

Resurrection Sunday – 3/27/2016

Evidence of historic fact

The witness of the New Testament is that an objective act took place in a garden outside of Jerusalem in which the crucified and entombed Jesus emerged from the grave into a new order of life. As we deal with the objective fact of the resurrection, it is not our intention to prove the fact of the resurrection and thereby compel faith. We recognize that faith cannot be compelled by a recital of “historical” or objective facts but only by the working of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart. But the Holy Spirit used the witness of the disciples to the reality of the resurrection of Christ, and we must here bear witness to the facts of the New Testament record.

The Gospels attest several facts. First, Jesus was dead. Few serious scholars will question this. Second, the hopes of the disciples were also dead. Jesus had preached the coming of the Kingdom of God; and his disciples followed him in the vibrant expectation that they would witness its coming (Lk. 19:11) and see the redemption of Israel (Lk. 24:21). Even though Jesus had on at least several occasions warned them of his impending death and tried to prepare them for it (Mk. 8:31), they never really understood what he was saying. It is important to recall that first-century Jews did not understand the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 to apply to the Messiah. By definition the Messiah was to reign in his Kingdom, not suffer and die; and when Jesus surrendered himself helplessly into the hands of his enemies, when he suffered execution as a common criminal, their hope was broken. For them it was the end of Jesus and his preaching and the end of their hopes.

A third fact is this: the disciples’ discouragement and frustration was suddenly and abruptly transformed into confidence and certainty. Suddenly they were certain Jesus was no longer dead. Something happened that convinced them that Jesus was alive. They were sure they had seen him again, heard his voice, recognized his person.

A fourth fact is the empty tomb. This is witnessed to by all the Gospels, and it is presupposed in Paul’s creedal statement in 1 Corinthians 15:1–3. There would be no point in emphasizing the burial of Jesus or the fact that his

resurrection took place on the third day unless the resurrection meant emptying the tomb. Many scholars maintain that the reports of the empty tomb are late legendary accretions designed to support Christian belief in the resurrection; but many scholars today feel compelled to accept the historicity of the empty tomb.

A fifth historical fact is the resurrection faith. Few will deny today that it is a solid fact of history that the disciples believed that Jesus was raised from the grave. Those scholars who are unable to believe in an actual resurrection of Jesus admit that the disciples believed it. They believed that their teacher and master, who was dead and buried, was alive again. They were confident that they saw him once again, heard his voice, listened to his teachings, recognized his features. They believed that his presence was not a “spiritual,” i.e., nonmaterial, “ghostly” thing, but an objective bodily reality.

This was the faith that created the church. That which brought the church into being and gave it a message was not the hope of the persistence of life beyond the grave, a confidence in God’s supremacy over death, a conviction of the immortality of the human spirit. It was belief in an event in time and space: Jesus of Nazareth was risen from the dead. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is an unavoidable historical fact; without it there would have been no church.

But we must go further to the final and crucial fact. Something happened to create in the disciples belief in Jesus’ resurrection. Here is the crucial issue. It was not the disciples’ faith that created the stories of the resurrection; it was an event lying behind these stories that created their faith.

They had lost faith. They were “foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets [had] spoken” (Lk. 24:25). The fact of the resurrection and faith in the resurrection are inseparable but not identical. The fact created the faith.

(Dr. George Eldon Ladd. A Theology of the New Testament.)

Main theme of all four gospels

Right at the beginning of His public ministry:

John 2:13-22 -- The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; 16and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." 17His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME." 18The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" 19Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

During His ministry:

John 10:11-18 -- "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12"He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13"He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. 14"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

After the Mount of Transfiguration:

Matt 17:9 – As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

On the way to Jerusalem the last time:

Matthew 20:17-19 -- Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, 18 "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death 19 and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

At the resurrection:

John 20:1-10 -- Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. 2 So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." 3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. 4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. 6 And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

After the resurrection, just prior to the ascension:

Luke 24:44-49 – Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the

Scriptures, 46and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48“You are witnesses of these things. 49“And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

If He is NOT raised from the dead, then He was lying.

The preaching of the resurrection happened right away – no historical development.

Prophesied reality – READ: **Acts 2:22-36**

Central to all Christianity

The resurrection was central to the apostles’ theology, the very core of their miraculous signs and faith in Jesus.

(Peter’s second sermon)

Acts 3:11-16 – While he (the previously healed lame beggar) was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. 12But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, “Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14“But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. 16“And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

The Trinity was active in the Resurrection:

the Father (**Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 1:21**),
Holy Spirit (**Rom 8:11**),
and the Son (**John 2:19-22**).

If the body of Christ is physically raised, then the gnostics are wrong and the fleshly, physical body is not inherently bad.

If Christ is not raised ... READ **1Cor. 15:1-12**

The resurrection validates everything else Jesus said and did. It proves He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the only way, truth, and life.

Main theme of Pauline doctrine and theology

Romans 1:4, 6:4-9, 8:11-14, Phil 3:10-16

John on Patmos – vision of Jesus

Revelation 1:17-18 -- And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Our hope, our eternity, is based in the fact of Christ's resurrection. If He raised, then we will too. Our resurrection (guaranteed by His) means that we will live in physical bodies in the New Jerusalem, in the New Heavens and New Earth.
