

The Resurrection

by J.C. Philpot

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Christian faith, and it is the attesting witness from heaven that Jesus lives at God's right hand to reveal justification to the heart and seal it effectually by the Holy Ghost.

Scripture: Matthew 17:1, Luke 24:39, John 10:17, John 20:27, Acts 1:3, Romans 1:4, Romans 4:25, Romans 8:11, 1 Peter 3:18

Topics: "The Resurrection", "Divine Sonship"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, emphasizing its pivotal role in establishing the Christian faith. The apostles, inspired by the Holy Ghost, consistently proclaimed the resurrection as the foundation of their sermons, as it validated Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah. The resurrection served as God's attesting witness to Jesus' divine Sonship and the acceptance of His atoning sacrifice, ensuring the church's justification. The sermon also highlights the identity of Jesus' risen body, refuting erroneous speculations and confirming through various appearances that it was the same body that was crucified, thus solidifying the truth of the resurrection.

Transcript

Chapter Eight from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

But we pass on to the resurrection of the blessed Lord from the dead; and here we shall have to establish the doctrine before we enter into its experimental fruits.

1. The first thing that we notice is, what we may call the grand fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. On this the whole verity of the Christian faith may be said to be suspended. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, he was not what he declared he was, "the Son of the living God." But if he rose from the dead, it was God's own attestation that he was his only begotten Son, for all will admit that nothing short of the power of God can raise the dead. For this reason we find in the Acts of the Apostles the resurrection of the Lord Jesus made a leading feature in every sermon and every address. Whether Peter preached to the inquiring Jews, #Ac 2:23,24 3:15 to the opposing Sanhedrim, #Ac 4:10 5:30,31 or to Cornelius and his friends; #Ac 10:39,40 or whether Paul addressed the synagogue of Antioch, #Ac 13:30 the Athenian Areopagus #Ac 17:31 or king Agrippa and the most noble Festus, it might be said of them what the Holy Ghost declares of all the rest; "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." #Ac 4:33

Look for a few moments at this remarkable circumstance, that these blessed men of God made the resurrection of Jesus, as it were, the very foundation of all their sermons and addresses; for we may be sure that the Holy Ghost inspired the apostles thus to preach. And see the reason why they bore this firm testimony in the very forefront of the battle which they waged in the name of God against the kingdom of darkness and death. The Lord of life and glory had been condemned to death by the Jewish council on a charge of blasphemy, first, because he had said that "he would destroy the temple made with hands, and within three days build another made without hands;" #Mr 14:58 and, secondly, that he had declared, in the very presence of the council, that he was the Christ, the Son of God. #Mr 14:61-64 He therefore died under the charge of blasphemy, in pain and ignominy, crucified openly for that alleged crime in the face of the assembled thousands who had come from all parts to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Now, had Jesus not risen from the dead that charge would have been substantiated, and he would have been justly convicted by the voices of many thousands as having been put righteously to death. It was necessary, then, not only for the whole economy of redemption, but for the very veracity of Jesus himself, and for the whole truth of the gospel, that he should be raised from the dead by the power of God as the seal of his mission, as the standing, undeniable, irrefragable truth that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, as he claimed to be.

We see, then, the force and meaning of the apostle's words, where he says that the Lord Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." #Ro 1:4 It was God's attesting witness to his divine Sonship, the visible, ratifying seal to his heavenly mission. And not only so, but God's own assurance to the church that his atoning sacrifice had been accepted, that the debt due to law and justice was fully discharged, and her justification complete, for he "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification;" #Ro 4:25 that is, he, as the head and representative of the church, was raised by God from the dead as justified from all law charges, and the church was thus visibly and authoritatively declared to be justified in him. This was the attesting witness from heaven that her justification was complete, and that Jesus lives at God's right hand to reveal that justification to her heart, put her into experimental possession of its unspeakable blessedness, and seal it effectually by the Holy Ghost upon her breast.

2. The next thing that we notice is that each Person of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was engaged in the blessed work of raising Jesus from the dead. Though the Persons of the Trinity are essentially distinct, and their acts in the great economy of redemption separate, yet as one God they participate in the putting forth of every act of divine power. Thus God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, as we learn from almost innumerable passages; but see the following, which we need not quote at length, but simply refer to; #Ac 2:24 3:15 4:10 5:30 10:40 13:37 17:31 Eph 1:20 Col 2:12. But the Son of God raised himself from the dead, according to his own words of grace and truth, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." #Joh 10:17,18 He is "the resurrection;" #Joh 11:25 and as he raised Lazarus from the tomb, and will at the last day raise up the sleeping dust of all that the Father gave unto him, #Joh 6:39,40 so, by the exercise of the same divine power, did he raise his own incorruptible body from the grave. The Holy Ghost also had a blessed participation in the same divine act. We therefore read that the Lord Jesus was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, #1Pe 3:18 - the same Holy and Blessed Spirit who will also quicken the mortal bodies of the saints at the great resurrection. #Ro 8:11

3. The next thing that we notice is, the identity of the Lord's risen body. It is a cardinal, fundamental article of our most holy faith that the same actual, identical body was raised from the grave which was deposited in it. If erroneous men had not indulged their vain speculations about the risen body of the Lord Jesus, we might well wonder at their daring attempts to pull up the landmarks which the Holy Ghost has so plainly set up in the word of truth. The Lord never had, never could have, two different bodies, one before, another after the resurrection. We might as well talk of his having two different souls - one soul for earth, and another soul for heaven. The identity of his body is as indispensable to his still being Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and for ever," as the identity of his soul, no less certain, no less necessary, and no less precious. But because, after the resurrection, the Lord came miraculously into the place where the disciples were assembled, the doors being shut, and vanished out of the sight of the disciples at Emmaus, and because they cannot conceive how he can wear a human body in heaven, such as he had upon earth, men who would be wise above what is written have assumed that a change took place in that body, and that it no longer consisted of flesh, and bones, and blood, as before, but was, as it were, transmuted into some aerial, celestial substance, they know not what, but such as they imagine would be more fitting to inhabit the courts of heaven.

Now, nothing can be more plain, if we are willing to follow the footsteps of the Holy Ghost, than that it was the same identical body which hung on the cross that rose from the dead. It would seem, as if to stop all cavil, and crush in the very bud all such erroneous speculations as we have alluded to, the Lord himself gave again and again the most incontrovertible proofs after his resurrection that he was the same Jesus as before, and not another, and that he wore the same body in all respects without change or alteration. He did not appear for a few moments only, as if "showing himself through the lattice," and then hastily withdrawing, but conversed with them most familiarly, and ate with his disciples after the resurrection; #Lu 24:42,43 Ac 10:41 and for this very purpose, that they might be standing and undeniable eye and ear witnesses that it was indeed the very same Jesus with whom they had consorted before his crucifixion. Now we all know what a marked change a little alteration makes in a person's form and features, so that a severe illness, or the lapse of a few years, makes him scarcely recognisable as the same person by even his most intimate friends. If, then, any visible change had taken place in the body of the Lord Jesus, it would not only have destroyed its identity but its identification. The whole chain of evidence that it was indeed the same Jesus who had been crucified that was risen from the dead would have been broken to pieces unless it was clearly and undeniably the same form, the same features, the same feet and hands, the same voice - in a word, the very same Jesus whom they knew so well and loved so dearly. Did not Mary Magdalene know his form and features well? Could she have been deceived? Was not John, who leaned on his breast at the last supper, well acquainted with his voice, gestures, and countenance? Could he have been deceived? So with Peter and James, not to name the other disciples who had attended him daily from the baptism of John. #Ac 1:22 One witness might be deceived, but not so many.

But besides this, there were several special seasons on which the Lord did not only appear for a short time to his disciples, but was with them some space. Look at the instance of Thomas. What can exceed the clearness of the testimony mercifully produced by his very unbelief? So firmly fixed was he in his disbelief of the resurrection that he would not believe that the disciples had seen the Lord as risen from the dead; and declared that except he should see in his hands the print of the nails; and, lest his eyes should deceive him, unless he put his fingers into the print of the nails; and even lest he should be deceived then, except he should thrust his hand into the very side which had been pierced by the Roman spear, he would not believe. But how condescendingly to him, and how graciously for the saints in all ages, did the blessed Lord, eight days after this unbelieving declaration, appear again gently to reprove

him for his unbelief, but at the same time to afford to the church through him the memorable testimony that he wore still the same body; that the hands were the very same hands, still bearing the print of the nails which had fastened them to the cross, and that it was the very same side which still wore the thrust-mark of the Roman spear.

If this were not a proof of actual identity where shall we find one? If this evidence be rejected, what remains but to reject the whole mystery of the resurrection as an idle tale? Learned men have, by comparing scripture with scripture, ascertained that the blessed Lord appeared ten times to eye-witnesses after his resurrection {1} and that at some of these appearances, as that memorable one recorded #John 21, he conversed with his disciples as closely and as intimately as before his resurrection. And that his human body in which he ate and talked with them was not a shadowy appearance, which had neither flesh nor bones, he spake to them those ever-memorable words, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." #Lu 24:39 "Behold," said he, "my hands and my feet" - they are real hands, they are real feet; "that it is I myself," the same, the very same Jesus, having the same body which you saw him wear before; "handle me, and see," feel, if you will, whether it be real flesh or an aerial body, "for a spirit," such as you take me to be, a disembodied soul, or an airy, unreal phantasm, "hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

Can anything be stronger than this the Lord's own testimony to the actual identity of his body before and after his resurrection? And if it be objected that, whatever the body of the Lord was then, it is now so exceedingly glorified that it has lost in that glory all the distinctive features of its former humanity, we reply. How was it with that same body before the resurrection, on the holy mount, when it was transfigured before the three disciples, so that "his face did shine as the sun, and his very raiment," as borrowing lustre from his glorious humanity, "was white as the light?" #Mt 17:1,2 There we see that the brightest glory no more altered the identity or changed the substance of the Lord's body than the glory of the face of Moses altered his. When we come to the ascension of our blessed Lord, we shall see this perhaps more clearly and distinctly still, or at least view more at length the blessings and benefits connected with it.

{1} The Lord's first appearance was to Mary Magdalene;- #Mr 16:9-11; John 20:14-18; his second to the disciples journeying to Emmaus: #Mr 16:12 Lu 24:13-32 his third to Simon Peter; #Lu 24:33,34 1Co 15:5; his fourth to the eleven disciples in the absence of Thomas; #Lu 24:36-43 Joh 20:19-25 his fifth to the eleven again, when Thomas was present; #Mr 16:14 Joh 20:27-29 his sixth to the women who had at first visited the sepulchre; #Mt 28:9,10 his seventh to the apostles and five hundred brethren at once in Galilee; #Matt 28:16-20 1Co 15:6 his eighth to the disciples when fishing on the lake of Galilee; #Joh 21:1-24; his ninth to James the Lord's brother; #1Co 15:7 and his tenth and last to all the apostles assembled at Jerusalem just before his ascension. #Lu 24:44-49 Ac 1:4-8 1Co 15:7. These are the "many infallible proofs" of which the Holy Ghost speaks #Ac 1:3 that he was really and truly risen from the dead.

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