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If Christ Be Not Risen - What Then? - Part 2

Introduction

In last months Front Page article there was consideration of the evidences for the Lord's resurrection. This paper will present further evidences of the resurrection of the Lord. Previous items written on the subject were written for Front Page in April 2014, and March and April 2015.

There can be no doubt that the greatest evidence in any court is not "circumstantial" or "hearsay evidence" but "first hand evidence", that being, those who have actually seen the fact being questioned. It is interesting to observe that no one saw the Lord rise from the dead. Are we then shut up to "circumstantial or "hearsay evidence?" Definitely not! In life I do not need to see or be with someone in the process of dying to know they are dead. Once I see them as they lie a corpse I know the individual is dead. The evidence is in plain sight. No one needed to see the Lord actually rising from the dead, they saw the evidences of it.

It is also an interesting fact that there are several verses in the Old Testament which indicate the day the Lord rose from the dead, that being, the sheaf of firstfruits was presented (Lev. 23:11) on the morrow after the Sabbath, and the Sabbath is Saturday, thus the day after the sabbath is Sunday or the first day of the week. When we read of the Lord as the "Firstfruits from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20), when connected to the Old Testament it indicates the Lord rose on the first day of the week. On this consideration, it is observed that there is only one verse in the New Testament which specifically informs us the day the Lord arose. It is when Mark wrote, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene" (Mk. 16:9). We are not told which day the Lord was crucified and to an extent it is irrelevant whither it was Wednesday, Thursday or Friday for had it been important to any aspect of the glorification of the Lord we would have been told.

Another observation is that the body of the Lord never decomposed for his body saw no corruption (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:27; 13:35). Sin had no power over the Lord to bring about His death for the wages of sin is death (Rom. 3:23) and since He was impeccable, there was no sin committed by Him or in Him. The dead body of the Lord was in contrast to that of every other human being for unlike Lazarus, even his sisters bore witness to the fact that having been dead four days "he stinketh" (Jn. 11:39). That was never the case with the Lord. He had a body that was impervious to disease, a spirit impervious to sin, and a body impervious to decay.

Finally, the resurrected body of the Lord was a real human body still having the marks of the nails and the sword. It was not a spirit body for He himself said, "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" (Lk. 24:39).

Evidences Christ Rose From The Dead

If I was going to call for witnesses to a major matter of great importance, I would seek out the most skeptical and ask them, "What changed you from being an open skeptic of the resurrection to being a firm believer in it?" I would not ask a group of people who solidly believed the Lord would rise before it happened for their opinion would be bias. As I read the scriptures I am aware of one individual who believed in the resurrection of the Lord before He died, and that was the thief on the cross. Believing the Lord would rise from the dead he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Lk. 23:42).

- a) While Paul, being a Pharisee, believed in the resurrection, he with others did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah but rather a false messiah who was rightly put to death because he claimed to be the Son of God (Jn. 19:7). Furthermore, he persecuted and put to death those who believed Christ was the Messiah and had risen from the dead (Acts 9:1-2; 13). If ever there was a skeptic it was Saul of Tarsus, yet with great zeal he sought to prove that Jesus was the Christ. What made him change his mind? It was his experience of meeting the living Christ on the Damascus Road. There the Lord appeared to him and having seen the Lord (Acts 9:3-6) risen from the dead (Acts 9:22), He knew this Jesus whom he persecuted was the Son of God, alive from the dead. Later he wrote almost an entire chapter giving the evidence for the resurrection of the Lord from logic (1 Cor. 15:16) and from nature (1 Cor. 15:35-44).

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However, the scriptures do list a number of persons who were skeptics but saw the Lord after His resurrection.

- b) Seeing the resurrected Lord had a fourfold purpose:
- i) The verification that the man who stood in the upper room (Jn. 20:19) walked by them in the wayside (Lk. 24:13-27); was with them on the mount of Olives whom they saw Him ascending to Heaven (Acts 1:9-11); and was the Jesus whom they had known and worked with for approximately three years.
 - ii) A foreshadowing of His High priestly ministry to His own. With Peter we see the great truth of restoration, to Thomas the establishing of his faith. At times He spoke to one person with comfort and exhortation (Jn. 20:11-17), at other times he was there for many at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). How wonderful this is, each of us is an individual and the Lord in His High Priestly ministry succours the individual and yet, at the same time, there are multiples around the world in the same situation and He comforts, exhorts, and secures the many.
 - iii) The verification that he really was risen from the dead and did have the wound to prove His death. The wound in the side of the Lord was the only wound that was a mortal wound (Jn. 19:34). One could have lived through the whipping, the thorns, or the wounds in His hands and side. However, the wound in His side was an evidence that if death had not taken place, (which it had (Jn. 19:33), the individual would have died from such a wound.
 - iv) The verification of the ancient promises, pictures and prophecies as to who He was and of His death and resurrection. While we cannot be positive about the exact order of the appearances, the following are, as I understand, their chronological order:
 1. Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9-11; Jn. 20:16-18)
 2. The other women who it appears had left the tomb (Matt. 28:5-10)
 3. To Peter to restore him (Lk. 24:34, possibly the same as 1 Cor. 15:5). It is normally understood that it was at this private meeting Peter was restored.
 4. The two on the road to emmaus (Mk. 16:12; Lk. 24:13-30)
 5. The disciples without Thomas (Mk. 16:14)
 6. Peter/ also called Cephas (1 Cor. 15:5)
 7. The disciples when fishing (Jn. 21:3-4)
 8. Over 500 brethren (1 Cor. 15:6), some who were still alive who could be contacted for verification.
 9. Saul (Acts 9:4-6; 1 Cor. 15:7)
 10. James (1 Cor. 15:7)
 11. The disciples when Thomas was with them (Jn. 20:26-28)
 12. The disciples in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-17) and possibly the same as the time of commission of the Lord at Galilee (Mk. 16:19)
 13. Then some forty days later (Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 1:11)
 14. Stephen (Acts 7:55-56)
 15. Saul (Acts 9:3-6)
 16. John (Rev. 1:13-18)
- c) The verbal / written witnesses
- i) It is the Biblical teaching that the Lord did rise from the dead:
 1. Evidenced from the Old Testament scriptures, one of which was the Lord's application of Jonah's experience to His death and resurrection (Matt. 12:40)
 - ii) The coming of the Holy Spirit because Christ was glorified (Jn. 7:39)
 - iii) The witness of the Holy Spirit when He testified through Peter (Acts 3:26; 10:40), Paul (Acts 13:9-10; Gal. 1:1; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:21) that God raised Him.
 - iv) The Holy Spirit authenticating signs evidencing the gospel of Christ (Heb. 2:3-4)

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- d) If the Lord is not risen:
 - i) His fidelity is questioned
 - ii) His authority is questioned
 - iii) His deity is questioned
 - iv) There will be no subjection of all under the Lord (Heb. 2:8-9)
 - v) No righteous judgement for sin (Rom. 3:21-26)
 - vi) No defeat of Satan (Heb. 2:14-15; Eph. 4:8; Col. 2:15)
 - vii) There is no justification (Rom. 4:25)
 - viii) The headship of Christ is not an assured reality (Eph. 1:22-23)

- e) That which He can now do and God do through Him.
 - i) Give him the ability to bestow eternal life (1 Cor. 15:45)
 - ii) Enable God to quicken us spiritually (Eph. 1:19-2:1)
 - iii) Give us the power for the new life (Rom. 6:4)
 - iv) A prerequisite for the dispensing of gifts (Eph. 4:8)

Conclusion

Christ was raised from the dead because there was no sin in Him (Rom. 1:4). Consequently, because He was raised from the dead, positionally regarding my standing before God there is no sin in me (1 Jn. 4:17).

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