

Pentwater Bible Church

Resurrection Sunday

April 1, 2018



Ascension by Rembrandt Cir. 1636

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

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Easter Sunday Message

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JESUS CALLS THOSE WHO ARE HIS

It is not on man's terms and will, but on God's, that man finds the salvation that he needs; the power of God and the wisdom of God. Through the preaching of Christ crucified, God calls people by opening their eyes of faith to believe the Gospel. For us who are saved, it is through the power of God that we believe the Gospel and experience the regeneration that draws us unto belief. It is not just the world at large that considers the cross "foolishness". There are many diverse so-called "Christian" organizations that consider the cross "foolishness". Some of these are the liberals, the Unitarians, The Christian Scientists, The Jehovah's Witnesses and others who think the same way as the New Agers.

The nations whose politicians have boasted of great wisdom and of the culture they have achieved are actually groping in their darkened vision instead of discovering how man can be saved and brought to God by believing the Gospel. They, in their foolishness, deny God and are drawn deeper into sin and despair.

Therefore, God made the wisdom of this world foolish (I Corinthians 2:18). Today, men who speak loftily of philosophy, scientism, and wisdom are being led into a darkened bleak eternity from which there is no escape once they have left these bodies. The cross puts human pride to shame, and what the Jews, the Greeks and the moderns consider "foolish" is actually the wisdom of God. This simplicity of the cross gives the believer the humility of truth that the wisdom of the world cannot supply.

Look around you, do you see the high and mighty coming to hear the simple Gospel of Christ? This is a rhetorical question to be sure. Most of the people that enter into God's redemption are not the leaders of the world. The education leaders perpetuate the anti-God studies of evolution, paleontology, philosophy and psychology. But God chose those who are of low estate to hear and understand as well as believe. We are richer than the world will ever know and will rule the world when the Millennium begins (Matthew 5:5).

It is not the strong and powerful who are called to be God's children but the meek. Some are to be sure as Paul says in verse I Corinthians 1: 26 "*not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*" But when God called, he turned the world's standards upside down and usually chose the ordinary rather than the outstanding in order that no one may boast before Him but only in the Lord. Christ set the pattern for us to realize this truth. He was born in a stable to parents of low rank in the Jewish culture. The Jews were despised and persecuted. His parents had no noble family lineage according to the world's system of monarchy, position, wealth and wisdom. He grew up as a tradesman in a remote town in the Galilean region of Israel, which was considered to be where the country bumpkins lived. In fact even the poor of the population recognized this. He made a greater impact on this world than any before or after. Napoleon Bonaparte the conqueror

admitted that Christ was able to gather more to Himself through love than any conqueror did through force.

Well then, I will tell you. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for Him. . . . I think I understand something of human nature; and I tell you, all these were men, and I am a man; none else is like Him: Jesus Christ was more than a man. . .¹

Appreciate and be thankful to Him for your position in Christ and share Him as you are given the opportunities. He loves us enough to give His life to redeem all who believe.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

On Easter we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus the Christ from the dead. In the resurrection we see that Jehovah God sent Himself, a suffering servant (Isaiah 49-57), in the body of a man to atone for the sins of the world. His suffering reached a level of pain before and during the crucifixion that we cannot imagine as He bore the sins of the world and the cosmic realm as well. He met with the powers of darkness in the cosmic realm, which He battled and won the war (Luke 22: 53). Satan tried all he could to prevent Christ's crucifixion. The death He experienced cleansed the heavenly tabernacle (Hebrews 9: 23-26), which Satan polluted with his sin and fall, as well as providing for the salvation of all who would believe the gospel of Christ (II Corinthians 5: 21). Salvation has always been by grace through faith in all dispensations but required the shed blood of the Savior to complete. Paul describes a situation that still exists today, doubt about the resurrection.

I Corinthians 15: 12-20a

¹² Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶ For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. ²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead (NKJV).

¹ Zacharias, Ravi, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, 2000, W. Publishing Group, Nashville, Tennessee...quoting from Henry Parry Liddon, *Liddon's Bampton Lectures 1866* (London: Rivingtons, 1869), 148.

Paul's prayer for the Corinthians is real specific. Some were denying the resurrection without any evidence. They simply said, "resurrections don't occur." Unbelievers say the same thing today. They say it couldn't have happened because resurrections just don't happen. Paul goes on to say that if there are no resurrections then Christ did not rise from the dead and our only hope is to trust in the powers of this world. If that were true our faith is misplaced in a false hope of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we would be the most miserable lot in the world because the world only offers, among other troubles death, divorce, financial hardship, disease, wars, tyranny and strained relationships. He concludes this passage with the strong assertion that Christ *is* risen from the dead. It is a matter of historical fact. The resurrection of Christ is the only hope for the world that there is remediation for the sinful decaying and dying world in which we live. There is no other way out of the decay and sin we live in. God Himself provided the way. We only *have to recognize* that this really happened and accept it as fact.

Paul's also offered a prayer for the Ephesian believers, which is very specific. He asks God to bestow upon them a deeper knowledge and understanding of Christ that we today must also experience. This is not something that one can learn in a seminary or even in a Bible study or from reading devotional books. Paul's desire for them was that they would *willingly* receive from God "*the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ*" (Ephesians 1:17-23).

Specifically, Paul prays that they would know the "exceeding greatness" of the power that God wanted to demonstrate in their lives. His explanation of this power is crucial for us to realize. He called it the "power of his resurrection."

Philippians 3: 10-12

¹⁰ That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own (ESV).

Was Paul uncertain of his salvation, concerned that he might not qualify for the resurrection of believers at the Rapture? Hardly! He is telling us that the Resurrection of Christ is not only a historical event that we look back to with satisfaction and joy. It is the greatest event in the history (past, present, or future) of the entire cosmos!

John 10:26-30

²⁶ But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸ and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them

out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and my Father are one (KJV).

The greatest event that the universe has or will ever see is also one of the most difficult for most people to understand. In fact, Paul tells us that the Resurrection is the greatest display of God's power ever to be demonstrated, nor can it ever be surpassed. Consider the following from Richard Dawkins, leader of the New Atheist movement: He was debating John Lennox, a fervent Christian, also an Oxford professor and scientist with two earned Ph.D.'s, who in his closing remarks testified to his faith in Christ and to our Lord's resurrection:

"Yes, well, that concluding bit," said Dawkins, lips curled in contempt, voice dripping with venom, "rather gives the game away, doesn't it? All that stuff about science and physics...that's all very grand and wonderful, and then suddenly we come down to the resurrection of Jesus. It's so petty, it's so trivial, it's so local, it's so earthbound, and it's so unworthy of the universe."

Yet God calls the Resurrection the greatest display that could ever be known of His majesty and power.

For centuries many of the world's distinguished philosophers have assaulted Christianity as being irrational, superstitious and absurd. Many have chosen simply to ignore the central issue of the resurrection. Others have tried to explain it away through various theories. But the historical evidence just can't be discounted. And evidence is what proves a historical event to our logical minds. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is either one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted on the minds of human beings – or it is the most remarkable fact of history.

Easter is the day that Jesus of Nazareth rose, in his body, from the dead. He came back from the dead in an immortal resurrected body. This was not a person being revived in the same body. His new body is one of permanence. Easter is crucial to every person of this earth because if Jesus did not rise from the dead, Christianity is false; it must be declared as such and repudiated. But if He did rise from the dead, then we must declare it as the single most important event in all of time. None of us can escape the power of the claim of the Resurrection. If Christ did not rise, then our own lives as Paul says will be miserable because we are still living with no hope out of a corrupt sinful existence. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to believe on a historically reliable event in human history. Personal commitment is the issue though.

Many people refuse to believe in the resurrection exactly for the reason that if they do, it will change their lives. They do not want to stop doing what they are doing in their lives that are contrary to the teachings of Christ. So, belief becomes not an issue of whether the Resurrection occurred or not. It becomes an issue of leaving the captivity of Satan and entering the deliverance of Christ. Jesus said that whomever sins is a slave to sin (John 8: 34). We tend to think our sins are so secretive that no one knows them. When confronted

with the truth of Christ many shy away from a commitment due to sin. We don't want them uncovered and go to extreme lengths to cover them even feigning unbelief in the historicity of the resurrection.

We are separated from God by our sin and we are sinners by nature. Our sin may seem like a small thing to humankind, but the God of the universe does not think so. The Bible says that God is *"of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity"* (Habakkuk 1:13). We are so imperfect and sinful that even when we try to do good works, we fail to please God. In God's sight *"we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness' are as filthy rags"* (Isaiah 64:6). The worst news for the world is that sin keeps people out of heaven. There is only eternal damnation for those who do not believe.

Revelation 21:27 is speaking of heaven when it says, *"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."* Even one lie would keep us from entering heaven. Most people think that if they don't believe something then the object of unbelief cannot be true. Which is in fact not true. Truth is not individually determined. There is absolute truth. Which is, something that is true in all times and in all places. The Resurrection of Christ is true and what Jesus said through the apostle Paul about the penalty for sin (eternal death) is true (Romans 6:23).

Salvation is not church membership. It is not good works. We cannot add baptism, the sacraments, confirmation, or any other good work to Christ's finished work on Calvary.

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast (KJV)"

Works cannot save us. Genuine Salvation occurs when one says, "I realize that none of these things can save me—but only Jesus can save me—and I believe that He died and rose from the dead.

Through the Risen Christ we are reminded that by His death and suffering we are saved to eternal life with Him when we leave these bodies. What a wonderful blessing we have in Christ. Share it with those who do not know or believe in Him. The world still needs this message more so now than ever.

But what about all the people before Christ came who believed that God was coming in the flesh? How were they saved? What happened between the time the risen Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene and the time He appeared to the disciples later that Sunday evening? What does the Scripture mean that Christ led "captivity captive?" Where do believers go today when they die?

David prophesied that his descendant, the Messiah, would die and his body would lie in a tomb but it would not decay. This means that the body would have to be raised from the

dead within a few days. Furthermore, the Messiah's soul would go to Sheol (Hades) but would not remain there. Sheol was the netherworld place of the dead both good and bad went after death in the Old Testament. This is called Hades in the New Testament. Instead He would be shown eternal life. Thus, His soul would be reunited with His body and be resurrected from the dead (Psalm 16:8–11). Before the Cross, the dead souls went to Sheol (Hades), the righteous to the Bosom of Abraham, and the unrighteous to the Place of Torment (Luke 16:19–31). SEE CHART I

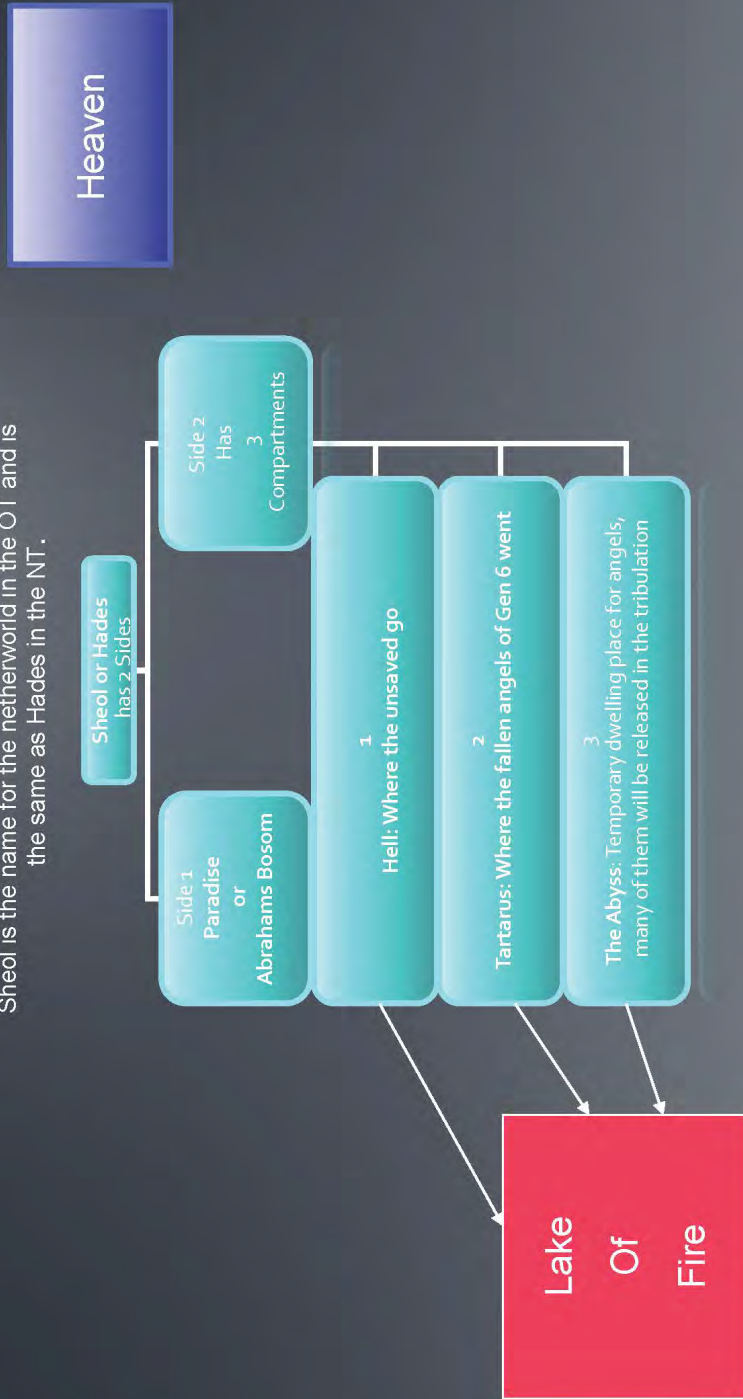
A LOT HAPPENED IN THREE DAYS

Jesus revealed in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) that throughout the ages before the Cross, the souls of the dead went to Sheol (Hades), but there were two major divisions in Hades: The Bosom of Abraham and the Place of Torment, with an impassable gulf between them. The righteous saints went to the Bosom of Abraham, while the unrighteous unbelievers went to the Place of Torment. The righteous believed in and looked forward to the redemptive sacrifice of the Messiah, but the unrighteous spurned the revelation of God through Moses and the prophets. The believers were comforted in the Bosom of Abraham, but they were not permitted to go to Heaven yet, because *the penalty for their sins had not been paid*. They could not enter into the presence of the Living God. Jesus proclaimed when He died “Tetelestai!” it is finished, the debt had been paid, and then His soul descended into Hades. He could then announce to the righteous souls that the time had come for them to be released from Hades and ascend with Him to Heaven and the presence of the Father. Before He could do that, He first had to demonstrate that He had risen from the dead. So His soul went back to earth, reunited and transformed His body and came forth from the grave victorious over death. When Jesus arose from the dead on Resurrection Day, He told Mary Magdalene not to cling to Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:15–17). After Jesus was complete with His resurrection body, the implication was that He descended again to Hades to gather the Old Testament saints and transport them from Hades to Heaven.

When Christ ascended to the Father, He took Captivity Captive. He took the righteous saints from the Bosom of Abraham to Heaven. This apparently was done on the Resurrection Day (Psalm 68:18; Ephesians 4:8–11). When Christ went to Hades what did He say? Peter says He proclaimed a message to the spirits in prison who were disobedient before the Flood (I Peter 3:18–20), but He also announced to the Old Testament saints that it was now time for them to go with Him to Heaven. The debt for sin had now been fully paid and they were released from the good side of Hades.

Spirit World Destinations after Death

Sheol is the name for the netherworld in the OT and is the same as Hades in the NT.



When an Old Testament Saint died, his body went into the ground and his soul went to Abraham's Bosom because the sacrifices were insufficient to get him into Heaven. They were sufficient to keep him out of Hell. Their sins have to be removed the same way ours are; by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament Unsaved who died went to Hell. When Christ died he went to Hades (side 1); not Hell to free the captives. Today when a New Testament Saint dies his body goes into the ground and his soul goes straight to Heaven. The unbelievers go straight to Hell. After the 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth (Millennium), the inhabitants of Hell, Tartarus, and the Abyss will be cast into the **Lake of Fire**. (The Greek word is Gehenna which means a burning garbage dump)

Chart I designed by Daniel Woodhead

From Hades to Heaven

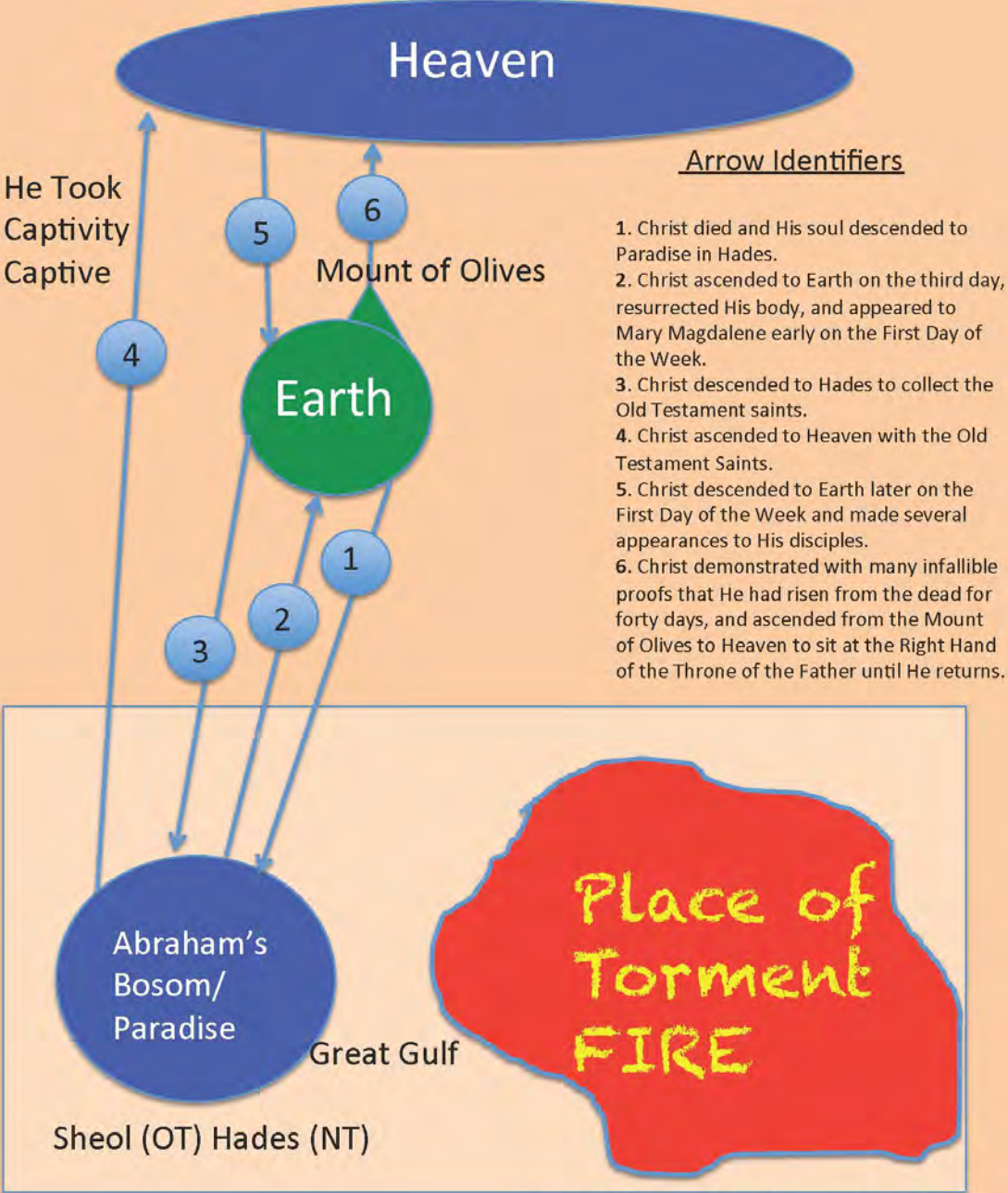


Chart Designed by Thomas McCall Th.D.

Chart II