



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Vital Truth of the Resurrection

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Bible studies for legislators are held Tuesday mornings at 8:30am in 514 CLOB. All Senate and House Members, all Democrats and all Republicans, are invited for a time of study and prayer on Tuesday mornings. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational.

The current study for the 2010 General Assembly is the Book of Philippians. The previous weekly study examined the importance of living in unity, humility, and perseverance. My prayer is for this Bible study to be edifying and invigorating to you. I am here to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as an evidence of my desire to serve you.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

At the very beginning of these Bible studies in the Capitol for the 2010 General Assembly, I would like to communicate the biblical goals of my ministry service to you and with you. The Apostle Paul articulated several of these goals as he petitioned God on behalf of the church. He was thankful for their Christian life, fellowship in the gospel, and confidence in the sovereign work of God in their lives. He then prayed that their love would abound "still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment" so that the church would approve the best things of life from the many good things in life, for the purpose of being "sincere and blameless until the day of Christ," and to be fruitful in righteousness "to the glory and praise of God."

As a result of the General Assembly being in recess this week and the Easter celebration this past Sunday, the current Bible study will focus attention upon "The Vital Truth of the Resurrection."

Introduction

A matter of ultimate importance in accessing the historicity of a document is 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 either 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.). Furthermore, the early church not only preached their testimony concerning Christ among friendly witnesses but also among those who could dialogue with them using aggressive and violent tactics concerning the fundamental details of the ministry and death of Jesus. The disciples could not risk inaccuracy or manipulation of such details since individuals who were less than enthusiastic concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ could refute such woeful details. Consequently, 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 even imprisoned for a brief time in 1934. The United States liberated Cologne, and reappointed Adenauer as major, even though he would be dismissed shortly thereafter by the British military government. Consequently, 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."

"IF A MAN DIES, WILL HE LIVE AGAIN?" (JOB 14:14)

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

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES ~ GEORGIA

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30AM, 514 CLOB

LOBBYISTS: DAY AND TIME, TBD, Capitol Building

STAFF: TUESDAYS @ NOON (AFTER THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION), Capitol Building

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 essential truths of the gospel message include: “that 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. Therefore, 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 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 sinners 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 points to 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. It would have been impossible for them to persist in affirming the truths they proclaimed if Jesus Christ had not 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 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 the Apostle John (Rev 1:18-19). The great fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the eyewitness testimony.

THE VITAL TRUTH OF REASONABLE FAITH

The early church proclaimed the resurrection as fact for even their listeners knew its reality. 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 Christ is a practice of faith, but it is not a blind faith; rather, it is a reasonable faith in an historical Jesus, who by grace through faith in Him alone, will transform the heart of any individual.