

STEPS *AFTER* THE CROSS

1 Corinthians 15

INTRODUCTION: Since early March we have tried to follow Jesus' steps to the cross, seeking to learn from Him how to better order our own steps to be faithful disciples who carry our cross out of love and devotion to our Savior and Lord. Last week, we talked about His steps that culminated in Jesus being nailed to the cross and paying the penalty for our sin by the shedding of His blood.

On this beautiful Easter morning, we are going to consider Jesus' steps after the cross.

The temptation is to jump from Friday afternoon when Jesus died to early Sunday morning when He rose from the dead. But that would be a mistake. Because **after Jesus declared, "It is finished," meaning the price for sin had been fully paid,**

John 19:30 NKJV ... Jesus ... said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

the Scriptures say that He gave up His spirit. In fact the definition of physical death according to the Bible is that moment when the soul and spirit leave the body.

- So when the soldier pierced His side, it was just a dead body that gave up blood and water.
- When Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus came to wrap Jesus in strips of cloth and anoint Him with a hundred pounds of spices and ointment, only the body of our Lord remained.
- When they laid Jesus on the stone ledge in the newly carved tomb, the spirit of Jesus had already departed.

Throughout Saturday, Jesus' body rested in the tomb, but in the Spirit, Peter tells us, Jesus went to the abode of the dead (Sheol) to announce that the penalty for sin was fully paid, just as God had declared would be done through the mouths of the prophets.

1 Peter 3:18-19 NKJV 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,

The saints in Paradise, awaiting the atonement, rejoiced while the imprisoned demons and the unbelievers tormented in hell cried out in agony over their own unbelief and its eternal consequences. Jesus was there with the repentant thief whom Jesus promised, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise."

Now, picture with me that Sunday morning. The first rays of sunlight have not yet arrived at the garden tomb.

- The stone that closed the interior of this cave-like grave sits fixed in its place.

- A line has been stretched tight across the stone and fixed at each end in a mound of clay, and the clay bears the seal of the Roman Empire.
- This sealing of the tomb would not keep someone from opening the grave, but it would keep them from doing it secretly.
- A squad of Roman soldiers stands guard around the stone, their very presence daring anyone to try to steal the body of Jesus.

At some grand moment in those early morning hours,

- **the Spirit of Christ re-entered the mutilated body of our Lord;**
- and by the power of the Almighty God that spoke the universe into being,
- **the body of Jesus was transformed**
 - **from a corruptible body to an incorruptible one,**
 - **from a mortal body to an immortal one,**
 - **from an earthly body to a resurrection body,**
 - **from a humble body to a glorified body.**
- The dark tomb was suddenly illuminated from within with a brilliance greater than the sun.
 - This new resurrection body came through the grave cloths as if they were not there.
 - His new glorified body still bore the trophy marks of the nails in His wrists and feet and the scar of the spear in His side.
- Jesus looked in many ways the same, but in some ways different as well.
- He traveled through the solid rock of the garden tomb as easily as He moved through air.

God sent angels to attend this momentous event.

- Some later saw one;
- others saw two;
- I suspect there were thousands attending.

God sent an earthquake, and an angel rolled away the stone,

- not to let Jesus out, He was already risen; but to let others see in.
- The guards were rendered unconscious,
- for the site of the empty tomb was a scene for believing eyes.

Early that Sunday morning, Jesus Christ arose from the dead.

- Ever since that day, those who are born again through faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior have held Sunday, the first day of the week in special regard.
- Believers began to worship on Sunday, and they called it “The Lord’s Day.”
- And the celebration of the resurrection of our Savior has throughout the history of the church been a high and holy day.

Why is that? Is the resurrection more important, more significant than the other events, than the other miracles in the life of Jesus?

- The answer to that question is “yes!”
- The miracle of **the resurrection stands alone in its** place of **significance** and its depth of meaning **among all of the miracles of the Master.**
- **Perhaps the resurrection is so significant because every person who is ever born will experience resurrection.** Jesus said,

John 5:28–29 NKJV 28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which **all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth— those who have done good, to the **resurrection of life**, and those who have done evil, to **the resurrection of condemnation.****

1 Corinthians 15:22 NKJV For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

I. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS PROVIDES THE EXAMPLE OF THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE.

A. Jesus’ resurrection was a bodily resurrection.

1. Not a resurrection of philosophy, or ideas, or spirit of Jesus.
2. The resurrected Christ was not a ghost or apparition.
3. Jesus had told the Jews, “Destroy this temple (meaning His body) and I will raise it up in three days.”

B. It was the same Jesus who died that was raised.

1. Jesus said to His disciples after the resurrection, “It is I myself.”
2. This is not a new Jesus to replace the one that died. This is the same Jesus who died and was buried.
3. He still had the marks of the crucifixion on His body.

C. His resurrection body was both the same and different.

1. It was the same in that

- a. People recognized Him.
 - b. He ate.
 - c. He walked (on the Road to Emmaus); He did not hover above the ground.
 - d. He talked.
 - e. He remembered.
 - f. He recognized people.
 - g. He continued relationships with people where they left off when He died as with Peter.
2. The resurrection body of Jesus was different in that
- a. They did not always recognize Him immediately (Mary at the tomb and the disciples on the Emmaus Road).
 - b. Jesus entered rooms without using the door.
 - c. He moved from place to place either instantly or very quickly.
 - d. When the resurrected Christ appeared in Heaven, He took on an even more glorified appearance.
 - He shown with brilliant light.
 - His hair was white.
 - His eyes were like a blazing fire and His feet like glowing bronze.
 - His whole appearance caused those who saw Him to be awe struck.

II. THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS WILL BE LIKE CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

1 John 3:2 NKJV Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is.

Philippians 3:20-21 NKJV 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 **who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, ...**

A. This does not mean that in our resurrected bodies we will be equal with Christ.

1. We are made “like” Him but not equal or exactly the same.

2. Christ remains the unique, One and Only, Son of God.
3. By faith, we become sons, but He is The Son.
4. Contrary to the false doctrine of the Mormons, we do not become gods. There is only one God!

B. However, **there must be many points at which our resurrected body will be like the resurrected body of Jesus**. That is a central message of 1 Cor. 15.

1 Corinthians 15:35-38 NKJV 35 But someone will say, “**How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?**” 36 Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. 37 And **what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be**, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other *grain*. 38 But **God gives it a body as He pleases**, and to each seed its own body.

This tells us that our resurrected bodies will be different in some ways from our present bodies,

- just as the tree that grows from a seed does not just look like a giant version of the seed.
- In some respects, it is the same (genetically for instance);
- but there are important differences.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 NKJV 42 So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

Here we learn not to be surprised that resurrection bodies will be different than our present bodies.

- Specifically we are told that our resurrected bodies will be incorruptible (they will not decay),
- they will be glorified,
- they will be powerful,
- and our bodies will be spiritual bodies.
 - This does not mean that we will just be spirits without a body.
 - It says spiritual bodies, so our bodies will have a spiritual dimension to them.

1 Corinthians 15:49 NKJV And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.**

Here is another place that tells us that we will be made like Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:51-55 NKJV 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “*Death is swallowed up in victory.*”

55 “*O Death, where is your sting?*

O Hades, where is your victory?”

Every believer shall be changed, those who die in Christ and those who do not die but are caught up to meet the Lord in the air! Just as Paul wrote in 1 Thess., when Christ returns at the sound of the trumpet the dead in Christ rise first.

- And it is not the old corruptible, decaying bodies that come out of the graves,
- but incorruptible, transformed, resurrection bodies that rise up.

And the same is true for those who are alive in Christ.

- These old mortal bodies become immortal bodies, experiencing the victory over death that Christ has won.
- At the resurrection, death is swallowed up in victory.

III. JESUS ALSO TOLD US OF THE RESURRECTION OF CONDEMNATION.

John 5:28–29 NKJV 28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which **all who are in the graves** will hear His voice 29 and come forth— those who have done good, to the **resurrection of life**, and those who have done evil, to **the resurrection of condemnation**.

Jesus said in John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

God’s Word is exceedingly plain. There is no need for confusion.

If you trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will be saved.

- **You will go to heaven when you die.**
- **You will be given an eternal body at the rapture.**
- **You will live with the Lord forever.**

If you do not trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you remain lost.

- You will go to hell when you die.
- You will be given an eternal body and brought before God in judgment.
- You will be cast into the lake of fire, and because you are in a resurrected body, it will not die in the flames – forever.

CONCLUSION: In his fascinating book called Heaven, Randy Alcorn likens the resurrection to an upgrade of computer software. When you install an upgrade, it is not a whole new program. It still performs the same functions and much of it works the same way. But there are differences, and they are better. There are also surprises, things the new will do the old never dreamed of. And unlike Windows and other software, there will be no bad surprises!

I look forward to the new, resurrected me. God will, at the resurrection, make me fully what He designed me to be.

- My mind will no longer be tainted by the thinking of the world.
- My heart will no longer be pulled between the flesh and the spirit.
- My love for God will be pure and altogether strong.
- My faithfulness will not fail or falter.

I will be still be Mike, but a far better Mike. You will see. I will be the best Mike Claunch you ever knew.

And the same will be true for all of you who have trusted Christ. **The resurrection of those who are in Christ will be the ultimate upgrade. It will still be you. It will be you as God intended had sin never entered the world. Each of us will be our very, very best.**

We will be able to talk about this day and other days, for we will be us. But we will be better us's. We will be more like our Savior, and we will be able to do things of which we have never even dreamed. And we are going to do it forever.

For now, if you are in Christ, if you have trusted Him, and you belong to Him, rejoice in what you shall become through Him when He resurrects you.

If you are not in Christ, come to Him today. He wants the resurrection of life for you. He went to the cross to purchase it for you. He rose from the dead showing us what we too may have if we trust Him. He offers it to you. You can receive it by faith. Just trust in Him today.