

Last week we began to consider the meaning of Jesus's resurrection. We considered how Jesus's resurrection from the dead, just as he had prophesied it, proves that his amazing claims about himself are true. Today let's consider how Jesus's resurrection means that his amazing promises are true.

To set the stage for his promises, listen to this one from John chapter 6:

**JOHN 6:40.** (NIV84)

[Jesus said.] **"My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."**

There is naturally overlap between the amazing claims of Jesus and his amazing promises. He makes the claims that he does, so that we may be certain of and take comfort in what he promises us. We are admittedly not going to be able to cover all of Jesus's amazing promises in this one devotion. The promises of God in Jesus Christ are one of the main features and themes of the Bible; who Christ is and what he promises his believers are the beating heart of God's word. But we can at least survey those promises.

Christ's greatest promises are those related to the forgiveness of sins, spiritual salvation, and eternal life in heaven. We just heard one of those promises, that whoever looks to Jesus and believes in him will have eternal life, and he will raise them up, that is, from the dead, on the Last Day. Jesus said the same thing in the famous passage John 3:16, sometimes called "the gospel in a nutshell": "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Jesus told his disciples shortly before he ascended into heaven, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15–16). Through his apostle Paul Jesus made this promise: "Let it be known to you that through Jesus forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, also forgiveness from everything from which you could not be justified through the Law of Moses. In this Jesus, everyone who believes is justified," that is, declared not guilty by God (Acts 13:38). Through his apostle John Jesus made this promise: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8–9). In this same vein, Jesus himself once promised that whoever humbled themselves before God and trusted purely in his mercy would be exalted (Luke 18:9–14), and that God's mercy would forgive *all* people's sins and blasphemies (Mark 3:28).

Christ has also made beautiful promises related to our daily care and provision. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pointed out how wonderfully God provides for the birds of the air and how beautifully he clothes the grass of the field with lilies. He then said that we are much more valuable than either, and so God will certainly be sure to clothe and provide for us that much more. Jesus concluded, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [namely, the necessities of life] will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:25–34). Similarly, he later told his disciples, "Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without the knowledge and consent of your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows" (Matt.

10:29–31).

Christ has also made us firm and wonderful promises when it comes to prayer. In his Sermon on the Mount he tells us not to babble and go on and on like the heathen in their prayers, “because your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” He then gave the Lord’s Prayer as a model prayer, showing how we can pray for everything important in just a few words (Matt. 6:7–13). Later in the sermon, he said, “Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep seeking, and you will find. Keep knocking, and it will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened. Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, would give him a stone? Or who, if his son asks for a fish, would give him a snake? Then if you know how to give good gifts to your children, even though you are evil, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matt. 7:7–11). Earlier the same week Jesus was arrested, tried, and crucified, he told his disciples, “Whatever you ask for in prayer, as you believe, you will receive” (Matt. 21:22). Now in other places, Jesus tells us what we should be asking for and what we should believe, and it doesn’t have to do with success and prosperity on earth. But nevertheless he promises that, if we ask for anything according to his will, he will hear and answer us (1 John 5:14)—either exactly as we have asked, whether right away or down the road, or he will give us something even better.

Christ makes us amazing promises as a body of believers. After Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God, Jesus said that he would build his church on the rock of Peter’s confession and the gates of hell would not stand against his church (Matt. 16:16–18). He also has given his believers what he called the keys of the kingdom of heaven, so that whatever they bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever they loose on earth will be loosed in heaven, that is, if they refuse God’s forgiveness to those who are not repentant, then those people do not have God’s forgiveness, and if they give God’s forgiveness to those who are sorry for their sins, those people are truly forgiven by God (Matt. 16:19; 18:15–18; John 20:22–23). He also told them that where two or three, or more, have gathered together in his name, there he is with them, supporting them and acting through them (Matt. 18:20). He also promised that he will always be with his church to the very end of the world (Matt. 28:20), and that he will make sure that the gospel is preached in the whole world through them before the end (Matt. 24:14).

Jesus also promises to refresh our souls, strengthen our faith, and draw us closer to him through his Word. “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened,” Jesus said, “and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28–30). “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it,” he said on another occasion (Luke 11:28). And in the parable of the sower and the seed, he said that the one who continues to hear and understand his word will produce fruit: some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times more than was sown (Matt. 13:23). “My sheep listen to my voice,” Jesus said. “I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:27–28).

Jesus also promised that as the earth draws closer to the end, things will get worse and worse. Hatred, persecution, disasters, and hardships will increase, but he also says that “whoever stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matt. 24:4–13). Then there are his promises about heaven

itself, how there will be no more hunger, thirst, or scorching heat, no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (Rev. 7:16; 21:4). There, he says, we will see him face to face, as he really is in all his glory and beauty, and we will know as we are known by him (1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2). In the meantime, he promises that “neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present nor things to come, nor powerful forces, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38–39). “Never will I leave you,” he says. “Never will I forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

This is just a sampling and overview of Christ’s promises. Without these promises, where would any of us be in this life of sadness, disappointment, and death?

For all the intellectual arguments that atheists like to proudly publicize, a recent study revealed that, actually, only ten percent of those who object to Christianity claim do so for intellectual reasons. Another ten percent object to Christianity because they want to have their own say over their own lives; they want to do what seems and feels good to them without thinking about true and false, right and wrong, good and evil.

But the other eighty percent object to Christianity for personal or emotional reasons. If there is a good and gracious God, why are their natural disasters? Why is there injustice, poverty, and hunger? Why are there senseless shootings at schools? Why are minors abused and children trafficked? Why is there bone cancer in children? Why did So-and-so die, or die when he or she did? Why didn’t God answer this prayer or that one?

But the problem with denying God and the resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead, is that it doesn’t help this pain. It only makes it worse. Denying God altogether makes pain pointless, because then our existence is nothing more than an accident with no rhyme or reason. Acknowledging that there is a god but denying the resurrection of his Son from the dead turns pain into punishment, because without Jesus there is no other explanation for pain, not to mention comfort in the midst of it.

But with God, with Jesus, with his resurrection, we have all these firm, beautiful, and wonderful promises at our disposal that help us not only to endure the pains, hardships, and difficulties of this life, but also to find purpose in them and to have joy and eternal hope in the midst of them.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! And because he is risen, we have the assurance that all of Christ’s promises are true. “Because I live, you also will live,” he promises us. We therefore have purpose and hope in this life and eternal joy and glory waiting for us in his presence in the life to come. Amen.