

Opening Words - As much as I love the Christmas season with all the carols and lights and family time and exchanging of gifts, celebrating the resurrection of our Lord and His victory over sin and death is our greatest season and our greatest reason to rejoice.

294 RV 01 – The Resurrection Affirms the Goodness of God’s Creation

I call this series, Resurrection Vision. I call it this because we must see all of life through the lens of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Listen to these words from the voice of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.

If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain.
Your faith also is vain. – 1 Corinthians 15:14

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless.
You are still in your sins. – 1 Corinthians 15:17

If we have hoped in Christ in this life only,
we are of all men most to be pitied. – 1 Corinthians 15:19

But think with me about these verses in the opposite way, in the positive way:

If Christ has been raised, then our preaching is full of purpose.
Our faith is solid as a rock. – 1 Corinthians 15:14

If Christ has been raised, our faith is worth more than all the money in the world.
For we have been freed from our sins. – 1 Corinthians 15:17

Because our hope in Christ is not only for this life only but for the life to come,
we of all men have the most to rejoice in. – 1 Corinthians 15:19

What a difference the resurrection makes!

This is our greatest season of celebration. As much as I love the Christmas season with all the carols and lights and family times and exchanging of gifts, celebrating the resurrection of our Lord and His victory over sin and death is our greatest season and so for the next two weeks I want to share a series of messages with you that I call Resurrection Vision.

So many times throughout my ministry I have shared that what distinguishes Christianity from other religions is that Christianity is about a person and not just a person’s teaching. Everything rises or falls upon Jesus Christ and everything about Jesus Christ rises or falls upon His resurrection. If He did not rise from the dead, our faith is groundless, and we are still lost in our sins. But if He did rise from the dead, then He is the Lord and we owe Him our full allegiance and worship.

In this series, I am going to share ten meanings of the resurrection. For many years I preached that the resurrection of Jesus proves two things: that Jesus is who He said He was, and that His death on the cross is the sufficient work to release us from our sins. What He did was enough to obtain our forgiveness and justification before God.

But in recent years, I have discovered the resurrection of Jesus to be much more. I have discovered eight additional meanings, filling in the picture that prophets and apostles painted in their writings and preaching. All ten will give us *resurrection vision* and help us to see life through the perspective of the resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ.

It has made a difference in my life, and I hope you will be with us for the entire series, that you will follow along with your Bible and that you will share these vital truths with friends about the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, not during this season only, but throughout the year.

Let me list all ten for you right now so you have an overview and know where we are headed.
The resurrection of Jesus

- 1. Affirms the goodness of God’s creation.**
- 2. Shows that God is concerned about and has a remedy for the man-made problems in His creation.**
- 3. Shows us a Man who has become everything God intended for humanity in the first place.**
- 4. Shows that the way He lived and the path He was the right path for Israel and all mankind.**
- 5. Proves that what Jesus did on the cross was sufficient pay for our sins.**
- 6. Proves that He is who He claimed to be.**
- 7. Fulfills the story of Israel and affirms the importance of history within this world.**
- 8. Guarantees our resurrection.**
- 9. Empowers us for holy living.**
- 10. Empowers us for ministry.**

There is a sequence to these reasons. They begin with creation, the Fall, God’s purpose for mankind and continue into the life of Christ and forward to the day of our resurrection when Christ returns. The ten reasons end with messages on being empowered for holy living and ministry until He returns.

I will explain all of these in the coming days and you will see how they fit. But for now, let’s look at the first meaning of the resurrection.

1. The resurrection of Jesus affirms the goodness of God’s creation.

I love to share that there are two things that distinguish Christianity from every other religion in the world. We are accustomed to hearing that Christianity is different from every other religion

because of the grace of God. All other religions teach works, but Christianity teaches grace. But there is another distinguishing factor to the biblical revelation – the Bible teaches that creation is good. Every other religion teaches that this creation is intrinsically evil or corrupt in some way, and we need to escape it. But the Bible teaches that though it is now fallen, it was originally good because God made it good and he plans to renew creation. The first step in His renewal of all creation is the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

There is an interesting event that took place in Paul’s second missionary journey that underlines this contrast between biblical revelation and every other religion in the world.

Paul was preaching a sermon in Athens on Mars’ Hill. He seemed to be doing quite well. One wonders if his heart thrilled with joy when the leading scholars of Athens politely invited him to share his views in a public forum. Paul began winsomely, noting their spiritual interest evidenced in their temples, and he focused on one place of worship which he could in honorably associate with the true God – the place dedicated *to an unknown god*. Using this as his foundation, Paul preached the God of creation and told them who this “unknown God” was, what he was like, and what He had done in Israel. This is what he said:

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; ²⁶ and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ ²⁹ Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. ³⁰ Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, ³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

Everything was going fine for Paul until he mentioned God raising Jesus from the dead. This his sermon collapsed. His audience laughed and sneered – “resurrection from the dead? How absurd! Whoever heard of such a thing? We’ll get in touch with you if we want to hear more.” And they dismissed him. End of sermon with meager results.

Why was Paul’s reference to the resurrection a turning point for the worse in his sermon? It is because of Greek thinking. The Greeks in Paul’s day were captured by the philosophy of Plato and others who held that reality consisted of two components – a physical, inferior component and a spiritual, superior component. The physical universe was a world of illusion, shadow, and error. Some Greek thinkers held it to be evil. The goal of mankind was to free itself from the slavery of these physical limitations and ascend to spiritual realms where the gods lived. Why would God resurrect anyone back into this world of illusion and evil? The concept of resurrection made no sense to them.

But this is where the full biblical revelation becomes important and was precisely the point Paul was attempting to make, and I believe, would have made if his audience had given him more time. The physical world is not intrinsically evil, an illusion, or inferior to the spiritual world. The God who made one also made the other, and He made them both good. Just because something is physical does not mean it is evil, inferior, or less of a reality than something in the spiritual world.

The world around us is a blessing from God and though mysterious, fallen, and sometimes unpredictable because of the Fall, it is still God's good creation, loved by Him, and is the focus of His rescue operation.

God's will is to restore all He has made, our bodies and all of creation. And this is our first reason why God raised Jesus from the dead. It was a reaffirmation of creation which includes our bodies and God's raising Jesus is His way of saying that He is going to redeem all of creation one day.

There's so much more to share about this, but we will stop here today. Please join us for our next resurrection vision message.