

Richmond Hill Baptist Church

April 4, 2010

Raised (1C15): Part 4 - What Difference Does it Make Anyway?

Questions & Answers about Death and the Afterlife

Prelude

Call to Worship: *Were You There? Low In the Grave*

Baptism: Fisayo (POF July 2006) & Damisi Latilo (POF July 2009), Nicolas (POF 99)

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Pray & Welcome: Good morning and welcome to Richmond Hill Baptist Church on this Easter Sunday morning. If you are a guest please take a Connect Card and fill it out and drop it in the offering plate when it comes by. Let's take a moment and greet one another!

Sing: *Majestic, Hallelujah, Great is Your Glory, Amazing Grace (my chains are gone)*

Children's Corner: (Alyssa Baker)

Offering: Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, Prayer Guide, The Reid's in Citadel

Offertory: *Let us Kneel at Calvary*

DVD: *Why We Celebrate Easter*

Sermon: Today we are concluding a four part series entitled:

Raised (1C15): Questions & Answers about Death and the Afterlife

Part 1 - What Do You Believe?

Nothing or Something (reincarnation, spirit world, bodily resurrection)!

Part 2 - What Happens When You Die?

Spiritual Death, Physical Death, & Eternal Death

Most people feel it's morbid to think about death, but actually it's unhealthy to live in denial of death and not consider what is inevitable. The Bible says, "It's better to go to a funeral than to attend a feast; funerals remind us that we all must die."

(Ecclesiastes 7:2 CEV) Only a fool would go through life unprepared for what we all know will eventually happen.

Part 3 - What Does a Resurrected Body Look Like?

Continuity, Specially Suited New Environment, Glorious, Spiritual, Powerful, Imperishable, like Christ

Part 4 - What Difference Does it Make Anyway?

1C15: 1 Corinthians 15 – This particular chapter gives us more information about death and the afterlife than any other. The word “Raised” is used 15 times in this passage in reference to Christ and those who are dead in Christ.

Two Significant Questions that every person must answer for themselves:

1. Was Christ raised from the dead?
2. Can we be raised from the dead?

Before you answer this question consider this statement by Doug Powell:

Jesus’ reality—His Historicity—is the foundation for Christianity. Without it, there is no Christianity. Paul was so sure of this foundation that he went so far as to point out the most vulnerable claim of the Christian faith:

1 Corinthians 15:14-19: And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. (raised: 7x’s)

If Jesus did not live, do, and say the things claimed by the apostles, then Christianity is false. If there is a better explanation for the resurrection, then Christians are simply wasting their time. By pointing out this vulnerability, Paul was really pointing out the strength of Christianity. So convinced was he of the historicity and verifiability of the resurrection, the event that confirmed the claims of Jesus, that he pointed out how to prove it false—almost as a challenge. The Christian claims can be investigated and tested. This challenge has no other parallel in other religions. No other sacred text shows how to destroy its own claims.

Let me give just one example:

The church fathers showed they understood the importance of Jesus’ historicity when they crafted the Nicene Creed of the church. The creed says, “For our sake he was crucified under **Pontius Pilate**; he suffered death and was buried.” Why mention Pontius Pilate? What doctrine is based on him? The answer is none; there is no doctrine based on Pilate. He is mentioned to remind us that these were real events happening to a real person at a particular point in history.

Many critics of the New Testament understood this and used it as a point of attack saying that Pontius Pilate never even existed, that there was no evidence of Pilate outside the New Testament. That changed in 1961 because of an archaeological find

at Caesarea Maritima. A team of Italian archaeologists were excavating a theatre there and found a stone with an inscription that gave the names of Tiberius and Pontius Pilate, as well as the title of the Prefect of Judea (Latin).

Show pictures:

1. Aqueduct
2. Castle
3. Theatre
4. Pilate Stone

As a result of this find; the historicity of Pontius Pilate is no longer questioned.

The name Pontius Pilate is mentioned 62 times in the New Testament:

Luke 3:1-2: In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.

Luke was a first rate historian.

I believe Doug Powell is right: If Jesus did not live, do, and say the things claimed by the apostles, then Christianity is false. If there is a better explanation for the resurrection, then Christians are simply wasting their time. By pointing out this vulnerability, Paul was really pointing out the strength of Christianity.

We see this strength in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

(Defense: Discredit the testimony of a Witness)

If the resurrection did not happen, then we can conclude that:

1. Jesus (Christ) was a fraud. (He was God's Son or he wasn't!)
2. the whole (crucifixion, burial, resurrection) event was fabricated. (swoon, almost dead, disciples stole his body, Jews made up a story, Matthew 28:12)
3. the Scriptures are false. (Historicity, Accuracy, Volume)
4. the testimony of the Disciples and the other 500 witnesses was forged.
5. Saul/Paul was a misguided fanatic. (Persecutor)

6. we are false witnesses and our faith is futile.
7. we have no hope or possibility of a resurrection in the future.

Picture: incomplete baptism, stay in the water, any volunteers?

If the resurrection did happen, then we can conclude that:

1. Jesus (Christ) is the Messiah.
2. the death, burial, & resurrection was a real historical event.
3. the Scriptures are true.
4. the testimony of the Disciples and the other 500 witnesses was accurate.
5. Saul/Paul was truly converted.
6. We are truthful witnesses and our faith is genuine.
7. we can participate in the resurrection of the dead and have the hope of glory.

Chuck Colson: ex-marine, lawyer, special assistant to president Nixon, Watergate Scandal, Came to Christ, Prison , Founded of Prison Fellowship.
How Now Shall We Live

Josh McDowell: Lawyer who set out to write a book that would prove that Christianity is a sham and he ended up writing book defense of the Christian Faith.
Evidence that Demands a Verdict

Lee Strobel: Yale Law School graduate and legal editor for the Chicago Tribune, his wife became a Christian and he mocked her and she challenged him to prove it wrong.
The Case for Christ, The Case for Christmas, The Case for Easter

Blaise Pascal, one of the acknowledged masters of calculus in the 16th century, was asked why he believed in eternal salvation or eternal life. His remarks were as follows: “Let’s assume that I am wrong and there is no life hereafter—then I have lost nothing. On the other hand, let’s assume that I am right and there is life hereafter, then I have gained everything.”

Four More Questions:

1. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God’s Son?
2. Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sin?
3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead?
4. Have you placed your faith & trust in Jesus Christ asking Him to forgive you of your sin? This is your opportunity!

What Difference Does it Make Anyway?

It makes all the difference in the world:

John 3:16-17: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send

his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

1 Corinthians 15:54-58: When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Response: *Hallelujah What a Saviour*

Next Sunday: Summer 2010

Postlude: *Forever*