

2009 Spring Newsletter
Detroit Bible Students
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*“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength,
and honor, and glory, and blessing.”
Revelation 5:12*



The Importance of the Resurrection

The Christian world has just celebrated Easter. For people of faith, this holiday is a commemoration of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. For others, it is a celebration of spring, bunnies, flowers, chocolate, and colored eggs.

In many churches, Easter sunrise services stirred the emotions of the worshippers, but were anyone's thoughts on the event being celebrated or were their thoughts merely on the beauty of the ritual? Was any consideration given to the

tremendous importance of that event? Do even faithful Christians realize that it wasn't merely a great miracle but the very foundation of our hopes?

While great stress is rightly laid upon the death of Jesus, few seem to also appreciate fully the importance of his resurrection and its bearing upon the entire Gospel message. The Apostle Paul indicates how much depended upon it when he wrote, (1 Corinthians 15: 14, 18) "if Christ be not

risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain...They also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Thus, from the inspired writing of the Apostle Paul we learn that without the resurrection we would have no hope.

Then, why do some Christians still picture Christ on the cross? The problem comes from a failure to understand that death means the cessation of life, as the Scriptures declare, "in that very day their thoughts perish." (Psalm 146:4) The masses of Christendom have come to believe that there is no death, that the dead are more alive than they ever were before they died. Applying this thought to our Lord, as well as to others, they do not appreciate the Scriptural declaration that "Christ died and rose and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living." (Romans 14:9)

Confused by the errors of Grecian philosophy and the traditions of medieval times, the majority of Christian people cannot appreciate the Scriptural declarations respecting the importance of the resurrection. Only those who realize that the dead are dead—that they have no conscious existence until awakened from the sleep of death (Ecclesiastes 9:10)—can really appreciate the importance of the resurrection and its vital connection with the Gospel message. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, we would have no basis for preaching the Gospel.

The Apostle John in recounting the crucifixion and how the soldiers came to break Jesus' legs to hasten his death, but finding him dead already, further verified his death by thrusting a spear into his side, says, "And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe." (John

19:35, NKJV) Why did John feel compelled to make this emphatic declaration concerning Jesus' death?

When John wrote his Gospel, there had already arisen in the church a group who put forth the idea that Jesus didn't really die, but merely appeared to die. That he wasn't really a man, but was a spirit in human appearance and his advent was merely to set a good example. The crucifixion was only a charade, unnecessary for salvation. Therefore, it was necessary that Jesus' death be witnessed, that his body be in the tomb and placed under guard behind a sealed stone long enough for it to be clear that he was in fact dead; then that he be raised on the third day as a demonstration of the acceptableness of his sacrifice for sin. Thus it was in refutation of this "Gnostic heresy" that John uttered these words.

In his first epistle to the church (1 John 4:1-3) John says, "...many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. This is the spirit of Antichrist, which you have heard was coming and is now already in the world."

That death was the penalty for sin is clearly stated in Genesis 2:17. There is no other punishment for sin stated in the Bible. Man's desire to cling to life is the basis for the theories of life-after-death that pervade the world's religions. But the word of God is firm and clear. There is no hope of life of any kind without the resurrection provided for in God's plan.

It was necessary for Jesus to die, "the just for the unjust" in order to purchase the sin-sick and dying race of Adam. (Romans 5:12, 18, 19) Jesus died not for the sins of each individual sinner, but for the one sin that plunged the entire race of man into death—Adam's sin. The Apostle John said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the **sin** (*singular*) of the world." (John 1:29) Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15: 21, 22, "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." In verse 45 he further contrasts Adam and Christ saying, "The first man Adam became a living being. The Last Adam became a life-giving spirit." "Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life." (Romans 5:18)

In Galatians 3:8, the Gospel is defined for us: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying 'in you all the nations shall be blessed.'" Has that been fulfilled? Not yet! Paul tells us further (vss. 16, 29) "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made, He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ...And if you are Christ's then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." So it is not until the Christian church, the Body of Christ, is complete that the promised blessing will be poured out on all the families of earth.

By the grace of God, Jesus' death was the ransom price for father Adam and his posterity (1 Timothy 2: 5, 6; 1 Timothy 4: 10; 1 John 2:2). Because Jesus thus paid the penalty for the whole race and redeemed all from the sentence of death by his own death, therefore, in due time, Adam and all of his posterity are to be released from the death sentence. Then, in God's due time, the risen Christ, as the great King, will establish his Kingdom in the world, and all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come forth to the glorious opportunities of the millennial kingdom—opportunities for reconciliation with God and release from all the imperfections of the fall. (Isaiah 35)

To preach such a Gospel without any proof of his resurrection, would be vain preaching indeed—foolish preaching, deceiving the people. But, thanks be to God, the resurrection is true, witnessed by Jesus' disciples during the forty days before his ascension, and by more than five hundred others (1 Corinthians 15: 6). That these were true witnesses is affirmed by the fact that they sealed their testimony with their lives and for this Gospel's sake endured unthinkably cruel persecutions gladly.

*"If when we were enemies,
we were reconciled to God
through the death of his Son,
much more,
having been reconciled,
we shall be saved by His life."
(Rom. 5: 10).*

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