

The Resurrection of the Dead

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Inevitably, from the time of conception, the specter of death looms over life. It stands, drawn in dread array, against the lives we have been given by God, waiting for the moment when it might strike and do us harm. We are robbed when life is stolen from us and we can do nothing about it. Death is an enemy that we cannot defeat. It seems absurd, based upon our experiences with death, to hear someone say that one day death will be no more. It is ludicrous to think that in the future all mankind, everyone who has ever lived, will be raised from the dead. While everyone has experience with death, no one alive today has ever seen a resurrection. When the whole of humanity has never seen something take place, we tend to be a little skeptical about its possibility.

This skepticism is not new; people have always been wary of things they haven't experienced, even people who believe the Scriptures. For example, when Paul is defending himself before King Agrippa II in Acts 26.27, he would declare, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." Yet, to the very same person, Paul would say in Acts 26.8, "Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?"

That is a very good question. Why would someone who believes that God can part the Red Sea and turn a group of slaves into a powerful nation doubt that God has the power to do anything? Why would someone who believed the writings of Ezekiel, where an entire valley of bones is raised and given new flesh (cf. Ezekiel 37.1-14) refuse to believe that God could resurrect someone? Yet, the people that Paul addressed thought, for whatever reason, that it was not possible for God to raise someone from the dead.

Maybe they thought that bringing someone back from the dead was too hard for God. It's one thing to move water around, but death is something that just can't be conquered. It's one thing to light the night sky with a pillar of fire, but it's an entirely different thing to put the life spark back into a dead body. Maybe they viewed the other stories from the Bible as impractical tales from long ago with little more than moral value, but death was real and personal. I'm not sure what they believed, but they didn't think that God could make someone alive again. This silly idea, however, that God can raise someone from the dead, is the very cornerstone of the hope given by the gospel of Jesus Christ. The very thing that is so impossible for us to overcome, death, God was able to overcome through the resurrection of his son from the dead. When Jesus walked out of his tomb, he triumphed over death. Because he has been raised, there is a reason to believe that God can make us alive again after we have died.

Skeptically approaching the situation again, what if this was a onetime occurrence? What if Jesus got to come back only because he was God's son? Sure, Christ arose, but what guarantee does that give anyone else? Well, Christ wasn't the only person to come back.

Elijah raised a widow's son in 1 Kings 17.21-24; Elisha raised woman's son in 2 Kings 4.32-35, and when a dead man came into contact with Elisha's bones, his life was restored to him, too (2 Kings 13.20-21). The Old Testament teaches that God can raise people from the dead!

In the New Testament, Jesus raised Lazarus (John 11.43-44), a widow's son (Luke 17.12-17) and the daughter of Jairus, a leader among the Jews (Mark 5.39-40). When Christ was raised from the dead, there were perhaps hundreds of people raised from the dead along with him (Matthew 27.51-53)! Peter raised a woman named Tabitha, and Paul raised a young man called Eutychus — even after he fell asleep during Paul's teaching!

God has given enough evidence to prove that he has the power over life and death. Now it is up to us to believe him when he says that one day in the future we will all be raised from the dead. He will not only raise us up, like he has done many times in the past, but he will also give us new bodies, immortal bodies, that can live with him everlastingly in heaven. Oh, what a day that will be!