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Results of the Resurrection

Acts 1:1-11

INTRODUCTION:

1. If Christ had not been raised. When Jesus Christ lay-dead in the tomb, a darkness as dense as that which shrouded the earth in chaotic times fell upon the disciples.

Had the Lord Jesus remained dead, the Church had never been born; the followers of the Savior had never been re-invigorated; and the preaching of the Gospel had never been known.

With Christ in the tomb, we would have a Christ dishonored of men, disowned of God, and disrobed of His claims.

Had Christ never been raised, the world would have been left without a Savior, and without a Coming King. On into the blackness of darkness, men would have swept their way until, at last, they would have been lost in the eternal night of despair.

We shudder, as we think of a world of men left to utter destruction. It would have been, as though some Heavenly sphere would have been left unorbited, and sweeping on in its maddened way.

2. With Christ raised, new hope, and light, and life hangs in the Eastern sky, betokening the world's new day. Night has passed, and redemption has drawn nigh. As we stand by the empty tomb, we see the Hope of the sinner, and the victory of the saint, coming into view. There is no blessing to man, or to the physical earth, that does not center in Christ's resurrection.

If Christ were dead, we were of all men the most miserable. "With Christ risen, we are of all men the most blessed. With Christ dead, our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sin. With Christ risen, our faith is sure, and our sins are done away. With Christ dead, those who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. With Christ risen, the saints are destined also to rise.

3. The object of this study. It is our purpose to seek to discover in the Book of Acts, which sets forth the message and the ministry of the early saints, the far-reaching effect which the resurrection of Christ brought about upon the followers of Christ, As we do this, we will discover, withal, one of the chief proofs of the resurrection itself.

We know the sun shines because the darkness disappears, and because the warmth of the sun's rays is felt, and all life takes on an upward look.

We know that Christ is risen because new life, and hope, and love, illumine our pathway; because a new power accompanies our message; a new inspiration stirs our service; and, a new and a far-flung

vision enhances our pathway.

The effect of the resurrection did not cease with the passing of the early Church. It is just as potent in the lives of the saints who live today. What means the great volume of praise which ascends from the lips of saints the world around? What means the consecration of millions to the cause of evangelism? What means the onward march of that great host of missionaries, who are pressing their way with the message of salvation, into the darkest regions of the earth? What do these things mean? They mean that Christ is risen, and that He still works.

I. THE NEW JOY (I Peter 1:3)

When Christ met the women, after His resurrection, He said, "All Hail"—"All Joy." We know of how the women were weeping at the tomb. We know of how the two disciples went on their way to Emmaus, depressed in spirit and sad of heart. We know also of how they, one and all, were begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

The early chapters of Acts breathe a spirit of exultant joy. We read that they continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. They continually glorified the Lord Jesus.

Their joy in the Lord was so great, that persecution and penury could not dampen it. They even rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. Paul and Silas in the prison at Philippi broke forth with prayer and praise, while their paeans of victory reverberated through the prison halls.

This joy and rejoicing, that gripped the early Church was evidence of a faith in Christ and in His resurrection, that nothing could overcome. They knew whom they believed; and they knew that He was not dead, but was risen indeed.

Should not this joy, that marked the ministrations of the early Church, abide?

II. A NEW MESSAGE (Acts 2:24)

We remember well the marvelous faith of certain Old Testament saints. They looked down through the years and told of Christ's death and resurrection. Job could say, "Yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Abraham could receive his son from the dead, in a figure, accounting that God was able to raise him up. David could speak, with certainty, of the fact that Christ was to sit upon his throne, because he foresaw and forespoke of the resurrection of Christ.

Yes, the Old Testament Prophets and seers, by faith, saw Christ risen. However, when the empty tomb became a blessed and glorious reality, then the resurrection took on a new meaning, and established a new message.

It does us all good as we follow the testimony of Peter, and of James, and of John, and of Paul, to note the emphasis they placed upon the risen Christ. They preached the Cross to be sure, but they did not separate it from the resurrection. If they told that Christ died for our sins, they also told that He was raised for our justification.

At Pentecost, Peter was quick to cry out, "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" Jesus of Nazareth. However, he also said, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."

Following Pentecost, Peter and John, on the occasion of the healing of the lame man, sounded forth the words, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."

When Peter and John were brought before the rulers, they said, "Jesus of Nazareth whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead."

Thus it was, that, with great power, gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Shall we of today, relegate our testimony of the empty tomb, to a once-a-year service. God forbid. Let us sound it forth as a dominant message of pulpit and of pew.

III. A NEW EMPHASIS ON CHRIST'S HEADSHIP (Acts 2:36)

From the day that the early Church began to serve, the Lord Jesus became unto them, not only the Lord Jesus Christ raised from the dead, but He became the Lord Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, and clothed with all authority and power.

The early saints moved under the inspiration that Christ was not only alive, but that He was alive to watch over them, and to clothe them with power. They went forth under the inspiration of those parting words of Christ,— "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth." They felt the deep meaning of the words, which Christ added, "Lo I am with you."

How the truth of Christ's headship stirred the saints! and how they pressed on their way, nothing doubting! Listen to Peter, as the spokesman of the Twelve: he says,— "This Jesus hath God raised up... therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Accordingly, Peter realized that the One, seated in the Heavens, was the One, working on earth. Men saw and heard, in the city of Jerusalem, what Christ was accomplishing from the right hand of God.

In almost his next breath Peter said, "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." Thus the Savior slain, was now the Lord exalted. He was holding in His hands the reins which guided the Church.

It was for this reason, that, on the occasion of the healing of the lame man at the gate of the Temple called Beautiful,— Peter said to the amazed multitude,— "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" Then Peter emphasized that the man was made whole because, the Jesus whom they crucified, had been glorified.

This same vision of Christ in His headship, leadership, and authority is seen all through the Book of Acts. It is also seen in the Epistles. We need that same vision to grip us today. We serve a Christ who is not dead but living.

IV. A NEW POWER IN SERVICE (Acts 1:8)

Before Pentecost, the disciples had neither power in service nor power over the enemy. They had been

given to seeking preference among themselves; they had known more or less of strife. They had failed, in attempting the miraculous. One of them had even denied his Lord, while all of them had forsaken Him and fled.

After Christ's resurrection, and ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were new men. To be sure there were, at times, marks of some of the weaknesses of their former selves; yet, as a whole, they were transformed.

We read "and with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Not only was this true of the Apostles, themselves, but it was true also of those who labored with them, and of those who succeeded them. The seven men chosen to look after the affairs of the Church in Jerusalem, were men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. The laity, as well as the preachers, received the Holy Spirit. When the first great persecution arose against the Church, and they were all scattered abroad, they went everywhere preaching the Word.

The Apostle Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit, and his messages were given in power.

Not alone, however, in the realm of power was there a new order, but also in the lives of the saints. Their prayer life was deepened. They walked together with one accord. They cared one for the other, even having all things common, and the peace of God garrisoned their hearts. They lived lives which manifested the fruit of the Spirit. All of these things came as the result of the risen, ascended and seated Lord.

V. A NEW VISION OF DEATH (Acts 7:55, 56, 59, 60)

The effect of the empty tomb carried to the hearts of the early saints a new vision concerning death. They knew not only that Christ was raised, but that He had ascended. They knew that each of them, in turn, if their bodies were laid away, would rise, and not only rise, but join their Lord above.

The empty tomb bore witness to them that the dead in Christ should rise. The empty tomb told them more. It told them that they should rise with bodies made like unto their Lord's glorified body. It told them still more. It told them that, with bodies glorified, they should be forever with the Lord. The result of Christ's resurrection was, therefore, that the early saints lost their fear of death. They were willing to be martyred for their faith, because martyrdom would only usher them into the presence of their Lord.

The death of Stephen was an inspiration to them all, in that, before Stephen gave up his spirit, his face had become as the face of an angel. He had looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and he had seen the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

Would that we, of today, might live under the power of this same wonderful vision! Life may be precious to us because of its association and of its opportunities; however, death exceeds in glory. Paul could well write "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

Let us live in the light of the glory of Christ. Then the sorrows of earth will not overwhelm us.

VI. A NEW FELLOWSHIP OF SAINTS (Acts 2:42-45)

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ brought an entirely new order. When Christ had died, the veil

of the Temple had been rent, and the Gentiles were given access, from henceforth, into the Holy of Holies, and into the presence of Christ.

When Christ was risen and exalted, a new fellowship was formed, to be known henceforth as the Church. This Church, from the beginning, met on the first day of the week to break bread. This day of resurrection, became, from the beginning, the recognized special day for the Church. The ordinance of baptism was observed, linking the Church indissolubly with the crucified and buried, yet risen and Living Lord.

The early saints understood, step by step, the deeper meaning of this new fellowship. It came to them first of all, as an addenda to Judaism. However, afterward, they saw that the Church was entirely distinct from the old order.

The Apostle Paul was sent of God to fill up the Word of God in its new message concerning the Church.

The churches in each city became the center for the fellowship of saints and for the preaching of the Word.

The churches realized that Christ, risen and seated, was their living Head. It was in Him that they moved, and from Him that they received their authority. It was He who walked in their midst, placing over them their messengers.

Until this hour, the Church is victorious in life and in testimony to the extent that it recognizes its living Head.

VII. A NEW HOPE (Acts 17:31)

As the disciples and the saints of early days grasped the announcement of the angel, "He is not here: for He is risen," they began by the way of the Lord's empty tomb to get a vision, such as they had never known, of the things to come. The grave with its stone rolled away, had a telescopic effect upon the disciples. They knew that the One crucified, had been crucified as King of the Jews. They knew the testimony of the Prophets, that the Babe of Bethlehem, the Child of the Virgin, the Son of God, had been announced by the Prophets to sit on David's throne. Now, in that empty tomb they saw God's pledge of fulfillment.

Thus it was that from the very beginning, even at Pentecost, Peter referred to the fact that God had sworn to David that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, God would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. Peter averred that David, believing this promise, spoke beforehand of the resurrection of Christ.

We do not wonder, therefore, that with the empty tomb before him, Peter called unto his nation to repent, that so the times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord, and that God might send Jesus Christ.

The early Church lived and moved, wrought and taught, under the inspiration of the empty tomb. To them that tomb was indissolubly linked to Christ's Second Advent.

The early saints lived, looking for that Blessed Hope and the glorious Appearing of their great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Shall we who dwell under the very shadow of the blessed hour of that glorious Return, not lift our faces upward to greet Him as He comes?