

1 PETER 3:18-22--CONSEQUENCES OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

April 2, 1988

H. Van Dyke Parunak

A. Synopsis

1. Easter.

- a) Traditional day to focus on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- b) In fact, it is not a biblical holiday. But this does not mean we should not think of the resurrection.
- c) The early Christians remembered EVERY Sunday as the day of Christ's resurrection. That's why they moved their worship from Saturday, the Jewish sabbath, to Sunday, the first day of the week. All the more reason we should give attention to biblical teaching about the resurrection.

2. Our Passage, 1 Peter 3.

- a) Reports the facts of Christ's death and resurrection.
- b) Traces its consequences into the distant past, and then on to us.
- c) Shows us the practical results of the resurrection in our lives.

B. Broader Context, 3:14-17

- 1. The church is suffering under persecution. NB: 1:1, this is modern-day Turkey, the same region described by Tom Aiken in his visit Friday evening.
- 2. The Christians have two responsibilities toward those who are persecuting them:
 - a) v.15, be ready to give an *answer*. You've got their attention; take advantage of the opportunity and give a witness.
 - b) v.16, have a good *conscience*. Be careful not to give any just grounds for persecution.
- 3. In support of these exhortations, he turns their attention to the work of Christ.
 - a) vv.18 and 22 may be fragments of an ancient hymn. In any event, they sum up the main events of our Lord's passion.
 - b) vv.19-21 trace the implications of these events for our *answer* and our *conscience*. The implications for our answer emerge from events long before Christ; the implications for our

conscience come from events after Christ.

C. The Time of Christ, 3:18,22

These lines bracket the application. The first verse summarizes the gospel, the Death and Resurrection of Christ. The last looks forward to his return to heaven, where he now waits the time of his return.

1. 18, his suffering.

- a) Its frequency: "once" [for all]. Christ did all of that that needs to be done. Don't diminish his work by giving men just cause to persecute us.
- b) Its nature: substitutionary. "The just for the unjust." Isa. 53.
- c) Its purpose: "that he might bring us to God." We were separated from God by our sin. Christ's sacrifice removes that barrier and opens the way for fellowship.
- d) Its components:
 - 1) Put to death in flesh: the death on the tree.
 - 2) Made alive in Spirit: resurrection after three days.
 - 3) "Flesh" and "Spirit" here are "dative of sphere."
 - a> Basic idea is locative. If I said, "put to death in Jerusalem," the idea would be clear enough.
 - b> Instead of locating the action *geographically*, we can place *conceptual or logical* bounds on it. Thus Christ's death is explainable in purely physical or fleshly terms. It takes place in the sphere of the flesh.
 - c> That conceptual space offers no such explanation for the resurrection. The physical world cannot accommodate resurrection; this action can be understood only in the sphere of the Spirit.
 - d> In the resurrection, the HS steps boldly into the physical world. Here is proof that the supernatural realm of Spirit can intrude into and affect the natural world of flesh. This in a nutshell is the significance that Peter draws from the resurrection. It is the Spirit who will help us both to give an answer and to keep a good conscience, and we are assured of the Spirit's reality because of the resurrection.

2. 22, his ascension.

Echoes fulfillment of two of the most common messianic psalms, 110 ("Right hand of God") and 8 ("Subject unto

him"). He is not powerless or out of touch, but has assumed the place of honor and authority over the entire spiritual world.

D. Before Christ: The Time of Noah, 3:19-20

This event shows us the relevance of Christ's resurrection to our ability to "give an answer to every man."

1. The spirits:

- a) Now in prison, cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6.
- b) Disobedient in the time of Noah.
- c) Probably connected with the angels who sinned, Gen. 6:2.

2. Preaching to them

- a) Confronted then by God's Spirit, Gen. 6:3.
- b) 2 Pet. 2:2-4 suggests this was done by Noah.
- c) Peter reveals that Christ in Spirit was guiding Noah's preaching of righteousness. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:11.
- d) If Christ's Spirit could empower Noah to rebuke the erring Angels, how much more will the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead enable us to "give an answer to every man," as Peter has just instructed his readers. The resurrection of Christ empowers us in our testimony, even in midst of persecution.

3. The Ark.

- a) Delivered from the waters of death.
- b) Eight people saved, not just in it, but *into* it, "by getting on board."

E. After Christ: Our Experience, 3:21

Develops out of the image of the Ark, and shows the relevance of Christ's resurrection to our ability to "have a good conscience."

1. Baptism and the Ark

Baptism in the NT has a two-fold sense: the symbolic ordinance, and the truth of which it is the symbol.

- a) The symbol: Water imagery.
- b) The reality: Getting "on board" Christ by means of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Rom. 6. Depicts our identification with him in death, burial, and resurrection.

2. What is baptism?

- a) Not losing the filth of the flesh. Not an ordinance of cleansing, unlike sprinkling in the OT.
- b) But "the request to God of a good conscience," "that for which one asks God: a good conscience." Two things block a good conscience: our old sin (resulting from things we should not have done), and our inability to do right (sins of omission).
 - 1) By our death with Christ, we are cleansed of our sin.
 - 2) By our resurrection with him, we receive his new life and partake of his righteousness.
 - 3) Thus our identification with Christ gives us what v.16 requires us to have--a good conscience, based not in our own feeble efforts, but in our incorporation into Christ by the work of his Spirit.

3. The agency: "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

- a) John 14:16, he asks the Father to send the HS
- b) Jn. 16:7, cannot happen unless he goes away
- c) Acts 1:4-8 shows that the sending of the Spirit depends on the ascension of Christ, which in turn depends on his resurrection.
- d) The resurrection of Christ thus is the gateway to our baptism in the HS, and thus to our good conscience. The power of the resurrection, communicated to us through the Spirit, enables us to live to God's glory and in obedience to his law.

F. Conclusion

- 1. Christ is risen from the dead.
- 2. The resurrection is the watershed between the two realms of flesh and spirit, the place where God's Spirit solves the problems of our material lives. It shows that God has not hidden himself, but intervenes directly, physically, in our world.
- 3. This Holy Spirit, in turn, is God's agent both in the proclamation of the gospel and in changing us from unbelievers into believers.
- 4. Our lives should thus show forth both this moral change and this effective proclamation.