

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 179

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus has not been raised from the dead our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17). The enemies of Jesus tried to stop evangelism by persecuting the apostles. A more efficient way to stop evangelism would have simply been to produce the body of Jesus. Obviously, if they could have done so, they would have.

When I was in college over 60 years ago I read an illustration that I assume was fictitious. Nevertheless it illustrated a point. It seems that a wealthy man decided to start a new religion. He took what he deemed the best teachings of all religions, mixed them together, and called it "Theo-Philanthropy". Then he trained 12 disciples and sent them out to evangelize the world. When they had no success he sought advice. A friend told him that first he needed to be crucified, then come back to life. Coming back from the dead would be the key to inspiring his disciples. Touche! It is obvious that without the resurrection of Jesus there would be no Christianity.

The late Chuck Colson reminds us that John Dean testified against President Nixon to "save his own skin.". The fact that not one of the apostles "cracked" or "turned against Jesus" was proof to Colson that they were telling the truth about His resurrection. The word "martyr", as you know, comes from the Greek word that means "witness". The fact that the apostles died as "martyrs" is powerful evidence that they were telling the truth.

The "Gospel" or "Good News" is that Jesus died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and then that He rose again, according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1 - 3). Note the phrase "according to the Scriptures". Every aspect of the life of Christ was predicted "in the Scriptures" centuries before they came to pass.. The death and resurrection of Jesus formed the foundation of Christianity from the Scriptures. As we have already pointed out, if Christ has not been raised from the dead our preaching is vain and we are yet in our sins. Apostolic preaching consistently involved preaching the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:31; 4:2; 17:18; 23:6; 24:21; etc.)

When on trial before King Agrippa Paul referenced the resurrection as the reason why he had been arrested. He then asked: **"Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?" (Acts 26:8).** This should be obvious. If I could raise the dead that would be incredible. If you could raise the dead that would be incredible. If medical science would raise the dead that would be incredible. But what is incredible about God raising the dead? If God can create the universe raising the dead is not a problem!

Most decisions we make in life are based on common sense. God knows our frame and remembers that we are dust (Ps. 103:14). He expects us to be skeptical. Therefore, when He commands us to do something contrary to common sense, He provides supernatural evidence so that we can obey Him and still be rational. For example:

- God gave Moses miraculous signs before sending him to Egypt (Ex. 4:1 - 17).

- God destroyed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in a supernatural way as a sign that the people were to obey Moses (Nu. 16:1 - 35).
- God supernaturally caused Aaron's rod to bud, blossom, and bear almonds in a single night. This was a sign that Aaron had been chosen by God (Nu. 17:1 - 12).
- God gave Gideon supernatural signs before sending him to fight the Midianites (Jud. 6:11 - 40).
- God caused the shadow to go backward on the sun dial of Ahaz as a sign to Hezekiah that he would live 15 more years (2 Ki. 20:1 - 11).
- Etc.

When Jesus chose men to be His apostles He expected them to be willing to give up everything, even their own lives. While Jesus performed many miraculous signs to prove His identity (Jn. 20:30, 31) the primary sign involved the resurrection. Jesus said: **“A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”** (Matt. 12:39, 40).

May the sign of the resurrection give you hope and guidance is my prayer!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce