

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

Volume 31, Number 44

November 2, 2014



Jesus' Resurrection Fulfills Old Testament Prophecy

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. (Acts 2:29–32, KJV 1900)

In Acts 2:25-28, Paul quoted from Psalm 16. When David wrote, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," though using personal pronouns as if writing of himself, he wrote of Jesus in prophecy of the resurrection. In our study passage, we have the invaluable benefit of inspired Scripture interpreting another inspired Scripture. We need not speculate or appeal to our unsanctified and highly unreliable private imagination. God tells us what He intended when He directed David to write those words.

Based on Peter's words, first century Jews knew where David's grave was, and it remained present and occupied by David's bodily remains at the time. After death, David's body "saw corruption." Folks who deny the resurrection outright or try to impose various mystical private interpretations onto this passage (indirectly trying to deny the resurrection) face an insurmountable problem. Based on the Holy Spirit's personal interpretation of His own prophetic words to David (2 Peter 1:20-21), the prophecy refers to Jesus' "flesh" not seeing corruption by prolonged time in death. Various Scriptures refer to the composition of an individual as consisting of body, spirit, and soul. Some commentaries and believers view spirit and soul as being the same, making the individual's composition body and soul or spirit. Does either a soul or a spirit have "flesh"? And the answer shouts from the pages of Scripture, "No." Our only reasonable conclusion from this passage must be that the prophecy referred to Jesus' physical body and His brief time in death, a time ended in victorious literal, physical, "flesh," bodily resurrection. The tomb in which His body was buried lost its tenant after a brief three days. His body did not remain there.

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Peter's vivid contrast between David's death and Jesus' resurrection leaves no reasonable view of the lesson other than a reference to Jesus' literal, physical, bodily resurrection. Peter reminds us; his claim that Jesus literally and bodily arose from the grave is not based on his imagination or speculation. Along with

several hundred other people who lived at that time, Peter reminds us that he was an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrected body. He could not deny what he had personally witnessed multiple times over several weeks between resurrection and ascension.

More than one skeptic has started his research intent on disproving the Bible's teaching regarding Jesus' resurrection only to discover that the evidence in Scripture is so compelling that the skeptic became a believer. Simon Greenleaf, a highly respected attorney in his day (1783-1853), represents only one such convert.

Greenleaf, one of the principle founders of the Harvard Law School, originally set out to disprove the biblical testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was certain that a careful examination of the internal witness of the Gospels would dispel all the myths at the heart of Christianity. But this legal scholar came to the conclusion that the witnesses were reliable, and that the resurrection did in fact happen.¹

Critics of Christianity devalue the testimony of the first generation apostles by comparing them to the long list of people who believed in a lie, but nevertheless gave their lives in martyrdom for their false beliefs. The skeptics fail. Believers in false teachers and false ideas who are willing to be martyred obviously believed the lies that they were told. However, first generation Christians died in martyrdom because they could not deny what they had personally witnessed to be true. This eyewitness versus second-hand reports powerfully underscores the validity of the New Testament record of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Would anyone falsely claim to be an eyewitness, knowing that he was lying, and still surrender to martyrdom for a known lie? These men died for a factual truth that they personally witnessed to be true. (2 Peter 1:16-21) For them, the question was

¹

<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/jesus/greenleaf.html>.

not "Will you die for something someone whom you respect told you?" but "Would you die in denial of what you personally witnessed to be true?"

Based, I believe, on a skewed interpretation of this passage, specifically the reference to Jesus' soul being left in hell, and 1 Peter 3:19, some commentaries teach that, during the three days and nights of His physical death, Jesus in His spirit went to literal hell, or, as they interpret the word, a dark intermediate "Abode for the dead," where He "Preached" to those souls who had formerly lived and died. This interpretation wholly ignores and contradicts the teaching of the whole Book of Hebrews. Based on Hebrews' inspired interpretation of the detailed manner in which Jesus' sufferings and death fulfilled the typology of the Levitical priesthood, when Jesus died, He did not go in spirit to an imagined intermediate place that housed the spirits of people who died in former ages. He went directly to heaven to the Father. In fact, at the moment of His death, Jesus specifically indicated that He was going to the Father, not to a dark intermediate prison for the spirits of dead people.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul refers to being caught up into the third heaven, Verse 2. In Verse 4, he again mentions being caught up, this time referring to the place as "paradise." Notice the direction. When Paul had this experience, He did not go down into a dark place. He went up. He identifies the place to which he went by two terms, 1) "the third heaven," and 2) "paradise." When Jesus answered the thief on the cross, he told the thief, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43. Based on these passages, Scripture affirms that true Biblical "Paradise" is not a dark nether region below. It is in fact a place that Scripture also identifies as "the third heaven.")

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. (Luke 23:46; notice Jesus' words. He does not expect to go to a place apart from the Father, but rather into the Father's hands, a place of intimacy with the Father)

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. If we follow Peter's detailed explanation of Psalm 16 in the context of our study passage, Acts 2, we learn that David's prophecy referred to Jesus' body. Literally, His life, His body, would not be left in the grave. Hell in this prophecy refers to the grave, not to a mythical place for the spirits of the dead. Take note of Peter's direct reference to David's grave where his body remained roughly a thousand years after his death. But his prophecy referred to Jesus whose body would not be left in the grave long enough to see corruption.

...when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:3) Jesus sat down on the Father's right hand immediately upon purging our sins. Nothing in Scripture in any way implies that Jesus did not purge our sins until His ascension approximately forty days after His death and resurrection. Quite the opposite, Romans 4:25 states that Jesus was "...raised again for our justification." "for" in this verse carries the idea "Because of." Because we had offended God by our sins, Jesus was delivered to death, and, because He accomplished our legal justification during those three days and nights, He arose out of the grave in His literal, physical body, because He had accomplished our justification. Our justification actually occurred before the Father during those three days and nights.

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9:15; emphasis added) In the moment of His death, Jesus accomplished our redemption. In fulfillment of the Levitical types and His greater and "for ever" Melchisedec priesthood, Jesus offered Himself to the Father in death. Nothing in any of these passages allows time or a logical reason for Jesus to spend three days and nights in a mythological place.

Thus, based on these and many other Scriptures, at His death, Jesus in spirit and/or soul immediately went to the Father in heaven where He offered Himself to the Father as the full atonement for the sins of all His beloved children. If we examine all the rich types of priesthood in the Old Testament, and explained in the New Testament Book of Hebrews, Jesus was busy during those three days and nights with the Father accomplishing our redemption, fully satisfying the Father for our sins. He even sat down beside the Father during this brief time, indicating that He had finished the work prior to His resurrection. Then, atoning, redeeming work fully completed, He returned to occupy His body and thereby arise from death and the grave. This process precisely describes the meaning of the word "Resurrection." If He did not return to reclaim and revive that body in which He lived and in which He was crucified, there was no real resurrection at all. And, based on Paul's reasoning in 1 Corinthians 15, if Jesus didn't bodily arise from the dead, we have no hope whatever of resurrection. But since He did arise, legitimizing the word "Resurrection" in the New Testament, we have a lively hope of arising, too.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor