

CB - 4/14/68 p.m.
Easter

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST--AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY

Scripture Reading: Matt. 28:1-8
Text: Acts 2:24

Intro: For the past seven weeks we have been considering the seven last words of Christ which He spoke from the Cross--seven sayings.

He was crucified at "the third hour" (Mark 15:25, and He died six hours later. The first three sayings were spoken during the first three hours, probably early. At the sixth hour, or noon, darkness covered the land, and no word was spoken by the Saviour until the ninth hour. Then we have His last four utterances, followed by His death.

Proof of His death is to be seen in the fact that both His friends and His enemies agreed that He should be buried. And so He was!

I am sure that we will never know the gloom which spread over the hearts of the disciples when the realization of this actually got to them. The disciples on the road to Emmaus are certainly a picture of the way all of the disciples felt.

But then a marvelous thing took place!!!

It is described by Matthew in the words which we read tonight. "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:6).

Gradually the word spread, and then the Lord Jesus began those post-resurrection appearances. And following His ascension this became the dominant theme of the preaching of the Apostles from Acts 2 on.

They did not spiritualize it, nor did the Lord. To avoid such a conception He told His disciples when "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit . . . "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:37, 39).

To spiritualize the resurrection of Christ is nothing short of blasphemy--and I want you to see why tonight.

The other day I was reading through various passages dealing with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and I came to this verse: Acts 2:24.

I was struck with the words, "because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

"Pains" could read cords, and "Sheol and Death are personified as hunters lying in wait for their preys with nooses and nets" (Ex. Gk. Test., II, 83).

Death is our enemy, the last to be destroyed, and it stalks us to claim us and hold us.

Some had been raised from the dead before the Lord was raised, but always death had claimed them again. NOW PETER HAD THE AUDACITY TO SAY THAT FOR JESUS CHRIST "IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT HE SHOULD BE HOLDEN OF IT."

This is nothing short of amazing, and there is something here which deserves our closest attention. How could he possibly say this?

Our text will give us our first answer, and then we will look for others.

- I. IF JESUS CHRIST HAD NOT BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD IT WOULD HAVE MEANT THE FIRST FAILURE EVER TO BE FOUND IN THE WORD OF GOD.

From this point on Peter begins to quote from Psa. 16.

Does this not tell you something of how Peter and the others had been spending their time, waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit? They had been searching the Scriptures, and they had discovered that the resurrection of Jesus Christ had to take place!

See the principle of Acts 1:16.

The Lord Jesus had taught them that "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35)--AND IT CANNOT!

Joshua wrote after all that God had done for His people in bringing them out of Egypt and into the promised land that "there failed not ought (not anything) of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Josh. 21:45).

NEVER HAS THERE BEEN AN INSTANCE IN WHICH GOD HAS BROKEN HIS WORD. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, "according to the scriptures."

So it was not possible for God to be faithful to His Word and for His Son to remain dead in the tomb.

- II. IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR DEATH TO HOLD HIM OR HIS OWN TEACHING WOULD HAVE BEEN PROVED WRONG.

Normally there would be no need to distinguish between the teachings of the Old Testament and the sayings of the Lord Jesus because both are the Word of God. But for emphasis tonight, let us look at His teachings separately.

If Jesus Christ had not been raised from the dead, it would have meant that He had deliberately deceived His disciples.

Note how Matthew develops this theme: Matt. 16:21; 17:22, 23; 20:17-19; 26:30-32; culminating with "as He said" in Matt. 28:6.

See also John 16:16-22.

There thoughts may have been filled with hopes for the Kingdom, or plans to deliver Him from death, so they did not notice what He had said, BUT HE SAID IT TIME AND TIME AGAIN!

Jn. 2:18-22
This is really the greatest test of all that our Lord taught. If He proved to be telling the truth here, then you and I should have not trouble at all with anything else that ever came from His lips.

III. IF JESUS CHRIST HAD NOT BEEN RESURRECTED, HIS DEITY WOULD HAVE BEEN BROUGHT INTO SERIOUS QUESTION.

I am not surprised that men who deny the reality of the resurrection of Christ also deny the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The two go hand in hand.

Some say that Jesus Christ never claimed deity. This is not true. Let me cite one example tonight.

How did the Jews interpret His claim that God was His Father? To them it meant that He was making Himself "equal with God" (John 5:18)--and so they took up stones to stone Him, or "sought the more to kill him" because of His blasphemy.

So in their eyes He was claiming deity--absolute equality with God.

Now take this idea to John 10:17, 18--two verses we have used again and again in considering the last words of Christ. These verses could only have been spoken by the Lord.

We have seen that He died on His own will: "I lay it down of myself." But this was only half of His claim. He also

claimed that He had "power to take it again."

Did He?

Note how Paul touches on this truth in Rom. 1:3, 4.

See also Acts 3:14, 15.

IV. FINALLY, IF JESUS CHRIST HAD NOT BEEN RAISED, THE CHURCH IS ROBBED OF ITS MESSAGE AND OF ITS HOPE.

To deny the resurrection of Christ is to strike the death blow to the Christian faith. Paul makes this very clear in 1 Cor. 15:14-19.

There is no reason to preach because our preaching is vain and "we are found false witness of God."

There is no reason to put our faith in Christ. Such faith would be "vain," empty, meaningless.

We "are yet in our sins."

We have not hope. "They also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

And to climax it all, "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," most to be pitied. WE HAVE NOTHING, BUT ARE ONLY KIDDING OURSELVES.

Concl: Do you now see why Christ had to be raised from the dead? Because the Scriptures prophesied it. Because He taught it. Because His deity demanded it. And because this is the glorious fulfillment of all that He came to do for you and me.

Without the resurrection of Christ we have nothing. But with a living Saviour, our faith in the Word finds its greatest confirmation, and our hope for salvation is not a fool's dream, but the greatest hope it is possible for men to have.

Cf. John's vision of Christ in Rev. 1, and the words of our Lord in vv. 17, 18,

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

Paul adds: "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." This is Rom. 6:9.