

Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ

Lecture 20

Jesus' Resurrection & Ascension

I. Jesus' Resurrection

Introduction

- The resurrection of Jesus Christ lies at the heart of the Gospel message – His death is central to the *kerygma* but without His resurrection, His death would have been just like the death of any great hero or martyr – a wonderful example to follow how He died but of no more special significance – cf. Paul's words in 1 Cor.15:3-6; the preaching of the early apostles – Acts 2:23,24,32; 3:15; 4:1-2; 4:8-12,33; 5:27-32; 10:39-41; 13:26-39; 17:18,30-32; 23:6; 24:14-16,20-21; 26:6-8 – these verses and passages show clearly that the resurrection of Jesus was indeed the central thrust to the preaching and witness of these early apostles – giving rise to the Christian belief and hope in the believer's resurrection from the dead
- Thus our study and reflection on Jesus' resurrection in Luke's Gospel, viewed from this post-ascension and post-Pentecost perspective, is a very important one – what are the fundamental truths?

Fundamental truths

- **GOD'S WORK:**
 - God raised His Son, Jesus, from the dead – He sent His angel to roll the huge stone away from the door of the tomb – Luke 24:1-8; cf. Matt.28:1-7
 - This means that Jesus' rising from the dead wasn't the result of some slight of hand or magical trick – the mighty Conqueror, God, through the working of His divine Spirit (Rom.1:3-4), delivered His Son from the grave as He had promised – Luke 9:22; 13:32; 18:31-33 (cf. John 11 – the "sign" of Jesus' raising Lazarus from the grave – see John 11:25-26)

▪ **JESUS' APPEARANCES:**

- Jesus appeared to all His closest followers – Luke 24:10,13-31,36, beginning with His closest followers and disciples who would soon become “witnesses” to the Gospel rooted in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Acts 1:22)
- He left them in no doubt concerning the fact that He was alive from the dead – this was absolutely fundamental to their future work as “apostles” who were “eye-witnesses” to His death and resurrection (cf. Luke 1:1-4) taking the Good News to all the nations – cf. 1 Cor.15:3-8
- One most important theological implication of this fact is that Jesus’ resurrection, in order to be the foundation of hope for our own resurrection from the dead, must be a *literal* resurrection, not just a spiritual resurrection, i.e. a belief in one’s mind (cf. believing something that you want to believe in regardless of whether it actually happened or not – in this way of thinking, believing doesn’t need to be based in fact, as long as it is something that the individual firmly believes in)

▪ **JESUS' RESURRECTION BODY:**

- Jesus rose again from the grave with His glorified resurrection body – He wasn’t a body-less ghost or spirit – He proved this fact to His disciples by eating food together with them on several occasions – Luke 24:37-43; John 21:1-14
- Jesus’ form or appearance was recognisable to His disciples (even though in their grief and unbelief they did not immediately recognise Him) – Luke 24:31
- However, Jesus’ body was a body without any of the physical limitations of space and matter, eg the limitation of physical barriers – He could come and go at will – Luke 24:31 – He could walk through doors – John 20:19

▪ **JESUS' WORDS:**

- He instructed them – Luke 24:17-27,44-46 – He showed them through this overview of Redemption History how everything that had taken place was in truth in total fulfilment of God’s Word
- He comforted and encouraged them – Luke 24:38; cf. John 21:15ff (Simon Peter’s special encounter)
- He answered their questions: “Are You at this time going to restore the Kingdom of God?” (Acts 1:6)

- Their thinking and interpretation concerning Jesus' promises spoken, eg in the Upper Room – see John 14:16-19 – had been dominated by the expectation that all such promises would “soon” (now!) be fulfilled – in other words, the kingdom of God would now break in to human history – they could not possibly have understood at this moment that the fulfilment of these promises would be worked out over centuries and generations, centuries beyond their own lifetime
 - Jesus uses this opportunity to direct their thinking to the work that He had prepared for them to do, i.e. to continue His mission work – Luke 24:46-48
- He commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem – Luke 24:49b
- He promised that they would be anointed with power for the work that He had commanded them to do – Luke 24:49a; Acts 1:8 – this “promise of the Father” was the Person of His very own Spirit who would anoint them with the same divine power that the Father had poured out upon Jesus at the beginning of His earthly ministry (cf. Luke 3:21-22)
- He blessed His followers – Luke 24:50-51

II. Jesus' Ascension

Commentary

- Jesus' ascension was a “parting” with and from His disciples – Luke 24:51 – He was “taken up” into heaven – Acts 1:2 – “lifted up” – Acts 1:9
 - Note that it took place in a particular location – Luke 24:50 – once again the text announces Jesus' ascension as a very real and actual event rather than merely a “spiritual” experience in the minds of Jesus' disciples
- The angels spoke to Jesus' disciples comforting them with the promise that He would one day return in the very same way He had been taken up in the clouds – see Acts 1:11
 - This was an announcement of hope that Jesus will one day return to earth “as He left”, i.e. with His glorified, resurrection body = a body that

people will see, and a body that cannot be destroyed or suffer decay – one day He will return to earth with power and great glory (Luke 21:27)

- Jesus' disciples, instead of being left in shock or in mourning at Jesus' departure, are actually filled with joy as they return to Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the Spirit as commanded by Jesus – Luke 24:52-53 – they spent their time waiting for the coming of the Spirit, praising God and praying (see Acts 1:14)
- Jesus' ascension is the foundation of our Christian hope – “the blessed hope” (Titus 2:13):
 - This hope is our certainty that God will one day release us from all the sufferings, limitations and imperfections in this life
 - It is also the assurance that God will use His divine power to transform our physical, temporal bodies into conformity with His heavenly body so that they become like Jesus' body – Phil.3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-2
- Jesus' ascension was His triumphant entry into heaven, into the presence of His Father with all the holy angels, witnessed also by the myriad of God's holy ones who like Abraham, Moses and David had already entered their eternal rest:
 - He entered now as the triumphant Lord Christ, Son of Man & the Son of God, the King – as the divine Mediator between God and man, believing man's Representative in heaven – as our Head, the Head of a new humanity – as our High Priest and Intercessor
 - He returned to glory to receive His eternal rewards of honour and glory which the Father gave to Him as His reward for His total obedience and faithfulness in keeping with His God-given mission – Phil.2:9-11; John 17:1-4
 - He ascended to heaven in order that He together with the Father might pour out the Spirit on all His people – Acts 2:33
 - There Jesus waits for the Father's command (see Mark 13:32) to return to earth to bring all things to a final end – first the judgment, and then His eternal and glorious reign, a moment of eternal triumph both for Jesus and for all those who are in Christ – see Col.3:3-4

Conclusion

- The life and ministry of Jesus is doubtless the most blessed study one could ever undertake in this life – to ponder such a life and ministry is to think life’s loftiest thoughts
- HE, Jesus, is the Good News – the Good News of the Kingdom – the victorious and all-powerful rule and reign of Jesus the King over all the forces of darkness – the declaration that now Jesus has all His enemies under His feet – not just for His own sake but as in all aspects of Jesus’ earthly ministry, so in this truth – all that Jesus has done, and is, and will do is the true believers’ inheritance in Him because He did it all *“for us”*
- Therefore, God’s Word calls us to study to know Christ – the true Lord Jesus Christ – so that we might live and serve Him out of a relationship of deepest joy and thankfulness – for His praise and glory

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