

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 43 – RESURRECTION - DEFEATING DEATH]

We have been looking in detail at the saving ministry of Jesus Christ.

- ◆ We started by speaking about how God the Logos, humbled himself by setting aside His heavenly glory and joining humanity as one of us.
- ◆ We learned when Jesus became incarnate, He assumed our fallen human nature in order to wrestle it to the ground, defeat it and restore it to God's original intention.
- ◆ We spoke about how Jesus was baptised in order to represent us through all aspects of his life, not just his death.
- ◆ We saw Jesus confronting the devil and overcoming the evil spiritual forces holding mankind captive in order to institute the kingdom of God.
- ◆ He chose twelve disciples for the embryonic formation of the church.
- ◆ He announces the arrival of the new age, the age of redemption by healing the sick, calming the elements, casting out demons, raising the dead and forgiving sin.
- ◆ He taught the ruling principles of the kingdom of God with his teachings and parables to show salvation was obtained through grace, not through obedience to the law, which is an impossibility for human beings.
- ◆ We saw how Jesus was born "under the law" in order to redeem those "under the law." Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant requirements from both the side of Israel and the side of God.
- ◆ At the last supper, Jesus introduces the New Covenant which has real forgiving power as it is based on His sacrificed body and blood, not the body and blood of animals.
- ◆ This New Covenant included not just Israel but all of mankind as it also embraced the Abrahamic Covenant. It was through Abraham's seed (Jesus) that "all nations of the earth would be blessed."
- ◆ With Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we saw how the relationship between God and mankind changed forever. Rather than living under the condemnation of the law, mankind now lives under the free gift of grace.
- ◆ We saw how Jesus as the "predestined" one or the "elected" one willingly substituted himself in the place of guilty mankind to accept the wrath of God's just penalty against sin, so we could be adopted into the family of God.
- ◆ We saw how Jesus went to that God-forsaken place called hell when he cut himself off from the source of true life and died the second death so we wouldn't have to.
- ◆ We saw through His willingness to accept the death penalty on our behalf and impute His righteousness to us, that we have been "justified" and "reconciled" to God.
- ◆ And finally we saw how on the cross He defeated the two sources of evil that hold mankind captive, our fallen human nature and the evil forces of the spiritual realm.

As the Roman soldier thrust his spear deep into the vital organs beneath Jesus' ribcage and His precious blood poured out on the ground, He willingly submitted to the welcome relief of death.

- ◆ But not before He uttered two last cries.
- ◆ ***"It is finished" (John 19:30) and "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46).***
- ◆ The cry, "It is finished" showed just how confident Jesus was that He had faithfully fulfilled every task the Father had asked of Him in order for the gift of salvation to be offered to all mankind.
- ◆ The God-ordained list mentioned above had faithfully been accomplished.
- ◆ After "working" for millennia to restore the relationship between Creator and created since the first sin, Jesus at last could rest.
- ◆ ***John 5:16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. 17 In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."***
- ◆ The Father and Jesus who enjoyed rest on the seventh day of creation had to recommence working after sin entered the world in order to restore the relationship with His rebellious children.
- ◆ The Sabbath commandment pointed forward to this day when spiritual rest and peace between God and mankind would be accomplished through Jesus' saving "work."
- ◆ ***Hebrews 10:11-13 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one***

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sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool.

- ◆ The duties of the levitical priesthood of the Mosaic Covenant merely pointed forward to the true saving work of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ Nothing more needed to be added to His work as far as Jesus was concerned, hence His cry, "It is finished."
However, having accomplished all this, there was still one last task Jesus could not complete on His own. There was still one last enemy that had to be defeated otherwise everything that Jesus had accomplished up to this point would be wasted.
- ◆ For this last task, Jesus had to rely on His heavenly Father to accomplish.
- ◆ That one last enemy remaining was death itself. If God could not demonstrate His power over the grave itself, then all His previous saving work would be for naught.
- ◆ To use the medical metaphor again, the disease causing death was cured, but unfortunately the patient died.
- ◆ Jesus lay dead in the tomb after submitting to the hell of the cross, and bearing the sins of the world.
- ◆ But His last cry, "**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit**" showed the vital connection between Jesus and His Father had not been broken by the evil forces arrayed against Him.
- ◆ Jesus, as demonstrated throughout His entire life, had complete trust that His spirit was in the safe hands of the Father until He was restored to life through His resurrection (John 2:19).
- ◆ Jesus did not have an immortal spirit or soul anymore than we do. He had to rely on His Father to resurrect Him.
- ◆ **Romans 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.**
- ◆ Only God has the power to raise the dead. If we want to live again, this is where we too need to put our trust.
But this resurrection is no ordinary resurrection. This one is unique in the annals of history.
- ◆ Other resurrections had taken place throughout the biblical narrative.
- ◆ Jesus Himself had already demonstrated He had the power to raise someone from a biological death and grant them back their physical existence (Lazarus - John 11:1-43; Jairus' daughter - Luke 8:49-54; Dead raised at Jesus' death - Matthew 27:52).
- ◆ But what makes Jesus' resurrection so unique is that this is the first time a "mortal" man has been raised to "immortality."
- ◆ He has passed through a gateway no man had ever passed before.
- ◆ Jesus' resurrection was not resuscitation to His former life as in the case of Lazarus, but a resurrection to eternal life.
- ◆ What was stunning to the early Christians, who already believed in a general resurrection at the end of history, was the timing of Jesus' resurrection.
- ◆ What was supposed to happen at the last day had suddenly been telescoped into the present.
- ◆ Earlier we spoke about Jesus' birth from "above" signifying the beginning of the new creation, now at the end of His earthly ministry we see further proof the new creation has arrived in the midst of the old decaying creation.
You will remember in an earlier session we talked about "personhood."
- ◆ "Personhood," you will remember, is the unique quality God has built into us humans which separates us from the animal kingdom and gives us the ability to relate to others, including our heavenly Father.
- ◆ For humanity to make the transition from mortality to immortality, it was critical this unique relationship with the Father be maintained, as God is the only one who can grant us immortality.
- ◆ However because of Adam's sin, mankind has cut himself off from the source of true life, and as a consequence now faces the prospect of both a biological and a spiritual death.
- ◆ This is the "second" death we spoke about in an earlier section, a death we referred to as the consequence of sin, "**the wages of sin is death**" (Romans 6:23).
- ◆ So mankind finds himself under the sentence of spiritual death pictured by their denial to the "tree of life."
- ◆ However, as we have learned, Jesus through His incarnational and atoning work has restored the relationship between God and man pictured by the tearing of the temple curtain.
- ◆ The created again has access to His Creator. The door to immortality has again been opened.
- ◆ But this whole scenario is contingent on God's ability to raise Jesus from the dead.

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- ◆ What is at stake here is God's ability to grant immortality to mortals and for the person's unique "personhood" to continue through to the spiritual dimension.
- ◆ So if God can raise Jesus from the grave and bestow on Him immortal life, it proves once and for all, God has the power to do the same for us (John 11:25).
- ◆ We see both of these criteria fulfilled when Jesus appears to His disciples the evening of His resurrection.
- ◆ ***John 20:19-20 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"***
- ◆ For Jesus to suddenly appear out of nowhere in a locked room ought to tell us something about His new body.
- ◆ It had powers way beyond the natural. Jesus was either a great magician or this was a supernatural occurrence.
- ◆ So we have undeniable proof of the Father's ability to raise someone from the dead and to grant immortality to mortals.
- ◆ ***V.20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.***
- ◆ Jesus wanted to assure the disciples that He was the same person they knew before His crucifixion so He asked them to check His hands and His side.
- ◆ So not only is Jesus raised immortal, but we see his unique "personhood" transcending death in the miracle of the resurrection.
- ◆ The disciples' recognition of the person who was Jesus Christ proves His "personhood" had crossed with Him from mortality to immortality.
- ◆ So we have living proof we serve a God who has power to raise someone from the dead.
- ◆ And not only raise them but to grant them immortality and restore their unique identity that died with them when they suffered their biological death.

Man in his arrogance likes to think he can control most circumstances in life. But one thing he can't control is this last enemy death. We may be able to postpone it for a while but eventually it strikes us all.

- ◆ So the resurrection of Jesus is great news for humanity, not only because Jesus our Savior is raised from the dead, but also we have a heavenly Father who has the power to raise the dead.
- ◆ Death has lost its sting in the face of the living God (1 Corinthians 15:55).
- ◆ But now that Jesus has defeated death, the Father passes this authority to the one who has defeated both death and hell to Jesus.
- ◆ ***Revelation 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.***
- ◆ Jesus now holds the keys to mankind's destiny.
- ◆ He is the one who has gone to death and hades on our behalf, defeated them and as a result is given the authority to offer us the gift of eternal life.
- ◆ It is no longer death, sin, the devil or any other power that controls the destiny of mankind. That power is in the merciful hands of our Savior.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.***
- ◆ Instead of being held captive by the power of sin, death and the devil, Jesus has set us free from those evil forces that held us under their sway.

And if we are set free, what has God in store for us?

- ◆ ***1 Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.***
- ◆ "Firstfruits" implies "secondfruits." Just as Adam's sin decreed death as the destiny for humanity, now Jesus' resurrection sets the stage for humanity to make the transition from death to life. And not just biological life, but eternal life in relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Mortality is not part of God's plan for humanity. We may experience a physical death, but the resurrection of Jesus proves the nature of a finite person, their "personhood" can extend beyond death into immortality.

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