



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Vital Truths

Tuesday, 2 September 2014

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CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

monthly (interim) schedule

*** 1st Tuesday of the month ***

TUESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2014

12 NOON in 123 CAP

Capitol Commission (Interim) Bible Studies are held the *first* Tuesday of every month at 12 Noon. The monthly Bible study is nonpartisan and nondenominational. We are currently studying First Corinthians, chapter-by-chapter, and verse-by-verse. I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I am here *solely* to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as evidence of my desire to serve you.

– Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

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First Corinthians 15 – “Vital Truths”

The historicity of a document is based upon the closeness in time of the writers to the accounts that they are recording. The New Testament accounts of the life of Christ were recorded by eyewitnesses or by those who received what they wrote from eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-3; 3:1; John 19:35; 2 Pet 1:16; 1 John 1:3; etc.). The early church not only preached their testimony concerning Jesus Christ among friendly witnesses, but also among those who confronted them using aggressive and violent tactics concerning the fundamental details. The disciples could not risk inaccuracy or manipulation of those details since individuals who were less than enthusiastic concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ could refute such woeful details. The foundational element of the apostolic preaching was the bold and confident appeal to the experience and knowledge of their listeners. Not only could they proclaim witness of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, but also could say, “just as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22, 32).

Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967) had an interesting relationship with the United States. When the Nazis rose to power, he was replaced as mayor of Cologne, and imprisoned for a brief time in 1934. The United States liberated Cologne, and reappointed Adenauer as major. Eventually, he formed the Christian Democratic Union as a new political party. Adenauer experienced an interesting life as statesman, with many challenges. Nevertheless, his answer to the question of the most important thing in the world was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He said, “If Jesus Christ is alive, then there is hope for the world. If not, I don’t see the slightest glimmer of hope on the horizon.” Adenauer confessed, “I believe Christ’s resurrection to be one of the best-attested facts of history.”

When Socrates faced death, he was asked, “Shall we live again?” The philosopher replied, “I hope so.” Conversely, on the night prior to his beheading, Sir Walter Raleigh recorded the following words in his Bible: “When we have wander’d all our ways, shuts up the story of our days; but from this earth, this grave, this dust, my God shall raise me up, I trust.” How would you respond to the question, “If a man dies, will he live *again*?” (Job 14:14). Job answered his question by stating, “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth” (19:25).

THE VITAL TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

According to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, the two vital truths of the Gospel message include: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” Even a casual reading of the apostolic preaching in the book of Acts reveals the reality that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not only a vital element, but also was a primary emphasis in their witness. Such an emphasis is not surprising because *only a living Savior can offer salvation* from the penalty and power of sin (which was the reason for his innocent death).

Since the time of the Enlightenment, the modern mind has attempted to be free from any semblance of religion. Fallen humanity attempted to erase the existence of God and the supernatural to be “captain of their own destiny.” However, in attempting to eradicate God, one eradicates the self in the process. The hope of the resurrection is vital because it results in present and future significance. *The resurrection of Jesus Christ assures humanity that life is not abandoned to nothingness.*

Every human being is created in the image of God (Gen 1:26) but has fallen into sin (Rom 3:23; 6:23). However, the good news is that whosoever will have a faith/trust relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will experience resurrection, and live with the Creator for eternity (John 3:16). Of course, one’s faith is only as good as the object in which it resides. *Biblical faith is founded upon certainty* in the historical resurrection of Jesus from the dead (as the divine Substitute on behalf of those who trust in Him).

The resurrection is a vital doctrine because it is the foundation for any hope in this life and thereafter. The resurrection is the vital truth of the Gospel because it forms the basis for the legitimacy and reasonableness of faith. “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. . . . For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. . . . But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep” (1 Cor 15:13-14, 16-17, 20).

THE VITAL TRUTH OF THE EYEWITNESSES

The existence of the early church necessitates the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many people act foolishly for things they believe to be true, but one does not engage in activity for something known to be a lie. If the deceased body of Jesus still occupied his tomb, the early church would have never come into existence. Nevertheless, the angel of the Lord testified, “He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said” (Matt 28:6). The early church proclaimed the resurrection in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, but was met with contempt, reviling, and bitter persecution. Believers would not have been able to persist in affirming the truths they proclaimed, if Jesus Christ had not

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actually risen from the dead (and if they knew this fact as certainly as any other). The early church knew the value of eyewitness testimony, and appealed to it repeatedly with confident and continual assertion.

THE CHURCH WAS FORMED UPON THE BASIS OF THE RESURRECTION.

The church was formed on the basis of the resurrection. The testimony that Jesus was seen alive after his death and crucifixion would have never resulted in the church being formed if his corpse was available for inspection. *The proclamation of the apostles and the early church is unfathomable without the emptiness of the tomb being a confirmed historical reality.* Indeed, the resurrected Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:3; John 20:14), the women at the tomb (Matt 28:9, 18), Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5), the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-33), the apostles without Thomas present (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24), the apostles with Thomas present (John 20:26-29), the seven by the lake (21:1-23), 500 believers (1 Cor 15:6), James (15:7), the eleven (Matt 28:16-28; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:33-52; Acts 1:3-12), Paul (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Cor 15:8), Stephen (Acts 7:55), and John the Baptist (Rev 1:18-19). *The great fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the eyewitness testimony.*

THE VITAL TRUTH OF THE RESURRECTION

The early church proclaimed the resurrection as fact because even their listeners knew its reality (1 Cor 15:9-19). Had it been a fraud, surely history would have reported such. However, “3,000 souls” were saved as a result of the first proclamation (Acts 2:41). Even members of the Sanhedrin — who were vehemently opposed to Jesus and the church — admitted, “we cannot deny it” (4:16). Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is a practice of faith, but it is not a blind faith; rather, it is *a reasonable faith in an historical Lord, who by grace through faith in Him alone, will transform the heart of any individual.*

Regarding the resurrection of all humanity, the Bible states each will be raised “in his own order” (1 Cor 15:23). The resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14; John 5:29) is distinguished from the resurrection of the unrighteous (Rev 20:5, 11-15). First Corinthians 15 begins with an introduction of the Gospel, and then relates that vital truth with the doctrine of resurrection. The exception to the doctrine of resurrection is the translation of living believers. Until that joyful day occurs, *God’s people are to remain faithful and true, “always abounding in the work of the Lord”* (1 Cor 15:58).

The Apostle Paul used the word “mystery” on twenty occasions (Rom 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim 3:9, 16). The Gospel writers referred to the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God (Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). The Apostle Paul referenced various mysteries, such as the mystery of the resurrection and translation of believers (1 Cor 15:50-58; 1 Thess 4:14-17), the mystery of the church being composed of both Jews and Gentiles in equality (Eph 3:1-11), and the mystery of Christ and the church (Eph 5:28-32).

The incarnation was a mystery (Col 2:2, 9; 1 Cor 2:7). The existence of sin in the presence of a holy and righteous God is revealed as the mystery of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:7). Israel’s present blindness to the Gospel is a mystery (Rom 11:25). There is even the mystery of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). The Apostle John referred to the mystery of seven stars (Rev 1:20), the finishing of the mystery of God (10:7), and the mystery of the harlot (17:5, 7). Identifying the usage of mystery, noted Bible commentator Albert Barnes remarked:

The word here does not mean anything which was in its nature unintelligible, but that which to them had been hitherto unknown. This commences the third subject of inquiry in this chapter—the question, what will become of those who are alive when the Lord Jesus shall return to raise the dead? This was an obvious inquiry, and the answer was, perhaps, supposed to be difficult, and says that they will undergo an instantaneous change, which will make them like the dead that shall be raised [Notes on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (London: Gall & Inglis, 1847) 383].

The mystery regarding the resurrection is that some believers will not die; consequently, *all saints will overcome death either through translation or resurrection at the coming of Christ.* When Paul used the Greek particle, translated “behold” (1 Cor 15:51) it was for the purpose of stating this truth emphatically. The use of the particle has the effect of focusing attention upon everything stated thereafter. Indeed, the attention of the reader is demanded so that one can understand the mystery of Paul’s teaching to the Corinthians.

Scripture reveals that all believers will “be changed.” A believer’s body may be dead or living at the time of this coming of Christ (1 Thess 4:13-18). Regardless of whether one has “fallen asleep in Jesus” or is of those who are “alive and remain until the coming of the Lord” (1 Thess 4:14-15), all will be changed. Of course, such teaching answers the question, “What will happen to believers who do not die prior to the resurrection?” “How will they experience the resurrection of the body?” “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” so there must be a transformation (1 Cor 15:50; Phil 3:21).

When the Lord Jesus returns in power and glory, the dead (in Christ) will be raised incorruptible, never to die again. Those believers who are alive and remain at the Lord’s coming will never experience death. Both the dead in Christ and the living saints at the coming will be raised immortal at the sound of the “last trumpet,” and as such are even now partakers of that eternal life (John 17:3). *The Christian has a great hope in Jesus Christ.* All humanity is condemned before God as sinners, but victory over the wages of sin is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone as one’s Lord and Savior. He alone can provide the victory through either resurrection or translation!

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the honor to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission state ministers teach ongoing verse-by-verse Bible studies for the entire Capitol community, and also meet personally with many government leaders (and their staff) to proclaim God’s grace, to encourage our leaders, pray with them, and provide biblical counsel. Capitol Commission is a charitable and religious nonprofit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Capitol Commission is supported by the generous gifts of businesses, churches, and individuals. Capitol Commission is not state-funded; rather, those with a heart for the Capitol community fund it. *Please join us in this ministry!*



**NEXT CAPITOL COMMISSION (INTERIM) BIBLE STUDY:
TUESDAY, 7 OCTOBER @ 12 NOON in 123 CAP
(always the 1st Tuesday of each month, during interim)**