**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

One Week After the Resurrection

42 Days to Pentecost on May 23, 2021

***Believers Resurrected - Acts 23:1-11***

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April 11th In the Year of Our Lord

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted.)

In today’s sermon, we will see that Paul continues to be God’s witness in life-threatening situations. We will see that God gives Paul the words to say to confuse his enemies and, at the same time, provide a witness to his accusers and to us today.

 By Paul mentioning the idea/thought of the *resurrection of the dead,* he polarizes the religious leadership. This is provocative in any culture or era. Human consciousness through time continues to put forth questions that will not go away. *Life after death* is a thought that possesses a quest and the greatest of questions. This eternal question is sought by the common man and the kings of the earth. God provides the answer. We are fortunate to have His Word. We are also fortunate that God has revealed Himself to us through the creation from the beginning of our world. I see that it is inherent in the Believer’s heart and mind that God has prepared an eternal place for us. Jesus tells His disciples not to fear.

**John 14**

 1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

 4 "And you know the way where I am going."

 Jesus provides critical elements to His teaching during this resurrection period statement. Yes, the disciples heard this teaching from Jesus after He walked out of the tomb. So, remember, the disciples receive this from a man who they saw mortally tortured and die on a Cross. Who would not be troubled?

1. Do not let your heart be troubled.
2. You believe in God, believe in what you see/hear in Jesus, who is God.
3. God has dwelling places for Believers.
4. God as Jesus prepares a place for Believers.
5. In the future, God is coming back as Jesus.
6. When God as Jesus returns, He will receive Believers to the place He is going.
7. Believers know the way where Jesus went.

**Why Pentecost?**

**Exodus 34:21-22**

21 "You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest.

 22 "You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. (Also called Feast of Harvest, Days of First Fruits)

 This took place 50 days after Passover. Thus, the Greek-speaking Jews called the holy day “Pentecost”. The Jews called the holy day “Shavuot”, a reference to seven weeks or 49 days from Passover. Therefore, on the 50th day, the Feast of Weeks was celebrated along with the observation that God gave Moses the Law.

**Exodus 34:27-28**

27 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

 28 So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

**Continue in Acts 23**

 **Continue in Acts 23**

We need to see the relationship with the Jewish Passover and the giving of the Law to Moses marked by Pentecost. Remembering that Passover called for the sparing of the firstborn male child’s life due to the lamb’s blood placed on the doorpost of Jewish and Egyptian houses in the Exodus account. This points directly to the Cross of Jesus (Lamb’s blood) and faith in His Gospel, sparing the lives of Believers for an eternity. Thus, the Resurrection is the pinnacle event accomplishing what the Law could not. Faith in the saving power of the Resurrection is in contrast with the Jewish religious leaders assigning salvation to adherence to the Law of Moses. Heartfelt-faith in God is the mechanism for salvation, removal of sin and eternal life (Psalm 51:16,17, Ephesians 2:8). The Jewish legalist taught that a person was justified to God meritoriously with strict adherence to the Law of Moses. Paul correctly identifies the Law as a tutor leading to Christ (3:24). Jesus and His Apostles taught that faith in God produced good works, and it was faith from a surrendered (circumcised) heart that was able to follow God’s commands (Deuteronomy 30:6-8). The brother of Jesus (James) understood this when he wrote James 2. At the same time, a claim of faith without any production of good works, in God’s name, is an indication of a false claim. So, the Jews misapplied the Law due to the hardness of their hearts. Hebrews 10 is a great passage to gain understanding of the contrast and application between the Law of Moses and being saved by faith.

Hebrews 10:1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?

 3 But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins year by year.

 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

**Paul Under Arrest**

**Continued to Preach The Resurrection**

**Roman Commander Orders Hearing by Chief Priests**

**Acts 22:30** But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

**Paul’s 2nd Speech After Arrest in Jerusalem**

**Acts 23:1** Paul, looking intently at the Council, said,

"Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

 **2** The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.

 **3** Then Paul said to him,

"God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"

 **4** But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

 **5** And Paul said,

"I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written,

'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.'"

 **6** But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council,

"Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees;

I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

 **7** As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

 **8** For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

 **9** And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying,

"We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

 **10** And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.

 **11** But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said,

"Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so, you must witness at Rome also."

**The Trial of the Resurrection**

Christianity is on trial for proclaiming the resurrection of the dead. In fact, the Old and New Testaments witness people raised from the dead, and Jesus prophesied that He would raise himself from the dead.

**I Kings 17:17-24** - In the Old Testament, Elijah raised the son of the widow Zarephath.

**2 Kings 4:18-37** - The Shunammite Woman’s son was raised from the dead by Elisha.

**2 Kings 1:20-21** – Man comes alive after being thrown in Elisha’s cave-tomb.

**Luke 7:11-17** – Jesus raises the son of a widow from Nain.

**Luke 8:49-56** – Jesus raises from the dead the daughter of Jairus, Synagogue leader.

**John 11:1-44** – Jesus raises Lazarus of Bethany, brother of Martha and Mary.

**Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-49; John 20** -Jesus raises Himself from the dead.

Jesus prophesied He would raise Himself in three days.

Matthew 12:40; 15:32; 26:61; 27:40, 63

Mark 8:2, 31; 9:31; 10:34; 14:58; 15:29

Luke 2:46; 4:25

John 2:19, 20

**Matthew 27:50-54 –** At Jesus’ death on the Cross, an earthquake broke open tombs and people rose from their graves.

**Acts 9:36-42 –** Peter raises Tabitha in Joppa from the dead.

**Acts 20:7-12 –** Paul raises Eutychus from the dead after he fell from a window.

Jesus’ life and death are universally accepted by scholars. In the face of Scripture and Christian witness, ironically and conveniently, 600 years after the Resurrection, when Islam is created by fallen men, Islam rejects Jesus’ death and resurrection. Islam teaches that Jesus did not die on the Cross, that there was a substitute man crucified in His place. (Therefore, there is not any death from which to be resurrected.) Islam does teach that Jesus ascended to Heaven. However, they do not present any evidence for their teaching. Islam has to deny the Resurrection for several reasons. The most important reason is that Jesus died for the sins of the world, paying the price for our sins that we could never merit. Islam is a merit-based system that teaches your good deeds have to outnumber your bad deeds in order to get into heaven.

**Facts of the Resurrection.**

1. Biblical eye-witnesses – the women at the tomb and disciples
2. The disciples and others died martyrs for proclaiming the resurrection.
3. The penalty for a Roman soldier to fall asleep while guarding the tomb of Jesus was death.
4. The Creator of life on earth can also resurrect life (John 1:1-4).
5. The accounts of the Resurrection are immediate and are circulated by word-of-mouth. Legends and myths take many years to form. Scholars agree that passages like 1 Corinthians 15 provide details from those that were there and witnessed what they saw. Paul is repeating an eyewitness account of the Resurrection.

**1 Corinthians 15:1** Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,

 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also

**Afterlife**

**The Afterlife** (also referred to as life after death, the world to come, rebirth or reincarnation) is an existence in which the essential part of an individual's identity or their stream of consciousness continues to live after the death of their physical body. According to various ideas about the afterlife, the essential aspect of the individual that lives on after death may be some partial element, or the entire soul or spirit, of an individual, which carries with it and may confer personal identity or, on the contrary nirvana. Belief in an afterlife is in contrast to the belief in oblivion after death. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterlife>

The World Wide Web contains an endless list of books, discussions, videos, movies, personal testimonies, scientific experiments and conclusions ranging from life after death is real – to, it is a product of human consciousness.

What is your definition of the next life?

We Christians should be able to articulate what happens to us, what happens to all of us after this life ends.

The short answer is that Believers, who by their heart-surrender to God, go to live eternally with Him in His Heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:14ff). The more expansive answer adds that we receive new bodies and continue our life in an environment that does not have tears, pain and suffering like we experience in this fallen temporal world (Revelation 20,21; 1 Corinthians 15:35ff).

Paul details in his letter to the Corinthians that our perishable bodies end here at death. We receive new bodies that are imperishable to be with God for an eternity. Paul writes for God to the Philippians (3:21) that our bodies are transformed into glorious bodies. To the Romans, Paul states that the Spirit of God who raised Jesus dwells in them and will give life to their mortal bodies. By His power, God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also (1 Corinthians 6:14).

**AMEN**