

Beforehand:

- Make Photocopies of the Bible Reading Handout.
- Bring copies of an evangelism tract (e.g. 'What is a Christian?', 'Two Ways to Live')
- Pray for the people you are going to be talking too.

1. This week – in a nutshell

Why the resurrection is so important in Christianity.

- The 'resurrection' is the term used for when Jesus rose back from being dead to being alive again.
- The Bible says – that if Jesus was not raised from the dead, then preaching/teaching about Jesus is useless, a Christian's faith in Jesus is futile and there is no forgiveness of sins (1 Cor 15:14, 17).
- The Bible has a lot to say about the importance of the resurrection – and so we will look at quite a lot of passages today. (Give out Bible Reading Handout)

2. What we've looked at so far?

(As with each week, explain that I am following notes – in order to be clear and succinct)

First Week – Introduced the Bible, introduced the Gospels, then introduced Jesus.

- We saw Jesus announce 'the kingdom of God is near'.
- We saw that Jesus taught with authority but also had authority over...
 - Spirits – he rebuked them.
 - Sickness – he healed
 - Sin – he pronounced forgiveness
 - Nature – he controlled (the storm)
 - Death – he raised back to life
 - People – he called them to follow.
- Whatever we think of Jesus – it is too simplistic to consider him just a 'good teacher', a 'moral man' or an 'unfortunate martyr'.

Last week – we looked at why the Cross was so important in Christianity.

- It deals with Sin – that which separates people from God.
- We considered the nature of sin...

- that all people (incl. Christians) are sinners
- there are visible consequences – our fallen world
- there is a real price – death.

- An imperfect person, stained by sin – cannot approach our perfect God.
- So, God did something about it – he gave his perfect son Jesus – who paid the price of sin – he died.

The cross is so important in Christianity because *it was at the cross that Jesus paid what he did not owe, for what we owe, but cannot pay.*

- So there are two types of sinners – those forgiven and unforgiven.
- Those who are forgiven are the ones who...
 - A – Admit our need – we have a problem – sin.
 - B – Believe in Jesus – recognise God's solution.
 - C – Consider – accepting Jesus as King.
- Those who are restored, cleansed and forgiven are not sinless.
- Yet, you are not shamed, have no reason to fear, and are no longer guilty for the consequence of your sin.

(NB: - you asked the person to read Mark 6-10 last week and write down any questions. This may be a good time to check if they have any questions – and answer them)

3. Is the Resurrection Important?

And so, this week we look at what happened after Jesus died on the cross – his resurrection.

- There is a lot of fuss made over the resurrection – and with good reason.
- It is not everyday that someone who is absolutely confirmed dead and buried, then comes back to life again.
- Why is it that Christians defend an event that just seems so unbelievable? Would it really matter if Christians just dropped the idea?
- The answer is that it absolutely matters and the Bible tells us why...

1 Cor 15:1-19 (pg: – on handout – the **bold** sections)

- Here the Apostle Paul (who writes) recognises that the resurrection matters.
- He says that if Jesus didn't rise, then Christians are still in their sins and are to be pitied more than anyone.
- Paul (and the other apostles for that matter) realised that if Christianity was fabricated then it was pretty silly.

4. The Resurrection

The resurrection was an event that was foretold – remember this passage from last week...

Mark 10:32b-34 (pg: – on handout).

- This prediction is either - true or terrible, weird or wonderful – and if it then happened, it would be in the least unsettling.
- Evidence for the Resurrection is in all 4 gospels (c.f. Mt 28:1-15; Lk 24:1-49; Jn 20:1-29).

For example: Mark 16:1-8 (pg: – on handout)

(Note that 16:9-20 are not reliably attested – usually comes up next week in questions.)

- As you read the Bible accounts it mentions numerous people who saw the resurrected Jesus, numerous times, in the forty days before his ascension:

We have already looked at 1 Cor 15 (on the handout) and it lists – Peter and then the twelve disciples (1+11) + more than five hundred brothers/followers (500) + James (1) + all the apostles (already mentioned) + Paul (1) = 514 not including women. In Mark 16 (on the handout) we have Mary, Mary Salome.

- In John's gospel there are several accounts including: John 20:24-31 (pg: – on handout) where we meet Thomas - the sceptic.
- Thomas' reactions are totally realistic – people don't come back from the dead – so show me. But once he sees – he proclaims 'My Lord and My God' (first place in the NT Jesus is called both 'Lord' and 'God'. Note: JW#1 looks at Jesus as 'Lord' & JW#2 looks at Jesus as 'God' – Thomas sees both)
- It is because of seeing the resurrected Jesus that Thomas is moved from disbelief to belief.

(It may be helpful to draw out the distinction between 'doubt' and 'unbelief')

- And as Jesus points out – Thomas believes because he sees, how much more will those who have not seen, yet believe, be blessed.

5. Three Resurrection Outcomes

The resurrection...

a. Vindicates Christ's Word.

- Jesus is given the stamp of God's approval – it declared Jesus to be the Son of God – Romans 1:4 (pg: - on handout)
- It confirms that Jesus was who he said he was.
 - Remember when we looked at Jesus healing the crippled man (Mk 2:1-12 – back in Week 1). Jesus said he could forgive sins, and to show it he healed the man – the miracle shows Jesus' authority to forgive.
 - In John 11:11b-27, 38-44 (pg: - on handout) we meet Lazarus who has been dead for four days and Jesus' declares himself to be '*the resurrection and the life*' (11:25). To confirm that Jesus was who he said he was – he raised Lazarus from the dead.
- Jesus says that just '*as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life*' (Jn 5:21). Only one who has conquered death is in a position to grant life over death.
- The resurrection shows that what Jesus claimed of himself was true.

b. Deals finally with Sin.

- The resurrection shows that humanity's enduring problem (death) has a solution.
- What the world offers stops when we die – and in the end are proved empty (or at best temporary) (Humanism – people have the answer; Individualism – I want to determine what is best; Materialism – What I can earn or own will be all I need)
- But in the resurrection God points us to his enduring solution.

1 Peter 1:3-4 (pg: - on the handout) – A living hope – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:18 (pg: - on handout) - The guilt and punishment that my sin deserves and God demands, Jesus takes, and

pays for it on the cross - and it is the resurrection that declares it PAID IN FULL.

Illustration. Gift Voucher – bought by someone (at their cost), given to me (freely), redeemed at store (so I don't pay), walk away with the item (paid in full) = Jesus went to the cross (paid the price), to set me free of sin (freely), died (so I could be redeemed from sin), rose to give me life eternal (paid in full).

c. Declares Jesus Judge

- The resurrection declares Jesus to be the now living Judge of both the living and the dead.
- Acts 17:30-31 (pg: - on handout) – God raised Jesus from the dead to be the judge of the world (see also Acts 10:39-42).
- Hebrews 9:27 (pg: - on handout) says that people will die and after that comes judgement – this is all people, believer and unbeliever alike. We will all stand before God's judgement seat.

(It may be helpful to drawn out that 'judgement' is needed if we want justice – because it declares that which is right to be right and that which is wrong to be wrong)

- The one who will judge is Jesus – and he judges without fault bringing true justice.

Illustration. The Courtroom, with Jesus as Judge and each person as the plaintiff – found guilty, condemned, sentenced, and then substituted – all by Jesus!

6. How will we stand?

'How we will stand on that judgement day?'

- Will we stand before Jesus either: –
 - a. As his friend – with our sin paid for such that we are restored, cleansed and forgiven.
 - b. Or, as a stranger – alone and called upon to defend ourselves.
- Many people think they are good enough – they are a good person, they have been nice, they deserve to be saved.
- But Bible says: 'Good people' are never good enough. God's standards are perfect. Are you?
- In their own minds, 'Good people' are often too good. The *problem* is out there (with others or in the world) and the *solution* is found in themselves.

- But the Bible says the opposite: the *problem* is in yourself and the *solution* is out there – in fact it is in Jesus.

- God calls on all people to repent and trust in Jesus.

7. What is Christianity?

- Christianity takes its name from Christ – without Christ there is no Christianity.
- Christianity is not about trusting ME, or YOU, or CHURCH, or some GURU, or some religious EXPERIENCE, or understanding some INTELLECTUAL PROOFS.
- Christianity is not dependent on a beautiful building, or the keeping of laws and commandments, or the battling over different philosophical ideas.
- Christianity is about trusting JESUS.
 - it is all about recognising a relationship with Jesus Christ and having life in his name.

- Jesus' *death* paid and cancelled our debt of sin – making it possible for us to be back in a relationship with God.

- Jesus' *resurrection* from the dead shows us life after death – and an ongoing relationship with God.

8. What next?

- Over these last three weeks we have looked at 'What is Christianity?' Next time, we are going to look at 'What is a Christian?' – in other words, what it means to recognise Jesus as Lord of your life.
- And if you are willing, I will show you how to start that relationship.

(You may want to give out the Evangelism tract here. It will mean that the person can read a second gospel explanation over the week hopefully reinforcing what you have said. It will also mean they have the Prayer that you will be asking them to pray next time)

9. Questions...

Ask to see if anything needs clarification.

Before next time:

- Have a read of Mark 11-16
- Ask yourself – does this Jesus achieve what he says he will?
- As in previous weeks, be Critical – but open-minded.