

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The resurrection of Jesus is the most important aspect of the ministry work of Jesus. Yes, I know that His death on the cross for all of our sins is most vital to the work and ministry that Jesus did. However, we must realize that it is His resurrection and the fact that because Jesus resurrected from the dead are the most pivotal aspects of any believer's salvation. It is at the forefront as far as our eternal salvation is concerned.

We must, as believers in Jesus, realize that Jesus came to this earth for us. We know that He came to save us from our sins. We know that He came to this earth to show each of us how to walk and live out the lifestyle of a true child of God as we go forward to live and walk on this earth.

When Jesus took the cross, He took the cross to be that final sacrifice that would be needed to pay the price for all of man's sin. That sacrifice on the cross by Jesus, and we believing in what He did on that cross is most important to us. However, we must truly recognize but not minimize, that what He did on the cross was only half of what Jesus came to do for us.

We must realize that Jesus came, in the flesh, to first live out His life on this earth as the perfect example of what a true child of God was to live like while here on this earth. He taught and most importantly, He lived out, the lifestyle of what a true child of God was to live out while they are on this earth. Jesus correctly taught and showed the people of that time and for us today, what the Word of God truly was saying.

Jesus came to teach us correctly what God was telling us in the first five books of the Bible – the Pentateuch. He came to teach us the correct understanding of what those books were trying to teach each of us. He became the final sacrifice for us. Yes, the Pentateuch went through all the sacrifices necessary that were needed to bring sinful man back into relationship with God. However, we know that all of those sacrifices could never be done correctly by any one person. Therefore, any kind of a relationship with God was not and never could be a full and deep relationship with the Living God. That is why Jesus came.

We must be aware and always remember that in the Old Testament scriptures, they reveal to us two aspects of getting back into relationship and in trying to keep that relationship with God. These two "aspects" are expressed as the "sacrificial" aspect of the Law and the "moral" aspect of the Law. To reiterate this again we must realize that the Law, in the first five books of the Bible, was broken down into two ways in which man's relationship with God could be rectified in.

The sacrificial system was instituted because there needed to be aspects shown to man that would make them realize that they needed to make atonement for their own sin. This atonement would come through the offering up of other animals and others things that would be offered to God. However, we must remember, that every one of those sacrifices would be representative of the life of every person who would offer these sacrifices to God. In actual terms, these animal and other types of sacrifices literally represented the people who were offering them up to the Lord.

The key here is to remember that these sacrifices represented the people that were offering them up. However, in reality, the person themselves needed to actually be killed unto God because of their immoral actions and because of their inbred sinful nature. God, in His mercy, allowed these sacrificial offerings to be done to replace what would actually be needed to set man free from their guilt of sin - themselves.

That is where Jesus came and stepped in for all men who were, are and will yet to come. He became the final sacrifice that would be offered to God on behalf of every man and woman who ever was, is and will come. That is what Jesus' crucifixion was all about. He became the ultimate sacrifice that took the place,

not of the animal sacrifices, but rather for the sin of every single person who was, is and ever will be on this earth. Jesus took the punishment for every person while He was on the cross.

That punishment was two-fold. The first part of it was that because of sin man should die physically because of their sinfulness. The second part of that punishment was that every person should reap the end result of their sinful life. That end result would be to spend eternity in their "dead" spiritual state in a place known as Gehenna (Greek), Hades (Hebrew) or as we know it today - Hell.

We must realize that Jesus took our place and set every man free from that ultimate fate. We just need to believe in what He did for us two thousand years ago. Now, through Jesus, man can live and walk on this earth as a child of God and have relationship with Him while we are here on this earth. They just need to believe and accept Him into their hearts and lives.

However, we must remember that Jesus did something else for man. We all know that Jesus did not stay in Hell. Yes, He took the keys of death and life from the devil but He did something else that truly makes this remarkable. Jesus rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. This was vital for our eternal salvation. We must realize that it is one thing to set us free so that now we can live our life on this earth free from the bondage of sin and free from the tactics of the devil. However, we must realize that the second part of what Jesus did truly gives the believer **eternal** life.

The second part of what Jesus did, as we mentioned, was that He rose from the grave. He rose out of that place of torment. He returned back to this earth and briefly spoke to the women at the tomb. However, on that same day, right after He had spoken to the women, He rose to present Himself to the Father. After presenting Himself to the Father, on that same day, He came back to this earth and to His disciples and revealed Himself to them.

However, when Jesus ascended to the Father on that first Resurrection Sunday, He opened the "door" to all those who were in "Abraham's bosom" to now enter into God's heavenly Kingdom. That is the power of the resurrection.

We must grasp and fully realize that there are two parts to what Jesus did two thousand years ago. Yes, He died and took the punishment of all of man's sin, which paid the price and freed us from the bondage of living a life under the influence of the devil. However, after Jesus defeated the devil, He then also rose from the dead. When Jesus did this, it gave to those who had believed and who would believe in all that Jesus did, the promise of eternal life - the promise of being in Heaven with God, the Father. Praise the Lord!!!

That is the most amazing aspect of what Jesus did for us. It would be great that we could just live our lives free from the bondage of the devil while here on this earth. However, it is fantastic that once we leave this earth we have eternal life with the Father and with Jesus. That is the power of the resurrection. Sometimes that gets lost in our understanding of what Jesus really did for us.

That is what the scriptures truly were telling anyone who would truly look into His Word. It was not simply for us to be brought back into relationship with our God while we lived on this earth. No, it was to give any one who would believe in Him eternal life with Him, forever and ever, even when this natural, physical life would end. The believer would have a new life which would be extended forever and ever to now be with the Living God forever and ever. Our spirit would be renewed, "born again," and we would now be able to communicate and have true fellowship and relationship with the Living God.

The aspect of "resurrection" was always in the Old Testament. However, it was spoken of, revealed and shown to us in a greater way by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament. Jesus spoke and taught on the aspect of "resurrection" as we see within the Gospel accounts. Jesus was confronted by the Sadducees with this aspect of "resurrection" as we see in Matthew 22:23-32, Mark 12:18-23 and Luke 20:27-36.

In the account brought forth in these scriptures, Jesus was confronted by the Sadducees who did not believe in any type of resurrection. Jesus did not back away from this discussion. The Sadducees came to Him with a “made up” example to prove what they thought would be the absurdity of “resurrection.” Jesus turned the tables on them and showed them the reality of the truth concerning “resurrection.” He states very clearly that the resurrection is a truth and a reality by stating that God IS the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jesus states very clearly that, “... *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*”

In John 11:25-26, Jesus makes a statement to Martha that states things very clearly for all to hear and read of concerning the resurrection. Jesus states, “... *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*” He then asks Martha if she believed this. Notice Martha’s response in verse 27. She makes a most profound statement concerning Jesus as she declares, “... *Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*”

Martha’s response to Jesus is great but does it really answer His question to her? Does she believe that the resurrection is a “now thing.” You see that was difficult for the Jewish people that believed in the resurrection to truly grasp. Martha declared her allegiance to Jesus but she didn’t really answer His question – or did she? Many people hesitate in this. However, it is very clear to me that Martha does indeed say “*Yea Lord...*” To me she answers the question that Jesus had presented to her.

We know that Lazarus, immediately following this, was raised from the tomb. Lazarus was dead 4 days which meant according to Jewish tradition that the spirit would have left Lazarus’ physical body by that time and there would be no way for him to “come back to life.” We see that Jesus waited until three days had passed and then on the fourth day He raised Lazarus from the dead.

It was at the time when no one else could have ever thought that Lazarus could “come back to life.” Yes, Jesus waited until the fourth day to raise Lazarus from the dead. Jesus did this to present His final miracle and to express the last aspect of what the Jewish people thought Messiah would do – raise one that would be considered “truly dead.”

This miracle however, does not reflect the great thing that Jesus did when He, Himself was resurrected. You see, Lazarus came back to life but he came back to this life. He would still need to physically die one day. Jesus was the first resurrected one, who physically died, took the punishment for all the sin that men had and would commit but after that He rose and went to the Father – directly.

He was the first to ever do that. In doing so, Jesus opened the doorway for all those who were waiting for Him – all those who were in Abraham’s Bosom – to now be resurrected, and come into the presence of the Living God. Yes, all of the Old Testament men and women who continued to believe in God’s promised Messiah – the One who would take them to eternal life with the Father forever and ever.

As mentioned previously, the resurrection of Jesus was expressed in and through the Old Testament scriptures. We see this in the Book of Jonah. In Matthew 12, the scribes and Pharisees demand a sign, but Jesus responds by calling them and their generation “evil and adulterous.” No sign, says Jesus, will be given to them but the “sign of the prophet Jonah”

In Matthew 12:40 Jesus states, “*For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*” As Jesus explains, Jonah and the big fish was a prelude to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was and is a much greater prophet than Jonah ever could be. After all, Jesus was the Son of God.

Just as Jonah's time in the fish would have proved meaningless had he not been "spit up" by the fish onto the shore to continue his appointed ministry of preaching repentance to Nineveh, so also would the crucifixion and death of Jesus prove meaningless if not for the fact that He went and defeated the devil. When and by defeating the devil, Jesus defeated the aspect of "death." Jesus defeated death by rising from death. He became the first resurrected man and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

There are many other examples found within the Old Testament concerning the foretelling of the resurrection of the Messiah in the day that He does come to the earth. There are numerous examples for the resurrection of the believer found and expressed within the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. The fact of the matter is that everyone will receive and experience a resurrection after they pass from this life. However, not everyone will possess and enter into everlasting life with Father, God.

The resurrection is actually the "cornerstone" of our faith in God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not only die for our lives while we live on this earth. No, He died, took our punishment, the punishment of hell, because that is where man was destined to go because of our sinful nature – no matter how good we tried to be. We always had the sin of Adam that had marked and doomed the human race, God's creation, for eternal damnation in hell.

Jesus came to set us free from the "mark of Adam." By believing in Jesus our heart has now been seared as God's own people. We are a totally new species of being that never was before. We are now children of God. As the scripture tells us – the old things are passed away, all things have become new – totally new. We are now a totally new species of being that never before existed. We are now children of God, joint heirs along with Jesus to the things of God. We now have life on this earth but most importantly we have resurrected life after we are changed from this life and we enter into God's eternal Kingdom.

1 Peter 1:3 tells us, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* The New Testament tells us that our resurrection is totally dependent upon Jesus.

I pray that we never forget what Jesus did for us by dying on that cross and taking the punishment of sin and death for each of us. However, let us never forget the primary purpose of why He did that for both you and I. Jesus was the first resurrected "man." Jesus did it all so that one day we will be resurrected into eternal life and be with Him and the Father forever and ever.

I want to leave us with this passage of scripture that I pray each of us will experience and be a part of when and as it takes place. It is from Revelation 21:1-7.

¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ² And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. ⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. ⁵ And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. ⁶ And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. ⁷ He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

God bless you.