



## **We believe in Jesus' resurrection, ascension and return**

**1 Cor 15:1 to 34**

The story of Jesus is eternal. He has been there since the 'foundation of the world' (1 Peter 1:19 and 20) and we will be with him for ever. But we sometimes limit even the story of Jesus' earthly life. The baby of Bethlehem becomes the miracle working teacher who goes to the cross. But there is far more in the pages of scripture about the end of his earthly life than there is about the beginning. And there is a lot about his second coming which has often been ignored.

*'He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law and that he must be killed **and after three days rise again.** He spoke plainly about this .....*

*Mark 8:31*

If you read the gospel narrative after Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8), you will see that Jesus repeated the facts of his suffering and death on several occasions. The disciples must have been struggling with the whole idea of a sacrificial Messiah although it was in their scriptures (e.g. Isaiah 53) and the idea that a dead person could live again would stretch us today. So don't be too hard on the faithless disciples.

**How do you deal with the idea of resurrection?**

**Do you have doubts?**

**Why do you think modern people find it hard to believe?**

It was clearly the core idea of the New Testament preachers. They preached that Christ is risen because they knew it was key to following him. They had to explain to people what was essentially a new idea. Jewish belief included a kind of resurrection but the idea that a God/man would die and rise again was hard to grasp. You can see that some of the new believers in the Corinthian church didn't understand

***'How come some of you say there is no resurrection from the dead' ( 1 Cor 15:12)***

And it is this challenge that Paul responds to in chapter 15. He starts with a gentle rebuke saying they should have remembered. He says it is the resurrection on which they must take their stand (v1) 'otherwise you have believed in vain' (v2). The gospel they have received is that Christ died for our sins, 'that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day from the dead' (v3) and that both these events were 'according to the Scriptures'. When Paul is writing that must be from the Old Testament.

**Do you think we have lost the centrality of the cross and resurrection?**

**Do we talk about it enough?**

**Are we convinced it's life changing?**

Paul's argument is not without evidence. He lists those who saw Jesus alive after he rose from the dead.. He also mentions his encounter with the risen Jesus on the Damascus Road. His appeal is both historical and personal.

**Should our witness be both personal and historical?**

**Should we talk about the biblical record of resurrection appearances?**

**Should we testify that Jesus has appeared to us?**

His argument from verse 13 is worth following through

- If there is no resurrection, then not even Christ has been raised
- If Christ has not been raised our preaching and our faith are a waste of time
- We are false witnesses about God
- If the dead are not raised then Christ has not been raised
- Those who have fallen asleep (died earlier) are lost

Then Paul comes out with one of his most emphatic statements

***'But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them who have fallen asleep'***  
(v20)

We should never cease to marvel that a man who was dead and buried appeared to many to show us that death was beaten and we could have life in all its fulness.

Stop for a prayer time to

- Thank God that he raised Jesus from the dead
- Ask God to grow our wonder and amazement that such a thing could happen
- Ask God to help us explain the miracle of Jesus to those who are still in darkness

Jesus' parting words prior to his ascension have deep significance. They amount to his final orders. Acts 1 records these words (Acts 1:2). We are told Jesus showed himself to these men and 'gave them many convincing proofs that he was alive' (1:3). His key words are

- Do not leave Jerusalem (1:4)
- Wait for the gift of Holy Spirit
- You will receive power (1:8)
- You will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth (1:8)

Look at the end of Matthew's gospel (28:16 to 20)

What does this say about the way we should serve God?

Do we sometimes want to receive power and forget to witness?

1 Corinthians 15 also speaks about the return of the Lord. The consequence of resurrection is that more of God's activity will follow. Jesus is restored to his father's side (The Ascension). He is the first fruits of resurrection power. But if there are first fruits there will other fruits to follow on – that's us. This is the great Christian hope that those who die in Christ will be with Christ forever. Along with that is the biblical promise that Jesus will make an unmissable return.

***'Look he is coming with clouds and every eye shall see him'*** (Revelation 1:7)

What does it truly mean to 'live in the light of his coming'?

How should it change the way we live?

Do we long for his return? Should we?