

Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures

1 Corinthians 15:4

Halifax: 8 April 2007

Introduction

As most of you know, we don't follow the church calendar in this congregation with Lent and Holy Week and Epiphany and Pentecost and all the other so called holy days.

- Our session, along with the Westminster Assembly, does not believe the church or any other human agency has the authority to institute holy days.
 - That is God's prerogative.
 - We believe that we are neither to add or take away from what God has commanded.
- And in these New Testament times, He has not burdened us with a great multiplicity of holy days...
 - Instead, He has appointed the first day of the week for us to observe the weekly Sabbath commanded in the fourth commandment.
 - This is the new creation that Christ completed when He finished his work of redemption.
 - He has finished the work and has entered into His rest when He arose on the first day of the week.
 - And as Christians, we have our Sabbath rest in His completed work and rest with Him on the first day of the week.
 - Each week, we celebrate and give thanks to God for our acceptance in Christ Jesus.
 - This is what God has appointed from the resurrection of Christ until the end of the world.
 - I will not go into a defence of that statement this morning,
 - but would rather refer you to the sermons I preached on Question 59 of the Shorter Catechism which can be found on our website.
 - Sadly, the church has not kept itself under submission to God when it comes to the observance of holy days.
 - The result has been that we have Christmas and Easter and other days that are of human rather than divine appointment...
 - These have been the cause of many divisions in the church—even quarrels about which day should be observed...

- but what is worse,
 - we have demonstrated that wicked propensity of the human heart to love the holy days appointed by man more than the holy days appointed by God!
- There is the pernicious tendency that Jesus put his finger to set aside the commandments of God because of our traditions.
 - In other words, the church tends to make the observance of Christmas and Easter more important than the observance of the weekly Sabbath.
 - There are many who would not dream of missing Christmas, but who are perfectly content to set aside the observance of the Lord's Day.
- What's more, as these days are of human institution,
 - they have often brought with them many traditions that are also not authorised by God...
 - such as the use of the advent wreath with candles that are supposed to represent Christ,
 - or the use of plays or Cantatas as an element of worship...
 - Sometimes these are even used instead of what God has appointed.

But having said all that,

- You know that I often take a break from my regular sermon series at Easter or Christmas—not to do a pageant—but to do a sermon on the theme of Christ's resurrection at Easter and His birth at Christmas.
 - As a minister of God's word, I see this as an opportunity to preach on these topics that our society is thinking about...
 - As the people within our society turn their minds to the subject of Christ's resurrection today,
 - I want to set forth the teaching of God's Word on this topic—just as I preached on hurricane Juan and on the destruction of the towers on September 11 in New York.
 - And so today, I am going to break from our regular sermon series to preach to you about Christ's resurrection.

As I meditated on the doctrine of the resurrection this past week,

- I began to think about that great chapter in Paul's letter to the Corinthians that has 58 verses devoted almost exclusively to that doctrine...
 - 1 Cor 15.
 - And as I began to meditate on the chapter,

- I was particularly taken with 1 Cor 15:4 where the faithful apostle tells us that Christ was buried according to the Scriptures, and that
 - “He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures!”
- This is a very interesting statement when you think about what scriptures Paul is referring to here!
 - Paul wrote these words in AD 55,
 - a couple of years before his letter to the Romans and a good decade before his letters to Timothy and Titus.
 - Few, if any of the gospels had been completed by this date...
 - To what scriptures, then, does Paul refer when he tells us that Christ rose “according to the scriptures”?
 - Paul refers to what we now call the Old Testament Scriptures.
 - He is telling us that the Old Testament Scripture teaches us that Christ will die, be buried, and rise again on the third day.
- This raises an interesting question.
 - Where does the Bible say that the Messiah would rise again on the third day?
 - Psalm 16 is about the closest reference we have.
 - In this Psalm, Christ is the speaker and He says:
 - Psalm 16:9-11: Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
 - Sheol is the place of the dead—the grave—
 - and Jesus is saying that He will not see corruption in the grave, but will be raised up to sit at God’s right hand.
 - Besides Psalm 16, there is the reference about Jonah in the belly of fish for three days and three nights,
 - Before He died, Jesus referred to this passage with reference to His resurrection.
 - He told His detractors that they would be given no sign from Him but the sign of Jonah...
 - that even as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights,
 - so the Son of Man would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights and then raised from the dead.

- But this is really more a prophecy from Jesus about His coming death and resurrection than a clear prophecy from Jonah.
- The point is, it is not very easy to find an Old Testament text that expressly states that the Messiah will die and rise again on the third day!
- Why then does Paul speak of it as something that is taught in the Old Testament?
 - The way he speaks about it, you get the idea that he refers to more than just a couple of rather indirect proof texts.
 - And I believe he is taking about more—a lot more!
 - I believe that rather than thinking of a couple of proof texts,
 - Paul is speaking of the whole tenor of the Old Testament's teaching...
 - It is not just a verse or two, but the whole of it that teaches us that Christ will die, be buried, and rise again.
- What we have in the Old Testament is a clear display of the body of Christ—the church—all of God's elect...
 - Again and again they are shown to be dead until the Lord raises them up.
 - The pattern of death and resurrection is the pattern that we find from start to finish.
 - And therefore, when Christ comes to fulfill all the types and promises of the Old Testament,
 - it should not seem strange to us to find Him conforming to the pattern of death and resurrection that has been so clearly established.
 - I do not mean to say that someone who lived in the Old Testament times could easily figure out that He could come and die and then rise again...
 - The gospel was a mystery that was not to be revealed until Christ came and actually did the work...
 - But after the work is completed,
 - it should be quite easy for us to look back at the Old Testament and see how perfectly it fits together with the work that Christ accomplished!
 - When we, as believers, read the Old Testament,
 - the veil ought to be removed and we ought to see Christ!
 - I find that sadly, a lot of Christians today read the Old Testament with the veil in place—
 - the miss the treasures and benefits of a huge portion of God's Word.

TRANS> This morning, I want set forth the glory of His resurrection to you from the Old Testament Scriptures in an overview fashion.

- In the Old Testament understood in light of the New,
 - we have declared to us how Christ comes to us in our death and raises us up to life.
 - He comes to us when we are in the worst of circumstances,
 - and joins Himself to us in those circumstances in order that He might raise us up to the best of circumstances!

I. First of all, see how Christ raises us up from the fall.

A. In Genesis 3, we have an account of the fall of the human race in Adam.

1. Adam and Eve had barely come from their Creator's hand when they fell into sin and death.
 - a. God had told them if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would surely die in the day that they ate it.
 - Death in the Bible means separation...
 - Physical death is the separation of the body from the spirit.
 - Spiritual death is the separation of man from God.
 - b. Adam and Eve died spiritually in that very day.
 - 1) No longer did they live in a harmonious relationship with God in which they received blessed life from Him.
 - Now they were disconnected from Him and from His blessing.
 - They had fallen under His wrath and curse and so were expelled from the Garden of Eden.
 - God told them that now they would face hardships in living and hardships in relationships.
 - 2) Not only did they die spiritually, but they were also sentenced to physical death.
 - God told them that they would return to dust—
 - Their bodies would rot and decay in the ground.
2. And this death that Adam and Eve fell into, as it says in Romans 5, passed upon all people.
 - a. The whole human race was bound together with Adam as our Father.

- Adam, being the first man, was what we might call the Federal Head of the entire human race.
 - That means that God had appointed him to be our legal representative...
 - He was our father who spoke and acted for us all, just a king speaks for the nation he represents.
 - If he makes a treaty with another nation, he speaks for the whole nation.
- b. And so it was that when Adam sinned against God by eating the forbidden fruit,
- He not only brought death upon himself, but upon every one of us.
 - This why in 1 Cor 15:22, Paul says, "In Adam, all die."
 - The whole human race inherited spiritual and physical death from Adam.
 - That's why David says that he was conceived in sin—we all are!
 - And that's why Paul can tell the Ephesians that before they were redeemed, they were "dead in trespasses and sins."
 - They were spiritually dead because in Adam all died.

B. But what does all this have to do with the death and resurrection of Christ?

- It has very much to do with it!
1. In Genesis 3:15 we have the marvellous announcement of God concerning what He will do for the now fallen human race:
- The LORD says:
 - Gen 3:15: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."
 - These words are addressed to Satan, the tempter!
 - Satan had just led the human race into a rebellion that brings death upon them...
 - And when God spoke these words to him, the whole human race was united with him in that rebellion.
 - But here God declares that not everyone is going to remain at peace with Satan.
 - The LORD is going to raise up a counter-rebellion from the woman's seed...
 - He is going to raise up a people who will turn against Satan and against the rebellion that he initiated.

- These people are, of course, all of those whom God has chosen for salvation.
 - God will put enmity between them and Satan because He will write His law in their hearts.
 - They will repent and turn against what they had become in Adam by the fall.
 - And there will be a leader of this counter-rebellion...
 - Genesis 3:15 switches to the singular when it says,
 - “He shall bruise your head...”
 - Now, of course, we know that Jesus is the Son who comes forth from the woman (not the man being born of a virgin) to lead this counter-rebellion against Satan.
2. And with these words “He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise your heel,”
- We are told of His death and resurrection.
 - a. The bruising of Christ’s heel speaks of the cross—that He must enter into the death that the human race has fallen into...
 - not as a participant in our sin, but as one who bears the shame and the guilt and the penalty of the transgression of His people.
 - Satan will have his day when Christ is brought to the cross.
 - That is when the curse that Satan brought the human race under will at once fall upon Christ and bring death upon Him.
 - In Adam, He too will die—not that He will fall into sin, but that He will be inflicted with sin’s penalty.

TRANS> That death is what the bruising of the heel refers to...

- b. But the bruising of the serpent’s head by Christ speaks of the resurrection.
 - The bruise to Christ’s heel will be something from which Christ will recover...
 - but the crushing of the serpent’s head will completely conquer him, putting down his rebellion forever and ever.
 - When Christ arises, His elect will rise with Him to serve God without rebellion and without the curse forever.

TRANS> And so here you see how Christ is presented to us from the very start—as soon as we fall—as the One who will enter into our death in order that He might raise us up to life.

II. Secondly, see how Christ raises us up from our filth

A. Because man is dead in sin, his multiplication fills the earth with corruption and filth before God.

1. In Gen 6:11-12, we are told that the earth was corrupt before God and filled with violence.

- **Corruption** perhaps speaks of our lusts for those things which God has not given us—sexual perversion, deceitfulness, lewdness, greed—we want things that defile us before Him...

- And **violence** speaks of what happens when we give way to our selfish desires—we trample over our neighbour whenever our neighbour gets in the way of fulfilling our lusts.

- Gen 6:5 says:

- Gen 6:5: Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

- That is a pretty heavy indictment against us!

2. But it is the sad truth about the whole fallen human race.

a. You all know it!

- You see violence and impurity in our society today—

- There are swarmings and there is sexual perversion and there is greed and deceit...

b. But you don't even have to look outside of yourself to find these things...

- There is the offence that wells up in you when you are not honoured or when you don't get what you want...

- There is greed and the envy that keeps you from rejoicing in the good of your neighbour.

- There are the impure thoughts that spring up from within...

- There are the bitter words that slip out of your mouth revealing the violence in your heart toward your husband or wife, your parents or your children.

c. If you are at all honest, you know that you are full of corruption!

- Just imagine what it must have been like when there was less death, less sickness, less troubles, and no civil magistrate in the days before the flood!

- Corruption was deep and wide! The earth was full of wickedness.

B. And so in Noah's day, God sent a great flood to cleanse the earth of this wickedness...

1. Since the LORD had found that "all flesh had corrupted their way" and that "every intent of the thoughts" of man's heart "was only evil continually,"

- You might have thought that He would destroy the whole human race—
 - All are dead in trespasses and sins...
 - The cleansing of the earth should take out all the sons of Adam.

2. But we are told in verse 8 that Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

- And you know the story...
 - How the LORD commanded Noah to build an Ark and how that ark carried Noah and his family and the animals safely through the flood!
 - They did not get washed away with the rest of the filth!
- The LORD brought death to the human race when He cleansed the earth,
 - but Noah is resurrected out of this death and given life!

3. But on what basis was Noah accepted?

a. We are told in Gen. 8:20-21!

- Noah builds an altar to the LORD and offers up a sacrifice.
 - This sacrifice is a burnt offering.
 - A burnt offering represents one who is wholly dedicated to God.
 - The whole thing was burned on the altar.

b. Noah wasn't wholly dedicated—he was part of the fallen human race...

- that is why instead of presenting himself to God, he presented a burnt offering...representing what he should have been before God.
 - And when the LORD smelled the aroma of that perfect dedication, He vowed that He would never curse the ground for man's sake...
 - "even though the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

c. Noah was raised up "even though" he was part of the problem.

- He was not raised up on account of his own righteousness,
 - but he was accepted because of the virtue of Christ—the one without corruption—who was represented in the burnt offering.
- Christ was to come forth from the woman according to God's promise.
 - And so it was that when God cleansed the world,

- Christ remained, and Noah remained because of Noah's association with Christ!
- He trusted in Christ and Christ was going to come from him—and was in that sense already in him.
- So it is that you, though you are filthy, have hope if you are in Christ.
 - Though the world will be destroyed by judgement,
 - Christ and all who are looking to Him as their righteousness will be raised up to live forever.
 - Christ had to be offered up just like that burnt offering,
 - but because His offering was accepted by the Father for us,
 - we are raised up with Him

TRANS> So you see that Christ entered our filth in order that He might raise us out of it.

III. Third, see how Christ raises us up from ruinous pride.

- A. It is very clear that even after the flood, the human race remained dead in sin...
1. After only a few generations, we find that the restraint of violence that the LORD imposed on man after the flood has indeed brought unity to the human race...
 - a. But it is not at all the right kind of unity.
 - Because man's heart is still not united to God,
 - it is a unity that expresses itself in pride.
 - Pride is when you think you don't need the LORD.
 - b. Look at what man proposes to do in his pride according to Gen 11:4:
 - Gen 11:4: And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."
 - God had given them their success and their unity,
 - but now instead of praising Him with thanksgiving,
 - they propose to make themselves prosperous and secure apart from Him.
 - Sounds an awful lot like our own people in the Christian West!
 - c. It is a great wickedness of ours that we cannot handle God's blessing.
 - As soon as it comes, our sinful hearts want to take all the credit for it!

- The men at Babel forgot that their very presence in the earth was grounded in God's acceptance of Noah on the basis of the burnt offering that represented Christ.
2. See what the LORD does to judge them...
 - a. They wanted to make a name for themselves, so He confuses their language gives them the great name of Babel (Babel means confusion!)
 - They wanted to be secure in each other, lest they be scattered, so the LORD scatters them across the face of the earth.
 - b. Here learn that no matter how great and how unified your society, you cannot survive apart from God.
 - Man was made to receive from God with thanksgiving, not to live independently of God.
 - Everything good that you have, you have received from God.
 - It is a great wickedness to ignore that fact and to pretend that you can get along without Him!
 - He is to be acknowledged in all your ways!
 - The proud moral man of Babel is every bit as abominable to God as the corrupt violent man at the flood.

TRANS> So at Babel we see proud man brought to shame...the families of the earth are scattered.

- B. But God graciously comes to one of these scattered families and singles him out for blessing!
 1. In Genesis 12, He comes to Abraham and says:
 - Gen 12:2-3: I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
 - Notice that here God graciously raises Abram out of the shame and humiliation that He has just brought upon the world!
 - He actually promises to give to this man as a free gift the very things the proud men at Babel were trying to achieve in their own strength!
 - The LORD is going to make Abram a great nation and the LORD make his name great!
 - There will be both security and honour!
 2. But on what basis is this blessing to come?

- a. As God's revelation to Abraham unfolds, we find that it is not on the basis of Abraham's merit or his works...
 - God promises that the blessing is to come through Abraham's seed...
 - b. And in His providence, He shows Abraham that this promised seed who will bring God's blessing into the world cannot be produced by Abraham...
 - Abraham's wife is barren and unable to bring forth the child of the promise.
 - When Abraham at last tries to bring forth the child through Sarah's maid Hagar,
 - he only produces an Ishmael who is not the child of promise.
 - Abraham is called to trust in God who alone can bring forth this child through whom the scattered nations of the earth will be blessed.
 - Even though barren Sarah is well beyond the age to bear children,
 - the LORD brings forth Isaac as the child of promise!
3. But soon Abraham is also brought to learn that Isaac himself is not the one who brings the blessing...
- a. He is commanded to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice—
 - The idea is that Isaac is to be the burn offering that will bear the penalty of sin so that blessing can come to the nations...
 - He is to be cut off from them so that they can be gathered.
 - And Abraham obeys because he believes that God is able to raise up Isaac from the dead.
 - b. But as Abraham is ready to slay Isaac, the LORD stops him,
 - commending him for his obedience and promising that through Isaac He will provide the required offering.
 - It is not Isaac, but Christ who will be God's offering for sin...
 - It is Christ who will come to bear the shame of the cross and to be cut off in order that we might be blessed and gathered, despite our pride!
 - He comes to raise us out of pride and restore us to absolute dependence on God for our blessing.
 - We are taught with Abraham to trust in the One God provides rather than in our own works.

TRANS> See here that if you will but look to Christ,

- you will be delivered from your pride and its penalty...

- You will be gathered in Christ and your name will be made great which means you will be honoured rather than brought to shame.

IV. Fourth, see how Christ raises us up from bondage

A. This is brought out when the seed of Christ is found in bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt.

1. The LORD has not forgotten His promise to make them a great nation and so He multiplies them, but their multiplication makes Pharaoh afraid...

- Pharaoh therefore attempts to thin them out by oppressing them and by calling upon the midwives to murder their babies in birth.
 - But the more he oppresses them, the more they multiply.
 - Yet, still they are in bondage and they have no way to escape.

2. The LORD therefore raises up Moses to bring them out of Egypt and into the Land that God had promised to Abraham some 400 years before.

a. When Moses goes to demand that Pharaoh release them,

- Pharaoh puts up a grand resistance.
- The LORD hardens his heart so that with very foolish obstinacy, he refuses to comply.
- In this way, the LORD displays His power by bringing Pharaoh to submission.

b. Pharaoh's oppression of Israel is Satan bruising the heel of Christ's body,

- but Israel's victory is a picture of Christ's resurrection.
 - He brings His people out of bondage by His virtue and power.
 - They are marvellously brought out of bondage to be God's people and to live in rich communion with Him as their God.
 - They are brought out of slavery to Pharaoh to be God's sons.

B. Christ is clearly brought into the picture when God judges all the rulers in Egypt.

1. The LORD pronounces death to the first born son in every family.

- The first born son represented the entire family as the head of the household... so it was a judgement on their rule over his people.
- But among the Israelites, He commanded that a lamb be offered in the place of each first born son as well.
 - This showed that Israel was not treated differently than Egypt because of her own merit...
 - Her leaders did not submit to God either in their leadership...

- and unless they offered a sacrifice, they would be judged with the Egyptians.
2. The Lamb sacrificed represents Christ dying in the place of His people.
 - a. The outcome is that Israel is brought out of bondage and into God's house to serve Him as His people...
 - b. And a tabernacle is set up to show that the basis of this relationship is Christ who would die for them that He might bring them from bondage to Sonship.
 3. As sons of God through Christ, we have been raised with Him to live a new life in God's family!
 - a. We are so helplessly bound up in our service to Satan that we cannot escape until Christ delivers us...
 - Even now you know of the many things you want to do for God that you do not do...
 - And how the evil you hate, you often find yourself doing.
 - b. The LORD has graciously given us the laws of his house—
 - that we love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and that we love one another as outlined in the Ten commandments.
 - c. How wonderful it is to live in God's house!
 - Christ was brought into bondage for us when He yielded Himself to the oppression of the Devil...
 - He did this in order that He might raise us up from that oppression to live forever in God's house as God's sons.
 - Are you delighting in the joy of this sonship, or are you still in bondage to Satan?

V. Fifth, see how Christ raises us up from anarchy

- A. Although Israel had been brought into God's house, she did not live according to the precepts of His house.
 1. In the Book of Judges, they fall into great confusion as everyone does what is right in his own eyes.
 - As a chastisement, the LORD raises up nations to oppress them—nations that He would have enabled them to subdue if they had keep His covenant.
 - Total anarchy arises and the people are unable to get along with each other.
 - Much as it is in our society, as the law is put aside, there is more and more wickedness and unrest.

2. But God graciously raises up David to rule His people...

- David is a king with a heart for God.
 - He restores God's law and worship among them,
 - and leads them in battle against the LORD's enemies.
 - A time of great blessing and peace comes.

3. But before David can become King,

- He is called to go through all sorts of oppression from the hand of Saul.
 - He is driven from the land and forced to hide in the caves...
 - He is like a dead man until at last God brings him forth to rule.

B. Here again we see the death and resurrection of Christ...

1. As with Isaac, God made it clear that David was not the final answer...

- a. It was not David, but David's son, Jesus, that would at last bring us under the rule of God as our King...
 - David's Son would be the one who would bring true peace.
- b. Jesus is able to restore God's law among us in way that is far better than David.
 - He is able to give us the Holy Spirit who writes God's law on our hearts so that we delight in God's ways.
 - That is how Christ rules in our midst.
 - That is how He brings us into sweet submission to God.

2. But before He could give us His Spirit,

- He first had to suffer the fruits of our anarchy...
- He was unjustly ceased and accused by the Jewish leaders, and not only did they attempt to put Him to death as with David...
 - They actually did put Him to death.
 - He had to pay the penalty for us in order that He might be given the authority to pour out His Spirit upon us...
 - We have to be purified from our guilt by His death so that the Spirit could dwell in us.

3. It is by the Spirit of God that we cry out to God, Abba, Father...

- a. Christ has brought us out of anarchy where anything goes into the Father's house.

- And when that is done by the Spirit of God, you no longer find God's law a burden... but a delight!
 - You want it to fill every detail of your life!
- b. Now let me ask you,
- Where is the anarchy in your life?
 - in your household?
 - in your church?
 - in your nation?
 - Come to King Jesus.
 - He is the One who gives the Holy Spirit to all who ask Him.
 - He entered our anarchy in order that He might bring us into God's kingdom.
 - God has raised Him up to rule until He makes all of His enemies His footstool.
 - He will at last put down all the opposition...
 - His heel was bruised, but He will crush the serpent's head.

Conclusion:

- So you see my brothers and sisters that in Adam all die, but in Christ all are made alive.
 - Every member of the human race including Christ must experience death...
 - Christ, as our representative, had to represent us at the cross in order that He might die in our place...
 - But He was raised up to live forever.
 - And if you will look to Him, He will also raise you up forever.
 - He will raise you up from the fall
 - He will raise you up from your filthiness
 - He will raise you up from pride
 - He will raise you up from bondage
 - He will raise you up from anarchy.
 - He is able to do this because He died and was raised again.
 - If He did not rise, then there is no escape from the fall, from filthiness, from pride, from bondage, and from anarchy.
 - If He did not rise, there is no hope for us at all...
 - But He did rise and His call goes out to all to look to Him and live.
 - See that you do so at once!