

MAKING CONNECTIONS

By

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On Easter Sunday there is talk about a Risen One, but the following week the talk is all about the attendance at church on Easter. To most minds the doctrine of a resurrection fails to connect with daily faith and life.

There is a pressing need for understanding the essential part the resurrection has in one's whole life outlook. It is not enough for a person merely to confess faith in the fact that Christ arose. He must see the connection between Christ's resurrection and his own resurrection, and the whole idea of Christian faith. And not only is this connection needed with regard to the resurrection, but also to the doctrine of Christ's second coming, the destruction of the unbeliever and the creating anew of all things.

There is a vital link between one's view of the total plan of God and one's present life and service to God.

For one thing, real peace of mind is dependent upon one's knowledge of where he stands or will stand in judgment. He may say, "I hope to make the grade," or "If I can just get inside those pearly gates." His "hope", may amount to merely a wish that things would turn out all right in the end. There can be no deep seated peace without some conviction that he is right with God and this conviction is often absent because there is no connection between what he claims as belief and what he understands as a final disposal of all things.

The purpose of the Gospel is to give a genuine conviction and knowledge that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). the reason being that the final death of the sinner has already been met through the death of Jesus, as our representative. Of course if one is doubtful about the kind of fate that is due the sinner as judgment for sin, then it is difficult for him to get the connection between the death of Jesus and his own freedom from that penalty.

There should be no doubt here. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Jesus compared the death of the sinner to the slaying of the rebels by the King (Luke 19:27). He compared them with the weeds that are destroyed by burning (Matt. 13:40-42). In plain language the Bible describes the destruction of the sinner in the judgment along with the destruction of the earth: "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). We do not know whether or not this is the description of a nuclear blast, but we know it will be the judgment upon the unbeliever, for "the heavens...and the earth... have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7).

We are reminded constantly of the fear in men's hearts of just such destruction. But the Christian understands that Christ has already met his judgment through His death, and he has no fear of this sort of thing, so there is peace. Naturally he is concerned about others and their destiny but he is free of any worry about his own future. He can demonstrate a confidence and contentment that will go a long way toward showing others what is meant by "the peace and joy in believing."

Another needful connection is that between what we are now and what God intends us to be in the next world – that "new earth wherein dwells righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). There's a real challenge in trying to be what you know you are eventually to be in eternity. The thing that Christ holds out to us as future life is just the kind of life he wants us to try to live now. This is why we need to see the connection between Christ's resurrection and our own. His resurrection from the dead shows us that God intends to restore life to all His people.

But somehow the religious people have put over the idea that what we know as human beings now is completely the opposite of what God expects to make of us as eternal people. Perhaps a lot of the misunderstanding is due to the use but the term "soul." When we speak of a person in the present world we understand him as a bodily creature, with mind and emotions, and all the other things that make him a human being. But then on the other side of life he is thought of in terms of a "soul." The scripture speaks of saving souls, but obviously this doesn't mean that there is just some mysterious part of a person that we should try to save. When Jesus gave life to the dead, he raised up the whole person. When he returned from the dead, he returned as a man with body, mind and spirit all intact. The New Testament consistently holds that Christ desires to save the whole person, body, mind and in fact the emotions, will and all.

We must keep in mind the whole purpose of God and then we will see how all the parts of God's program are connected. Then the resurrection will no longer be a once-a-year attendance builder, but the heart of the faith as it should be.

God's purpose always has been to have man in His own image. He began with this intention, and there is no record of His having changed His mind. This is the whole scope of the message of salvation, to save man from death that he might be alive and live forever in God's eternal creation. The rites commanded by our Lord are designed to reveal this purpose. In baptism one is buried to indicate that death, as the penalty for sin, has taken place through Christ and He now has no problem of a final death at judgment. He is raised from baptism to walk in a new life, both now and in eternity. The communion of bread and juice of the grape is designed to remind us that a death has taken place (the death of Jesus) in our stead, that we might be free from the death penalty. The idea of communion each week is simply to keep us constantly aware of the purpose of God and how it is made possible by such a great sacrifice.

The connection between one's present walk with God and the ultimate and final destiny was repeatedly presented by the apostles. Peter wrote that it is knowing the purpose of God in the final disposal of all things that should cause us to live holy and godly (2 Peter

3:11) John wrote that it is knowing the purpose, that “we shall be like him,” that will cause us to purify ourselves (1 John 3:2-3). Paul, after describing the second coming of Christ and how he would raise up the dead and save them in the last day, commanded us to exhort one another with these facts (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). But in our day these thoughts are reserved for funerals and even then the application is often obscured by generalized and mystical terms.

As one views the present world developments and considers the precarious position of civilization on the little ball of earth, the detached doctrines of the church may seem very unimportant. But when viewed from the revealed Scriptures and connected with the purpose and intention of God in His eternal plan, knowing the destiny of this world and what God plans for the next, the truths of the Faith become highly illuminating.

If we are in the dark concerning the meaning of the past and the expectations of the future, then the present hardly makes sense! But if we are assured that some day we will be the creatures God intended, perfect, immortal, sinless and in perfect fellowship with Him in a society of such people, then we have good reason to try to live like that right now, and we have a tremendously important witness to bear to this perishing world.

JUST FOR YOU–TH

An awful lot can happen in these last few weeks of school. In fact, a lot is planned to happen. A high school Junior was complaining recently of all the banquets and other events now stretching the seams of the schedule.

But it’s not the planned events that usually give trouble. It’s those things that happen as the aftermath of the hectic schedule in these last crowded weeks of school. There’s nothing wrong with a banquet for this and a banquet for that, a ball game, a track meet, a Junior play, a Senior play, and other planned activities. But all these activities have a way of creating a sort of “attitude” which is destructive to your purpose as a Christian.

It’s the “having a ball” attitude which develops from too much concentration on these planned activities. If one evening is a success the next evening has to be a bit wilder in order to be a success. Soon the banquet or the play is not nearly enough; you have to get with the gang afterwards and “do something.” Of course this never means just do “something.” It means to find some excitement or create some. This can gradually grow into anything from drinking parties where everyone plays loose with the opposite sex, to committing criminal offenses such as burglary or vandalism.

It’s not just coincidental that this is the time of the year that we see more youth in trouble than at any other time. This runs all the way from sex involvements, often resulting in tragic and unhappy marriages, to the crimes which land a lot of youth before the court and often in prison. Once you start out to have a ball it is very hard to decide just where the ball should stop. There’s always somebody in the crowd who wants to go just a bit further. And if YOU are in the crowd you can expect some pretty strong pressure to be

applied to get you in on the mischief too. Many Christian youth say “yes”, to the tempter at this point, because they have fallen into this attitude of living it up near the close of the school year. “Just this once” they say. And since the whole atmosphere of the evening is for fun, and since a Christian youth is still, after all, quite human and subject to all the ordinary human weaknesses and temptations, he is going to be fairly excited over the idea of not missing any fun. It’s kind of contagious. It gets hold of a crowd of youth like a current of electricity, and anyone who even looks like he would want to short-circuit the flow is considered a square - a downright cube!

Here is the challenge to the Christian boy or girl to stop and weigh yourself. Are you really 100 per cent part of this kind of gang? Is the contagious, electrical attraction toward cutting loose, letting down the bars of restraint, and acting in a un-Christ-like way actually so strong upon YOU? If you will stop and make this evaluation, you can break the magnetic force of the mob (really the power of Satan) and makes a proper choice of right and wrong.

If you do this, the closing weeks of school can be the very best of the year, instead that part of the calendar which sets the stage for failure and destruction for so many of God’s choice servants.

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