

Resurrection and Glory

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No fact of Scripture is more wonderful than this; — there is a risen Man in the glory of God. It is the appropriate sequel to the wonder of God having been manifested in the flesh, as 1 Timothy 3: 16 declares. It is also the basis of a third wonder, viz., the descent of the Holy Spirit to dwell in the believer on earth, according to John 7: 39.

We are also well within the mark when we say that no fact of Scripture is verified with such abundant care as this. In 1 Corinthians 15: 3, 4 the Apostle Paul rehearses the gospel which he preached. The death of Christ for our sins and His burial are stated and left, for there was no need to verify these facts since they were beyond dispute and acknowledged by all. He passes to the third fact of the gospel, "That He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures," and in support of this he adduces a host of witnesses. The resurrection of Christ had not the same publicity and was not carried out with spectacular effect as was His death. Nevertheless, it is the very keystone of the whole arch of Divine truth, as verses 13 to 19 show. How necessary, then, for the Apostle to start by showing that the resurrection of Christ is a fact beyond dispute.

In verses 5 and 8 Paul cites six different occasions on which the risen Lord was seen. He commences with an individual, Cephas or Peter; he mentions that as many as five hundred saw Him at one time, he finishes with his own personal witness, and he saw Him not only risen but in glory. The list he gives is by no means exhaustive. He does not cite the women who saw Him, nor say anything of Stephen. The wealth of witness which he does cite makes it, however, quite evident that if Christ's resurrection be not a certain fact there is no event of history of which we can be sure.

Having established the certainty of this great fact the Apostle proceeds to demonstrate its commanding importance. His argument in 1 Corinthians 15: 14-19 is based upon the hypothesis of the non-resurrection of Christ. If He be not risen, what then? Why, the whole fabric of faith and blessing would collapse into ruin. The Apostle's preaching would be vain, and they would stand convicted as false witnesses. The faith of the Corinthians, or of any Christian to-day, would be vain, and such would then be as much in their sins as anyone else. The saints who have died in Christ would be in no state of blessedness at all, but would have perished. We, the living saints, would be of all men most miserable, for we would incur certain worldly disadvantages by believing, and so merely get a little extra trouble

in this life with no recompense in the life to come. Truly the resurrection of Christ is the keystone of the arch. Dislodge that, and every stone of the arch falls out.

But equally we may liken it to the foundation stone upon which the temple of truth stands. It is the guarantee of the accomplishment of all God's purposes. In verse 20 the Apostle turns from the negative supposition to the positive assertion that Christ is risen, and he proceeds to enumerate all that is involved in it. Commencing with the resurrection of the saints at His coming, he does not stop until he reaches, at the close of verse 28, the eternal state where God shall be all in all. The glory of that day will be the topstone, just as the resurrection of Christ is the foundation.

The certainty of Christ's resurrection proved, and its commanding importance stated, we have in the latter part of the chapter the bearing of resurrection in regard to ourselves, and great light is thrown on its meaning, on what it really involves, for the believer.

We see, for instance, that resurrection is not mere restoration to life under the ordinary conditions that prevail in this world, as was the case when our Lord restored to life the son of the widow of Nain, or Lazarus of Bethany. These men resumed their life in this world and subsequently died again. Resurrection involves life in altogether new conditions, as verses 42-44 show. Our lives in this world are characterized by our possessing natural bodies with their attendant weaknesses, ending in the corruption and dishonour of the grave. In resurrection we shall be possessed of spiritual bodies characterized by incorruption and glory and power.

Further, as the still later verse) of the chapter show, our present bodies are in the image of Adam, the earthly man, and mortal. In resurrection our bodies will bear the image of Christ, the heavenly Man, and be immortal and incorruptible. Resurrection, moreover, is the public declaration of victory over death and the grave, so that when the saints stand in their risen condition the saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory," will be triumphantly fulfilled. For this we wait, but while we wait we are already rejoicing in it, for God "giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 57)

After all, the victory that is yet to be altogether depends upon the victory that already has been. In the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the saints, as a mighty army, will stand forth in glory as a fruit of the resurrection change. Their victory will be great, their hearts full, their praises abundant.

"This is our redeeming God!

Ransomed hosts will shout aloud."

But greater even than this was that yet more fundamental victory when the Lord Jesus, in the early hours of the first day of the week, came forth in a resurrection body from the grave of Joseph, closed with the seal and guarded by the soldiers

We have no victory apart from His. All is "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This leads us again to consider His resurrection. He, too, was not restored to continue life — even His perfect life marked by every moral beauty — in this world. This was the mistake of Mary Magdalene on the resurrection day. She imagined He had come back like Lazarus on the old footing, and she had to learn He was, as risen, on an altogether new footing. He had laid down His life and taken it again as He said (John 10: 17), but He had taken it up in new and heavenly conditions suited to the place of supreme glory He was so soon to occupy at the right hand of God.

How clear this chapter makes it that the Lord Jesus is to-day a Man in glory. His resurrection did not involve His discarding the Manhood He had assumed in incarnation, as some seem to think. It involved rather he coming forth of His holy body, which never saw corruption, in new and spiritual

conditions. His body is now altogether beyond the possibility of death, a body which, according to our chapter and Philippians 3: 21, is the glorious pattern to which our risen bodies are to be conformed; a body, therefore, in which He abides for ever.

And that risen Man is in glory! — A truly astounding fact. The Old Testament view of things is stated pretty concisely in Psalm 115: 16. "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men" The earth was emphatically man's sphere as he was originally created, and there was the place of his dominion. In keeping with this you find "heaven" mentioned about thirty-eight times only in the Psalms, and then not infrequently as only indicating the atmospheric heavens, where the birds fly and the clouds float; whereas "earth" is mentioned one hundred and thirty-five times at least. The New Testament view, consequent upon the exaltation of Christ, is very different and vastly enlarged.

Read Ephesians 1: 20-30 by way of contrast to the verse in Psalm 115. Note that God not only raised Christ from the dead but "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." In those scenes, untainted by sin, there are various ranks of spiritual beings, as well as authorities upon earth, whether in this age, in their very imperfect condition, or in the age to come when they will be perfectly controlled from heaven. Well, the risen Man is above them *all*. And not only above but FAR above. He is Head and Chief over every one of them, and, further, He is Head to His body the Church in a far more intimate way. Small wonder then that we who compose the Church should be spoken of in verse 3 of the chapter as blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Here let us again note that in all this the Lord Jesus is our Great Representative. We rejoice in His resurrection and glory for His own sake, but we do not forget how great the bearing of it all on ourselves. His resurrection was the loosing of the pains of death (see Acts 2: 24). Death, of course, had no claim on Him personally. It had substitutionally, inasmuch as He espoused our cause and on the Cross assumed our liabilities. Hence His resurrection involves the loosing of us from all pains and penalties. He was liberated, but so were we. He was "delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4: 25). In view of this His resurrection is often spoken of as the receipt which God has given into the believer's hand, proclaiming the complete discharge of all his liabilities which were taken up by the Lord Jesus in His death.

It is even more than this. It is also the pledge and beginning of that new creation into which the believer is brought. It is like the olive leaf with which the dove returned in the evening after Noah had sent her forth for the second time over the waste of waters (Gen. 8: 6-12).

The dove, emblematic of the Holy Spirit of God, was sent forth three times. On the first occasion it returned with nothing. There was no rest for the sole of her foot, for the waters were everywhere. This sets forth the utter ruin of the first man and of the old creation as connected with him. All were submerged in death. On the second occasion she returned with the solitary olive leaf. At last the first bit of the renewed earth had appeared above the waters. Here we see that in the second Man pleasure is found. His resurrection was the beginning, solitary as yet, of the new creation. On the third occasion the dove found not a simple leaf only, but a resting-place for her feet, just as the day is coming when in a renewed earth the Spirit of God will be poured forth abundantly, or as in the new creation scenes beyond the millennial age He will dwell in perfect complacency.

How excellent the thought that in the risen and glorified Man, Christ Jesus, we see the pledge and beginning of those

". . . bright and blessed scenes

Where sin can never come,
Whose sight our longing spirit weans
From earth where yet we roam."

Modern unbelievers do not hesitate to question the fact of Christ's resurrection, even denying the reality of His death in their effort to avoid it. What can be said to such?

Very little. As a matter of fact and history the resurrection of Christ has been logically proved with a fulness and exactitude to which very few, if any, of the great events of time can lay claim. If men put the telescope to the blind eye like Nelson, and will not see the evidence, words are of little avail.

Most of them probably see quite clearly that of all the miracles the resurrection stands first, and that if that be granted they cannot consistently object to much else that is in the Scriptures merely on the ground of it being miraculous.

Why did the apostolic preaching, as recorded in the Acts, take the resurrection of Christ, rather than His death as its central theme?

Because, as we have said, His death was admitted by all, and in regard to that they had but to explain its meaning. His resurrection was fiercely contested. Here the apostles faced the point of strongest opposition and they knew that if the Spirit of God carried home their testimony to the breaking up of resistance here, the whole position of unbelief gave way.

Incidentally it shows that neither the apostles nor the men of that day were credulous people who easily received any story. Paul had to say, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26: 8). So evidently the resurrection seemed to men then as incredible as it seems now; yet the truth of it was maintained by the apostles, and multitudes who received their witness, though for all of them it meant loss in this world, and for many a martyr's death.

Is it correct to speak of the resurrection of the body?

Some have insisted that it is persons that are raised.

You have only to examine carefully the language of 1 Corinthians 15 to see that it is quite scriptural to speak of the resurrection of the body. Unbelieving questions were raised among the Corinthians, particularly in regard to the resurrection body. "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (v. 35). . In replying the apostle likens the burial of the body of a saint to the sowing of a grain of wheat, and he points out the analogy between them. That which is buried or sown has a link of identification with that which is raised or which springs forth from the ground. Yet in both cases the risen condition is far in advance of the former condition. In verse 44 he says plainly, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." The resurrection of the *body* could hardly be stated in clearer language

It is a fact, of course, that Scripture, speaking just as we often do in ordinary conversation, sometimes identifies the person with the body rather than with the spirit. "Devout men," for instance, "carried Stephen to his burial" (Acts 8: 2). If we think of Stephen as identified with his spirit, he was, of course, with Christ. Actually they carried but his dead body to burial. Again, John 5: 28, 29 tells us that "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." Their spirits are with Christ, it is their bodies that actually come forth.

Some of us have great difficulty in thinking of the Lord Jesus as a Man for ever. Is that an assured truth of Scripture?

Well, let us look at the Scripture evidence step by step.

On the resurrection day He came forth from the grave a real Man in a human body, not a body of *flesh* and *blood* as He had before the Cross, but of *flesh* and *bones* (Luke 24: 39); a body in which He could eat (Luke 24: 43); a body which bore the marks of His suffering and which could be handled by Thomas (John 20: 27).

In that same body He was "carried up into heaven" (Luke 24: 51). "A cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1: 9). A spirit could not be said to be *carried up* nor are clouds necessary to receive such out of human sight. He was still a Man.

Shortly after Stephen saw Him in glory. His testimony was, "I see . . . the *Son of MAN* standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7: 56).

Later still Paul writes of Him as "The Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2: 5). He does not speak of Him as the One who once *was* the Man Christ Jesus. He is a Man *to-day*.

The millennial age is to come. It is to be put not under angels but under Man in the person of the Son of Man. This is the argument of Hebrews 2: 5-9. Clearly, then, He will be Man in the coming age.

At the end of the millennial age He is to deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and become Himself subject (see 1 Cor. 15: 24-28). Bearing in mind that He is God equally with the Father we might with astonishment ask how this can be, save that we remember that also He is Man. As Man, He fills perfectly man's place of subjection without for one moment ceasing to be equal with the Father. Our blessed Lord is essentially God, yet for eternity He takes the subject place, only explicable by the fact that to all eternity He is also Man; and as such the Head and Sustainer of the redeemed creation, which is the fruit of His work.

Are we right in speaking of glory as a future thing?

Jesus is glorified today, is He not?

He certainly is glorified to-day at the right hand of God. That does not, however, in the least clash with what the Old Testament so abundantly predicts, His coming visible glory in the very scene of His former reproach and dishonour.

When Jesus presented Himself to Israel as their King, entering Jerusalem on an ass as the prophet had predicted, the hour was come that He should be glorified (John 12: 23). Was He glorified? No. He had, on the contrary, to speak immediately of His death and its consequences. Yet soon after in the

upper chamber He said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified," only God, having been glorified in the Cross, was going to "glorify Him in Himself " and do it "straightway" (John 13: 31, 32). That is His present glory hidden in the heavens.

In our Lord's prayer, as recorded in John 17, we get three references to His glory.

In verse 5 He prays to be invested as Man with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. In this He stands alone.

In verse 24 He speaks of "My glory, which Thou hast given Me." This is a supreme glory given Him in virtue of His sufferings and death in which also He stands alone though we are to behold it.

In verse 22 He says, "the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." This is the public glory of the coming age in which we, His saints, are to have our happy part. When He is manifested we shall be manifested with Him in glory.