

HOW GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER LINK TOGETHER DIVINE GRACE AND DIVINE JUDGMENT

Good Friday & Easter Sunday, 2018 - Good Friday, March 30th, 2018, 10 a.m. - Teaching #2038
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Acts 17:30-31 - "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, [31] because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

In so many ways the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central piece of the entire Christian faith. It is pivotal in several different areas:

- a) ***The resurrection completes the saving work of Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross - 1 Corinthians 15:17*** - "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

This is a very significant verse. It tells us, perhaps surprisingly, that Christ's death on the Cross, ***unaccompanied by His resurrection***, accomplishes nothing. Let that sink in for a minute. The resurrection ***completes*** the work of redemption. So much so that, Paul says, if Christ isn't raised (even though He died on the Cross) we are still in our sins.

- b) ***Christ's resurrection guarantees our own resurrection from the dead when Jesus comes again - 1 Corinthians 15:22-23*** - "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ."

What glorious words of hope! How they have sustained countless Christians through sickness, persecution, despair and even martyrdom. Christ's resurrection from the dead is clearly set out by Paul as the first accomplished part of a larger whole event. Eternal life is all of ***one harvest***. And it is already in process in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will follow.

But today I want to consider another significant truth tied to Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is not one that we commonly deal with during the Easter season, but Paul says to miss it is a terrible oversight. Paul says ***Father God Himself*** has forever linked the resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, to an event still in the ***future***.

Also, this event in the future is one that has relevance for ***everyone who has ever breathed a breath on planet earth***. This means the resurrection of Jesus has significance far beyond what our world would consider as a ***religious*** perspective. It affects ***everyone*** the way pollution affects everyone, or the weather affects everyone or climate change affects everyone.

In other words, ***first*** there is the ***historic reality*** of the resurrection of Jesus Christ - the ***fact*** that the grave in which He was buried truly was empty three days later - the ***fact*** that Jesus was seen risen and alive in His body ***after*** He was crucified. The resurrection of Jesus ***actually happened***.

Then ***second***, there is the message of ***hope*** that fills the hearts of all Christians. The risen Christ is now ***preparing a place for us in heaven***. We have hope of being with Jesus after we die. Nothing separates us from the love of God ***in*** Christ Jesus.

But there is a ***third*** factor the Apostle Paul ties to the resurrection of Jesus Christ that doesn't just have to do with those who believe in Jesus Christ or honor Him as Lord.

This third ***resurrection factor*** has to do with everybody - ***Christians*** and ***non-Christians*** alike. It is stated in our opening text from Acts. The resurrection of Jesus Christ establishes Him as the ***future judge of all of mankind*** - "....he [that is, God Almighty] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Jesus Christ - God the Son - is the selected future judge of everyone who has ever lived - Christians, Jews, Muslims, atheists, agnostics, passionate or indifferent. This is established by His resurrection from the dead.

There are two questions I want to look at that arise out of this tremendous statement made by the Apostle Paul: ***First, why is Jesus the One to judge the world?*** This is the question we're considering in this Good Friday gathering. Why not one of the other members of the Trinity. Why not Father God? Why not the Holy Spirit? Why is Jesus Christ, God the Son, the One to whom judgement is committed?

The second question is the one we'll be drilling down into on Easter Sunday morning. And that **second question is what is the significance of this fact?** What does it **mean** to us that God is going to judge the world by His Son, Jesus Christ? Or, in the title of this message, how does this idea **shape the meaning of the days in which we all live?** What are we all called upon to do that is **different** now that Jesus Christ is risen and designated as the judge of the whole world?

Let's look at question number one this morning:

1) **WHY IS JESUS CHRIST, GOD THE SON, THE APPOINTED FUTURE JUDGE OF THE WORLD?**

Let me go through several Scriptural reasons you may not frequently think about:

a) ***Christ is appointed our judge because He became one of us and died for our sins.***

There is a place in John's gospel where Jesus actually **tells** us why He is the One who will judge the world - **John 5:26-27** - "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. [27] And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man."

Notice that phrase, "**He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.**" There is no phrase used by Jesus more frequently to refer to His Incarnate state - his dwelling among us in human flesh - than the title "**Son of Man.**" Father God grants the role of judge to the Son because the Son is **one of us** in a way that the Father and the Holy Spirit are not.

Paul makes the same point in this morning's text:

Acts 17:31 - "... because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness **by a man** whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Lest you think this is some irrelevant point of theological trivia, please think deeply about the significance and profound **comfort and consolation** we have in this fact: **The One who spilled His blood to redeem us is the very same One who will judge us.** Our **judge** is our **intercessor**. The One who decrees our eternal state is the one who poured out His very life in grace, love and unmeasurable mercy.

Behold the goodness of God in this! It is God's way of **magnifying His wondrous grace** before the whole world. I need not doubt receiving from Jesus Christ at the judgment that which He gave His very life to secure on my behalf. If your judge is your worst **enemy**, you're in deep trouble. If your judge is your **redeemer**, your heart can have great assurance and be at peace.

b) ***Christ is appointed our judge as a suitable result of His suffering and humiliation.***

No one deals with this truth like the Apostle Paul in the book of Philippians:

Philippians 2:8-11 - "...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] **so that** [these words imply the explanation] **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**"

Father God designs that Jesus Christ, who appeared in such lowly and humble circumstances here on earth, who had "**no place to lay His own head,**" who was "**despised and rejected by men,**" should have every knee bow and confess His greatness and Lordship.

This will not necessarily be a **saving** confession for all those who kneel (we know, for example that the demonic creatures in the realms "**under the earth**" aren't going to be saved), but all will be **compelled** to acknowledge Jesus because He alone will be the judge of all.

Paul's point is crystal clear. This will **not** be the baby in the manger. This will not be Jesus, pierced and bleeding on the cross. This will be Jesus with a Name above every other name. He will shine with authority and might and greatness.

c) ***Jesus Christ is appointed as judge that He might put all His enemies under His feet.***

The Bible says there is something both wonderful and terrifying that is **going** to happen, but hasn't happened **yet**:

1 Corinthians 15:24-25 - "...Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. [25] For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet."

We don't yet live in a world where all Christ's enemies are under His feet:

Hebrews 2:7-8 - "You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, [8] putting everything in subjection under his feet.' Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him."

The writer of Hebrews says there is yet a work to be done with Christ's enemies. The last enemy, of course, is death itself. Death is the **last** enemy. It is not the **only** enemy. There are many enemies that oppose Jesus Christ in this present age. There are so many things that cause us to long for a victory that is only **initiated**, but not **completed**.

Jesus is the appointed judge so He can officially pass sentence on all His enemies. All who reject Him. All who oppose His grace and redemption and Lordship. No one **has** to submit to Jesus right now. People **can** go their own way. But one day Father God will make it appropriate that the **Son** bring all enemies under **His** feet in judgment.

In other words, just as God's **grace** is magnified in appointing our Savior to be the judge of the redeemed, God's **justice** is magnified in having Jesus, God's offer of redemption for the whole world, be the judge of those who have rejected that saving grace. Christ's enemies will be judged by the very One through whom they could have been saved. In this their guilt is doubly magnified.

The closing application of this is Good Friday is always **good** from God's end in that merciful, pardoning grace is made available to absolutely everyone. Behold the love of our God!

But Good Friday - or the **truth** revealed on Good Friday - is only **good** for those who accept and act upon its reliability. Redeeming truth must be **treasured**. Jesus said kingdom truth must be treasured like a finding of gold in the ground. Make it your own. Rejoice in it. Live by it. The same grace that is wonderfully good to receive is frighteningly judged when rejected.