



Face the Issue:

This week, we learned that baptism is a public declaration of what Christ has done for us. It is “an outward expression of an inward change. It is letting the world know that you are a follower of Jesus Christ.”

There is no “saving power” in just being baptized. The Bible has many stories of people who were saved without being baptized. If that is so, why was it so important to Christ that He commanded that we should follow Him in baptism? To answer that we have to look at just exactly what the baptism represents: the physical resurrection of our Savior.

Into the Word:

In the early days of the church, there was much debate about the resurrection of the dead. Greek philosophy placed no value on the physical body so they saw no value in resurrecting something of no worth. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrecting of the dead and even tried to trap Jesus in theological debates about the subject. Paul found the need to instruct the church at Corinth and to correct this matter.

(Note: This is the same letter in which he had to set them straight about the Communion.)

Turn in scripture to **1 Corinthians 15**. In this part of his letter, Paul lays out an explanation for why the resurrection is so important.

Read **1 Corinthians 15:12**.

Paul puts it pretty bluntly and asks why they do not believe. He probably already knew the answer. The people were being misled by the oldest misdirection around. They failed to understand that the resurrection was not about them but, was instead, about God.

From the beginning, the human body has been the medium for God’s work. An artist uses paint, but paint isn’t the point of a painting. The point is what the artist does with the paint. Likewise, the creation is about the body, not for its own sake, but for God’s sake, as the expression of God’s creative power and of the human being as an object of God’s love. What God began in Genesis 1 is carried out through the medium of human beings, not apart from their bodies, but in and through their bodies.

How important do you think our bodies are to God?

If our bodies are important to God, don’t you think that they are important in His ultimate plan of salvation?

Read **Corinthians 15:13-14**

Paul writes that the chief argument for resurrection is that Christ himself was resurrected.

God chose for his Son to have an earthly body; that's evidence of the body's importance. God had sent angelic messengers to earth prior to the coming of Jesus, but God did not choose to sacrifice a spiritual being. In the incarnation of Christ, God shows the importance of the body in His creation, and in the resurrection of Christ, God demonstrates the importance of reuniting body and spirit. As Christmas is meaningless without Easter, so the Incarnation is incomplete without the Resurrection.

If our sins were paid for by the suffering and death of Christ, why do you think God resurrected Him from the dead?

Read 1 Corinthians 15: 23-28

Paul calls Jesus the "first fruits." As in the Jewish sacrificial system, the first and best of the harvest was offered to God, and then the rest was given for the grower's use. Jesus, the first and best, was resurrected, and the rest will follow. In these verses, Paul gives the order: Jesus, Jesus' followers who will be resurrected at his coming, and finally the kingdom.

The establishment of Christ's kingdom completes the work God started in Eden: the redemption of all His creation, including humanity, whose sin caused the fall of all creation. Jesus will reign over all His enemies, death will be abolished, and all things will be under Christ's reign. The evidence is that sin and death no longer holds bodies in the grave; they are resurrected.

Application:

When we are baptized, we are publicly saying that we truly believe that Christ died for our sins but that He also rose from the dead. It is a public display that we also believe that one day WE will be raised from the dead.

We are affirming that this is important and has true meaning. It does not save us but says that we believe and proclaim this promise.

The Communion says we remember the death of our Savior. Baptism says we believe in His resurrection and our coming one.

Age and disease take their toll on our bodies. Why would we want them back? Scripture assures us that we will. For when we receive our resurrection bodies, they will be glorious and beautiful and strong and in the image of Jesus. In those bodies we will have an eternal witness to the goodness of God. We will see what God intended for each of us from the beginning. And we will praise him forever for delivering us from what we were to what we ought to be.

What hope does the promise of resurrection have for you?