

Return and Resurrection

By Elder Keith Ellis

As generations of believers pass from this world, one thing remains constant in the Christian community: The hope and anticipation of the resurrection. The doctrine concerning the return of Jesus and the resurrection is central and at the core of almost every Christian denomination on the face of the earth, with the exception of the modern eschatological position of hyper preterism, which teaches that Jesus second coming and the general resurrection took place in the past. This doctrine is not true and destroys hope and overthrows ones faith in Jesus' promise to return and resurrect our bodies from the grave. The idea of these important events being preached in the past tense may stem from misinterpreting these two texts.

And their word doth eat as a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some, Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

2 Timothy 2:17-19

And behold the of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went in the holy city and appeared unto many.

Matthew 27: 51-53

As you can see, the teaching that the resurrection is past is not new. Perhaps the resurrection of the saints spoken of in Matthew twenty seven could have been mistaken as the only resurrection.

Who were those saints that were resurrected after Jesus' resurrection? Did they really appear in physical Jerusalem? And who were the "many" that they appeared to?

First let's consider when this took place. After the feast of unleavened bread according the Levitical feast calendar would have been the feast of first fruits where the priest was charged to perform a wave offering. (See Leviticus 23:10-11) The first fruits from the dead are the one hundred forty four thousand which were offered before God when Jesus ascended after telling Mary, to touch me not, for I have not yet ascended.

Commonly it is taught that Jesus was to ascend to make the atonement. However this cannot be true since the veil in the temple was rent immediately upon Jesus giving up The Ghost, proving that the way into the holiest of all was now accessible to every believer. (See Ephesians 2:12 and Hebrews 10:9) The offering was made through the eternal Spirit. (See Hebrews 9:14)

Secondly, those saints that arose after Jesus' resurrection were not seen in physical Jerusalem, but the holy city, in the presence of God. Jesus pronounced a woe upon the scribes and Pharisees and it was clear that the city was anything but holy. Physical Jerusalem is spiritually referred to as Sodom and Egypt, where Jesus was crucified. (See Revelation 11:8)

Therefore we can say with confidence that the general resurrection is not past and we can anticipate that our bodies will be raised and fashioned like the glorious body of Jesus when He returns to take us home.

. Wednesday towards sundown is when Joseph and Nicodemus proceeded to bury Jesus in that new tomb. Not Friday. There is no way to have The Lord be in the grave three days AND three nights with a Friday burial. (See Matthew 12:40) A Friday burial is mistakenly assumed because of this text.

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

John 19:31

The Sabbath under consideration is not the weekly Sabbath, (Saturday) but it is referring the feast of unleavened bread, which is a Sabbath, on the first and seventh day of this seven day feast. (See Lev 23:6-8) This is a Sabbath or high day.

Time context of the word of God is critical in finding a consistent understanding of the doctrine of God. We have already seen what happened on the day Jesus' resurrection took place. The time of His resurrection is likewise important for us to understand. The first day of the week is when He came out of the grave

A Sunday morning sunrise resurrection is commonly taught. But our text leads us to understand that Jesus came out of the grave sometime after sundown which would be our Saturday night, but Sunday evening according to the Jewish moon calendar. Remember, the evening and the morning were the first day.

The women came to His tomb on the first day of the week which began on our Saturday evening when it was yet dark. (See John 20:1) No Sunday morning sunrise resurrection is taught in the scripture to the best of my knowledge.

The doctrine of the resurrection is said by the apostle Paul to be the very foundation of the Christian faith. If there is no resurrection then we are without hope, and are found to be false witnesses of Christ, seeing we preach the resurrection of Christ from the dead, says Paul.

Through faith we anticipate the resurrection from the dead. We look for these vile bodies to be raised from the grave and changed and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Jesus. Without question, the scriptures describe the second coming of our Lord and the bodily resurrection of His saints as coming to pass at the same time.

(See John 5:28-29) Not only a resurrection to life for the elect vessels of mercy, but a resurrection to damnation for the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. (See Romans 9:22-23)

Because of the great hope and grand expectation of the bodily resurrection, which the church possesses, we discover this point of doctrine to be one that affords the enemy tremendous opportunity if he can divert the saints of God away from the truth of this doctrine.

Most every generation since Jesus ascended back into heaven has been inhabited by some which believed Jesus would return in their life time. These I refer to as the terminal generation. Yet two thousand years have passed and the world is still standing. Jesus has not **physically** come a second time to destroy the world as promised in the word of God. The fact that past generations of believers have been mistaken in their zeal concerning the return of Jesus to the earth serves as a testimony of the hope associated with the "end of time" paradigm. The terminal generation has existed throughout the timely progression of the New Testament church. At the close of the last millennium, end time advocates were prepping for Y2K and the imminent return of Jesus was proclaimed with even more vigor and heart wrenching emotion. Even though there were sects of Christians throughout the world who were captivated and fascinated concerning the "*end of time*," doctrine, God has not allowed His remnant (according to the election of grace) to be diverted from their Christian vision.

Even today, I feel that the teaching regarding the forecast of the great tribulation being yet future and coupled with end time theories serve as a major diversion. After all, we are in a spiritual battle. And if our enemy has been successful in turning our attention to the doctrine and commandments of men, doubtless we are the ones who stand to lose the promises (timely and temporal) of God, which have been hidden from us through this diversion.

I suppose it is a spiritual blessing to have the hope that The Lord may return in our life time. In generations of the past it is certain many of the disciples of Jesus were sincere in their belief The Lord would end the world in their day. In the opinion of this writer, the scriptures, which mention a "return" of Jesus, have been grossly misapplied and misunderstood. Basic rules of Bible interpretation have been ignored. To approach the doctrine of the return of Jesus from this perspective is without doubt, a departure from the doctrine established by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Consider how God has well cemented the major points of doctrine within our hearts. We are all aware of how we continually review certain minor points of doctrine throughout the course of our lives. The teachings concerning the return of Jesus and the general resurrection should not be thought to be a *minor* point of doctrine. The position you take on this teaching can possibly have a profound effect on just about everything else you believe.