

Romans #5

No two events in human history are more significant than the virgin birth of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. Proving His birth by tangible evidence can only be done indirectly, by His resurrection. To prove one is to prove the other because to prove Christ's resurrection is to sustain his declaration that he is the Son of God. John wrote, "*Many other signs and wonders therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name*" (Jn. 20:30-31).

Christ's death was part of God's plan. John saw a Lamb as it had been slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Christ came to give his life a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45). They greatly err who teach that God's initial purpose to set up a kingdom was thwarted by the rejection of His nation and that instead of the kingdom, Christ set up His church. Christ did exactly what he came to do! When Jesus died on the cross and said, "*It is finished*", God's earthly work for His son was completed. All that remained was that he be raised from the dead; commission His apostles to preach the gospel to every nation and then ascend back to the Father, sit down on His right hand and have given into His hands "*all authority in heaven and on earth*" (Mt. 28:18).

We are far removed from First Century Judaea. Just how would one go about to prove the resurrection of Jesus? Witnesses! The accounts of Christ's resurrection from the gospels and epistles chronicle more than a dozen separate citings by different ones of the risen Jesus, one of the most celebrated of whom was Paul. His testimony is very significant for it is the testimony of a "hostile witness"; an unbeliever in former life. Paul had nothing to gain, as the world would measure "gain", from the testimony he gave. To the contrary, his change of life brought pain, suffering, contempt, scorn, hatred, imprisonment and finally death to him. Still, he relentlessly testified "*and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also*" (1 Cor. 15:8). There was no perceivable, material benefit to Paul to declare "I saw Him", which makes his testimony all the more believable. Follow him in his arduous journeys and two messages he continuously heralded: Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ and Jesus of Nazareth was put to death but raised from the dead by God's power. Read his epistles and the message remains the same.

By His resurrection Jesus is demonstrated to be what He claimed He is:

the Son of God. His challenge to his nation "*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again*" was accepted by them and proven by Him (Jn. 2:19). Yea, "*let God be true and every man a liar*". To those who cried "Show us a sign", he rejoined, "*An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign and thee shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah for as Jonah was for three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" (Mt. 12:38-40). The conviction that Jesus was risen from the dead, thus validating his claim to Deity, the Son of God, drove Paul to a relentless pace. He carried the message to the furthestmost ends of the earth. He was imprisoned and ultimately sentenced to death for his message, but he was never swayed nor moved from his conviction. To Paul, Christ was the "*blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality*"; to him, Christ Jesus "*abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*" (1 Tim. 6:15f; 2 Tim. 1:10). To his dying day Paul said, "*I know him whom I have believed and I am persuaded he is able to guard that which I have committed to him against that day*" (2 Tim. 1:12). Christ's resurrection from the dead manifestly declared Him to be the Son of God!

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