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The Message of the Resurrection



The synopsis of a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on March 27th 2005.

The term EASTER appears once in the New Testament. It is found in Acts 12:4. "And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people." Easter is a mistranslation of the Greek word pascha meaning Passover. It is translated in the other 28 places that it appears by the word Passover. The word EASTER comes from the name of a Babylonish goddess, ASTARTE. She was also known as Semiramis, Queen of Heaven. I need not tell you of the razzamatazz that surrounds Easter. It is derived from the heathen festivities that surrounded the worship of their gods. Such activities have completely superseded the Word of God. Let us be careful what we teach our children about this time of the year. Christ was crucified and raised from the dead at the time of the Jewish Passover. This year, that celebration will not begin until the evening of April 23rd. The early church celebrated the resurrection of Christ at the same time as the Jewish Passover for obvious reasons. However, Emperor Constantine instigated an alteration of the date of the celebration in the year 325 at the Council of Nicea, in order to disassociate Christians from the Jewish people. I believe that he was wrong in doing that. It was his wrong decision which established the date of our modern "Easter." Strange to relate, the early church in Ireland was among the last to adopt the new calendar and its acquiescence marks the final Romanising of religion in Ireland and initiated the dark ages in this island! Whenever we do particularly remember the death and the resurrection of Christ let it be remembered that the doctrine of the resurrection is central to the Gospel. It was clearly seen to be so in the preaching of the early church.

I. THE RESURRECTION IS THE MESSAGE OF THE HOLY GHOST. The first sermon recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is that preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost. That sermon is filled with references to the resurrection of Christ. Acts 2: 14-36. The great day of Pentecost was a day for the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. The task of the Holy Ghost was to show the truth about Christ and exalt Him. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you," John 16: 13-14. The Holy Ghost had clearly spoken of this matter before. "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see cor-



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ruption," Acts 2:25-28, 31. The Holy Ghost had predicted the resurrection, now He declared it. His coming was proof of the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ to the Father's right hand. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," Luke 24:49.

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION IS THE MESSAGE SINNERS NEED TO HEAR.

"But 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 . . . unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," Acts 3:14-15, 26. The lame man, whose healing is recorded in this portion of Holy Writ, was a demonstration of the presence of resurrection power in their midst. Only the Conqueror of death can help poor sinners. The One who has died and risen again is the One who alone can help those crippled and paralysed and ensnared by sin and death. Verse 6 — 'Rise up and walk.'

III. THE MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION IS THE MESSAGE WITH WHICH TO COMBAT SATAN.

"The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word . . . And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all," Acts 4:26-29, 33. The resurrection of Christ is the message of God to the enemy. The preaching of the resurrection reminds Hell that its power is broken. "But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name . . . So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done." Acts 4:17, 21. Hell can only threaten.

IV. THE MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION IS THE MESSAGE WITH WHICH TO BREAK NEW TERRITORY.

The people of God are to advance with this message in their hand. It has power to break through the ranks of the enemy. Thus Peter and Paul went forth in their day. "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in



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him shall receive remission of sins," Acts 10:39-43. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ," Acts 17:2-3. "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles," Acts 26:22-23. It was with this message on his lips and burning in his heart that Paul entered new areas.

V. THE MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION IS THE MESSAGE WITH WHICH TO FEED THE SAINTS.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures," 1 Cor 15:1-4. "Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," Eph 1:16-20. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Peter 1:3.

1. Our whole glorious future is based upon the certainty of Christ's resurrection.

We need to be aware that our hope is founded upon the rock of Christ's death and resurrection. If there is doubt about Christ's resurrection then heaven is in doubt. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished," 1 Cor 15:17-18.

2. The resurrection of Christ is the great demonstration of God's power put forth on our behalf.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," Ephesians 1:19-20. The resurrection of Christ was a demonstration of God's power which is working on our behalf.

3. The resurrection of Christ is our living hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Peter 1:3. Our hope is a living, breathing hope for it is based upon the sure word of the Lord of Glory.

What is your hope for eternity?



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Rest, alone in Christ crucified, buried and raised again. In Him is salvation.