

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood. Welcome to Part 9 in our series called Christus Victor: Christ the Champion You Need in the Fight For Your Life.
- B. We are re-laying the foundation of who is Jesus and what he did. We've talked about his birth, childhood, baptism, temptation, his miracles, his teachings, his arrest and trials, and last time, we sunk down low into the sadness of his death on Calvary's Cross.
- C. Today, I want to pick it up right there. What happened when Jesus died? Where did he go next? And what happened in that incredible moment of the resurrection?
- D. Ready or not, here we go.

II. The Resurrection Events

A. Death and Spear

1. *Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. (John 19:32-34)*
2. Christ has been on the cross for several hours. He has cried out seven cries from the cross. And then he died.
3. He died spiritually, when he felt the condemnation for our sins.
4. Then he died physically, when his soul and spirit left his body, and there was no life left in his physical frame.
5. Some time later, the Roman soldiers came out to break the legs of the three crucified men. They did this to hurry up death. When they came to Jesus, he had already died.
6. Just to make sure, one of the soldiers shoved his spear into the side of Jesus. Blood and water came out – a sure sign he was dead.
7. We cannot even imagine the sadness of that moment for Mary and for John at the foot of the cross.
8. It's over.
9. They thought it was over.
10. Fortunately, we know how the story turns out, right?

B. Burial

1. *Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. (Matthew 27:57-60)*
 - a) This is the burial of Christ.
 - b) John tells us this happened in a Garden, and that they wrapped his body with strips of linens and with the customary spices (John 19:38-41).
 - (1) In the Garden of Eden, death and the grave first received the power over humankind. Now, in a Garden, they are defeated and disarmed.
 - (2) Christ began his suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane.
 - (3) Now, in a Garden, he will rise again and begin his exaltation.
2. *On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' "Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard. (Matthew 27:62-66)*
 - a) The religious powers are evil.
 - b) The political powers are evil.
 - c) All the evil forces of the universe combine all their dark powers to keep the Lord of Glory locked in his grave. They're doing their demonic victory dance, dancing on the corpse of Christ.
 - d) Let's see how well that works for them.
 - e) Jesus died on a Friday and rose again on Sunday. One big question that everybody has is where did Jesus go during the time between his death and his resurrection?
 - f) Shall we talk about it?

C. Three Days

1. Death is not the end. Death is never the end. It was definitely not the end for Jesus.
2. Let me back up a little bit. I need to remind you we live in a spiritual universe. It's a physical universe too. It manifests space and time and matter and energy – realities mankind's smartest scientists still can't wrap their minds around.
3. But there is another set of dimensions bigger and more lasting than earth's space-time continuum.
4. There is a spiritual realm that is timeless, eternal, limitless, and true. It is more real than the earth beneath your feet.
5. You, as a human, are created to live in both realms – both the physical and the spiritual. When you one day shed the limitations of this realm, you will wake up in that other realm where the rule and reign of Jesus Christ are utterly uncontested.
6. When Jesus died, his body went to the grave.
7. But his personality – his true self, the invisible part of his human nature – when he died, the soul and spirit of Jesus crossed over into that other realm.
8. What did he say to the thief on the Cross?
 - a) *Today you will be with me in Paradise (Luke 23:43).*

9. Let me say really quick— Jesus did not go to hell for our sins. He did not burn in hell, like an unbeliever. All the condemnation he endured, he endured while he was still on the Cross. All the wages of our sins, he endured there.
10. How do we know?
11. Because he said “it is finished.” There was nothing left to do, so he went to Paradise.
12. Paradise is an English word that comes from a Latin word that comes from a Greek word that comes from a Persian word that means... are you ready? GARDEN. It means an enclosed garden or beautiful park.
13. The Jews had two names for this awesome place. They called it Paradise and they also called it Abraham’s Bosom (Luke 16:22).
14. Paradise is one part of a much bigger realm. This realm goes by several names. It’s Hebrew name is Sheol. It’s Greek name is Hades. And it means “The Grave” or The place of the dead.
15. Hades has a nice part and a not nice part.
16. So far so good? Ready to go deep?
17. We’re asking the question, where did Jesus spend his time between his death and his resurrection?
 - a) *Christ also suffered when he died for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners that he might bring us safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. So he went and preached to the spirits in prison-- (1 Peter 3:18, 19, NLT).*
18. He went and preached to the spirits in prison. It’s a really odd Scripture passage.
19. Something like this is talked about in two other places in the Bible: in Jude 6 and in 2 Peter 2:4. This is not a sermon about that stuff. It’s a sermon about the Resurrection of Christ. And we are asking where Jesus spent the time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.
20. It is something you might have never heard before. It is something you should study for yourself and draw your own conclusions. Here is where I’ve landed (along with John MacArthur and others). (Read Josephus’ Discourse on Death and Hades – Google it).
21. *The REALM OF HADES/SHEOL/THE GRAVE*

| Realm of THE GRAVE | Occupants | Name | Scriptures |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| A Beautiful Part | Believers | Paradise / Abraham’s Bosom | Luke 23:43, Luke 16:23 |
| A Painful Part | Unbelievers | Torments / Hades / Hell / Gehenna | Luke 16:23, Matt 5:22, Luke 12:5 |
| A Deep Chasm | Nobody for now Satan eventually | Bottomless Pit / Great Gulf / Abyss | Luke 16:26, Rev 20:1-3 |
| A Prison | Certain Demons | Prison / Tartarus | 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6, 1 Peter 3:18,19, Gen 6 |

a) *The Grave (Hades, Sheol) has four main parts to it:*

(1) *A Beautiful Part – Believers – Paradise/Abraham’s Bosom (Luke 23:43, Luke 16:23)*

(2) *A Painful Part – Unbelievers – Torments/Hades/Hell/Gehenna (Luke 16:23, Matt 5:22, Luke 12:5)*

(3) *A Deep Chasm – Nobody for now, Satan in the End – Bottomless Pit/Great Gulf/Abyss (Luke 16:26, Rev 20:1-3).*

(4) *A Prison – Certain Demons – Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4)*

22. When Jesus died, wherever he went, he brought the Thief on the Cross with him. Their bodies went to their graves, but their souls and spirits went to Paradise.
23. While Jesus was in Paradise, one of the things he did was to announce his victory. He proclaimed the triumph of the Cross. He stood on the edge of that abyss, and proclaimed to the spirits in prison –
 - a) “Hey guys, I have good news, and I have bad news. Which do you want first? Ah, never mind. I WIN AND YOU LOSE, AND YOU’RE NEVER GETTING OUT OF HERE.”
24. Pretty soon, he’s going to empty out Paradise and bring everybody to heaven, but that’s going to have to wait till next week.
25. Where was Jesus during the three days?
 - a) He descended to Hades, to the grave, to the part called Paradise. He found there all the believers of ages past. He celebrated with Moses and with Daniel and Ruth and Naomi. He embraced Isaiah and David. He probably gave a big hug to Adam and Eve and told them he had them covered.
26. He declared his triumph over every dark power and spirit.
27. And then, it was time to come back into this realm, and really blow everybody’s minds.

D. Resurrection

1. *Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? “He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, “saying,*

“The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” And they remembered His words. Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. (Luke 24:1-9)

2. The literal resurrection of Jesus — body, soul, and spirit — is a non-negotiable essential to our Christian faith. The testimony of the Bible is enough. The Bible tells me so. That is where I start. History affirms this. Logic supports this. The Holy Spirit confirms it. And my own experience demonstrates it.
 - a) It was literal. It was real. It was the greatest miracle of all time.
3. Christ’s resurrection sent shock waves throughout the cosmos. That’s because it was such a devastating defeat for all the forces of darkness.
4. This single act of God was the greatest display of God’s power the world has ever seen. When the writers of Scripture looked for an example of divine omnipotence, they pointed to the resurrection.
 - a) It was harder than the creation.
 - b) It was harder than parting the Red Sea.
 - c) It was harder than healing the sick.
 - d) It was harder than reading men’s minds.
 - (1) The strongest act God ever did in world history was raising Jesus from the dead.
 - (2) Why?
 - (a) Because all the forces of darkness were concentrated on keeping Jesus in the grave.
 - i) *[I pray that you would know]...what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1:19-21)*
5. The powers of hell concentrated all their might on keeping Jesus in the grave. And with one little flick of his little finger, God sent them flying.
 - a) There was SIN, holding on for dear life.
 - (1) And God judged it, and obliterated it, and broke its grip forever.
 - b) There was HELL, with its bars locked tight.
 - (1) And God shattered those bars to rescue from its domain all who would believe in him.
 - c) And that old monster, DEATH, held onto Jesus with all its might.
 - (1) And God broke that monster’s back, and death lost its power.
 - d) The GRAVE held him in.
 - (1) And God opened the grave, and set Jesus free.
 - e) The DEMONS were there, energizing the guards and making Pilate seal the tomb with the authority of Rome.
 - (1) And God blew the demons head over heels and they screamed and scurried away.
 - f) The DEVIL was there, that old serpent, doing what he could to smother the life out of Christ.
 - (1) And, with one mighty stomp of his almighty foot, God crushed the head of that old adversary, and shouted his defeat through the heavens.
 - (a) And the powers of darkness are still shaking in their boots.
6. When he arose from that grave, Jesus Christ defeated the devil, routed the demons, opened the grave, and broke death’s grip. He shattered the bars of hell, and washed away our sins to make us white as snow. It was the triumph to end all triumphs.
7. It was the hardest thing God ever did, and he didn’t even break a sweat.
8. Christ is risen.
9. Death is defeated.
10. Christus Victor: the Champion you need in the fight for your life.
11. Aren’t you thankful for him?
12. Now, let me ask the big question: SO WHAT? What difference does a resurrected Christ make in our lives today?
13. I have four words for you: proof, grace, hope, and power.

III. *The Resurrection Theology*

A. *PROOF*

1. *The resurrection proved everything else Jesus claimed.*
2. It is very hard to explain it away, and many have tried. I’m not going to go into the proofs of the resurrection today, but they strong and they are convincing.
3. Timothy Keller said,
 - a) “If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn’t rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead.”
4. If the hardest thing is true, then all the lesser things are true too. And the resurrection was the hardest thing of all.
5. So if you are investigating the claims of Jesus Christ, and if you are wondering if his message is true, may I respectfully suggest that you spend some time studying proofs of the resurrection of Christ.

B. *GRACE*

1. *The resurrection shows that God himself bears all the burden to save you from your sins.*
2. Grace is the exact opposite of religion and of works.
3. Here is what religion looks like:
 - a) You go to God, and he puts a backpack on you. Then he drops a big rock inside, and says, Go do good. It’s the burden you must bear.

- b) The next time you go to God, he adds another rock to your backpack and says, Give something up for lent. It's the burden you must bear.
 - c) The next time you go to God, he adds yet another rock to your backpack and says, Go serve humanity. It's the burden you must bear.
 - d) Time and time again, you go to God, and God adds another rock to your burden.
 - e) Till finally you are stooped over, and carrying a load no one can bear.
 - f) That's religion.
4. Grace is the opposite.
- a) In Grace, God comes to you. He empties out the rocks, throws away the back pack, and picks you up and carries you for the rest of eternity and time.
 - b) In grace, you become the burden and God bears you.
5. The saving work of Christ is his cross and resurrection. Jesus bore that burden alone... just as he bears every part of your salvation.

C. *HOPE*

1. *His resurrection guarantees your resurrection in the end.*
2. Jesus is called the first-fruits of resurrection life (1 Corinthians 15:20). That means he is the first in a long line. You're in that line if you have Jesus.
3. Death is not the end for you. Death is not the end for the people you love who know Jesus.
4. When Jesus broke the power of death, he broke it for all his children too.

D. *POWER*

1. *The resurrection delivers Christ himself to live in you with resurrection power every single day.*
2. You have a resurrection, waiting for you in the future. You're going to rise up and meet Jesus face to face.
3. But you have a resurrection already in your past, if you're saved. Christ came to live inside you, and he brought his resurrection life into you. He brought resurrection power into you.
4. It's hugely important to remember that the earliest Christians didn't just preach the resurrection as life after death – though they did that for sure – but they always proclaimed it as God's omnipotent hand stretching through our lives into each of our worlds through us.
5. This makes the Bible the most exciting and relevant book in the world.
6. The power that was strong enough to get Jesus out of the grave, and to blast the whole Christian movement across the globe and down the centuries, that power that was mighty enough to shatter the hideous demonic alliance of evil, and creative enough to devour death in resurrection – that same power is still going strong.
7. The identical divine energy that took Christ out of the grave is still available. Not just to raise you up in the hour of your death, but also to raise you up to a fantastic life every single day.
8. The same power which shattered death is now yours to energize the most depressed, discouraged, and defeated man or woman into a resurrected personality and an all-conquering soul.
9. How was it that a little group of blundering, fallible men became the battery pack of a movement that turned the world upside down? This is the church's awesome little secret.
 - a) They were not experienced leaders.
 - b) They did not occupy positions of power.
 - c) They had no impressive credentials, and no friends in high places.
10. What made the difference was that same unearthly power that made them different men and women.
11. Resurrection life in the soul of mortal humans.
12. Resurrection power flowing through them.
13. The Resurrection was evidence that there were now, on earth, walking and talking vessels of grace, who tapped into a new dimension. As children of God, we are not merely preaching the resurrection as a past fact for Christ, or a future promise for the church.
14. We proclaim a present power as citizens of a heavenly kingdom.
 - a) *[I pray that you would know] the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1:19-21)*
15. That power is your birthright. And we'll talk about how to tap into it next time.