Scripture.

MOST AMERICANS It's surprising how these views pervade society. Yet central to the Christian view of life and death is that there will be a time when the dead in Christ will be raised to life again. Actually it goes further as we read further in this chapter (verse 20) and in more detail in Revelation because we find that all the dead will be raised to judgement (Rev 20). What was dead will be made alive. Bodily resurrection is what it's about because we have a God who has power over death. And when our bodies have long since rotted into nothing, that's fine because the

Creator God just crafts a new one.

1 COR 15:15 *Here's what Paul says: Now, since our message is that Christ has been raised from death, how can some of you say that the dead will not be raised to life?*

There's nothing new under the sun. People were pouring cold water on the Christian faith in Paul's day. In his case Jewish Saducee views were obviously common, but to Paul, Christian faith without the resurrection of Jesus is meaningless - to Paul it would be a waste of time. 1 Corinthians 15 gives us why the resurrection is so vital.

WHY IS THE RESURRECTION SO IMPORTANT?

- **It proves our sin has been dealt with**

How do we know that the death of Jesus has been sufficient to deal with our sin? How do we know that the sacrifice of the cross worked? Because Jesus rose from the dead. Consider this verse: ROM 5:12 *Sin came into the world through one man, and his sin brought death with it. As a result, death has spread to the whole human race because everyone has sinned.* Because of the sin of one man, death entered into the world. Of course by death we are embracing death in the widest sense of eternal death, but the act of Jesus' physical resurrection after He was well and truly dead, proves His conquering of sin. Sin brought death. When sin was dealt with then Jesus could put all that into reverse because He now has power over it. How am I sure that my sin is dealt with - because Jesus is alive. *17 And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins. 18 It would also mean that the believers in Christ who have died are lost.*

- **It shows us that death is not the end**

*19 If our hope in Christ is good for this life only and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in all the world. 20 But the truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised.* You can see the point. If our hope in Christ is only good for this life, then I'd say that I could find much easier things to do than being a Christian! I'd probably want to do all the things that are bad for me, or do my "bucket list" or try to live as long as possible. But because Jesus came back from the dead, it proves there is life after death and that His promises of eternal life are valid.

- **It shows us that Jesus has power over death**

*20 But the truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised. 21 For just as death came by means of a man, in the same way the rising from death comes by means of a man. 22 For just as all people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ.* Raising from the dead when someone is well-dead is truly a miracle. There are the near-death kinds of miracles where it could be debated that the person may not be quite as dead as the doctors thought they would, and then there are the Lazarus and Jesus types where the injuries were so severe or where decomposition may have set in. They are truly miracles. Death should never be a problem for Christian people because Jesus has absolute power over death.

Paul expands the idea more in 2 Corinthians 5: 6 *So we are always full of courage. We know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord's home. 7 For our life is a matter of faith, not of sight. 8 We are full of courage and would much prefer to leave our home in the body and be at home with the Lord.* What happens between the time we die and when we are raised. There you have your answer. Jesus has such power over death that if we're dead, we're with Him and He will raise us to life again when He returns. That's the promise and the resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that power. Jesus said John 10:18 *No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back.*

The resurrection is about hope and expectation. Jesus has been raised to life again and as a result we have an assurance, an expectation and a hope that He's everything He said He is. In a

world full of fear, we bring a message of hope, eternal hope. That kills our fear of death. It should be an expected joy if we are in Christ.

It is also an antidote to the fear, the denial and the desire by many to hang on to life whatever the cost. Let's ask Him to fill us with the assurance of His promises afresh as we walk in an uncertain world.

Prayer

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