

RESURRECTION

Jesus resurrection is a centerpiece of the Christian faith, because

1. **The resurrection vindicates Jesus' claims about his identity.** Jesus repeatedly made both implicit and explicit claims to being the Savior, Messiah, and Son of God. Throughout history others have made similar claims as well. However, Jesus can back up his claims in that he foretold that after being put to death he would rise again from the dead (ex. Mark 8:31) – a remarkable claim, to be sure! And, as predicted, he accomplished this very thing. Anyone who can make such a claim about being able to be raised from the dead and then have this claim come true deserves a hearing with regard to any other claims as well.

2. **The resurrection vindicates the claims of the cross.** The claim of the cross is that by dying there, Jesus completely paid the penalty for sin. As Jesus drew his last breath, he cried out victoriously, "It is finished!" If Jesus had stayed dead, we would have plenty of reason to doubt that sin and death had been completely paid for and defeated. The fact that Jesus rose to life vindicates the claim that sin and death have been conquered. So, His resurrection becomes the fuel for our confidence that already now, we too are resurrected to a new life.

3. **The resurrection of Jesus is a guarantee of our future resurrection.** When someone dies and we bury or cremate their body, it may seem impossible to us that we will ever embrace them, talk to them, or see them again. Most of human experience indicates to us that we will not. Most of human experience indicates to us that death is the final word in our bodily existence. As a result, the most people usually expect or hope for is that our souls will survive our body's death. However, the fact of Jesus' resurrection gives us confidence that bodily resurrection is not only possible, but it is something that God intends to do. So, Jesus' resurrection is called a 'firstfruit' of all the future resurrections that God intends to bring about (see 1 Cor. 15).

4. **The resurrection shows us that God intends to maintain the closest possible relationship with humankind.** As Christians, we celebrate the incarnation. This is the biblical teaching that the second person of the trinity took on human flesh. In fact, one of Jesus' titles is "Immanuel" – which means God with us. The incarnation is a remarkable teaching about God, that He loves and cares for us so much that he humbled himself and shared in our humanity in order to overcome sin and death for us! (see Hebrews 2 and Philippians 2). Our expectation might be that once God destroyed sin and death that he would certainly return to His pre-incarnate state and glory. However, Jesus' bodily resurrection teaches us that God intends to maintain this close union between Himself and humanity forever. (see Mt. 28:20)