

"THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST"

EVIDENCES OF THE RESURRECTION

By Mike Burnham

1 COR. 15:3-8...NOTICE THAT PAUL TWICE EMPHASIZED THAT THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST WERE "ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES." HE WAS REFERRING TO THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES. HE WAS SAYING THAT THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST FULFILLED WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS PREDICTED ABOUT THE COMING MESSIAH.

BLENDED INTO THE PROMISE OF A COMING MESSIAH WAS A MYSTERIOUS THREAD OF PROPHECY THAT PICTURED A SUFFERING SERVANT WHO WOULD DIE IN BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE'S SINS. ONE EXAMPLE IS FOUND IN ISAIAH 53. THERE THE INSPIRED PROPHET WROTE ABOUT A SERVANT OF THE LORD WHO, ALTHOUGH INNOCENT OF ANY WRONGDOING, WOULD BEAR THE SINS OF HIS PEOPLE IN DEATH. AND THIS PASSAGE IS AN ACCURATE PREDICTION OF WHAT HAPPENED TO CHRIST.

PETER TOO, WHILE PREACHING TO THE JEWS IN JERUSALEM SOUGHT TO CONVINCED THEM THAT THE OLD TESTAMENT INTIMATED THE COMING MESSIAH WOULD DIE AND WOULD NOT BE LEFT IN THE GRAVE (ACTS 2:22-47).

SECONDLY, PAUL SAID THAT "CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS...AND THAT HE WAS BURIED" (1COR. 15:3,4). THAT'S AN IMPORTANT STATEMENT. CHRIST WAS NOT BURIED ALIVE. HE DID NOT ENDURE HIS AGONY AWAY FROM THE NOTICE OF THE CROWDS; HIS DEATH WAS THE CENTER OF A CITY'S ATTENTION. THIS

WAS A PUBLIC EXECUTION BY SOLDIERS WHOSE OWN LIVES DEPENDED UPON THEIR ABILITY TO CARRY OUT THE DEATH SENTENCE. THE EVIDENCE SAYS THAT CHRIST ACTUALLY DIED AND SPENT 3 DAYS IN A TOMB. HIS DEATH WAS CONFIRMED BY HIS EXECUTIONERS, WHO DIDN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES BUT PLUNGED A SPEAR INTO HIS SIDE. THEN HE WAS CARRIED AWAY, WRAPPED ACCORDING TO THE CUSTOM OF THE DAY, AND PLACED IN A TOMB SEALED BY A HEAVY ROCK. THE EMPEROR'S SEAL WAS PLACED ON THE TOMB TO WARN GRAVE ROBBERS, AND A GUARD WAS POSTED TO MAKE SURE THAT NO ONE WOULD STEAL THE DEAD BODY.

THE EVIDENCE OF AFTER-DEATH APPEARANCES

AFTER CHRIST'S GRAVE WAS FOUND TO BE EMPTY, HE BEGAN APPEARING TO BOTH INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS OVER A PERIOD OF 40 DAYS. IT WASN'T JUST A CASE OF A HIGH-STRUNG PERSON HERE AND THERE WHO HEARD VOICES IN THE NIGHT, OR WHO WOKE OUT OF SLEEP TO SENSE A MYSTERIOUS PRESENCE IN THE ROOM. IT WASN'T THE RUMOR OF A GLIMPSE OF A LOOK-ALIKE IN A CROWD, OR A GHOSTLIKE APPEARANCE IN THE TREES. THE REPORTS WERE BASED ON ACTUAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCES.

TO THOMAS, HE SHOWED HIS SCARRED HANDS AND FEET, AND ASKED HIM TO PUT HIS HAND IN THE HOLE IN HIS SIDE. THOMAS RESPONDED WITH WORSHIP AS HE ESCLAIMED, "MY LORD AND MY GOD!"

NOTE PAULS CLAIM THAT A GROUP OF 500 PEOPLE SAW CHRIST AT THE SAME TIME, AND THAT MOST WERE STILL LIVING AT THE TIME HE WROTE HIS LETTER. THE IMPLICATION IS THAT THE WITNESSES WERE AVAILABLE FOR QUESTIONING. AN INVESTIGATION WAS POSSIBLE. HUNDREDS OF

EYEWITNESSES COULD HAVE BEEN INTERVIEWED. HE WAS SEEN BY JAMES, THEN BY ALL THE APOSTLES, AND FINALLY BY PAUL HIMSELF.

THE EVIDENCE OF A CHANGED LIFE

PAUL'S LIFE WAS CHANGED. AFTER COMING FACE TO FACE WITH THE RESURRECTED CHRIST, HE HAD BECOME AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PERSON. PAUL'S CHANGED LIFE WAS EVIDENCE THAT HE REALLY BELIEVED HIS OWN STORY. HIS CHANGED LIFE WAS IN RESPONSE TO THE REALIZATION THAT CHRIST REALLY WAS THE SON OF GOD. 1 COR. 15:9,10.

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION TO CHANGE LIVES IS SEEN IN ITS ABILITY TO CHANGE THE MOST UNLIKELY PERSONS. AS FAR AS THE CHRISTIANS OF HIS DAY WERE CONCERNED, PAUL MUST HAVE SEEMED LIKE THE LAST PERSON IN THE WORLD YOU WOULD EXPECT TO JOIN THE CHURCH.

WHILE PETER, JAMES AND JOHN WERE DOING EVERYTHING THEY COULD TO TELL THE WORLD THAT CHRIST HAD RISEN FROM THE DEAD, PAUL WAS DOING EVERYTHING HE COULD TO SHUT THEM UP. BEFORE HE WAS CONVERTED PAUL WAS ONE OF THE DARKEST, MOST SINISTER FORCES IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH. HE HATED CHRISTIANS WITH A PASSION THAT VERGED ON THE INSANE. HE HUNTED CHRISTIANS. HE HURT CHRISTIANS BY SUBJECTING THEM TO ARREST, IMPRISONMENT, AND EVEN DEATH. THIS IS REFLECTED IN WHAT HE SAID IN VERSE 9.

NOTICE IN VERSE 10 PAUL SAID "BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM." GRACE HERE MEANS "AN UNDESERVED EXPRESSION OF KINDNESS." GRACE IS ANY EXPRESSION OF THE KINDNESS OF GOD THAT IS GIVEN TO THOSE WHO DO NOT DESERVE IT. THAT INVOLVES NOT ONLY THE INITIAL GRACE OF SALVATION BUT EVERY OTHER EXPRESSION OF UNDESERVED HELP WE EVER

RECEIVE FROM HIM. THIS IS WHAT MAKES THE KIND OF LIFE-CHANGING THAT PAUL EXPERIENCED AVAILABLE TO US AS WELL. THE FACT THAT WE DON'T DESERVE IT IS WHAT QUALIFIES US FOR IT.

SOME OF THE CORINTHIANS HAD BECOME OPEN TO THE IDEA THAT THERE WAS NO FUTURE BODILY RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD TO LOOK FORWARD TO. 1 COR. 15:12-19. THESE CHRISTIANS HAD ALREADY ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT CHRIST HAD RISEN FROM THE DEAD, SEE VERSE 11 (SO YOU BELIEVED). PAUL EXPLAINS THAT IF THERE IS NO RESURRECTION THEN CHRIST IS NOT RAISED AND IF HE IS NOT RAISED THEN WE ARE STILL IN OUR SINS. IF WE ARE STILL IN OUR SINS WE HAVE NO HOPE AND ARE MOST MISERABLE.

VERSE 20...BUT CHRIST IS RISEN, WE DO HAVE HOPE. THERE IS SOMETHING PATHETIC ABOUT ANYTHING THAT HAS NO FUTURE. WHETHER IT'S A PERSON, A RELATIONSHIP, WORK OR A PROFESSION, VALUE IS TO BE FOUND IN HAVING A FUTURE. THE HISTORY WE ARE STUDYING NOW, THE RESURRECTION, IS HISTORY THAT HAS A FUTURE. LETS LOOK TOGETHER AT WHAT WE HAVE TO LOOK FORWARD TO AS A RESULT OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD.

FIRST, IT GIVES US A PROMISE OF MORE RESURRECTIONS. RATHER THAN REFERING TO THE DEPARTED AS BEING DEAD AND GONE, PAUL SPEEKS OF THEM AS BEING "ASLEEP." RATHER THAN SEEING THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AS MERELY A MATER OF THE PAST, PAUL SAW IT AS THE "FIRSTFRUITS", THE FIRST PORTION, OF A GREAT FUTURE RESURRECTION HARVEST FROM THE DEAD.

VERSE 22...JUST AS WE DIE BECAUSE OF ADAM, WE WILL LIVE BECAUSE OF CHRIST. AS ADAM MADE OUR DEATH CERTAIN, SO CHRIST MAKES OUR RESURRECTION JUST AS CERTAIN. THE TWO "ALL'S" ARE NOT IDENTICAL IN QUANTITY. ALL MANKIND ARE IN ADAM, BUT THEY ARE NOT ALL IN CHRIST. ONLY THOSE WHO ARE BORN AGAIN ARE IN CHRIST.

VERSE 23...NOTICE WHO WILL BE RESURRECTED. THE "ALL" WHO SHALL BE MADE ALIVE IN VERSE 22 IS QUALIFIED HERE IN VERSE 23 AS THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S. WHO ARE THEY THAT BELONG TO CHRIST? REV. 5:9, 1 COR. 6:20, 7:22,23; 1 PET. 1:18, 2:24. WILL YOU BE CHRIST'S WHEN HE COMES?

THE DAY IS COMING WHEN ALL WHO ARE CHRIST'S WILL BE RAISED TO LIFE. THOSE WHO ARE NOT HIS WILL BE RAISED TO JUDGMENT AND DISHONOR. THEY HAVE NO FUTURE. REV. 20:11-15.

VERSE 24-26...THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST ALSO GIVES US THE HOPE OF A "FUTURE OF ULTIMATE VICTORY". ALL EVIL FORCES AND EVEN DEATH ITSELF WILL BE FINALLY OVERTHROWN. THE END IN VERSE 24 REFERS TO THE KINGDOM, THE KINGDOM ON EARTH WILL THEN BE MERGED WITH THE ETERNAL KINGDOM OF GOD.

VERSES 27, 28...CHRIST WILL DELIVER UP HIS MEDIATORIAL KINGDOM TO GOD THE FATHER. WHEN THE PRESENT KINGDOM OF CHRIST HAS BEEN ATTAINED IN THE CONQUEST OF EVIL, THERE WILL NO LONGER BE A NEED OF A MEDIATOR.

IN DELIVERING UP HIS KINGDOM CHRIST IS MAKING KNOWN THAT WHATSOEVER HE HAD DONE IN THE OFFICE OF MEDIATOR WAS DONE IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND BY HIS POWER AND AUTHORITY AND THEREBY PLACING HIMSELF IN A POSITION OF SUBJECTION AS A GENERAL PLACING THE SPOILS OF WAR BEFORE THE THRONE OF HIS KING IN WHOSE NAME HE FIGHTS.

THAT GOD SHALL BE ALL IN ALL: THE ONE GOD IN THREE PERSONS - THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST SHALL GOVERN AND RULE ALL THINGS AND HE SHALL BE OUR GOD AND WE SHALL BE HIS PEOPLE IN A NEW AND EXCITING WAY. REV. 21:3-5, 22:3-7

VERSES 29-33...PAUL SHOWED HERE THAT IT WAS HIS BELIEF IN A REAL RESURRECTION THAT CAUSED HIM TO GO ON TO A CONSISTENT WAY OF LIFE FOR GOD. WITHOUT HIS BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION, HIS SELF-SACRIFICING EFFORT DIDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE. IN FACT, WITHOUT A REAL RESURRECTION,

HIS FAITH DIDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE EITHER.

ON HIS REFERENCE TO THOSE WHO ARE BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD, HE COULD HAVE BEEN ALLUDING TO NEW CONVERTS WHO, BY BEING BAPTIZED INTO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, WERE REPLACING AND CARRYING ON THE RESURRECTION FAITH OF THOSE WHO HAD ALREADY DIED. HE WANTED HIS READERS TO SEE THAT BELIEF IS MORE THAN A MATTER OF THINKING. IT INVOLVES HOW WE LIVE, AND WHAT WE DO TO PREPARE OURSELVES AND OTHERS FOR THE FUTURE.

BY PAUL'S WAY OF THINKING, THIS MEANS THAT WE NEED TO BE CONSISTENT. HE FELT THAT IF WE BELIEVE IN A FUTURE RESURRECTION, THEN WE OUGHT TO LIVE FOR THE FUTURE. BUT IF THERE IS NO RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, THEN "LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE. IF CHRIST WAS NOT RIGHT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION, THEN LETS DO AS THE PAGANS DO AND LIVE IT UP.

VERSES 33,34...THESE VERSES EMPHASIZES THE NEED TO BE CONSISTENT IN OUR RELATINSHIPS. PAUL WAS TELLING THE CORINTHIANS THAT THEIR PROBLEMS WERE RELATED TO HANGING AROUND WITH THE WRONG KIND OF PEOPLE. THEY APPARENTLY HAD BEEN INFLUENCED BY THOSE WHO, IN PAUL'S WORDS, "DO NOT HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD." THIS MAY HAVE INCLUDED SOME PEOPLE WHO CLAIMED TO BE FELLOW CHRISTIANS, ICOR. 5:9-11, 13. THIS SHOWS HOW DANGEROUS IT IS TO KEEP COMPANY WITH FELLOW CHRISTIANS WHO ARE NOT CHARACTERIZED BY CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN LIVING. PAUL HAD ALREADY POINTED OUT IN THIS CHAPTER THAT UNCHECKED EVIL IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH IS CONTAGIOUS (V-6).

PAUL WAS VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE FACT THAT WRONG DOCTRINE, WHETHER IN REFERENCE TO THE RESURRECTION OR NOT, OFTEN FOLLOWS WRONG BEHAVIOR AND WRONG RELATIONSHIPS.

HANGING AROUND WITH PEOPLE WHO CLAIM TO KNOW CHRIST BUT WHO ARE THEMSELVES FAR FROM THE LORD CAN BE MORE DANGEROUS THAN

SPENDING TIME WITH NON-CHRISTIANS. WE ARE INCLINED TO BE VULNERABLE IF THE CHRISTIANS AROUND US ARE MATERIALISTIC, SENSUAL, LOOSE TALKING, FREE THINKING, IRREVERENT PERSONS.

THERE IS ANOTHER HOPE THAT IS WRAPPED UP IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST; IT IS "A FUTURE NEW BODY." I COR. 15:35-44

THE PLANT, THOUGH VERY DISSIMILAR TO THE BARE GRAIN, HAS A VITAL CONNECTION WITH IT. IT GROWS OUT OF IT, AND IS OF THE SAME ORDER, THERE IS AN UNBROKEN CONTINUITY.

IF THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY FROM THE GRAVE MEANS ANYTHING, IT MUST MEAN THAT SOMETHING FROM THE OLD BODY COMES UP AND TAKES FRESH FORM. OTHERWISE, WHY DOES SCRIPTURE SAY; "ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES SHALL HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SON OF MAN AND COME FORTH?" THE RESURRECTED BODY WILL BE AS DIFFERENT FROM THE BURIED BODY (NATURAL, EARTHLY BODY) AS AN APPLE TREE IS FROM THE SEED IT GREW OUT OF, A GRAIN OF WHEAT TO A STALK, A BULB TO A FLOWER.

VERSES 36-38...PAUL SHOWS THAT THE RESURRECTION IS NOT AGAINST NATURE AND THAT WE HAVE A CLEAR ILLUSTRATION OF IT IN NATURE ITSELF, IN THE GROWTH OF THE FRUITS OF THE EARTH.

"TO EVERY SEED HIS OWN BODY" JUST AS IN THE CASE OF THE GRAIN, EACH ONE PRESERVES HIS PERSONAL IDENTITY.

VERSES 39-41...THERE IS VARIETY THROUGH EVERY PART OF NATURE, IN HEAVEN AND EARTH. NO TWO OBJECTS ARE ALIKE. EVEN EACH STAR DIFFERS, ONE BRIGHTER, SOME DIMMER, ONE LARGER, SOME SMALLER, SOME MOVING QUICKLY, SOME SLOWLY. THOUGH MAN, BEAST, FISH AND BIRDS ARE MADE OF THE SAME SUBSTANCE THEY DIFFER.

VERSES 42-44...THE SAME IS TRUE OF THE RESURRECTION. THE BODY WE NOW HAVE DIFFERS FROM THE BODY WE WILL HAVE IN DIGNITY AND EXCELLENCE. AS PAUL LABORS TO DESCRIBE THE INDESCRIBABLE AND EXPRESS

THE INEXPRESSIBLE, HE SINGLES OUT FOUR THINGS.

FIRST, THE BODY WILL BE RAISED INCORRUPTABLE. OUR RESURRECTED BODY WILL NEVER DECAY, GET OLD, OR SICK, OR HURT.

SECONDLY, IT WILL BE RAISED IN GLORY, AS THE FLOWER IS THE GLORY AND THE BULB THE UGLY SEED, SO THIS EARTHLY BODY, LOW IN DIGNITY, HUMILIATION. PAUL CALLS IT A "VILE BODY." PHIL. 3:21.

THIRDLY, IT IS RAISED IN POWER. NOT FRAIL, TIRED, LAZY, LIMITED IN WHAT IT CAN DO, BUT STRONG, FULL OF ENERGY AND VITALITY, CAPABLE OF EXTRODINARY AND EXCITING THINGS.

FOURTHLY, IT IS RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY, ADAPTED TO THE HIGHER AND SPIRITUAL LIFE. IT WON'T BE SUBJECT TO THIS WORLD AND MATERIAL THINGS, BUT OUTFITTED FOR THE SPIRITUAL REALM AND THE THINGS OF IT.

VERSE 45...PAUL POINTS OUT THAT SCRIPTURE AGREES WITH WHAT HE IS SAYING. THE TWO ADAMS STAMP THEIR CHARACTERISTICS ON THEIR RACES.

THE TERM "THE LAST ADAM" WAS COINED BY PAUL TO INDICATE THAT THERE CAN BE NO THIRD REPRESENTATIVE MAN, SINLESS AND WITHOUT HUMAN FATHER, AS WERE BOTH CHRIST AND ADAM.

VERSE 46...THE IMPERFECT PRECEDES THE PERFECT, HUMILIATION BEFORE GLORY.

VERSES 47-49...THE FIRST ADAM WAS MADE OF THE DUST OF THE EARTH, EARTH-MINDED AND THROUGH HIM WE DERIVE OUR ORIGIN AND RESEMBLANCE.

THE SECOND ADAM WAS THE LORD FROM HEAVEN WHO WAS NOT OF ADAMS SEED BUT CAME THROUGH HEAVEN TO PARTAKE OF THE HUMAN RACE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. FROM HIM WE WILL DERIVE OUR NEW ORIGIN AND RESEMBLANCE.

VERSE 50...PAUL SAYS THAT THE REASON I SAID THIS IS BECAUSE "FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT OR SHARE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD", BECAUSE OF ITS CORRUPTION, ITS DECAYING AND PERISHING SUBSTANCE.

THE SPIRITUAL BODY OR THE RESURRECTION BODY WILL STILL BE A BODY THOUGH SPIRITUAL, AND RETAINING THE PERSONAL IDENTITY OF THE PERSON RAISED UP, LUKE 24:39; PHIL. 3:20, 21; ZACH. 12:10.

VERSE 51...THE OBVIOUS QUESTION OF SCOFFERS OF THE RESURRECTION IS; "WHAT WILL BECOME OF THOSE STILL LIVING WHEN THE LORD COMES?" A MYSTERY IS A TRUTH PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN NOW REVEALED.

VERSE 52..."IN A MOMENT" MEANS "A PERIOD OF TIME SO BRIEF IT CANNOT BE CUT OR DIVIDED. THESE PHRASES EMPHASIZE THE SUDDENNESS OF THE CHANGE.

VERSE 53...THIS "CORRUPTABLE" REFERS TO THE DEAD, DECAYING BODIES, AND THIS "MORTAL" REFERS TO THE LIVING BODY THAT IS DYING. THE NEW SPIRITUAL BODY WILL NOT DECAY AND GROW OLD AND DIE. IT WILL BE INCORRUPTABLE AND IMMORTAL.

VERSE 54..."THEN" NOT BEFORE. "SWALLOWED UP" OR DISSAPPEARS FOREVER.

VERSES 55,56...THE "WHERE" IMPLIES THAT DEATH AND HADIES WERE SECURE IN THEIR POWER BUT PAUL TAUNTS THEM BECAUSE THEIR POWER IS TAKEN AWAY FOREVER AT THE RESURRECTION, THAT IS THEIR POWER OVER THOSE TAKEN. DEATH HAS NO STING WITH WHICH TO WOUND EXCEPT SIN, AND THE LAW IMPARTS TO THIS STING A DEADLY POWER.

TAKE AWAY SIN AND DEATH WILL NO LONGER HARM US FOR IT STINGER IS PULLED, DEATH IS DISARMED, FOR THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN, BECAUSE IT IS BY SIN THAT DEATH GAINS AUTHORITY OVER MAN. ROM. 5:12.

"THE STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW." THE LAW FORBIDS ALL SIN AND THE PENALTY IS DEATH SO THE LAW ADDS STRENGTH TO SIN IN THAT IT GIVES SIN THE RIGHT TO BE PUNISHED BY DEATH.

VERSE 57...THANKS BE TO GOD...COL. 2:11-15 BELIEVERS IN CHRIST ARE SET FREE FROM THE LAW, SIN AND DEATH BY THE LOVE AND MERCY OF GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

CHRIST OVERCAME SIN, WAS SINLESS, AND ENTERED DEATH AND CONQUORED IT BY THE RESURRECTION. ALL WHO ARE "IN HIM" ALSO OVERCAME SIN AND CONQUORED DEATH THROUGH HIM. WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW, AS IT WAS NAILED TO THE CROSS AND TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY, SO SIN HAS NO STRENGTH AND DEATH NO LONGER HAS AUTHORITY OVER US TO HOLD US BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION.

VERSE 58...PAULS EXHORTATION IS THREEFOLD:

1. BE STEDFAST...BE STABLE, FIRM IN YOUR BELIEF IN THESE TRUTHS.
2. BE UNMOVABLE...DON'T BE TURNED ASIDE, LED ASTRAY BY OTHERS FROM THIS HOPE AND EXPECTATION OF BEING RAISED INCORRUPTABLE AND IMMORTAL.
3. THE LAST FUTURE PROMISE OR HOPE MENTIONED IN THIS CHAPTER CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION IS THAT OUR LABOR FOR THE LORD WILL NOT GO UNREWARDED. 1 COR. 3:8,14.

OUR WORK FOR THE LORD IS NOT IN VAIN OR OF NO ACCOUNT AS THE DENIERS OF THE RESURRECTION WOULD MAKE IT.