

Jesus' Resurrection and Commissioning His Apostles ... and What They Mean for Today

Resurrection

1. Important: There is no biblical account of Jesus' actual resurrection, none of the gospels specifically state "what happened" when Jesus rose from the dead. This lack of a specific biblical account does not mean that Jesus did not truly rise from the dead or that the resurrection is a made-up story. It simply means that there were no eyewitnesses to the actual resurrection event.
2. Historical fact of Jesus' resurrection – see *Catechism* #643-644

Theological Significance of Jesus' Resurrection (*Catechism*, #638-658)

1. What is Resurrection?
 - a. Jesus' body reunited with his soul.
 - Note: Resurrection is not resuscitation, Jesus really did die and rose from the dead.
 - b. Christianity teaches that at death, the body and soul separate (body decays, soul continues to exist). Our resurrection is the reunification of our body and soul at the Last Judgment (Parousia)
2. Essential element of Christian faith
 - a. Christian teaching on resurrection is met with much "incomprehension and opposition" in the world. In other words, many people cannot understand how someone can die and then rise again from the dead.
 - b. St. Paul: "If Christ has not been raised, then empty [too] is our preaching; empty too is your faith" (1Corinthians 15:14) => If no resurrection, no Christian faith.
3. Importance of Jesus' resurrection for humanity
 - a. Jesus' resurrection ...
 - 1) Validates or "proves" the entirety of Jesus' teachings:
 - "The Resurrection above all constitutes the confirmation of all Christ's works and teachings. All truths, even those most inaccessible to human reason, find their justification in Christ by his Resurrection has given the definitive proof of his divine authority, which he had promised." (*Catechism*, 651)
 - 2) Demonstrates God's ultimate victory over sin and death
 - 3) Offers humanity the opportunity for salvation through faith in Christ
 - b. Jesus' resurrection is the model ("principle and source") of human resurrection.
 - 1) Jesus's death & resurrection demonstrates what will happen to all humans.
 - 2) All humans will experience death, but ultimately all will also experience resurrection.

Commissioning the Apostles

Matthew

"All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always until the end of the age." (28:18b-20)

1. Christians today have a duty to “make disciples of all nations,” or to evangelize the world. This means bringing others to Christ through our preaching, teaching, and actions.
2. Jesus’ commissioning in Matthew is the biblical basis for Christian baptism => Proper form of baptism: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
3. Jesus is “with [us] always until the end of the age” most intimately through the Eucharist.

Mark

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (16:15-16)

1. Faith in Christ is the means to salvation. In order to be saved, one must have faith in Christ. If one rejects Christ, there is no salvation.
2. Important: God wills the salvation of all people, but it our choice to accept or reject God. In this sense, humans “choose” heaven (or not).

Luke

“Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to these things. And [behold] I am sending the promise of my Father [the Holy Spirit] upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (24:46-49)

1. Jesus promises his apostles (and all Christians) the gift of the Holy Spirit to help them in their work of preaching his gospel (“good news”) to all nations.
2. Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1-4)
3. Catholics receive the full gift of the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of confirmation.

John

Jesus’ first appearance to his apostles: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you ... Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” (20:21-23)

1. Jesus empowers his apostles with the ability to forgive sins, just as he forgave sins. This is the basis for the sacrament of reconciliation (confession).
2. Today, Catholic priests and bishops are empowered through their ordination with the ability to forgive sins (grant absolution). They are acting *in persona Christi* (“in the person of Christ”). The proper context for the forgiveness of sin is sacramental confession.

Jesus’ second appearance to his apostles: “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (20:29).

1. Thomas was not present at Jesus’ first appearance, he did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead.
2. Through his response to Thomas’ unbelief, Jesus once again emphasizes the necessity of faith. He also commends us, those who have not yet “seen” him—have not yet experienced him first-hand—but who have faith in him.