

WHAT DOES CHRIST'S RESURRECTION MEAN?

Scripture reading: 1 Cor. 15:12-22.

Intro: At our Good Friday Service I spoke on the subject, What Does Christ's Death Mean?

This morning I would like to speak on the subject, What Does Christ's Resurrection Mean?

Tonight (and I am changing my subject from the one announced in the bulletin) I plan to speak, the Lord willing, on, What Does Christ's Ascension Mean?

And next Sunday night I hope to speak, with the Lord's blessing, on, What Does Christ's Return Mean?

I am always hesitant to ask people to come to hear me speak, but, if you feel that these subjects will be helpful to you, I invite you to join me as we look into the Word of God together.

What Does Christ's Resurrection Mean?

To answer this question fully would take far more time than we have this morning. We can only touch on a few of the many aspects of this important subject, but I want to touch on some of the most important ones. And then, once you see what I am doing, you can go on in your own study of the Word to see what the other aspects of this wonderful subject are.

I am assuming this morning that you know the account in Scripture which gives us the historical record of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is given in all four Gospels. When we talk about the resurrection of Christ we are talking about a literal, physical resurrection! To be raised from the dead involves the return of life to a body where there has been death!

It is Dr. Luke, the writer of the third Gospel, who tells us that, when the Lord appeared to the twelve, He said to the terrified disciples,

"Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 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.

And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them" (Luke 24:38b-43).

Such a description points unmistakably to a physical resurrection!

Obviously, such a resurrection has some very important significance. What are some of the things which the Bible teaches concerning the meaning of Christ's resurrection?

- I. First of all, IT VERIFIED THE MOST AMAZING PREDICTION THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST EVER MADE.

We have been going through the Gospel of Mark in our Sunday morning services. We have gotten up to chapter 14. We will get back to it next Sunday morning. But as far back as the 8th chapter Mark recorded this concerning what our Lord taught His disciples:

"And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and by the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31).

He repeated this prediction several times.

After the Lord left the Upper Room with His disciples, and went out to Gethsemane, He said to them,

"All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee" (Mark 14:27, 28).

Then, when Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome came to the tomb on that memorable first day of the week, Mark tells us that "a young man" was in the sepulchre who said to them,

"Be not amazed. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; He is risen; He is not here. Behold the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6).

And then he said,

"But go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, that He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you" (Mark 16:7).

Our Lord was right on three counts:

- 1) He did rise from the dead.
- 2) He arose on the day He said He would.
- 3) He went from Judea into Galilee as He predicted.

Jesus Christ said many things while He was here on earth. Many of those things have been questioned. Many have been denied. BUT, IF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS RIGHT ABOUT THIS AMAZING PREDICTION, IT GIVES US AMAZING SUPPORT FOR BELIEVING THAT EVERYTHING HE SAID WAS TRUE!

- II. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST CONFIRMS THE GREATEST PROPHECY OF OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE.

If Jesus Christ had not been raised from the dead, the truthfulness of the entire Old Testament would be in question!

Why? Because of what we read in Luke 18:31-33:

"Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. FOR He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully treated, and spit on; And they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death. And the third day He shall rise again."

Obviously we cannot go into Old Testament prophecy this morning to speak of all that it has to say about Christ. But let me cite one passage which speaks of the resurrection. I speak of Psa. 16:10,

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol, neither wilt thou permit thine Holy One to see corruption."

David knew that the Messiah, the Christ, would be raised from the dead. And Peter placed heavy emphasis on this in his message in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2!

This is the point I am making: IF JESUS CHRIST HAD NOT BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, IT WOULD HAVE PLACED A CLOUD OVER THE INTEGRITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. BUT SINCE HE WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD, WE HAVE ONE OF THE STRONGEST PROOFS THAT THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE WORD OF GOD.

No one here this morning can afford to ignore such evidence.

- III. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST GIVES US ONE OF THE STRONGEST, IF NOT THE STRONGEST, PROOFS OF THE DEITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Paul teaches this as he begins his epistle to the Romans:

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God . . . concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:1, 3, 4).

The NASB says, "declared in an act of power" (mg.).

What does "declared" mean? It means that just as His birth proved that He was a man, so His resurrection proved more than anything else that He was God, Deity, the Son of God!!!

All of Christ's miracles give proof of His Deity, but none was greater than this!

Peter spoke of this also on the Day of Pentecost:

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:24).

The Lord Jesus Christ might die, but, if He is the Son of God, He will not stay dead!

And He did not! He arose!

IV. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST GIVES US PROOF THAT HIS WORK FOR OUR SALVATION WAS APPROVED AND ACCEPTED BY GOD, THE FATHER.

Here we must look at Rom. 4:25 where Paul, speaking of Christ, says,

"Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

Last Friday night we learned that we were "justified by His blood" (Rom. 5:9); now we read that our Lord "was raised again for our justification." Which is right?

Both are. The difference is this. The death of Christ was the sacrifice that was necessary for our sins. The resurrection of Christ was God's way of saying that the work was finished! He was raised on account of the fact that all that was necessary for our salvation had been done!

The only thing that could have kept our Lord in the grave would have been our sins. The fact that He came out is evidence that our sins are gone!

Cf. Rom. 10:9, 10, "That if thou shalt confess with . . ."

V. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST SHOWS HOW MIGHTY GOD'S POWER IS.

This is the part of my message which should bring encouragement to every troubled child of God who is here this morning.

One truth that we love to dwell on is the truth Paul expresses in Eph. 3:20.

But how do we know that that is true?

We know it because earlier in that same epistle Paul said that this was the way he was praying for them:

"That ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all princi-

pality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come; And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:18, 19-23).

Certainly a God who can raise His Son from the dead and give Him such glory is a God who can meet any need we have!

VI. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST GUARANTEES OUR RESURRECTION.

Our Lord conquered death for Himself, and for us.

We read in our Scripture reading this morning,
"But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

If Jesus Christ did not arise from the dead, then there is no possibility at all that you and I will ever be raised if we die!

Through resurrection, the resurrection of Christ, Paul can quote from Isaiah 25:8, and also say for himself, "Death is swallowed up in victory." And then Paul adds,

"But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:54b, 57).

Connected with the last, and yet adding to it, we have this finally:

VII. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST GUARANTEES OUR LIVING AND HEAVENLY HOPE.

Peter makes this clear in 1 Pet. 1:3-5:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Every Christian loves to talk about and think about HEAVEN. Paul teaches us that

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most" to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:19).

THE ONLY REASON WE HAVE ANY HOPE AT ALL, ANY PROSPECTS FOR A GLORIOUS FUTURE, IS BECAUSE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION WHICH IS OUR GUARANTEE.

Concl: Can anyone possibly say after seeing all of this that it really doesn't make any difference whether or not you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ--the bodily resurrection?

It means the difference between heaven and hell, between life and death, between peace and fear, between absolute certainty and hopeless chaos, between the forgiveness of sins and eternal judgment.

Do you believe it?

If so, then you know that we are speaking about a living Savior.
HAVE YOU TRUSTED HIM?

No decision you will ever make will be as great as the decision you make concerning your relationship to Jesus Christ. If you know Him as your Savior because you have placed your trust in Him as the One who died for you, THEN YOU HAVE ALL THAT YOU WILL EVER NEED.

But if you do not know Him, no other decision and no other possession can ever compensate for not having Him. Let me urge you to trust Him today! What a wonderful thing to remember Easter Sunday of 1973 as the day when you gave your heart to the risen Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

For those of us who do know Him--these great truths can only serve to strengthen our faith, and to give us greater peace and hope as day by day we wait for Him who died for us and rose again.