The resurrection: basis for blessing, service & worship (John 20:19-29)

The resurrection of Jesus declared for all that He was the Son of God, the Christ, exactly as He had claimed. The first events of the resurrection reported by John serve to establish the person of Jesus by revealing the fact and the nature of the resurrection. The remainder of chapter 20 gives further evidence in those areas but also shows the resurrection to be the basis for fulfilment of things which Jesus had promised and prayed for on the night before He was crucified.

I. ***The resurrection of Jesus is a basis for blessing.***

The manner of Jesus's appearance to the disciples on that first day established for them that He was the same Jesus, whom they had known and who had been crucified. His resurrected body was the same, bearing the same marks, but now capable of new things. But we also see in John's report the outworking of the resurrection in two specific blessings.

1. *The resurrection is the basis for peace.*

The triple repetition of "peace be with you" indicates a greater significance than just being a common Semitic greeting. It points to the promises of peace which Jesus had made earlier (John 14:27; 16:33).

The resurrection established that Jesus had overcome the world. The resurrection was necessary for the removal of the enmity between God and man. The resurrection made possible the inward peace which God gives when His children face difficult, fearful circumstances.

2. *The resurrection is the basis for joy.*

The disciples had grieved at the death of Jesus, but now their grief has been turned to joy, just as He had told them (16:20; cf. 15:11). No one could take this joy away (16:22).

The resurrection is the basis for the permanent possession of this joy, because by it we are new creations, children of God, and indwelt by the Spirit whose fruit includes joy. Jesus, as a risen, living Savior, will not allow anything to separate us from the love of God. We can be sorrowful, yet rejoicing (*cf.* 2 Cor. 6:10). We only fail to experience that joy, when we fail to submit to God or believe Him. No one robs us of it.

II. ***The resurrection of Jesus is a basis for service.***

Because Jesus is who He is – as shown by the resurrection – He expected that His disciples do what He had told them to do and He equipped them to do it as He had promised.

1. *Jesus sent out His disciples to serve, as the Father had sent Him.*

John had frequently reported Jesus's claim to have been sent by the Father. He represented the Father, did the will of the Father and spoke the message of the Father. Jesus is now sending out His disciples with the same thoughts in mind. This understanding fits the context and matches well with the other Gospel reports of the commissioning of the disciples.

The resurrection is the reason why Jesus could now send out His disciples and for their motivation to go.

2. *Jesus equipped His disciples to serve with the Spirit of God.*

Even conservative interpreters offer differing understandings of verse 22. It seems best to understand this event as predictive of what will happen at Pentecost. However, even differing interpretations conclude that the Spirit was given to equip the disciples. Jesus had foretold that another Counselor, the Spirit, would come (*John 16*). The Spirit, given by Jesus, results in the gifting of the church and the fruit of the Spirit.

The giving of the Spirit was a result of the exultation of Jesus to the right hand of God the Father which in turn required the resurrection.

3. *Jesus gave primacy to the ministry of the gospel.*

The promise to pronounce or withhold forgiveness (v 23), is not a promise of some independent power of absolution. Jesus's discourse with the disciples on the evening before His crucifixion points more to a ministry of proclamation by the disciples and conviction by the Spirit. Luke's report of the evening also mentions the promise of the Spirit and the commissioning of the disciples, but explains the forgiveness of sin as part of their message to be preached (Luke 24:45-49). An example of this practice is seen at Pentecost (*cf.* Acts 2:38). Forgiveness can be pronounced on the basis of a positive response to the gospel message.

Such a message can be proclaimed because Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus was raised because of our justification (Romans 4:25). Only on the basis of the resurrection can forgiveness be pronounced.

III. ***The resurrection of Jesus is the basis for personal worship.***

Thomas, who was absent on that first evening, wanted physical proof of Jesus's resurrection, which Jesus gave him one week later. Thomas responded with a proper and worshipful response to Jesus, "My Lord, and my God".

1. *The response of Thomas was personal.* It is a good reminder that each person must personally embrace Jesus for who He is and accept Him as Lord and God.
2. *The response of Thomas demonstrated an understanding of the significance of the resurrection.* The resurrection of Jesus was different than any previous resurrection. Jesus had foretold it and claimed the authority to accomplish it. The resurrection declared Jesus to be what He was, the Christ, the Son of God. The only reasonable response is worship. The resurrection was and is the basis for personal worship.

Thomas portrays that which John wants for all his readers, to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they may have life in His name. Many others besides Thomas would believe without seeing Jesus or the empty tomb and would be blessed. The resurrection, as witnessed to by reliable witnesses, was the proof for the claims Jesus made. It is the basis for blessing, service and worship. It is the reason we celebrate, even now, the birth of Jesus, a victorious, living Savior.

© 2014 David Manduka