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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, April 12, 2009
Resurrection Day
“Christ’s Resurrection – A Must?!”
I Corinthians 15:12-23

I am told of the man who was taking it easy, lying on his hammock and looking up at the clouds. He was identifying shapes when he decided to talk to God.

"God", he said, "how long is a million years?"

God answered, "In my frame of reference, it's about a minute."

The man asked, "God, how much is a million dollars?"

God answered, "To Me, it's a penny."

The man then asked, "God, can I have a penny?"

God said, "In a minute."

Time and eternity are always not easy to define, are they? Time and eternity, however, have been brought together in Jesus Christ, who existed as the eternal Son of God, and took upon Himself flesh, took upon Himself humanity in time. He came to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, namely to deal with our greatest and last enemy which is death.

How did Jesus Christ fare? The eyewitnesses tell us that that the Jesus who was crucified on Calvary’s cross, to pay the penalty for our sin died. Then, He was buried, and on the third day He conquered the grave, He came back from the grave bodily in His resurrected body. Yes, the evidence is clear that eternity has conquered time.

I Corinthians 15:5 tells us that after His bodily resurrection, Jesus showed Himself to Cephas (Peter) the twelve, to 500 brethren at once, to James and to all the apostles, and to me – the Apostle Paul referring to himself, when the risen Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus.

Yet Paul knew in his day that there were those who did not believe in bodily resurrection of Christ. It is still the same in our day.

Note, then, what God is saying through Paul about the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ in this I Corinthians 15 passage.

I. The deniers who have rejected the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. In the time of the New Testament (I Corinthians 15:12).

“Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead.”

Who is Paul referring to when he refers to those who denied the bodily resurrection of Christ in his day?

(1) Greeks – Gentiles - Basically, the Greeks, the Gentiles, who believed in the immortality of the soul but no bodily resurrection. In the Greek thinking, man’s weakness was having a body, which was the source of sin . At death, the soul was liberated from the body. For the Greeks to believe in the bodily resurrection would mean that they would receive another body and be enslaved all over again.

Obviously, if there was no resurrection of the body in the Greeks' thinking, then Jesus Christ hadn't risen from the dead as well.

(2) Sadducean party - They also denied the bodily resurrection, so the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. They controlled the priesthood and the Temple ritual.

2. Down through history.

- Then there were those like Arius, and Marcion, who denied the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ in the second and third centuries. World religions, philosophers, theologians through history, and the cults have denied the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- For example, Rudolph Bultmann, one of the most influential German theologians (in the mid to late 1900's) says Christ has been resurrected in the preaching of the Gospel. For him, "the resurrection, of course, simply cannot be a visible fact in the realm of human history."
- Another scholar, Willi Marxsen, another German Scholar, in the mid to late 1900's, tells us that resurrection language is just a way of saying that the idea of the kingdom of God continues to have meaning for some today.
- Paul Tillich, who dominated North American theology during the 1960s and 1970s, identifies the resurrection event as the experience of the spiritual presence of the crucified Christ in the hearts of all disciples in every age. He considers it "absurd" to ask what happened to the body in the tomb.
- Hans Grass, a German writer, would construe the resurrection, at least overtly, merely in terms of the survival of Jesus's soul; he affirms a bodily resurrection, but the body is 'spiritual' in nature, as by the apostle Paul, not physical. There is not the emptying of the tomb. Because the body is spiritual, the appearances of Christ were in the form of heavenly visions caused by God in the minds of those chosen to receive them.
- Many university and college courses on Christianity or comparative religion express the view that Christianity is merely a variation of a more ancient religious theme. They teach that Christian faith developed from or was influenced by the ancient pagan mystery religions of Rome, Greece, and Egypt. Therefore, the conclusion of such courses is that Christian faith is not unique as it claims, but at best an imitation faith, claiming to be something it really is not.

II. The dilemma that is present if there is no bodily resurrection.

Paul in writing to the Corinthian believers around A.D. 55, who have come out of backgrounds where any idea of bodily resurrection is completely denied, penned that a denial of bodily resurrection means that there is no bodily resurrection at all (I Corinthians 15:12-13).

So Paul penned, that if there is no resurrection of the body, then there is no bodily resurrection of Christ either. Then Paul adds that since he has been preaching that Jesus Christ rose from the dead bodily, he must be telling a lie, he must be a false witness (15:15).

If, to top it off, Christ has not conquered the grave bodily, the believer's faith is vain (empty) (I Corinthians 15:14), and one's faith is worthless, and one is still in one's sins (I Corinthians 15:17), and there is no hope for those who have fallen asleep (died) in Jesus (I Corinthians 15:18). If our hope is in Jesus Christ, we are people to be pitied (I Corinthians 15:19).

III. The decision we need to make regarding Christ' bodily resurrection.

1. He did not rise again.
2. His body was stolen.
3. The disciples went to the wrong tomb.
4. He didn't really die – swooned – and came back to life in the tomb.
5. The disciples were having hallucinations or some kind of a vision of the resurrected Jesus.
6. He rose spiritually but not physically – this is popular today among liberal theologians and churches. It's the spirit of Jesus' resurrection that must pervade our lives, the newness that resurrection brings. No proof historically that Jesus rose from the dead, but the spirit of resurrection is what brings change to our lives and

our world. This means that one can have truth without a historical fact, which is impossible. Such an argument would not stand up in a court of law.

7. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical event in time. Jesus rose from the grave in a literal resurrected body.

Of course the choice is ours as to what our decision will be.

It is obvious, as we take the New Testament writings as historical fact, the first 6 choices have no merit in light of the historical record in the New Testament documents. They are concoctions of men, really inspired by the evil one to somehow discredit this momentous and miraculous event in time which establishes the basis of who Jesus Christ is and biblical Christianity's uniqueness in relationship to other philosophies and religions of men.

Since Jesus Christ rose from the grave bodily, what does that mean for us?

IV. The discoveries we make since Jesus Christ conquered the grave bodily.

1. We discover who Jesus Christ is.

He is more than a man. He is God in the flesh.

Romans 1:1-4 reads as follows.

"Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Obviously the many miracles that Jesus performed before His crucifixion displayed convincingly that Jesus was truly God in the flesh. But could he face our greatest enemy death and win? The Scriptures tell us that Christ defeated death coming forth from the grave bodily the third day, demonstrating that He is truly God in the flesh. He is the God-man. There is no doubt now that He is the true Savior of the world.

2. We discover what Jesus Christ has done for us.

(1) Our desperate situation in time.

There are major issues in life that we all have to deal with - Sin – the missing of God's mark of holiness. Our inner self - which causes us to do what isn't right – the evil one who tempts us. The world's philosophy that is filled with self-centeredness, pride, power, wanting more and more possessions. Then there is physical death and spiritual death. Life is filled with all kinds of negatives and challenges.

Are we left to deal with these things on our own in this life? Do we just somehow survive, and eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die?

Note what Paul pens in I Corinthians 15:17 – If Christ is not raised, your faith is worthless, and you are still in your sins.

Paul is saying if Christ has not conquered the grave, life in all its many challenges, is left to us. As Paul pens in I Corinthians 15:19 – "we are people to be most pitied."

The bottom line here is this. **If Jesus Christ didn't conquer the grave bodily, this life is it.** We live a few years on this earth touching other's lives, but that is it. There is really only a human reason for living, what you can get out of it, and there isn't even have any kind of lasting reward. **Everything is for time, for there is no eternity.**

But praise be to God such is not true.

(2) Christ's eternal intervention into time.

- **Christ's coming was prophesied in the Old Testament.**

From Genesis 3:15 on down to the prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Zechariah. Someone is coming who will not just deliver Israel but will provide forgiveness for all mankind. Through Abraham's seed the world would be blessed.

- **At His incarnation –**

The eternal Son of God took upon Himself sinless flesh. “His name will be called Jesus for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

- **In His life**

He did all things to please His heavenly Father (John 8:29). He lived under the law of God and obeyed it completely. He did what no other person on earth has ever done. He fulfilled the law of God perfectly. Yes, and he did it for us, because we could never do that as sinners before the Holy God.

- **In His death**

When he started talking about going to Jerusalem to be rejected, to suffer, to die, and be raised the third day, the disciples didn't understand what He meant. Peter told his Lord, God forbid. This shall never happen to you. But Christ told Peter that he was thinking the thoughts of men, and to get behind him, Satan.

Jesus willingly submitted to His Father's will in the Garden of Gethsemane, He went to that old rugged cross, and was placed on that cross, and a spear was placed in His side, blood and water flowed, and he cried out it is finished and gave His spirit into His Father's care.

As Jesus hung on that cross, something awesome and indescribable was taking place. Jesus was being made sin for us, who knew no sin. On Him was placed the sin of the world, and He was roasted as it were on the altar of sacrifice so that the awesome holiness and justice of God could be satisfied, and then grace and love could flow to you and me.

He was buried and was in the tomb 3 days. But that wasn't the end, was it?

- **In His bodily resurrection.**

Christ came back from the grave bodily and showed Himself alive for 40 days to his disciples, and to 500 brethren at once. He is alive for evermore. That's why we celebrate today. He is risen. He is risen indeed.

Christ's bodily resurrection demonstrated conclusively that the penalty of sin has been paid, and God's righteousness, His holiness and justice had been satisfied.

Note what this means since Christ conquered the grave bodily!

1. **Redemption** – Sin's penalty has been paid – “We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).
2. **Propitiation** – God's wrath has been satisfied – “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, but not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).
3. **Reconciliation** – A change has been made so the believer can be the friend of God not an enemy of God. “
4. **Justification** – to be declared righteous before God, accepted in the beloved. He was raised on account of our justification (Romans 4:25). To be given all the spiritual assets of Jesus Christ.
5. **Forgiveness** – all sins taken away – “As far as the east is from the west so far as he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).
6. **Sanctification** – To be set apart to God as His possession – to belong to him so the believer can live a holy life. “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).
7. **Identification** – Placed into Christ, the believer now has a new nature, the life of Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit's power can now say “Yes” to righteousness, and “No” to sin. “The believer can consider Himself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6: 11).
8. **A citizen of heaven while living on planet earth** – “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20),.
9. **Indwelt spiritually by the Trinity, God, the Father, God, the Son, God, the Holy Spirit** (1 John 4:15; Colossians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:19).
10. **New Power** - Obeying the indwelling Holy Spirit, the believer can please the Lord and glorify Him (Galatians 5:16).
11. **New Purpose** – In the Spirit's power to do everything to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Even in the difficulties and challenges of life, God is there giving hope and encouragement causing one to know God is at work glorifying Himself (Romans 5:1-5).

12. **New Hope** – All things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose in this life (Romans 8:28). Knowing that one will be with the Lord after this life forever (II Corinthians 5:8). The living hope that Jesus Christ could return any time I Thessalonians 4:13-18). Those alive who know the Lord will be joined with others who have gone on before.
13. **New personal relationship** – We can come boldly to His throne of grace with all of our needs (Hebrews 4:15-16). We can enjoy His fellowship through the Word of God (Hebrews 5:13-14; I Peter 2:1-3).
14. **Glorification** – To some day have a resurrected and glorified body like unto our Lord's resurrected and glorious body (I Corinthians 15:20). The resurrected Christ is the first fruits, (the first of the crop – looking back to the feast of first fruits) of the rest of those who will be raised from the dead. Because He lives, others who possess His life will also be raised from the grave. Those He justified He also glorified (Romans 8:30).
15. **New Heavenly Home** – All believers of all ages will live with the Lord for all eternity, as time will be no more and we live with the Lord forever serving Him in His new world He has prepared for us (Revelation 21-22:1-5).
16. **God's Word the Bible is true** - all of the above are a reality and will be a reality for the believer because Christ's bodily resurrection validates the validity of the Word of God (Luke 24:44; John 16:13). We know the Bible is true because the bodily resurrected Christ says so.

I take time to present some of these theological truths, for if Christ had just died and not have risen from the grave bodily, none of these teachings would be true. But since Christ conquered the grave bodily, these realities are available to each of us. That's why Donald Gray Barnhouse wrote a book entitled, "The Cross Through The Open Tomb." The work of Christ on the cross and His bodily resurrection can't be separated. If they are then, the cross is of no effect and the bodily resurrection has no merit either.

3. We discover what Jesus Christ has done for us through His death and bodily resurrection can be ours personally.

(1) Christ is the true object for our faith today.

Note again what Paul writes in I Corinthians 15:14:

"And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain, or empty."

The opposite of what is stated here is that Christ has conquered the grave bodily, and He is the true object of our faith. Faith in the resurrected Christ is not empty, but brings, His forgiveness, eternal life in its unlimited experience.

There are many objects for one's faith today, but I trust this morning, that if you have asked Jesus Christ to be your personal Savior, you are grateful to the Lord that your faith has found a resting place not in device nor creed, but you trust the ever-living one, His wounds for you shall plead. I need no other argument, I need no other plea, it is enough that Jesus died and that He died for me.

(2) Christ is the One to live for today (For me to live is Christ, to die is gain).

Note I Corinthians 15:17 again.

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."

Let's put that in the opposite context. "Since Christ has conquered the grave bodily, your faith is filled with eternal riches.

I have been redeemed, and forgiven in Jesus. Nothing can separate me from His love. When I sin, I can confess my sin to the Lord, and go on in fellowship with Him. I am God's friend, reconciled to God. I am God's possession, and I can in the power of the Holy Spirit live a life that pleases the Lord. I have that wonderful standing and position of being in Christ, of being called a saint.

(3) Christ is the One who gives me hope for today and tomorrow, yes for eternity.

Note I Corinthians 15:18:

"If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men to be pitied."

Again, the opposite is here in the context. "Since Christ has conquered the grave bodily, knowing Christ as personal Savior gives me a living hope in this life, and the hope of someday being with the Lord forever, and knowing that I will be with loved ones gone on before me who knew the Lord personally."

Why does the believer in Jesus Christ live with confidence in the midst of challenges? He knows that the resurrected Lord is with him or her cheering one on to do His will.

Chuck Colson pointed out this out in one of his Breakpoints this week by saying:

It's this Christian hope that gives us the joy, the self-sacrificial love, the boldness, and the endurance to carry on-even in tough times. You often see these fruits in the lives of devout believers.

For example: Justin Martyr, born around 100 AD to pagan parents; he grew up studying philosophy. But while in Ephesus he was impressed by the steadfastness of Christians under persecution and converted to Christianity. He is known for his "Apologies," defenses of the faith addressed to those in highest power: the Roman Emperor and the Roman Senate.

Justin boldly defended the lives of his persecuted fellow Christians. For publically debating and defending the Christian beliefs in public, he was tried before a Roman prefect. When he refused to deny his faith, he was beheaded. But it was Justin's hope in Christ that enabled him to boldly and sacrificially defend the truth.

Centuries later, Nien Cheng would stand up to the authorities of her day. Cheng was arrested in 1966 by Chinese Red Guards. Six years in prison she was pressured to make a false confession that she had been a spy for the imperialists. Despite torture, Cheng would not admit to something that wasn't true.

Cheng was a Christian and although she couldn't let the guards see her praying, she secretly turned to God and found solace for her grief and hope to face each day. Cheng was released under the pretense that her behavior had improved. But it was her hope in God that enabled her to endure her brutal treatment.

Hope to them was not a flimsy optimism that everything would somehow work out alright. Hope was understanding that the reward for holding fast to God was a weight of glory that exceeded the pain of any momentary affliction.

The resurrected Lord can even use children.

The 40 Days for Life campaign that started February 25 just ended last Sunday April 5. People gathered all over the United States to pray near abortion centers in different cities. The report is that 422 babies were saved.

This amazing report came from Orange County, California, as to how one little girl's faith helped to save the life of a baby.

"Tim came to me with his daughter and told me that his little girl (about 4 years old) told him before he went to Planned Parenthood, 'take this plate of cookies and give it to a Mommy. Tell her to keep them so that she can give them to her baby when he is born.'"

"When Tim approached one of the women that he talked to last Saturday morning, he told her the message of his little daughter. The woman broke into tears and the thought of not being able to give her baby the plate of cookies that Tim's daughter sent her made her decide to keep her baby!"

Yes, the believer can give a cup of cold water in the name of the risen Lord.

LIFE, COURAGE, HOPE – That's what the resurrected Christ offers to those who know Him personally and live for Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I believe what the Lord would want us to take from this service today is that knowing Him by faith we are in His family and belong to Him forever. We are saints, who receive our identity from Jesus Christ. We have our different ethnic backgrounds, and different upbringings. But more significant than that is the believer in

Jesus Christ is in Jesus Christ, a saint, a child of God, possessing His resurrection life, a divine masterpiece, a child of light, a citizen of heaven.

Neil Anderson tells of a missionary who had to come back from the field due to emotional problems. She had a very difficult childhood having been raised in a dysfunctional family. Attending one of Neil's conferences, she began to realize who she was in Jesus Christ and was with God's help able to resolve her spiritual conflicts. It was as if she were born again.

When she went home after the conference, she encountered even more family challenges. She made an appointment with Neil and told him about some of the family problems that she had encountered.

He said, "Aren't you glad that you learned this information after you found out who you are as a child of God."

The lady responded, "Oh, if I would have heard this about my family two months ago, it would have been the final blow."

Neil replied, "Now that you know this about your family, what does that do to your heritage?"

The lady started to answer. Then a smile broke across her face and she said, "Nothing."

This lady realized that she was in Christ, her new identity. She was a new creation in Christ Jesus. She was accepted in Jesus Christ, loved by Him forever.

She had experienced totally what the Resurrected Christ meant to her.

I trust that you today, not only know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, but you realize afresh today, that you are IN Jesus Christ. Your identity, your life, is in Him not only for time but for eternity.