

Rooted in History



Resurrection (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

My theme this week relates to the single most important event that has ever taken place in human history. It also looks forward to the next major climax due to take place in human history. It can be summed up in one dramatic and powerful word: Resurrection.

But first, let me say thank you to those of you who've been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it's only a brief personal note.

Now back to our theme: Resurrection.

I need to begin by stating that the Gospel of Jesus Christ consists of three simple historical facts. Many people have a very foggy idea of what the Gospel is. They associate it with something that's primarily emotional, something subjective, and much so-called preaching of the Gospel centers on the emotional and the subjective. But this is not accurate. The Gospel is based not on something subjective or emotional, but on simple, vital, historical facts; things that have actually taken place in human history and are attested by many reliable witnesses.

This is what Paul says in the great chapter in 1st Corinthians of which the theme is resurrection. That's 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, and I'm going to read the opening eight verses of that chapter which will provide the foundation for my teaching this week and also next week. So here is what Paul says now about the Gospel in relationship to history:

> "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to

> the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. And after that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as one born out of due time." (NKJ)

You'll see there that Paul states the Gospel which he preached, the Gospel which it is essential to believe for salvation and it centers, first of all, in the person of Christ. Second, it centers in three great historical facts that relate to Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, there is no Gospel. The Gospel is not a set of human opinions, it's not a system of theology, or a philosophy; it is a set of historical facts. It's so important that we grasp this, that it's rooted in history.

What are the three central facts concerning Jesus Christ which make up the Gospel? Here they are. First, He died. Second, He was buried. And third, He rose again the third day. Let me state those facts once more. I want to imprint them on your mind and on your heart in a way that you'll never be able to forget or get away from them because Paul, in writing to the Corinthian Christians, says, "These are the facts by which you're saved unless you believed in vain." I think the suggestion there is that if at any time they should get away from these basic facts into some kind of religious theories, fantasies, or subjective experiences, then they might have believed in vain. And so, I want to take this opportunity to imprint upon you indelibly, by the power of the Holy Spirit, these three key central facts that make up the Gospel. First of all, Christ died. Secondly, He was buried and third, He rose again the third day.

Then, Paul offers two kinds of confirmation of these historical facts. First of all, they are attested by the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament, and second, they're attested by the testimony of many reliable witnesses. It's very important that we see the first confirmation of these facts is not the testimony of human witnesses, although that's very important. But the primary confirmation is the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament because the entire New Testament continually maintains this fact, that the Old Testament prophetic scriptures had to be fulfilled, that not one of them could fail. Jesus said that; His apostles said that and you'll find that all through the New Testament, both in the life of Jesus Himself and in the subsequent activities of His apostles and of the early church, time and time again, one phrase recurs like a refrain, "that it might be fulfilled," which was spoken by the prophets. And so, the primary confirmation of the truth of the resurrection is that it had been predicted very clearly in the Old Testament Scriptures and that in the New Testament, we're confronted not by something new or unpredicted, or unpredictable, but for those who knew the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the resurrection of Christ was predictable. It had been predicted there and Jesus Himself, of course clearly, predicted His own resurrection before it took place because He was familiar with the Scriptures of the Old Testament prophets.

Then the second source of confirmation is the testimony of many reliable witnesses. So we have three facts: Christ died. He was buried. He rose again. And, two sources of confirmation: First the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament, and second, many reliable witnesses.

Now, I want to point out to you in connection with what Paul says about the three facts of the Gospel, three ways in which Christianity, based on these facts, differs from almost every other major religion. The first way is that Christianity is totally centered in a person. That person is Jesus of Nazareth. It's not merely that He was the one that gave forth the truths of the Gospel, but it was in His life and death and resurrection that the entire Gospel's centered. You cannot take away Jesus and have the Gospel. You cannot take away Jesus and have the New Testament. Now, that's not true of other religions. You could take away Mohammed and replace him by somebody else with another name and another age who came out with the same theories because the Mohammedan religion is based on theories. It is not based on historical facts. There are historical facts connected with it but they're not essential to its truth. Whereas in the case of Christianity, these historical facts about Jesus are central to its truth. If they hadn't happened, the Gospel could never have been presented to the human race.

Second, a distinctive fact about Christianity, I have already implied it in what I said, that it's rooted in history. It's not something subjective. It's not something theoretical. It's not floating around as it were in some misty realm of subjective truth or theory or theology or philosophy; it is centered directly in human history. If the events on which it is based are true, then Christianity is true. If they are not true, then Christianity is not true. There's nothing in between. It's a complete commitment to a certain set of historical facts.

And thirdly, Christianity claims that it will be verified in the personal experience of those who believe these three vital facts: Christ's death, His burial, and His resurrection, that believing in Jesus and in these facts about Jesus will produce a tremendous total supernatural transformation in the life of everyone who believes. So again, Christianity is rooted in human experience. It's rooted in the personal history of everyone who believes it and receives it. It is taken out of the

realm of theory. I say this with emphasis because so many people today view Christianity as just one religion among many; one set of theories, one set of moral principles and so on. That's incorrect. Christianity is different from the religions which are theories or moral principles, or whatever you like to call them because it is based directly in human history and in human experience. It stands or falls with the truth of history and of human experience.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. In my talk today we've seen that the primary confirmation of Christ's resurrection is provided by the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament. Tomorrow I'll be sharing with you just how Old Testament prophesy works and that's very important.

Radio Program

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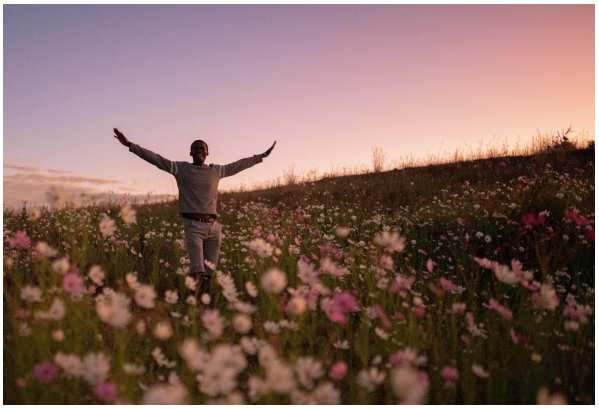

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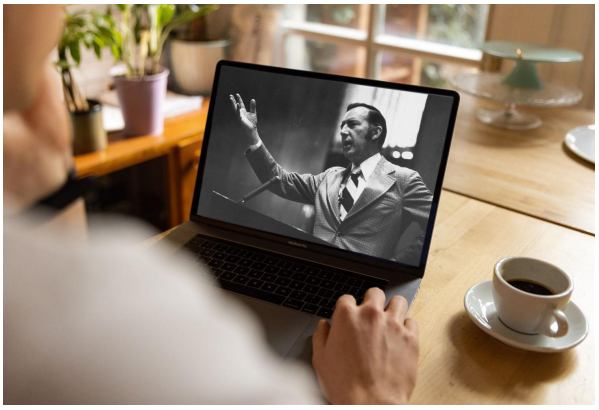

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