

THE DAY THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Every once in a while, in the midst of a difficult situation where all possible outcomes are imagined and none of them seems good, something new appears that changes everything. Things like a college scholarship, a medical breakthrough, or an unexpected encounter can all be game-changers. But one game-changer stands high above them all: Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

In truth, it didn't just change the game, it changed the world. The resurrection certified Jesus' divinity as He broke the shackles of sin and death, and opened the door of eternal life for all who believe in Him.

Some are skeptical about Jesus' miraculous resurrection, in spite of the testimony of four gospel accounts, the report that "He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time" (1 Corinthians 15:6), and corroboration outside of the Bible.

Lee Strobel was one such skeptic, who surmised that disproving Jesus' resurrection would expose Christianity as a house of cards. As a highly educated, staunch atheist, Strobel was desperate to do this in order to unravel his wife's newfound faith in Jesus.

Putting his considerable skills as an investigative reporter and legal editor for *The Chicago Tribune* to work, he vigorously pursued the claims of Jesus' resurrection to their logical end. To his great surprise, He became convinced beyond a doubt that they were true after all!

He yielded his own life to Christ, and documented his unlikely journey to faith in his *New York Times* bestseller, *The Case for Christ*.

Now he has tackled the subject of miracles in general, in another book, *The Case for Miracles*. I have not read it yet, but apparently Strobel again took a skeptical approach as he documented numerous genuine miracles in our own time. Eric Metaxas has done the same in his book, *Miracles: What They Are, Why They Happen, and How They Can Change Your Life*.

Some people dismiss miracles altogether because they do not fit within the laws of nature. But wouldn't it make sense for the all-powerful God of the universe to color outside the natural lines to show Himself as the Supreme Being that He is? Indeed, that has always been the purpose of miracles, including the resurrection.

When Jesus healed a blind man, He said it was "that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3). When the disciple Phillip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus replied "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves", referring to the many miracles He had performed (John 14:11).

When Jesus was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, He told Lazarus' sister Mary that she would see the glory of God, and He prayed aloud to the Father, "I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me" (John 11:40, 42).

Even as Jesus entered Jerusalem for the final time, which we commemorate on Palm Sunday, "the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen" (Luke 19:37).

Yet, as mighty as those works were -- the blind could see, the lame could walk, the sick were cured, food was multiplied dramatically -- nothing would compare to the miracle of Jesus' resurrection, but which He not only came back to life by his own power, but also opened the way for spiritually dead people to become spiritually alive.

If you would like to hear about one of these miraculous transformations firsthand, just ask any Christian to share their story. In a sense, all Christian believers are walking miracles. Each of our stories is unique, yet can be summed up in the words of a familiar hymn: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found, was blind, but now I see."

With love in the Lord,
The Rev. Christine Maddux