

THE STORY

Adult Sunday School Lesson Guide

Chapter 27

The Resurrection

Timeless Truth: He is risen!

Teacher's Background Notes

Paul himself had made the resurrection of Christ and, subsequently, the resurrection of believers of “first importance” in his teaching to the Church in Corinth. Paul had ministered for 18 months in Corinth, probably in 51-52 A.D. If Paul taught about the resurrection of believers in his 18 month pastoral ministry in Corinth and deemed its connection to the gospel of “first importance,” perhaps we too need to place greater import on the doctrine.

The Corinthians did not deny the resurrection of Christ, but there were some who denied the resurrection of believers. Paul made it clear that the bodily resurrection of believers is foundational to the Christian faith because if it is impossible for us then it must also be impossible for Christ. After all, Jesus was and still is completely and fully as human as we are. The Corinthians were likely influenced by the Greek dualism that considered the material body bad and the “spiritual” good. This dualism exists today to some degree in our own thinking.

Nevertheless, the resurrected body is not the same type of body that we currently have. Using the analogy of the seed to a plant, Paul emphasized that the new life comes forth from the dead. The two are organically connected yet very different. That God does the same thing with nature proves that He can and will do the same thing with us. This transformation is necessary to enter the spiritual mode of existence and will happen when Christ returns. It is impossible for us to enter into the kingdom of God in our current condition. Therefore even those who are alive at Christ's return will be miraculously and mysteriously changed. This new body will not be subject to the decay and death that our present condition allows. It will be imperishable, immortal and immediate. Since Christ's return is always imminent, we should live in hopeful anticipation of His appearing.

This doctrine is also vital to a theologically correct view of death. Our culture has a distorted view of death and so do many Christians. While death is “a natural part of life,” it is a natural part of life in a fallen world. Death is bad because it was never a part of God's original creation, and will not be part of God's eternal state. It is a result of the fallen, sinful condition in which we find ourselves. We do more harm than good when we try to comfort the bereaved by convincing them that their loved one's passing is somehow a good thing. Remember chapter one's timeless truth: sin changes everything. Sin brought death, and death is the enemy that Jesus overcame. Death's final destiny is in the lake of fire where it will never touch believers again (Rev. 20:14). His resurrection vindicates Him, justifies us and shows us that life in a body is better than life without one.



THE WHOLE FAMILY | THE WHOLE BIBLE | THE WHOLE YEAR

Sadly, many Christians' only exposure to the idea that *we* will be one day resurrected comes through the recitation of the Nicene or Apostles' Creed or through a serious study of the book of First Corinthians. But the resurrection is a big deal!

There is actually more Scripture devoted to the resurrection or eternal state than there is to the current heaven, but you might not think so given our focus on heaven. Christian bookstores abound with volumes on heaven including the very popular *90 Minutes in Heaven* by Piper and *Heaven* by Alcorn, to name a few. While the current heaven is a wonderful paradise that awaits us, we should long for the infinitely better eternal state in our resurrected body. As we study God's great Upper Story of redemption, it becomes paramount that we teach our brothers and sisters in Christ that His story of redemption will not be complete until the redemption of our bodies is complete (Rom. 8:23).

Lesson Plan: Resurrection: What Does it Mean to Me?

I. Resurrection Past (Old Testament)

- A. Is the resurrection of the dead a New Testament concept alone? Is there any evidence that any of the Old Testament believers considered the literal bodily resurrection of people to be in the future for believers?
- B. Job alludes to such an idea. Job is one of the most ancient books in the Bible. He was likely a contemporary of Abraham. He said, *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"* (Job 19:25-27)
- C. Daniel was told by the angel in his vision about a future hope for Daniel's people. Remember that Daniel was among those nobles taken in the first siege against Jerusalem in 605 B.C. and lived in exile in Babylon for the entire 70 year period. He was very concerned about the condition that Israel found herself in. Was there any hope? The angel assured Daniel, *"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever,"* (Dan. 12:2-3). Here we learn a further detail about the future resurrection—it won't be just believers. "ALL will awake, *some to life*" refers to those who will enjoy the fullness of life in the presence of Christ. Others will spend eternity in a resurrected body in shame and contempt. While Daniel and his people were in humbling circumstances in this life, God assured Daniel that a future life in a literal resurrection of bodies awaited the faithful. This is God's Upper Story plan! While our Lower Story circumstances may be bitter and painful, God's Upper Story points to a future life even beyond the present heaven. Daniel's hope—and ours—is in the resurrection life. Sadly, others will be resurrected only to shame and destruction.
- D. Isaiah prophesied that the Suffering Servant Messiah would both die and then live again. *"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring*



and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand,” (Isa. 53:10).

- E. The religious leaders of Israel at the time of Christ (who only had Old Testament understanding at the time) argued over the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees said there was no resurrection but the Pharisees affirmed it. This confirms that resurrection was not a foreign concept, based on the Old Testament Scriptures. This also reveals that when the Sadducees questioned Jesus about whose wife a woman would be in the resurrection who had been married to seven brothers in this life, they were asking a bogus question. They did not believe in a resurrection. (Matt. 22:24-32). Nevertheless, Jesus confirmed the resurrection of the dead by noting Moses’ burning bush conversation with YHWH who was the God of Abe, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the living and not the God of the dead (Matt. 22:32). When Jesus arrived at the home of distraught Mary and Martha, Martha knew that Lazarus “will rise again in the resurrection on the last day,” (Jn. 11:24). *Lazarus and Jairus’ daughter were not resurrected in the same way that all believers will be resurrected in the future. They died again. Perhaps it is better to say that they were resuscitated then than resurrected. Nevertheless, Jesus point in resuscitating them was to prove He has the power over death and therefore prove the resurrection hope to be true.*
- F. David the Psalmist wrote, “For You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay,” (Ps. 16:10). Peter later referred to this passage in his powerful Pentecost sermon. Although David wrote it, Peter argued that David looked prophetically ahead to Christ’s resurrection (Acts 2:25-32, especially verse 31). Peter reasoned that David’s tomb was still with them and he had indeed undergone decay. Christ, however, had not been left in His tomb.

II. Resurrection Present (Jesus)

- A. In spite of all the warnings that Jesus gave His followers to prepare them for His death and resurrection, they still did not get it. They were surprised by the empty tomb and they were astonished by His appearances.
- B. In John’s vision of Jesus in Revelation, John describes Him as the “firstborn of the dead,” (Rev. 1:5). He describes Jesus as “a Lamb standing, as if slain” (Rev. 5:6). Why do you suppose that Jesus in heaven looks like a Lamb slain? Perhaps because His resurrected human body—which He will spend eternity in—still bears the marks of the cross. What else do we learn about Jesus’ resurrected body from this chapter in *The Story*? *[This is a good place to draw out observations from your students.]*
 1. He eats and drinks.
 2. He can appear and disappear at will, with no need for doors.
 3. He still speaks and communicates with people who do not seem to sense Him as anything other than fully human, like on the road to Emmaus and on the beach.



4. He still has flesh and blood. He made sure the disciples did not think he was a ghost by having them touch His hands and feet (Lu. 24:36-40). His body was not a ghostly spirit. It was fully materially real.
5. He still bears scars.

III. Resurrection Future (Believers)

- A. Nearly every Easter season, magazines, newspapers and various television specials analyze the Christian assertion that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Reporters look for other explanations for the empty tomb. Why? Perhaps it is because resurrection is such an outlandish idea that some other more plausible explanation must account for the empty tomb. More likely, though, is the millennia-old attempt to undermine the deity of Jesus and the authority of Scripture. The resurrection of Christ is, after all, a must-have for the gospel. Without it, the gospel crumbles into just another hyped up tale of a guy who claimed to be a god.
- B. The resurrection is more than the cornerstone of the gospel. It is the inheritance of every believer. Many Christians look toward the present heaven as a future blessing, and indeed it is. When we die, we will be absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). But God has something even better for us—our own resurrection when our disembodied soul will be reunited with our resurrected, imperishable bodies. While heaven is good, the resurrection is better! The Church in Corinth had been planted and nurtured by the great apostles. Peter, Apollos and Paul had all spent time there teaching. But the Corinthians began to question the truthfulness of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12).
 1. **The denial of the resurrection is a denial of the gospel.** Paul reiterated the main points of the gospel to the Corinthians. (1 Cor. 15:3-4)
 - a. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3)
 - b. He was buried (1 Cor. 15:4)
 - c. He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:4). What Scriptures? Probably the ones we looked at earlier—Ps. 16:10, Isa. 53.
 - d. He appeared to so many. Paul’s argument is this: Yes, Jesus appeared to the disciples, but He appeared to more than just them. While a small group of super-loyal followers could conceivably perpetuate a fraud, He appeared to over 500 people at one time and most of them are still living. Paul basically challenged the Corinthian doubters to ask any one of them if they did not believe him. He appeared to James and to Paul, neither of whom were followers of Jesus until He appeared to them.
 2. **Consequences:** If Christ was not resurrected then your faith is worthless and you and I are still dead in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17).
 3. **The resurrection of Christ confirms the resurrection of all the dead** (1 Cor. 15:12-13).



4. **Order of resurrections:**
 - a. Christ the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:20)
 - b. Those who are asleep in Christ (1 Thess. 4:14—16) will come with Him at His return. The disembodied spirits of believers will be reunited with their resurrected, imperishable, immortal bodies (1 Cor. 15:52-53).
 - c. Those alive when Christ comes will be caught up to meet Him in the clouds (1 Thess. 4:17) and their bodies will be changed instantly and immediately into imperishable, immortal bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-52).
 - d. This is known as the first resurrection. “Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years,” (Rev. 20:6). Believers will enjoy eternity not in the present heaven, but in the New Heaven and New Earth in new resurrected bodies. The joy of the New Heaven and New Earth is that there is no longer any death (Rev. 21:4). Why? Because death is a result of sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23) and it is an enemy of Christ (1 Cor. 15:26). Death was in the power of Satan (Heb. 2:14) and enslaved people through fear (Heb. 2:15). But Jesus’ death and resurrection now makes Satan powerless (Heb. 2:14).
 - e. By contrast, the wicked dead, the unbelievers are also raised to life in resurrected bodies, and will be then given a final judgment and second death (Jn. 5:25-29; Rev. 20:11-15, 21:8). Jesus taught this to the wicked Jewish leaders who persecuted Him.
5. **The Corinthians had lots of questions** about our future resurrected bodies. Many believers today have similar questions. Though we do not have too many details, we can put a few Scriptures together to draw conclusions.
 - a. “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, but the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body,” Phil. 3:20-21. Jesus’ resurrected body is our best model for understanding our own future resurrected bodies.
 - b. The resurrected body will be infinitely more glorious and better than our present body, yet organically connected. It is new but not altogether new. Paul compares it to the difference between a seed sown and the plant it becomes (1 Cor. 15:37).
 - c. The body now is perishable, but raised imperishable (1 Cor. 15:42).
 - d. The body now is dishonorable, but raised in glory (1 Cor. 15:43).
 - e. The body now is weak, but it is raised in power (1 Cor. 15:43).
 - f. The body now is natural, but it is raised spiritual (1 Cor. 15:44, 49). This does not mean that it is not material, but like Christ’s who had Thomas touch His scars (Jn. 20:20, 27).



IV. Applications and Implications

- A. He is risen! I worship a risen, living Savior. The leaders of all other major religions are still in their graves.
- B. The great numbers of eyewitnesses strengthen my faith in the validity of the resurrection story.
- C. After writing a whole chapter on the resurrection, Paul concludes that in light of our future resurrection, we should “stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord,” (1 Cor. 15:58).
- D. The future hope of resurrection should deepen our faith and our resolve in the present. It should motivate us to persevere in the work of the Lord.
- E. A better understanding of death and resurrection should help us cope with the grief of passing loved ones, and to prepare for our own death.
- F. A better understanding of death and resurrection should help us minister more effectively and sensitively to others who are experiencing grief (1 Thess. 4:13).
- G. Because sin changes everything, my body is subject to decay and death. All the aches and pains that I experience are the result of living in a fallen world and sin. God’s plan of redemption reverses that.
- H. Although when I am absent from the body I will be present with the Lord, I look forward to the full redemption of my salvation that includes the redemption of my body (Rom. 8:23).
- I. While my outward change is yet future, my inward transformation is in the present. I should purify myself in anticipation of Christ’s return (1 Jn. 3:3).
- J. Paul concisely emphasized the main points of the gospel. I too can make them “of first importance” (1 Cor. 15:3).
- K. Knowing that unbelievers will experience a resurrection that leads to eternal judgment and “second death,” I should be more motivated to share the good news of the gospel.
- L. While I may have “scars” because of choices I have made, Jesus kept His scars as a reminder to me of the choice He made.

Learning Activity: Worship Through the Arts

Materials needed:

- PowerPoint presentation, [Adult_SS_Ch_27_Resurrection_Art.ppt](#)

For most of the history of Christianity, the Scriptures were available to a select few. The printing press later made them more accessible to the common worshiper. But the stories of the Bible were captured by artists and used as teaching tools to worshipers around the world. They adorn cathedral ceilings, chapel alcoves and museum walls. It is interesting to observe how artists envisioned the resurrection of believers. This learning activity allows learners to synthesize what they have learned in the lesson and then apply it by analyzing the correctness of the details in artists’ work. A PowerPoint slide show of Renaissance “resurrection art” is provided.

