

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord May Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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The Resurrection

Introduction

When one ponders the sojourn of our Lord there are details which we would like to know, but which God has not revealed. We can speculate about the month He was born or on what day He died, but neither of them are of any importance for the more important truths are that he was born and He did die. If it could be proven that He was born on Sept. 19th or Oct. 21st, would it make any difference to the truth of His condescension and incarnation? In similar fashion, if one could prove He died on a Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, would it add to or detract from the truth of His sacrificial death? However, when it comes to His resurrection, God makes it abundantly clear that it was on the “first day of the week” (Mk. 16:9), not the Sabbath (which is Saturday), but the day after the Sabbath (Lev. 23:15) which is Sunday.

When it comes to the work of salvation and its resulting triumph, we learn that there were certain things man saw and things He did not see. For instance:

- a) Man saw Him crucified (Matt. 27:36)
- b) Man saw the effects after His death, the earthquake (Matt. 27:54), and the rent veil (Mk. 15:38; Lk. 23:45)
- c) Man saw Him raised (Matt. 28:17; Lk. 24:31)
- d) Man saw Him ascend (Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:9-10)

But man did not see:

- a) His suffering for sins, for the scene was clothed in darkness (Matt. 27:45-46)
- b) Him rising from the dead (Mk. 16:9)
- c) Him enter Heaven, but they were told this by the angels (Acts 1:11)

Questions

1) Since man did not see Him rise from the dead, how do we know He did rise?

- a) A paper like this is too small to give a comprehensive review of all the reasons by which we know Jesus rose from the dead. The following are a few of them:
 - i) The separated and empty grave clothes.
 - 1. I am grateful to God for the information about the napkin and the grave clothes. Only twice is the Greek word for “napkin” used in connection with a dead body (Jn. 11:44; 20:7) but it is a contrast. Lazarus came out of the grave with his face “bound about with a napkin” and bound “hand and foot with grave clothes” (Jn. 11:44), but when our Lord left the tomb, the napkin and burial clothes were left there. How precious to know that they were not left outside the tomb, for skeptics would have argued that someone took them off Him as they did with Lazarus (Jn. 11:44). God foreseeing this

- argument makes it evident that no one had gone in and unbound Him, for the stone had not yet been removed and the soldiers were on guard (Mk. 16:3; Matt. 27:65-66; 28:11). There had to be a supernatural power at work. One writer informs his readers that the folding of the napkin had to do with a Jewish custom and the finishing a meal. This was nothing other than a rumor! The napkin being folded indicated this was not a rushed matter, but a calm activity for which no haste was needed. Being in a place by itself it enabled the disciples to see the body of the Lord was no longer there.
2. Another observation is that when David was leaving Jerusalem in shame, he had his head covered (2 Sam. 15:30). Perhaps there is a contrasting thought that when the Lord took the napkin and set it aside, it indicated that His days of shame were forever over. Never again would man humiliate Him, mock Him, spit on Him, or buffet him, never again would they mock His claims, for from this point on He was ever moving upward and on to glory (Acts 10:40; Lk. 9:51).
- ii) The fidelity of Christ demanded His resurrection
1. He clearly declared that He would rise from the dead (Matt. 16:21; Jn. 2:19). If the Lord did not rise from the dead then all His claims are bogus. Therefore, when He claimed to be the only way to God, that would be a lie (Jn. 14:6); when he claimed to forgive sins, that would be a lie (Lk. 5:20); when He claimed to be deity, that would be a lie (Jn. 8:24). Everything depends on His resurrection. How glorious are His words: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore" (Rev. 1:18).
- iii) The fidelity of scripture demands it
1. The prophetic scriptures:
 - (a) Peter preached the Lord's resurrection using the text from Psa. 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-32)
 - (b) Paul preached the Lord's resurrection using the text from Psa. 2:7-8; Psa. 16:10 (Acts 13:3; Acts 2:27, 31, 13:35)
- iv) The testimony of the witnesses establishes it
1. It is important to observe that the witnesses were not bias toward its truth but were the most skeptical of it. Peter waited to "see the end" (Matt. 26:58). Also, the two on the Emmaus road (Lk. 24:21-23). To my understanding there was only one individual who believed He would rise again, and that was the thief on the cross beside Him. He looked across at a man on a cross, soon to be dead, and said: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom" (Lk. 23:42), something he would never have said if he did not believe the Lord would rise again.
 2. The appearances of the Lord to individuals:
 - (a) Mary (Jn. 20:16); Stephen (Acts 7:56); Saul (Paul) (1 Cor. 15:8); Peter / Cephas / Simon (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5); John (Rev. 1:13-18).
 3. The appearances of the Lord to collective groups:
 - a) The eleven (Mk. 16:14); the five hundred (1 Cor. 15:6); the two on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:15-31)
- v) The changed lives of people demonstrates it:
1. Peter, the coward, before a woman testifies before hundreds. (Acts 2:5-41)
 2. Paul, the persecutor of those who believed Jesus was the Christ, became the most ardent proclaimer of it. (Acts 9:20, 22; 18:28)
 3. The two on the road to Emmaus were so disheartened, for them all they were left with was blasted hopes and broken dreams. Then when the Lord revealed Himself they went back to Jerusalem to tell of the joyful discovery. (Lk. 24:33)
 4. Peter, who waited to see the end (Matt. 26:58), speaks of that which happened at the beginning because Jesus rose from the dead. (Acts 11:15 with Acts 10:44-47)
- vi) The witness of the angels:
1. On that Sunday morning the angels said: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen" (Lk. 24:5-6).

2) What actually happened at the moment of His resurrection?

- a) It is very easy to think of the resurrection of the Lord strictly on the physical level, but the reality is, it was much more than that. Indeed, it is much more than any ordinary human death which has two dimensions:
 - i) There is the physical when the heart stops functioning, the brain is reduced to almost non activity as cells fight for survival but eventually die off.
 - ii) There is also a spirit dimension when at that moment the spirit leaves the body.

For the Lord it was an instantaneous cessation of all aspects of life and the dismissing of His spirit to the Father. However, His death was more than that for He entered into the citadel of Satan, the mighty ugly fortress of satanic power, like a mighty liberator enters a realm which no other had deliberately entered. We see a faint shadow of it in the Old Testament. Israel was taken into Babylon, they had no power to prevent it, just the same way as every human being is taken into death. However, the Medes and Persians came and entered into Babylon and defeated that mighty nation. Christ entered death, that was something none else had ever done. Having of His own volition entered the strong man's house, he bound him and spoilt his goods (Matt. 12:29), and that included bodily resurrection.

- b) It must be emphasized that it was not a spirit resurrection but a bodily resurrection. I say this because Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Jehovah Witness movement, speculated, "Our Lord's human body . . . did not decay or corrupt . . . whether it was dissolved into gases or whether it is still preserved somewhere . . . no one knows" (Studies in the Scriptures by Jehovah Witnesses, 2:129). Thank God we do know. His bodily resurrection is the foundation for the bodily resurrection of all humanity, and they will not be a collection of gases!
- c) The resurrection of the Lord was the death knell to the power of Satan and death, and being such, it had a spiritual dimension. Just as His death was the first peal of the defeat of Satan, His resurrection was the final ringing of the bells proclaiming, "Satan is a defeated foe - the purposes of God for humanity and the world will be accomplished". In a day to come when the beast rises from the deadly wound, the world says: "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4). How much more the celestial ranks rose in triumphant praise when Jesus, breaking the power of Satan, rose from the dead. One can almost hear the celestial vaults ring: "Who is like unto Jesus? who is able to make war with Him?"
- d) In the gospels there is recorded the historical fact of the Lord's resurrection. In the Acts and epistles it's effects and doctrines are expounded, and in Revelation it's full outcome is manifested. Remove the resurrection of the Lord and the consequences are:
 - i) Our preaching is vain (1 Cor. 15:14)
 - ii) Your faith is vain (1 Cor. 15:14)
 - iii) We are false witnesses (1 Cor. 15:15)
 - iv) Ye are yet in your sins (1 Cor. 15:17)
 - v) Those believers who have died have perished (1 Cor. 15:18)
 - vi) We are most miserable, that is, we are to be most pitied. (1 Cor. 15:19)

3) How did He raise Himself from the dead?

- a) When we see a corpse, what we see is the body and nothing more. We do not see the spirit. It is evident that while the body is dead, the spirit is alive. When our Lord was about to enter into death He said: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk. 23:46). Thus, while His body was in the tomb, His spirit was with God; the body dead, the spirit alive. Make no mistake, the spirit of the Lord did not go down into Hell. He did not go to be abused by satanic hordes as some pseudo teachers teach. At the moment of resurrection the Spirit of life returned causing His body to come to life. As with every other aspect of the Lord, all human explanations and clarifications fail, for how can anyone describe the happenings of any miracle?
- b) It is after His resurrection that John writes: "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (Jn. 20:30-31). The question is, why did John write that here when there was another miracle to be written about? (Jn. 21:6-7). I suggest it was because in chapter 11 the Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead, a stupendous miracle. Could there be anything greater than to raise a man from the dead, whose body was already in a state of decay and stinking? Yes, after three days raise yourself! To the natural thinking, "an impossibility", but that is exactly what the Lord does, he raises Himself as He had said: "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself . . . and take it again" (Jn. 10:18). Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (Jn. 2:19)

- c) Having said that, make no mistake, it was also a work of God the Father and the Holy Spirit:
 - i) “But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses” (Acts 3:14-15)
 - ii) “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly” (Acts 10:38-40)

3) In what way is His resurrection unique?

- a) He was the first to rise from the dead having accomplished something BY His death. No one else ever accomplished anything by death (Lk. 9:31). Death was the accomplisher.
- b) He was never a dying man for death had no power over Him, and as such, the grave had no power, Satan had no power, and at the time appointed He rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:4).
- c) He was the first to rise from the dead, never to die again (Heb. 7:16; Rev. 1:18).
- d) He alone is the “firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:20, 23), He alone is the “Forerunner” (Heb. 6:20) and “Firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18). Being the “Firstfruits” indicates priority of Christ and Him being pledge of others to follow in resurrection. As the “firstborn” it speaks of His dignified position.

Consequences of His Resurrection

- 1) Because He rose from the dead, we guilty sinners can be justified, cleansed from all guilt. Many years ago I was in court in Belfast for not having a bell on my bicycle. I was guilty. I recall paying the fine and walking out free, but no court could eradicate my guilt. Thank God that in the court of Heaven, across the name Rowan Jennings is a beautiful caption: “Justified, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 4:25).
- 2) “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:25). Note the order. It is not, “I am the life and the resurrection”. This clearly teaches that Christ is the “Life” after the death of the believer, and He is the “Resurrection”. He is the maintainer of life just as blood is that which maintains life now, for the life is in the blood, so also the life after resurrection will be maintained by Him.
- 3) His Resurrection is:
 - a) The potency for giving life now (Eph. 1:20-2:1)
 - b) The proof of the coming harvest (1 Cor. 15:20)
 - c) The promise that all will be raised from the dead (Jn. 5:28-29)
 - d) He rose in the power of an endless, indissoluble life (Heb. 7:16, 25)
 - e) The pattern for the life of a believer now (Rom. 6:4, 11)
 - f) The pledge of our justification (Acts 13:39; Rom. 4:25)
 - g) The proving of His claims (1 Tim. 3:16)
 - h) His resurrection is the pledge of the present change in our lives (Rom. 8:11). The Spirit is working now to make alive, quicken our mortal bodies. This does not happen after death for the body is no longer mortal.
 - i) Fulfillment of the scripture in type and prophecy (Lev. 23:10-15; Isa. 53:10; Ps. 22:21)

Well may we sing the words of Robert Lowry:

Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior,
Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain:

*Up from the grave He arose;
with a mighty triumph o'er His foes;
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
and He lives forever, with His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Savior,
Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!

Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Savior;
He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!



. . . . *Rowan Jennings*

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