

## ***FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA***

### **THE EASTER MIRACLE**

*Villa Rica April 20, 2003*

*Genesis 2: 4-17; 3: 22-24*

If a man die will he live again? And if a man dies and lives again, what kind of life will it be? Will he live again in a body, or will he just be a disembodied spirit? There is not a person living who has not thought about these questions. Man has always wanted to know if there is life after death and if there is life after death will it be life in a body?

The Bible answers these questions. Nowhere else but the Bible do we get authoritative answers. And we don't want anything that is not authoritative. What good after all is speculation? Who wants an opinion based on conjecture or proof less hypotheses? If the questions are answerable at all then we want answers that are reliable and certain. We want to know. We don't want to guess at an answer. The Bible, gives us certain and infallible answers. How important is the Bible. It speaks to the deepest and darkest questions in all of life.

#### **I. We Learn From The Bible That God Revealed To Man The Certainty Of Life In A Body Beyond The Grave**

A. The very first man Adam knew that there was life in a body that was endless: God put in the garden the tree of life (Gen. 2:9) which supplied Adam with continued life indefinitely. Death was an unknown experience and was not the normal and intended experience for man. Death was decreed the penalty for disobedience. Death was an experience only if Adam disregarded God's commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We can see therefore that God's will was that man might live forever, having access to the tree of life, and since that life was begun in a body, and since eating implies some sort of bodily function in order to receive the food from that tree of life, we can argue quite conclusively from scripture that God created man to live forever in a body.

But Adam disobeyed God's commandment and brought himself and his posterity to a fallen estate and Genesis 3:24 states that God placed angels, Cherubim, and a flaming sword that turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. The tree of life was not removed it was guarded. The tree of life was no longer easily accessible as it had been before. But even that scripture does not make access to the tree of life hopeless. Sinners must come in the way the Lord directs, but the possibility of gaining access was not removed. Had God said that the tree of life had been taken away, or that Adam's banishment from the garden and the curse upon the ground for his sake had also put a curse on the tree of life, so that life could no longer come from that tree of life, then it might appear to be an utterly hopeless situation.

As it is the Bible does not leave the will of God to give a tree of life dependent upon the will of man. In that case we would have to say that the will of God to provide a tree of life had been effectively thwarted by man's disobedience. But God is still the sovereign. Man disobeyed and lost his right to the tree of life, but God can still provide a way to that tree of life if it pleases him to do so. Man is not greater than God so that he can utterly destroy that which God willed to create and provide. God permitted Adam to disobey his commandment and introduce death as an unwanted and unnecessary experience, but God never said that Adam's disobedience would destroy the tree of life or frustrate God's will to bestow eternal life on whom he willed to bestow it. God is still God. God's perfect will from the beginning was to create man to be in God's image with all of the blessings of having God as a Father and living forever, so unless you believe that man has the power to frustrate and obviate the perfect will of God, then you must come to the conclusion that the possibility of eternal life in a body is still something God may cause to happen. If not with all men then at

least with many men. To not believe that is to believe that Satan in his temptation and Adam in his sin succeeded in defeating the will and purpose of God.

B. Secondly, we have the testimony of scripture that God made known to mankind by his prophets and by special revelation that there can be life beyond the grave for those who come the way God ordains, through faith in the Seed of the woman -- the Messiah Lamb and that their understanding of that life was that it would be in a body.

Job fully expected to stand upon the earth at a later time in a body of flesh and he expected to see his Redeemer for he said...**Job 19:25-27 25 "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,**

**And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.**

**26 "Even after my skin is destroyed,  
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;**

**27 Whom I myself shall behold,  
And whom my eyes will see and not another.**

When God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac he was willing to go through with it because he believed in the resurrection. We read in Hebrews 11:17-19 **By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; 18it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." 19He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.**

David saw in vision by the Word of the Lord that God planned life beyond this one in a resurrected body. We read in Psalm 16:9-10 **Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

**And again in Psalm 71:20 20 You who have shown me many troubles and distresses Will revive me again, And will bring me up again from the depths of the earth.**

In Daniel 12:2 we read, speaking of God's people, **Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.**

In Hosea 13:14 we read: **"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death.**

**O Death, I will be your plagues!**

**O Grave, I will be your destruction!**

Throughout the centuries before the coming of Christ this resurrection hope was passed from one generation to another. At the time of Christ it was the orthodox teaching of the rabbis of the pharisaical school. Of course the liberal view, represented by the Sadducees, disagreed with the Pharisees on this most vital issue. Remember how they tried to disprove the doctrine of the resurrection with a hypothetical situation they presented to Christ. They thought they had a Biblical dilemma for Christ to ponder. They knew he was a strict Biblicist. The Law of Moses required that if a man married and died without any children, that the brother of the deceased was obligated by the law to marry his dead brother's widow and have children so that the brother's name would be perpetuated. They said to him in Luke 20:28-33:

**"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER. 29"Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless; 30and the second 31and the third married her; and in the same**

way all seven died, leaving no children. <sup>32</sup>“Finally the woman died also. <sup>33</sup>“In the resurrection therefore, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had married her.”

You see the subtlety of the Sadducees. They thought that this question was unanswerable and therefore a refutation to the doctrine of the resurrection. Since it was illegal for a woman to have more than one husband at a time, and since the resurrection would present the impossible problem of one woman with seven husbands, the resurrection would pose a dilemma. Since this woman had seven husbands in the resurrection she would have seven husbands in eternity.

But Christ in answering both exploded their error and verified the doctrine of the resurrection. He said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, <sup>35</sup>but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; <sup>36</sup>for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. <sup>37</sup>“But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. <sup>38</sup>“Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him.” <sup>Luke 20: 34-38</sup>

That was the end of their questions. He silenced the Sadducees with his answer. Again, he taught the certainty of the resurrection. He said in **John 5:28-29** “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, <sup>29</sup>and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Jesus made the doctrine of the resurrection a primary teaching. He taught them that he himself would be raised from the dead on the third day following his suffering and death at the hands of his enemies.

## **II. The Easter Miracle Is Proof Of A Bodily Resurrection**

A. The doctrine of the resurrection is no longer a fondly hoped for future eventuality, it has already happened when the body of Jesus was resurrected to life. He is the first fruits of all men of faith in the resurrection. He was visibly seen and handled by witnesses. They ate with him. They conversed with him. The book of Acts begins by saying that Jesus showed himself alive by many infallible proofs to the apostles, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

B. The very dynamic for the spread of Christianity was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Picture those sorrowing and discouraged disciples following the crucifixion of Christ. They believed their cause was lost with the death of their Messiah. They had believed he was the promised Messiah but they had expected him to set up his kingdom and begin to overthrow all their enemies. They believed he would be a world Ruler and now he was dead. They had forgotten his words to them about the necessity of his being betrayed into the hands of his enemies, the elders and chief priests and scribes. That at their hands he would suffer and be put to death. They just had not understood the necessity of the cross. But as they heard the report of the women who had heard from angels that he was risen, as they went to the tomb and saw the stone rolled away and Jesus gone, then as they saw him with their own eyes and heard with their own ears his words concerning his resurrection, they were convinced. They quit being sorrowful and began to rejoice. They went forth joyfully, confidently to proclaim the resurrection, even in the face of stiff opposition. The apostle Peter, who had denied his Lord on the night of his arrest, now stands up to the high priest and the highest council of the Jews to testify to the truth of the resurrection.

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost Peter preached,  
**Acts 2:22-24** <sup>22</sup>**"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—**  
<sup>23</sup>**this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.** <sup>24</sup>**"But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.**

The crucified Jesus hath ascended into heaven and sends forth the Holy Spirit upon men. He is both Lord and Christ. When Stephen had finished his sermon to the Council, just before they took him out and stoned him, the Word of God says in Acts 7:54- **Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.** <sup>55</sup>**But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;** <sup>56</sup>**and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."**

C. Our faith today rests in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and was raised for our justification. His resurrection is the foundation of all our hope for life beyond this one and a resurrection of our own similar to his. We do not speculate. We do not simply suppose or have opinions. We know. We are certain that all who have trusted in Jesus Christ shall enjoy a like blessed resurrection from the dead.

Why should we dread this thing called death?  
 It's just an open door,  
 Where all within is love and peace  
 And joy forever more,

Because I live, you too shall live  
 We hear the Savior say.  
 Let's consecrate our lives anew,  
 On this glad Easter Day.

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