

Is it essential to believe in the physical resurrection?

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Date: 05 April 2015

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[0 : 00] Oh, this is... City College hits breaking point. £60 million revamp. Right. Easter lost among piles of chocolate and fluffy little bunnies.

! This is the survey of different ministers.! Okay, here we go. So, let's... I don't know whether it's charitable to assume that they've been quoted correctly.

So, Father David Clues, St. Bartholomew Ann Street, is asked two questions. Has the meaning of Easter been lost? Secondly, we ask, do you believe in the literal truth of the resurrection?

And can someone be a Christian if they don't? So, David Clues, from St. Bartholomew's, says, The resurrection is life, but not as we know it.

The resurrection is not about more of the same for longer. Our society seeks to deny, control, or cheat death, and so affords it an even more fearful power.

[1 : 03] The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates the power of God to overcome cruelty, oppression, hatred, and death itself, so that it no longer has the last word. The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that God, who orders all things for good, has the power and love to transform lives from mere survival to liberated, enriched, fulfilled existence with God-given dignity.

This is the literal truth of the resurrection. Why would you bother to be a Christian if you did not believe it? Did he actually say that Jesus was raised from the dead?

No, I don't think he did. The rest of it was good. But I think there was an omission there. We need to be very charitable, because when the Argus rings you up and asks you for something, they don't always put down exactly what you say, and they sometimes cut it down.

This is Father Felix something or other, Good Shepherd Church, can't actually read his name. So his answer.

One has to be careful here. I remember a professor of mine saying, I can judge your knowledge more by your questions than by your answers. However, I would begin saying that the resurrection of Jesus is a supernatural or extra-mundane experience, and therefore difficult to put in adequate words.

[2 : 26] Although the resurrection is described in words in the Bible, I think it is an experience that each Christian can have, or might not have, and always differently from others. At times someone is unable to have that experience.

I think someone can be a Christian, even if they don't believe. Christianity does not exclude anybody, and is for all who believe, even if they do so in a different way.

I don't think he hit the nail on the head there. So here's somebody. Here's somebody.

Here's somebody. Answer two. I do believe in the literal truth of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and I don't see how someone can be a Christian or would want to follow Jesus as Lord and Saviour if they didn't.

Why follow a dead man? Anybody like to guess who said that one? It was Carl Chambers, yes. So good on you, Carl.

[3 : 31] Carl Chambers is the minister of the Christ Church, Christ Church Brighton, which is where Corinne was...

Yeah, what about this one? I won't tell you who this one is. I do believe in the resurrection, but whether it's a necessary requirement for being a Christian depends on how you define it.

The Church defines it as being able to assent to the creeds, which include the resurrection, but I think many people's definition of a Christian would go beyond the creeds these days.

I'm not impressed with that one. Shall I say that again? I do believe in the resurrection, but whether it's a necessary requirement for being a Christian depends on how you define that.

The Church defines it as being able to assent to the creeds, which include the resurrection, but I think many people's definition of a Christian would go beyond the creeds these days.

[4 : 33] So I thought the creeds were what you had to believe. And he's saying many people's definition of a Christian goes beyond what you have to believe, and you can presumably, you either don't believe that or you believe something different, so you don't believe the creeds, and that you can still be a Christian.

I'm not happy with that one. I'm not happy with that. Here's one. Here's one. Where's it gone? It's on the next page. Here's one. Oh, this is this one.

I believe the resurrection isn't just something to do with the mind or a feeling in the heart. It is a material faith, which is about matter, flesh, the body, the new life, the creation. I believe it's important that the resurrection happened in history at a particular time, at a particular time to a particular person.

It was a concrete thing. The promise of the resurrection is not just an airy-fairy thing or an intellectual thing. It's about trusting in the reality of God. To be a Christian, you have to believe in the truth of the resurrection.

[5 : 46] It's at the heart of Christianity. Without the resurrection, death, and suffering of Jesus Christ, the Christian faith is nothing. I think I like that.

That was a gentleman from All Saints Parish Church in Hove. I think, good on you. Now then, where's the one I wanted?

Right. Do you think it's necessary to... Do you believe in the literal truth of the resurrection? And do other people...

Is it essential to being a Christian? Answer. Yes, I do. And I think it's pretty essential. The tomb was empty. Jesus is alive today. If being a Christian is about friendship with Jesus Christ, it's to do with a friendship with a living person rather than a dead hero.

Okay, that was said by Mark Lloyd, who's our speaker for the weekend away. So I hope you like that one. Yeah, so it's interesting, isn't it?

[6 : 47] It's interesting. I thought the most difficult to pin down one was the one about the creeds.

You know, you don't have to believe the creeds. I think that it's always difficult. You don't want to be unfair to people.

I think many people's definition of a Christian would go beyond the creeds these days. Yeah, but are they right to do that? Is that what the Bible says? Okay, well, those are what some people said. And let's see what the Bible says. Is it essential to believe in the bodily, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day?

So that's what we're going to look at. And first of all, I'd like to clarify exactly what we're talking about. Oh, it all came off at once, didn't it?

[7 : 51] Never mind, it's all come off at once. So this is the statement that we're considering. Let's look at 1 Corinthians 15, which Lindsay read to us this morning.

1 Corinthians 15. Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, and on which you have taken your stand.

by this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you, otherwise you have believed in vain.

So he's saying this is sort of a body of truth, a set of things that you are to believe. And it isn't really optional whether you believe them or not. So this is the basic core of things.

And you need to hold firmly to this if you want to be saved. There's this saving truth, which you believe with a faith, which is capable of saving you.

[9 : 13] It says, otherwise you have believed in vain. And what did he say? For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance. So here we go. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

So you have to hang on to that. Otherwise your faith is not going to cut the mustard.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and he was seen by people.

So he boils it right down. I don't think you could boil it down any further. In fact, what he says invites being unpacked. But he says, it is of first importance, you must believe this, that Christ died for our

sins according to the scriptures, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. So that's what he's saying is essential. So let me just differentiate it. It's not saying that Jesus lives on in our hearts.

[10:23] That, as I shall say in a minute, there is an indwelling of Christ, but that's not the bit that he's referring to here.

He's saying that Christ was raised whatever condition my heart is in, Christ was raised anyway. So put it another way, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was an experience that Jesus had, whether I have it or not.

So it is not just that Jesus lives on in our hearts, and we're not saying that Jesus is at peace after death, and it's assumed that everybody else is, which is a rather dangerous assumption.

And it's not saying that Jesus lives on in that sense, you know, like Robin Hood, or, I don't know, Spirit of Winston Churchill, or something like that.

It's also not saying that Jesus received a healing like Lazarus did. So Lazarus, you remember, Jesus raised him from the dead.

[11:32] But he raised him from the dead in the sense that, we presume, he died again later. So his death was postponed, it was reversed, and then postponed, but he didn't, so we understand, he didn't actually conquer death in the sense that he was now in a realm where sin was no longer an issue and death was no longer an issue.

It's just that he was temporarily reversed, and this is not the experience that Jesus had. That's not what we're saying happened to Jesus. But we are saying that the same Jesus who died bearing sin was raised physically from the dead on the third day, a particular time, you know, a particular point in history, and that this death was a death that conquered death.

So Jesus did not just re-enter the same world that we live in with a body that's under the same restrictions as ours, but he entered the realm of sinlessness where he dealt with sin and the realm of deathlessness, which is really the realm of the world to come.

And Jesus entered that. Do you get the point? It's quite a radical, powerful, pioneering action of Jesus.

And we add to that that what happened to him is linked up in a mysterious way with believers.

[13:20] And that's the sort of second part of this statement. Jesus did something, but he did it for us. He did it with us in mind, and he did it with us receiving a beneficial, actually, a radically beneficial effect from it.

And as we're going to see from the texts, the effect of that is that believers are caught up into the wake of what he achieved with the effect that as of now, we are raised with him in a spiritual sense and one day we'll be raised with him in a physical sense.

So that's what I, do you get the idea of what I'm trying to say? So I've got much more opportunity to say what I mean than the poor guys who got run up by the Argus.

And I don't think I could have spelt that out in a couple of paragraphs like these guys had to do. But that's what I want to talk about. So, a couple of objections.

So you say, well, he does live within my heart. You know, are you trying to take that away from me?

And I'm saying, no, no, I'm not trying to take that away from you. But what I am definitely saying is that the experience that believers have of Christ is a product of his resurrection and ascension in the sense I've just been explaining it.

[15:00] And it is not less than that. It is not less than that. It's a question of the right holding together our experience and the objectivity of what happened to Jesus Christ.

Christ. And what I'm trying to persuade us of is that our internal experience rests upon the objective work of Christ. And if we're looking for the sort of strong ground to stand on, that although we can stand on the ground of my experience, the strongest ground is to stand on the ground of what happened to Jesus Christ.

Christ. And I simply say that because our experience comes and goes, and goes up and down, and some people are wired up to be very, very experiential people, and other people are not wired up that way.

But Christ is the same for everybody, and what he achieved is the thing. So he does live within my heart. Well, yes, he does, but this is a product, what we experience is a product of what he achieved.

Objection two, so a gentleman this morning asked me about this. I thought he was raised with a spiritual body. Let's look at 1 Corinthians 15, 44.

[16:26] So without trying to do the whole of 1 Corinthians 15, it was read to us this morning, and Paul is making a strong distinction between our bodies as they are now and as they will be.

It's because Christ has a resurrection body, we will have a resurrection body too. And he says in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 47, this continuity but this difference will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown, like a seed going into the ground, is perishable, it is raised imperishable, it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory, it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

So he's making these differences between our human condition now, which is perishability, dishonor, weakness, happiness, and the human condition as it will be, which is imperishability, glory, power.

And he said, keeping on that same idea, he says what we have is a natural body, and what we will have is a spiritual body.

[17:52] So I looked it up, there is what I've written up there in small writing, don't have to worry too much about it, but what it says is there is a body natural, a psychicon body, a soulish body, there is also a pneumaticon and a spiritual body.

So he's summarising the things he's already said, perishable, dishonor, weak, that's the psychicon, that's the sort of body that we have now.

And the body that will be imperishable, glorious and powerful is the pneumaticon, the spiritual body. So what I'm trying to say is it's a body.

He doesn't say now we have bodies, in the future we won't have bodies. He's saying now we have bodies and they're of a certain sort and in the future we will have bodies but they'll be described differently.

body. And one of the words he uses, it will be a spiritual body. And I'm simply trying to say it is a body.

[19:08] He's not talking about being disembodied. He doesn't mean floating around like a cloud and like a wisp and like mist and oneness and all that sort of stuff.

He's saying a person with a glorious body like Christ's. And if it helps, think of a spiritual body, think of a steamship.

Think of a steamship. Now a steamship is not made of steam. A steamship is not made of steam, is it?

It's called a steamship. A steamship would be made of wood and iron and all sorts of solid stuff. It's called a steamship because that's what powers it. And that's why it's called a spiritual body.

Because our bodies here, if you like, are powered by the natural things in this world. You know, digestion, pilates, circuit training, memorizing, memorizing your times tables, those are the things that drive the body, the life now.

[20:29] In the world to come, in some way which I don't think we can pin down, the body will be energized by the power of the spirit, spirit, a spirit body.

So, is it essential to believe in the resurrection? Let's put two texts together. Romans 10 verse 9. Romans 10 verse 9 and verse 10.

Let's say Romans 10 verse 9 and verse 10. Romans 10 verse 9 and verse 10. Ben, do you think you could kindly read that out to us in a loud voice?

Thank you very much.

[21:39] So Paul's picking up some quotes from the Old Testament in that particular arrangement of thoughts, but it is fairly clear, isn't it, that we, confess with the mouth Jesus is Lord, and we believe in the heart God raised him from the dead.

And he says, that's another way of boiling it down to its absolute basics, the Lordship of Christ, the resurrection of Christ. Well, he's fairly clear that that is, that's what Christian faith is, isn't it?

I mean, you can put Christian faith in different ways, you can look at it from different angles, but here's one angle of it, we're to believe that Christ raised him from the dead. I think that's reasonably clear, actually.

It would have been great if the Argus had allowed anybody to quote that. 1 Corinthians 15, which is going back to where we were before, what is the gospel on which we take our stand?

The gospel on which we take our stand is that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

[23 : 06] Paul says we've got to believe that. Let me just backtrack a little moment. In quoting these things from the Argus, I'm not trying to score cheap points of people who are probably very, very nice people.

I know some of those people and they're nice people. But what we tell is the Christian message is a different thing to is somebody a nice person.

So people who are in a teaching capacity, who are representing Jesus Christ as to his message, have a responsibility.

And it is a responsibility that if somebody comes and says what's the Christian message, that they tell them what the Christian message is. So I'm not trying to say these people aren't nice people, and I'm not trying to say that they probably don't do lots of helpful things, that are probably far more than any of us to, quite possibly, quite possibly.

And I'm also not necessarily saying I don't think that they have Christian faith in their own hearts, but what I am saying is there is a communication of the gospel, and there is a responsibility to communicate that clearly, and that's what the job of Christian leaders is.

[24 : 38] So I think one can say what sort of message is being proclaimed, and assess that. So I'm trying to assess the communication, not trying to make aspersions on the people as such.

But Paul is pretty clear about this. You do need to believe this, and people need to be told they need to believe it. So, now what about the Corinthians?

This is quite interesting, because Paul knows that some of the Corinthians are wobbling on this matter. So in verse 12, if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection from the dead?

So clearly the Corinthians were wobbling on this. So I don't think he's saying they've stopped being Christians, but he is saying you can't possibly say this and believe this, can you?

Verse 29, if there is no resurrection, then, etc, etc, he works it out. And verse 35, some may ask how are the dead raised, with what kind of body will they come, you fool.

[25 : 52] This is literally what he says to them. So, I don't know what you think about this, but it looks to me as though in the Corinthian church there were some people who if you'd said to them at that particular moment, are you believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

They would have said, well, I'm a Christian, but I don't really, I'm not sure, I do believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, it probably wasn't as neat a church as we would like it to be, but Paul is very definite with them, you can't stay like that.

Okay, maybe you've wobbled, maybe you've lost your way, but you really can't stay in that condition, because you don't hold on to this, by this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached.

If you don't, if you're going to wobble and go off in a different direction, then you've left Christian faith, and you've left the benefits of Christian faith. That's, it seems to me that's what he's saying. Does that make sense? Anybody want to come back to me on that? Well, I think it's this section, they're querying the issue of the resurrection of the dead, and he's saying to them, you haven't got the implications, right?

[27 : 16] Yep. So I'm not sure they're actually denying the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but they haven't run through to a conclusion, so that's making the resurrection of Jesus a very important weight.

Yep. Thank you. Yeah, that's right. What is it? Because they're saying there's no such thing as a resurrection for people, and he's leading them back, therefore that means Christ wasn't raised, and are they really going to say that?

Because that cuts the ground from everything, so that's very helpful. Yeah, thank you, that's right, that's right. Okay, saving faith cannot be less than faith in the resurrected Christ.

So I'm just, that's the ground to be on. It's very, you know, when you get saying, well, people define Christians differently, and all of that, that's very murky territory, which I think we should steer well clear of.

So let's, so the key points of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ into this area of sinlessness and deathlessness, the reality of his involvement of us with that act.

[28 : 33] And let's look at some texts that make this linkage. So let's look at Romans 6. verse 1.

So, he's making a linkage between the resurrection of Jesus and us.

And he makes it in a number of ways. Romans 6, verse 1. What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase? By no means. We who died to sin, how can we live in it any longer?

Well, don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. We know that the old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

[29 : 53] If we died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again. Death no longer has mastery over him.

The death he died, he died to sin once for all. The life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ.

Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

We'll stop there. So, there's lots of connections and I don't think we can pick them all out in depth but he is definitely saying that the Christian life now and in the future is linked with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, if you look verse 4, we were buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

[31 : 15] If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. It seems to me that he's taking the resurrection, the fact of the resurrection and linking it in two ways, that a Christian is living a new life, verse 4, and in the future will be raised with Christ in the resurrection.

Do you agree with that? We, as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life, I think that's now.

if we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. I think that's future. Verse 8, if we died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him.

Not sure which that is. And then he goes on to the ethics of it, and he says, because of this linkage of our lives with the resurrected Christ, the ethics that should govern our lives are the ethics which fit with the resurrection life of Christ, rather than the cultural biological pressures that we're under now.

So he says in verse 11, in the same way count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies.

[32 : 48] He says you have to think this through, that you're linked with Christ. Christ is living the resurrection life of heaven, and that's the life that you're linked up with, so you should live the ethics of the world to come.

Let's look at Ephesians 1, verse 19. So he's praying for the Ephesian Christians, and he says, I want you to know, verse 19, his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and seated him at his right hand. So what, he's referring to the resurrection power of Christ, that Christ was raised from the dead, and seated at the right hand of God, and he's saying that that power, in some real but mysterious way, that incomparably great power, is for us who believe, verse 19.

So that power is for us in some sense. Ephesians 2, verse 4, because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions.

So, Christ was made alive, and he included us in that. Verse 5, he co-raised us, he made us alive with Christ, he co-made us alive, when we were dead in transgressions, it's by grace you've been so, and God raised us up with Christ, and seated us with him in heavenly realms.

[35 : 00] So we are co-raised with Christ now, in some sense. not that the full thing has happened to us because we're not yet raised physically, but there's some sense in which our lives now are linked with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3, verses 10 and 11. Philippians 3, verse 10, NIV puts I want in front of it, but I don't think the I want is in the Greek.

Has anybody got a different translation? Have you got an ESV or anything? AV? Nothing? Sorry, read it as it stands from the New International Version.

Philippians 3, verse 10. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

And so, I think you could translate somehow in every possible way to attain to the resurrection from the dead. You've got that same idea that I'm looking forward to the resurrection of the dead, but right now, the thing is to know the resurrection power of Christ in my life now.

[36 : 32] So, I've just sort of touched on those verses without really going into them very deeply, but here's something to ponder, that this means that the transforming power of Christ can do heavy lifting, and that the Christian life has real power at work in it.

In other words, the power of the Christian life isn't just your willpower, your ability to press on, or your ability to get up early in the morning to read your Bible, something like that.

It's not a human, the human energy is not the fundamental thing. The fundamental thing is the resurrection power of Christ.

Christ. So I think that opens the door to real changes in life. So people's lives can be controlled by very powerful things.

Let me just sort of mention alcohol substances can really get a grip of people's lives. Now, let's be honest, you can escape those things, alcohol problems, substance abuse.

[38 : 09] Human power can do a lot for that, certainly true. But if that's true, how much more true is it that the resurrection power of Jesus can transform people?

And you might say, well, my life is pretty stuck, I can't see myself, you know, God would have a lot of work to do to change me. And the answer is, of course, God is able to do a lot of work to change people.

And the change that God does is, as it were, from the bottom upwards. It's not, it doesn't just change a few things on the surface, but can change the deep motivations, the deep currents of life. The resurrection power of Jesus is at work there. That's a message of great optimism really, isn't it? And a great hope, and really of challenge if somebody's saying, well, I'm not a Christian, and God could never change me, and I'm pretty well, I'm how I am, and that's how it's always going to be. The gospel is saying, well, actually, that's not right. you're selling God short. He's able to do far more than you can ask or imagine.

[39 : 36] Now, God doesn't obliterate our personalities, but he takes us, and he can change us in quite remarkable ways, and that is because of the power of the resurrection.

And just one other thing, and then I'll stop. There was a now aspect, and there is a future aspect, and you probably tire of me saying this over and over again, but the Christian life is a life with a real future in a new creation, that just as Christ was raised physically, that carries the implication that the whole cosmos will be changed, and that Christ will make a new heaven and a new earth, and make everything new, and it's a sure future, and it is not a floating around on clouds future, it is a physical future.

Now what that will look like, I don't know, but we're told, what does it say, eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has entered into the heart of man, the good things God has prepared for those who love him, but these are now revealed to us in the gospel, so we have an enormously wonderful future hope, and as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, that makes service now worthwhile, because of this, 1 Corinthians 15, right at the end, therefore my dear brothers, stand firm, let nothing move you, always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain, work now is worth it.

I had a couple of other points which I put in very small, which I'm not going to develop, and we've finished. finished.