

Series: Resurrection!

April 23, 2017

Title: Resurrection!

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Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Sabbath

The Place of Trumpeting:

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On the evening of Good Friday a lone trumpeter climbed to the highest point of the Temple compound's southwest corner. Below him spread the city of Jerusalem. A few moments after sunset, he raised a long, slender silver trumpet and sounded the trumpet call that marked the beginning of the Sabbath.

With the sound of the trumpet all work ceased in Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. The markets and bazaars fell silent. The crowded streets and squares became empty as people found their way home for Sabbath prayers.

On the north side of the city the last stragglers of the crowd that had gone out to watch the day's crucifixions made their way back through the Garden Gate. A small group of mourners climbed out of a quarry that had been converted into a cemetery. They had taken the body of Jesus down from the cross and hurriedly buried it in one of the quarry's stone-cut tombs, making sure to finish their work before the trumpet's call.

Sabbath:

The Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, marked sacred time: one of those ways in which heaven and earth overlapped. It reminded the Jewish people of the fact that God had delivered them from slavery. Sabbath was a day for rest and refreshment. Even more, it reminded them that they and the world they lived in was God's Creation. The Sabbath commandment explained:

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Exodus 20:11 NIV

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

God had promised to one day create a new heavens and new earth. Until then, this day of joy and fellowship served as a foretaste: a time when God's people at least for 24 hours entered into God's rest.

Three stars in the sky:

Early Saturday evening the trumpeter returned to his post high on the wall of the Temple compound. When the sun had set and three stars were visible in the evening sky, he sounded the trumpet to announce the end of Sabbath. A new week had begun.

Almost instantly the city came to life. Doors opened and closed. People streamed into the streets, intent on making a purchase or doing an errand before night fell.

The trumpeter turned his back on the bustling city and carried his long silver trumpet down the stairs. Little did he know, but with his trumpet call he had announced the beginning of the First Day of God's New Creation.

The women who had witnessed Jesus' death and burial were purchasing the ointments they would carry to His tomb. In a few short hours they would discover the tomb open and empty. Heaven would inform them that Jesus the Messiah had been raised from the dead and God's New Creation had exploded into this old world.

The Good News

Paul's trumpet call:

It had been twenty years since Jesus rose from the dead. Twenty years since the temple trumpeter unknowingly announced the first day of God's New Creation. Now Paul found himself in need of making his own trumpet call – in the form of a letter to Christians in faraway Corinth. They had heard and believed the Good News of Jesus' resurrection; but now they needed a reminder:

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1 Corinthians 15:1-2 NIV

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

This is a make-or-break moment: either they go forward in the Christian journey or they turn back. There is no middle ground. They have left the “Egypt” of paganism and unbelief, but now they are in danger of losing their way.

So what *is* this ‘gospel,’ this Good News upon which everything else depends?

“Christ died for our sins”

Paul’s Good News trumpet call comes in four powerful notes.

First, the two dark notes of Jesus’ death and burial:

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1 Corinthians 15:3-4a NIV

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried...

This tragic death was no accident of history or simple miscarriage of justice. It was part of God’s purpose to once and for all set His world free from the exile of sin and death.

Think, for example of what it is like to go to the check out at the supermarket with a cart full of groceries – only to discover that your debit card is overdrawn. Ugh! There you stand in front of the cashier, with a line of people behind you. You’re confused, embarrassed, frustrated, powerless. You are in a kind of financial exile.

That is where Israel found itself, despite its own best efforts. It’s where we all find ourselves. We are slaves to Sin and prisoners of Death.

But when Jesus died on the cross, He took upon Himself the penalty of our sins. He went into voluntary exile for you. No wonder He cried out: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

His exile meant that He died and was buried. These are the first dark notes of Paul's trumpet call. But His exile was the price that He was willing to pay to set us free.

"He was raised on the third day"

Then come the two bright notes of Jesus' resurrection and appearances:

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1 Corinthians 15:4b-8 NIV

*...that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [Peter], and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. **[Slide 7]** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

Here is the proof that the exile is over and the New Exodus into God's New Creation has begun. The prophet Hosea had written:

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Hosea 6:1-3 NIV

"Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

"After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.

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"Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."

The wounds of exile had fallen on Jesus the Messiah. Now, in His resurrection, we all receive the promise of resurrection. And we see the proof of this promise in His own appearing.

Notice how this promise is anchored in God's New Creation: sunshine, winter rains, spring rains, new life after the long cold winter. Jesus' resurrection fulfilled this ancient prophecy. It was "according to the Scriptures." It marked the First Day of God's New Creation.

Resurrection!

Not in vain:

Paul's deep concern for the believers in Corinth is that they would not have "believed in vain." How tragic to have started this epic journey from darkness to light, from death to Life, only to fall by the wayside through unbelief.

For them, as for us today, the idea that a dead body could come back to life was preposterous. Why not simply define the resurrection as a spiritual reality expressed in metaphorical terms? Why not say that what really mattered was that Jesus' spirit went to Heaven? Why not say that the same is all that matters for us after we die? Isn't Heaven a far better place than Earth?

Death swallowed up forever:

Paul would have none of this. He understood that God's plan was bigger than snatching souls from Earth to bring them to Heaven. He understood that God had promised something far better: a New Heavens and New Earth. In this New Creation Death would be no more.

Right here on this Earth God had promised to bring Death's reign of terror to and end:

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Isaiah 25:7-8 NIV

On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.

The LORD has spoken.

Paul's trumpet call proclaimed that God had done what He had promised. He had raised Jesus from the dead on "this mountain" of Jerusalem. He had swallowed up death forever. This happened not in far-off Heaven, but right here in a rock-cut garden tomb. The Earth itself gave birth to the Son of God.

Resurrection!

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An ancient triumphal arch in Rome tells the story of the silver trumpet that announced the First Day of God's New Creation. It was erected in honor of Titus, the general who conquered Jerusalem just 15 years after Paul's first letter to Corinth. One of its carved panels shows Israel going into exile, with the victors carrying the spoils of war. In the parade we see the gold menorah and table that once stood in the Temple. And in front of the table we see two trumpets.

Never again would they sound the beginning and end of Sabbath. That task now fell not to trumpeters, but to those who went out into the world with the astounding news that Jesus had risen, according to the Scriptures. This is why Paul dedicated his life to spreading the Good News.

This is the trumpet call that proclaims God's New Day. This is the news that defines you as a follower of Jesus. This is the guarantee that Death will not have the final say over you. But only if you dare to believe that He is truly risen, just as He said.

Resurrection!

LIFE Group Lesson for "Resurrection!"

Ice Breaker

- Did you ever try to tell something and they wouldn't believe you? What did it feel like? What did you do to try to convince them that you were telling the truth?

Believing the Gospel:

- To be a follower of Jesus means to believe the Good News. Paul describes what it means to truly believe the Gospel this way:
 - *1 Corinthians 15:1-2 NIV*
 - *Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise you have believed in vain.*
- To accept and believe the Gospel means:
 - To *receive* it as true. The word Paul uses is a Jewish technical term for the passing along of a sacred teaching or tradition.
 - To *take you stand* on it. In other words, to stand confidently and securely on the truth of the Gospel.
 - To *be saved* by it. Being "saved" is something that happens both now and in the future resurrection.
 - To understand what is at stake in standing firm in the Gospel: if we don't hold firm to it, we are wasting our time. Our faith is in vain. To trust God is the one thing He requires of us.

The Core Gospel:

- So what *is* this Gospel? Paul breaks it down for us into 4 parts:
 - First: the fact that Jesus died according to the Scriptures.
 - Second: the fact that He was buried – thus truly deceased.
 - Third: the fact that He rose on the 3rd day according to the Scriptures.
 - Fourth: the fact that He was seen alive after the resurrection by many witnesses.

- The phrase “according to the Scriptures” assures us that what happened when Jesus died and rose again was not some anomaly; it was part and parcel of God’s great Story of rescuing His world. Without this Gospel, God’s rescue mission does not exist.
- Note: The Jewish people of Jesus’ time saw themselves trapped in a kind of exile – cut off from God’s victory and kingdom.
 - The exile would only end when Israel’s sin was forgiven, thus opening the way back into God’s favor and blessing.
 - This is why Jesus died for our sins “according to the Scriptures.”
 - The resurrection demonstrated that God had vindicated Jesus, even though He had been condemned as a criminal and heretic.
 - With the resurrection it was clear that He was the true Messiah.

Taking our stand:

- To be a Christian means to accept and stand firm in this amazing reality: Jesus is risen.
- I means accepting the eyewitness testimony of those who saw Him alive and shared their story.
- It means seeing that His story is now our story.

Prayer time:

- Pray for each other for courage and faith in this new journey!