

DOCTRINE OF CHRIST – part 8

I. THE STATES OF CHRIST

- A. The State of Pre-Incarnation
- B. The State of Humiliation
- C. **The State of Exaltation**

1. The Resurrection of Christ

c. Evidence of Christ's Resurrection.

- Lord Darling, a former Chief Justice of England concluded, “The crux of the problem of whether Jesus was, or was not, what He proclaimed Himself to be, must surely depend upon the truth or otherwise of the resurrection. On that greatest point we are not merely asked to have faith. In its favour as living truth there exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true.”
- Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853) was the famous Royall Professor of Law at Harvard University and succeeded Justice Joseph Story as the Dane Professor of Law in the same university upon Story's death in 1846. Story & Greenleaf made significant contributions to the development of Harvard Law School as a premier legal school in the United States. In Greenleaf's book *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice (TE)*, he wrote:

“The great truths by which the apostles declared, were, that Christ had risen from the dead, and that only through repentance from sin, and faith in Him, could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere ... Their master had recently perished as a malefactor, by the sentence of a public tribunal. His religion sought to overthrow the religions of the whole world. The laws of every country were against the teachings of His disciples. The interests and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them. The fashion of the world was against them. Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, revilings, bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments, and cruel deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay, rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unblenching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted...

It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact. If it were morally possible for them to have been deceived in this matter, every human motive operated to lead them to discover and avow their error. To have persisted in so gross a falsehood, after it was known to them, was not only to encounter, for life, all the evils which man could inflict, from without, but to endure also the pangs of inward and conscious guilt; with no hope of future peace, no testimony of a good conscience, no expectation of honor or esteem among men, no hope of happiness in this life, or in the world to come. Such conduct in the apostles would moreover have been utterly irreconcilable with the fact that they possessed the ordinary constitution of our common nature. Yet their lives do show them to have been men like others of our race; swayed by the same motives, animated by the same hopes, affected by the same joys, subdued by the same sorrows, agitated by the same fears, and subject to the same passions, temptations, and infirmities, as ourselves. And their writings show them to have been men of vigorous understandings. If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication.” (Greenleaf, TE, 28-30).

- A lawyer, Frank Morrison, wrote in his book, *Who Moved the Stone?* (<http://www.gospeltruth.net/whomovedthestone.htm> - free pdf book) of how he had been brought up in an unbelieving rationalistic environment, that view the resurrection as nothing but a fairy tale happy ending. Therefore he planned to write an account of the last tragic days of Jesus, allowing the full heroism of Jesus to shine through. He would omit the miraculous events, and utterly discount the resurrection. But when he came to study the facts with care, he had to change his mind. His first chapter is significantly called, “The Book that Refused to Be Written”.
- Two able young men, Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, went up to Oxford, determined to attack the basis of the Christian faith. West wanted to prove that Jesus never rose from the dead, while Lyttleton was bent on proving that Saul of Tarsus was never converted to Christianity. Some time later, they met to discuss. Both came to their independent conclusion that the biblical accounts were accurate. Saul of Tarsus became a radically changed man through his conversion to Christianity. West found that the evidence pointed unmistakably to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, as recorded in his book *Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* published in 1747.

d. **What did the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Accomplish?**

i. To Jesus Christ Himself

- *It demonstrated His victory over death* (Acts 2:24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. 1 Cor 15:54-57). Jesus pointed to His physical resurrection body as evidence that He had risen from the dead, saying, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).
- *It vindicated Him as righteous.* Jn 16:10 **Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;**
- *It proved His divine identity as the Son of God.* Rom 1:4 “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Had Christ remained buried in the ground like any other men, there would have been no reasonable ground to put faith in Him. The empty tomb and Christ’s resurrection appearances testify to His deity.
- *It proved His claims to be God in the flesh.* Dr Norman Geisler said “If Christ did not rise in the same physical body that was placed in the tomb, then the resurrection loses its value as an evidential proof of His claim to be God.” (Jn 8:58; 10:30).
- *Jesus based His authority for His teaching and truth of all His claim on His resurrection from the dead.* “He is risen, as He said” (Mt 28:6).
 - Jn 2:13-22 “Jesus answered and said unto them, **Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.** Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”
 - Mt 12:38-42 (Jesus likened His death and resurrection to prophet Jonah’s time in the fish): “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, **An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.** The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here.”

ii. To the Believer in Christ.

- *Assures him of his acceptance with God.* It guarantees the believer's present forgiveness and justification. Rom 4:25 Who (Christ) was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification; 1 Cor 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. "So long as Christ lay in the grave there was no assurance that His redemptive work had been acceptable to God. The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead was evidence that the Father was satisfied with the sacrifice Christ had made for the sins of men." – W Evans. Believing sinners may now rest satisfied in Him that they are justified (declared righteous) by the blood of Jesus.
- *Assures him of an Interceding High Priest in the Heavens.* Rom 8:34 "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."
- *Assures him of all needed power for life and service.* Eph 1:19-20 "... 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"
- *Assures the believer of his own resurrection and immortality.*
 - 1 Thes 4:14 "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."
 - 2 Cor 4:14 "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you."
 - By rising from the dead in fulfillment of His own promise, He guarantees to His people, "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19). "The resurrection of Christ is held forth as a pledge and promise of His people's resurrection, and as the sure foundation of their hope" - W.W. Clarke.
 - Paul taught that Christians who are alive on earth at Christ's second coming will be similarly transformed and given glorified bodies. 1 Cor 15:51-54 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
 - Christians who die before the second coming will be raised and clothed with their new heavenly body. 2 Cor 5:1-5 1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

iii. To the World.

- *The certainty of a Judgment Day.* Acts 17:31 "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men,* in that he hath raised him from the dead."

2. The Ascension of Christ.

- a. The ascension of Christ is His physical visible departure from His disciples into heaven.
- b. **Jesus told Mary Magdalene He must ascend to His Father in heaven.**
 - Jn 20:17 "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father ..."
- c. **Jesus referred to His ascension many times.**

- Jn 6:62 “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?”
 - Jn 14:2 “I go to prepare a place for you. ... I go unto my Father.”
- d. **The disciples later saw Christ ascended to heaven.**
- Lk 24:51 “And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”
 - Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.
 - Heb 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
- e. **It was a bodily and visible ascension.**
- Acts 1:9-11 “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”
- f. **He took His place at the right hand of the Father.**
- Heb 1:3 when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
- g. **He has entered Heaven as a forerunner.**
- Heb 9:24 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even Jesus*, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
- h. **He is now appearing before God in our behalf**
- Heb 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
- i. **He has gone to prepare a place for His people.**
- Jn 14:2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
- j. **He shall come again.**
- Acts 3:20-21 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.