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Resurrection Realities

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DOUBTLESS you have heard the story of a London boy who was found gazing at a picture of Jesus dying on the cross. Standing before the window of a picture dealer, the poor urchin appeared to be lost in wonder and amazement; so much so, that he failed to notice a gentleman standing near at hand who had been attracted to the window by the lad's evident interest in the crucifixion scene.

Breaking the spell, the gentleman asked, "Whom are those cruel men killing?" Thinking the man was ignorant of the message of the cross, the boy feelingly related all that Jesus endured as He died in agony and shame. He poured out his young heart in testimony regarding the willingness of Jesus to die for sin and sinners. Thanking the lad for his explanation, the gentleman said, "What a wonderful Savior He was to come and die for all mankind."

The two parted but the man had not gone far before he heard running feet, and turning around, he saw his young friend with joy written over his countenance. "Oh, sir, I forgot to tell you that He did not stay on His cross! *He rose again.*"

Yes, this is the blessed truth of Easter. Jesus rose again! Death could not keep its prey.

*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!*

And is it not fitting to have a season such as Easter when we can turn aside and meditate upon the fundamental truth of the resurrection of our blessed Lord?

The Resurrection in Prophecy

The Apostle Paul reminds us that Jesus died and rose again, *according to the Scriptures*. And that the resurrection was prophesied ere Christ was born is clear from a consideration of one or two Old Testament passages.

Job, for example, believed that the Redeemer could not be kept imprisoned in a grave. "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." And to the patriarch was given a clear revelation of his own participation in the resurrection. "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Then we have the declaration of David in Psalm 16:10: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [that is, in the "abode of departed spirits"]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Peter, in his Pentecost sermon confirms this prophetic declaration of Christ's resurrection (Acts 2:25-35).

In the Calvary Psalm, Psalm 22, David turns from the crucifixion to the resurrection in the words: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren" (verse 22). This was fulfilled in the command of the Risen Christ: "Go to my brethren" (John 20:17).

Among other Old Testament predictions of the resurrection, mention may be made of Hosea's striking message: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (13:14).

If Christ was not raised from the dead, then the truth of inspiration is weakened, seeing that the prophets themselves professed to be led

of the Holy Spirit in their predictions. If Christ did not rise again, then the prophets stand branded as liars, for with one voice they declared the central truth of resurrection.

The Resurrection in Pattern

The most casual reader of the Old Testament must be impressed with the fact that the resurrection can be found therein, fully typified as well as prophesied. Combining Genesis 22:5 with Hebrews 11:19 we have a figure of the resurrection of God's Son in the raising up of Isaac, Abraham's son, virtually from a grave.

Jonah likewise foreshadows the death and resurrection of Christ (Matthew 12:39, 40). It would seem as if Jonah actually died inside the whale; otherwise, how could a man miraculously kept alive be a fitting type of Christ who died and rose again? The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, seeing that he bore the evident signs of death and resurrection.

Isaiah's prophecy regarding the restoration and re-establishment of Israel as a nation is likened unto a "resurrection." "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise" (26:19). As Christ rose from the grave, so His ancient people are to rise from the graves of nations where for centuries they have been buried.

Another figure of resurrection is supplied by Ezekiel in the vision of the valley of dry bones (37:3). "Can these bones live?" Well, Christ's resurrection is a guarantee of Israel's and of our own resurrection.

Furthermore, the miracles of the dead restored to life offer further proof of the Lord's

power to raise the dead. We have the account of the restoration of the Shunammite's son to life (2 Kings 4:18-37), and the miracle that happened to the dead man as he was cast into the tomb of Elisha (2 Kings 13:20, 21). Touching the bones of the prophet who gave life, the man, we are told, "revived, and stood up on his feet."

The Resurrection in Practice

The resurrections made possible by Christ proclaim Him to be the resurrection and the life and prepare us for His own actual resurrection from the grave. There were the raising of the dead child, the young man, the only son of his mother, and Lazarus, whom Jesus loved.

Our Lord, declaring that He had power to lay down His life, and to take it up again, foretells His own resurrection in the memorable words, "the third day he shall rise again" (Matt. 20:19; Luke 24:1-8; John 10:18). And the resurrection of Christ is one of the most important facts recorded in the New Testament. The whole system of Christianity stands or falls by it. Admit the miracle of the resurrection, and all other miracles become possible. Higher criticism, casting doubt upon the truth of the resurrection, reaches the logical conclusion of denying everything else miraculous in the Word of God. Thus, everything miraculous is explained from the natural standpoint.

But "the Resurrection of Christ," as one writer puts it, "is the heart of Christianity, which makes it pulsate with the life of God. It is the keystone to the arch of truth, which holds all the faith of the Gospel together. It is the foundation of the Church—it is the mainspring of Christian activity. It is the lever of power

which moves the world. It is the link that unites all believers.”

And Easter calls us to the fresh consideration of the indisputable fact, not only of a vacant cross but an empty tomb. Some there are who worship a crucifix, displaying as it does the limp, blood-stained, lifeless form of the Saviour. The Christ we worship is not on a cross, nor is His body in a grave. Praise God, He is alive forevermore!

Angels, who do not lie, echoed forth the glorious message on that first Easter morn, “He is not here; but is risen.” And all the details in connection with the resurrection narrative bear the stamp of reality.

Coming to the resurrection in practice, Paul declares that as we are identified with Christ’s death, we likewise share His resurrection. We have been raised together with Him. But is the risen life ours? Do we walk in the newness of life? As risen ones, are we dead to the world? Surely there is no food for the risen life in the dead things of the world. Are we daily experiencing the power of Christ’s resurrection, a power well able to set us free from the tyranny of sin? “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). May the life of our risen, glorified, reigning Christ flow in a fuller measure through our lives here below!

The Resurrection in Preaching

The resurrection message was the secret of the power of the early church. Preaching Jesus and the resurrection, she knew what it was to turn the world upside down. Christ’s victory over death and hell formed the church’s constant theme.

Following the preaching of the glorious fact

of the resurrection, there came a great spiritual awakening. Multitudes were saved and added to the church. If only the present day church would return to the same central message, there would follow a time of spiritual quickening. Modernism preaches Jesus, that is, after a fashion, but the full message is Jesus and the resurrection. Yes, and let it not be forgotten that the dual message is necessary, ere men can be saved. Sometimes we emphasize the cross to the exclusion of the resurrection. We tell sinners to believe that Jesus died for their sins and they will be saved. But surely this is only half the truth. Paul is careful to link the empty tomb on to Calvary as the full saving message. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath *raised him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9). No one, then, can be truly saved if he discredits the resurrection. In the salvation of the soul, faith in the resurrection of Christ is of paramount importance.

In a larger way, the resurrection stands proven by the existence of the church. Her presence in the world confirms the fact of Christ’s victory over death. If there had been no resurrection body, there would have been no mystical body, for the Holy Spirit came as the result of the resurrection and the ascension. Every believer, then, is a living proof of the resurrection. The existence of Christians proves that the resurrection is not only a fact, but a factor—not only a doctrine, but a dynamic. Through the power of the resurrection, sinners are transformed into saints. Because Christ rose again from the grave, ungodly men, buried as they are in graves of sin and lust, can experience what it is to be raised from their dead selves to a higher, holier life.

Paul also reminds us that if Christ did not rise again, then our faith and preaching are vain; that is, empty or void. Denying the resurrection, we have no saving message to declare to a guilty world.

The crucifixion left the disciples tearful, weak, timid, despondent, wretchedly inert. But the Risen Christ sent them forth brave, strong, and full of power. They were no longer the weeping friends of a dead Prophet, but heroic soldiers willing to die for the Prince of Life!

At this Easter season may we be encouraged to give ourselves more completely to Him, who reassures us of His triumphant victory over death in the commanding words, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forever more." May glorious and continuous victories be ours as we remember that He lives!

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