

## G. The Burial of Christ—the Glory of His Final Abasement

“[A]nd that He was buried . . .” (1 Corinthians 15:4)

In the context of Paul’s gospel preaching found in 1 Corinthians 15:4, he mentions Jesus’ burial. This may surprise us, yet for the apostle it is not a redundant nor superfluous fact. It confirms Jesus’ death. It forms an important connection between Christ’s death for our sins and His resurrection for our justification and life.

### Epitomizing Text: Luke 23:50-56.

In His burial several blessed and instructive “monuments” (memorials) are established for us:

*A Monument to Christ’s Real Death for Us.* This gravesite is a *real one*. This burial confirms the real death of the Lord of glory. “*God determined . . . that Christ should be buried, that it might be more fully attested that He suffered real death on our account*” (Calvin). Already His side had been pierced in confirmation of this death (Jn. 19:32-34). Already the centurion had confirmed His death to a questioning Pilate (Mk. 15:44-45). But it is again confirmed by him who took Him down and tended to His body. He has not “swooned” who has been stabbed and wrapped and laid in rock! The real death means a real debt actually paid. His work is done, His body now rests from its labors. This real death is a monument to our real pardon. Your sins have been buried with Him!

*A Monument to Christ’s Word Fulfilled for Us.* This gravesite is a *promised* and promised one. Here is a monument to the fulfillment of the OT types and shadows, for here is a better Isaac, a better Joseph, a better Jonah, and the better Son of David, saying, “**Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay**” (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:24-28). Here is a monument to God’s faithfulness to carry out all His purposes. “**His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death**” (Isa. 53:9). Here is a monument to Christ’s own predictions (Mt. 12:40; cf. Lk. 11:29-30).

*A Monument to Christ’s Deep Love for Us.* This gravesite is a *low one*. Christ’s humiliation did not end at the Cross, but continued to the tomb. Here is a monument to the depth of divine love, how far it will “stoop.” He stoops to assume our humanity. He stoops to obey to the point of death on a Cross. But He stoops even to the grave—to be “*a dead corpse*”—He who made and carries the world, now buried and carried in it!

*A Monument to Christ’s Full Union/Identification with Us.* This gravesite is a *representative one* (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). The Lord Christ came and identified with us in every aspect of our humanity, from the womb to the tomb. The body of the Son of God comes to the final place of all flesh. He knows the “nakedness” of the soul which Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 5. Even of the grave we may say, “*Our Savior has been here.*” Even death for a believer is now “perfumed” by His presence. He has entered into death’s den. He has sweetened it. By His death He has removed its sting. He has “undeathened death.”

*A Monument to Christ’s Glorious Victory for Us.* This gravesite is but a *temporary one*.” The grave could receive Him, but not hold Him (Acts 2:24). He can’t remain there. He didn’t remain there. The gravesite is like Jonah’s fish—it has to spit Him out! He will arise out of the grave without death’s smell on His garments or death’s decay defiling His appearance.

What epitaph shall we write over this tomb? We could sure write, "Son of God, Son of Man." Surely, "King of the Jews, King of Glory" would be correct. So would "Redeemer and Savior." Let each one ascribe glory to Him as they will, but this writer will lay this word at the tomb:

*Here once lay the Friend of sinners,  
Who came to seek and to save that which was lost,  
He is not here, He has risen, just as He said.*

**THE EXALTED GLORY OF CHRIST—“[W]e do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor . . .” (Heb. 2:9)**

DOCTRINE: *“Having endured the cross Jesus Christ has taken His place of sovereignty and honor at the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (McDonald, 131). Primarily the glory of His exaltation consists “in the *exaltation* of His human nature, as subsisting in the divine person, above the whole creation of God in power, dignity, authority, and rule” (Owen, I, 345).

We come now to consider the “exalted heavenly glory” of Christ, that is, the glory of Christ in His exaltation to **“the right hand of the Majesty on high”** (Heb. 1:3). This is the glory which follows his humiliation and suffering, as Peter refers to in 1 Peter 1:11 when he writes of **“the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”** This is an axiomatic article of our faith, as Paul declares in 1 Timothy 3:16, that He was **“[t]aken up in glory.”** This is that glory *which He presently enjoys* in heaven. We may say, in a sense, that this glory also is eclipsed; but its veiling is only on earth. In heaven the ancient doors have been lifted up and the King of glory has come in (Ps. 24:7-10)! Heaven’s “Favorite Son” has returned! The temporary eclipse of His humiliation is now past and over. He now blazes forth in infinite luster and beauty on high! The day shall come when that glory in heaven shall be seen by men on earth (but that is a subject matter I shall reserve for another time). This is the glory about *which the Lord prayed* in John 17:24 when He said, “Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me . . .” This is the glory *which is the glory, the beauty, of heaven. “The bride eyes not her garment . . . Lord is all the glory of Emmanuel’s land.”*

**The Ground of His Exaltation—His Suffering for Sinners.** He completed the work the Father gave Him to do (John 17:4-5). Three texts—one from the Old Testament and two from the New—are sufficient to establish what is the ground of (the basis for) His exaltation in glory.

- Isaiah 53:10-12. Verse 12 is post-battle language indicating a decisive conquest has taken place. The Servant of the Lord is here exalted, and we see Him dividing the spoils of His victory. The text, however, is surrounded on both sides with the ground or basis of the Servant’s exaltation—His work on behalf of sinners. In verse 12, especially, this is seen in four clauses denoting His personal sacrifice, His shame, His substitution, and His supplication, on behalf of sinners.
- Philippians 2:8-9. **“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.”**
- Hebrews 2:8-9. **“But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor . . .”**

It is His suffering and dying work which is the ground of present His heavenly exaltation in glory. It is the fruit and reward for His labors on earth. He takes the highest place because He willingly took the lowest place. His self-forgetting, self-renouncing, self-denying sacrifice of Himself for sinners is the. This reinstatement into His heavenly glory means for us the Father’s complete satisfaction with His sacrifice on our behalf. His glory now is thus the guarantee of our glory hereafter. Yea, the writer to the Hebrews calls Him “a forerunner for us” (Heb. 6:20). His exaltation is the basis for ours. We shall one day rise in His train if we do not disdain to tread the

same path He walked here on earth (1 Peter 5:6).

We will consider this “glory” in its respective “stages”: His resurrection, His ascension, and His enthronement at the right hand on high (sometimes called His “session). With the resurrection the downward “stoop” is reversed.

Here is a glory to *constantly rejoice in and consciously live under*.

## A. The Resurrection of Christ—His Raising to Glory

**“He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”** (1 Cor. 15:4)

**“He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days . . .”** (Acts 1:3)

DOCTRINE: *The bodily raising of our Lord Jesus Christ from the grave to life from the dead, by the almighty power of God is fundamental to our faith, confirmatory of His person and work, victory over our enemies, necessary for our whole salvation, exemplary of our eternal destiny, and glorifying of His name.*

### Epitomizing Text: Luke 24:1-12

1. **The IMPORTANCE of His Raising.** It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of the resurrection to the Christian faith.
  - Being an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ was an essential qualification of an Apostle (Acts 1:21, 22)
  - The main subject of the apostolic preaching was the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:24ff; 3:14-15; 4:1-2; 5:30; 10:39-40; 13:28-30; 17:3; 24:15, 21; 26:23)
  - Belief in the resurrection is essential to Christian salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).
  - It is one of the three or four fundamentals in the Christian gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
  - It is the “anchoring reality” of Christianity. It is a foundation stone of Christianity upon which it rests or falls (1 Cor. 15:17-18; Jn. 11:25; Rom. 1:3-4; 6:4-11; 8:11, 19-23; 1Cor. 3:10-11; 15:3-4; Eph. 2:4-7). *“Paul suspends the truth of Christianity on the reality of the resurrection of Christ”* (Warfield).
  - It is the “distinguishing reality” of Christianity, establishing it as the sole religion of life from above.

**Can the resurrection of Christ be “proven” as an historical fact?** It is a fact that unbelief will not be convinced. One unbeliever declared, “I would not believe Jesus rose, even if I saw it” (cp. Luke 16:31).

**Two strands of “evidence”:** the empty tomb (Matt. 28:6) and the post-crucifixion appearances of Jesus (at least ten, over forty days: Matt. 28-8-10; Jn. 20:10-18; Luke 24:13-35; 1 Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:36-43; Jn. 20:20-28; 21:1-22; Matt. 28:16-20; 1 Cor. 15:6-7).

Other inferential evidence for the historicity of the resurrection: the transformation in the disciples from paralyzing discouragement to faith and certainty and boldness, the later conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and the change of the day of worship to the first day of the week (Reymond).

*“The early church did not manufacture the resurrection . . . the resurrection created the church”* (Sanders).

2. **The NATURE of His Raising, Luke 24:36-53.** To what may we compare this event, the bodily rising of Jesus from the grave? Explosion and implosion. It is the great shock wave of history and it will be the means of the great ingathering at the end, when all who are Christ’s will also be raised up in His likeness. The resurrection blew an irreparable hole in the devil’s flanks, it shattered forever sin’s dominion and smashed death’s final grip.

a. ***It was a reunion of material and immaterial.*** It was a physical rising again, not a mere “spiritual resurrection.” It was a real body: **“behold My hands and My feet.”** It was a body of substance: **“handle Me and see.”** It was a body of **“flesh and bones”** (Luke 24:39). It was a body capable of taking in food: **“He did eat before them”** (Luke 24:42-43). It was a body of different substance than anything known today. It could pass through solid matter unhindered (John 20:26). It was a body carrying the same identity as before: **“It is I Myself”** (Luke 24:39). It appears from the post-resurrection accounts that it could take a different form (Mark 16:12) and was sometimes not readily recognizable (Luke 24:13-32). It was not yet a glorified body. The pre-ascension body of Christ was in a temporary, transitional state (Macleod, 163).

b. ***It was done by the power*** of God the Father (Gal. 1:1; Acts 2:24; 3:15; Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 1:20) and by Christ Himself (Jn. 2:19; 10:17-18).

c. ***His is the first “never-to-die-again” rising*** (Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:20). It was not like that of Lazarus, who would die again.

3. **The BIBLICAL WITNESS to His Raising.**

a. ***Old Testament Witness.***

- Predicted in Old Testament Prophecy. (Ps. 16:10—Acts 2:25-31; 13:35-37) (Ps. 2:7—Acts 13:30-37) (Ps. 110:1—Heb. 11:35).
- Foreshadowed by OT types and allusions. (Genesis 22—Heb. 11:19; Rom. 8:32) (Jonah, Matt. 12:40).
- Possibly inferred from OT eschatology. (Exodus 3:6, cf. Matt. 22:32; Job 14:14; 19:25-26; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:1-2; Hosea 13:14; 6:2(?)) One thing is clear—the righteous will be raised from the dead. (Consequently, this is an argument from the lesser to the greater)

b. ***New Testament Witness.***

- Anticipated by the Lord Christ Himself. **“He has risen, just as He said”** (Matt. 28:6). (Direct claims: Matt. 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19; 26:32; Mark 8:31; 9:9-10, 31-32; 10:34; 14:28; Luke 9:22; 16:31; 18:33, 34; John 2:18-22; 10:18; 11:25. Certified by His enemies: Matt. 27:62-66. Implied by His eschatology: Matt. 25:31ff.; 26:64; John 5:28-29).
- Attested by the NT writers. Mark 16:1-8; Matt. 28; Luke 24; Acts 1:3, 22; 2:24-32; 4:10, 33; 5:31, 32; 10:39-42; 17:3, 31; 26:22, 23; John 20 and 21 (including Revelation); Paul in all His letters (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 4:13, 14; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:13-17); Peter (1 Pt. 1:3).
- Inseparably embodied in the NT theology.
  - Matters of Christian belief (salvation, Rom. 10:9; justification, Rom. 4:25).
  - Matters of Christian morality (worldliness, 1 Cor. 15:32-34; Rom. 6:4).
  - Matters of Christian service (1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 11:35; Lk. 14:13-14).
  - Matters of Christian hope (Acts 23:6; Phil. 3:10-11; 1 Peter 1:3, 21; 3:21-22; 1 Thess. 4:13-14).
  - Matters of Christian experience (Phil. 3:10-11; Eph. 1).

#### 4. **The THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE of His Raising.**

- The Resurrection is the fulfillment of the promise made to the OT fathers (Acts 13:32-37, cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; Gal. 3:16). The promise to bless the world through the descendant of Abraham could not be fulfilled if that descendant was dead.
- The Resurrection established finally the identity of Jesus as the Son of God, thus vindicating the claims He made (Rom. 1:4; Rev. 1:18). Some of the claims He made are found in John 2:19-21; 5:17-18; 10:17-18; 10:30-36; Matt. 26:63, 64. The validity of the Gospel message rests upon His identity. The resurrection confirms who He is.
- The Resurrection validated Christ’s atoning work, thus declaring the believer’s justification (Rom. 4:25). Justification was procured through the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9). The validation of the fact that the price was paid in full at Calvary was the resurrection. The Resurrection is God’s radical approval of Christ’s work on our behalf.
- The Resurrection insures our regeneration (1 Pt. 1:3). The “resurrection life” of Christ is our present life (Phil. 3:10; Rom. 6:4, 11; Eph. 1:19-20).
- The Resurrection guarantees the believer’s future resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23, cf. Lev. 23:10-11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14).
- The Resurrection body of Jesus is the pattern for the future resurrection body of the believer (Phil. 3:20-21; cf. Luke 24:36-43; John 20:26)
- The Resurrection guarantees the final judgment of the world (Acts 17:31).

**A RIGHT REGARD.** If we are to regard this “raising” rightly we must regard it as:

*Fundamental*—to be believed (1 Cor. 15:14-19) and to be proclaimed (Acts 2:32).

***Confirmational***—confirming the Scriptures (Luke 24:46), confirming the Son (Jn. 11:25; 10:17-18; Rom. 1:4), and confirming His work.

***Triumphal***—over death (2 Tim. 1:10; Acts 2:24) and over the devil (Heb. 2:14-15).

***Beneficial***—for our regeneration (1 Peter 1:3), for our justification (1 Cor. 15:17; Rom. 4:25), for our sanctification (Rom. 6:4; Phil. 3:10; Eph. 1:18-20), and for our glorification (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

***Instructional***—His resurrection is the pledge and pattern of ours (1 Cor. 15:20; Phil. 3:21).

***Doxological***—it brings glory to Him (Rom. 14:9; Col. 1:18).

### **Applications of this Glory.**

It provides a reason for an optimistic outlook for the future (1 Pt. 1:3-5; 1 Cor. 15:19; Col. 3:1-4).

It provides great confidence that the believer can live the quality of life and perform the sort of service that God requires of him (Eph. 1:19, 20; Phil. 3:10; 4:13; Rom. 6:4; 7:4).

Since the Resurrection is the guarantee of the believer's resurrection, it provides strong moral restraints (1 Cor. 15:32-34), it provides a motivation for persistent service/steadfastness (1 Cor. 15:58), and it provides a comfort in the hour of bereavement (1 Thess. 4:16-18; Jn. 11:25-26).