

The Resurrection Factor

A. Introduction

The importance of our Lord's sacrificial death on the cross is properly emphasized in the presentation of the Gospel. It is the unmerited favor of God that presented His Son as a Substitute for us and it is the unconditional love of Jesus Christ who submitted Himself to be judged for our sins. As a result of His vicarious sacrifice, those who place their faith in His Person and His work of the Lord will be saved.

A famous quote regarding the identity of Jesus Christ occurred in an exchange between a Pharisee, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; who came to Jesus and made this statement in:

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

v. 2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.

v. 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

v. 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

v. 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

v. 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

v. 7 "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

v. 8 "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus responded to Jesus:

John 3:9 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?”

To this Jesus responded:

John 3:14 “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

v. 15 so that whoever believed will in Him have eternal life.

John 3:16 is a verse that gives a concise presentation of the Gospel:

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (NASB)

This was Jesus’ statement to Nicodemus a Pharisee who had approached Him.

This conversation occurred after the first Passover of our Lord’s public ministry in circa A.D. 26. The Lord’s crucifixion did not occur for another three years and the details of His work on the cross were not yet clear to so many of those who believed in Him and came to follow Him.

The Old Testament however contains prophetic references to these details, especially in Isaiah 53. Christians claim that this chapter is ignored by the Jews because it so clearly refers to the Passion of Christ. But the rabbis point out that the reason this chapter is not often referenced in the synagogues is because it is not considered to be an haftórah [häf-táv-rä]¹: “One of the biblical selections especially from the books of the Prophets bearing on and read immediately after the párashäh [a section of the Torah] in the Jewish synagogue service on sabbaths, festivals, and feast days.”

The rabbis note that Isaiah 53 is not classified as an haftórah and this is the reason it is rarely read. They go on to state that the chapter is misinterpreted by Christian theologians since the masculine singular pronoun in the passage does not refer to Messiah but to the nation Israel.

The blindness suffered by present-day rabbis initially afflicted Nicodemus as well as it did other Jews of the first century. But as the Incarnation progressed the Lord clearly revealed His Messianic identity through His miracles, His healings, and His fulfillment of various prophecies.

When He arrived at the cross, He was not only qualified to become the Substitute for the human race lost in sin, but He had also clearly revealed to those who were objective to His claims to Messiahship.

¹ “haftórah”: *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, ed. in chief, Philip Babcock Gove (Springfield: Merriam-Webster Inc., 2002), 1019.

Yet, although His work on the cross was completed in precise compliance with the salvation plan of God, there yet remained one more factor that had to be accomplished before salvation and eternal life could become a reality for those who believe in Christ. That factor is the Lord being physically raised from the dead in resurrection body. Without this resurrection there could be no salvation.

1 Corinthians 15:12 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? (NASB)

Some of the members of the Corinthian church were of the belief that believers would not acquire a literal resurrection body. They contended that there would be a “spiritual” resurrection, but not a physical one.

Verse 12 begins with the conditional particle **εἰ**, *ei* plus the indicative mood of the verb **ἐγείρω**, *egeirō* which sets up the protasis of a first-class condition. This is a statement of fact that calls into question the claim of some Corinthians which is expressed in the apodosis: “... how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”

Taking this as a premise, Paul enters into a debater’s technique in which he makes the assumption that their claim is true. He then systematically demonstrates the fallacy of their contention beginning in verse 13 and continuing through verse 19.

In these seven verses Paul takes the position that there is no resurrection of the dead. This debater’s technique utilizes a series of first-class conditions which assume for the purpose of debate that a proposition is true.

Beginning in verse 13 each verse, except for verse 18, contains the protasis of a first-class condition of a debater’s technique and is best translated “let us assume if”:

1 Corinthians 15:13 But let us assume if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;

v. 14 and let us assume if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also in vain.

v. 15 Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised the Messiah, whom He did not raise, if we are to assume in fact the dead are not raised.

v. 16 For let us assume if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;

v. 17 and let us assume if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

1 Corinthians 15: 18 Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

v. 19 Let us assume if we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (EXT)

Paul successfully argues that if there is no resurrection then there is no salvation, for we would be forced to conclude that even Christ was not resurrected. And without the resurrection of Christ, we are still in our sins and therefore our faith in Christ is in vain.

The resurrection of Christ is proof positive that the Father was propitiated with the work of our Lord on the cross. If we are to conclude that there is no resurrection, then Christ was not resurrected and thus His work on the cross is found wanting before the righteousness and justice of God.

The Corinthians who held this heretical view were not only rebuked by Paul's logic but also by the testimony of four prominent Old Testament heroes. We shall examine each and discover the power that confidence in the resurrection had on these individuals as they applied it to the spiritual life of their dispensation through its major problem-solving device, the faith-rest drill.

B. Daniel

Daniel used the resurrection as a problem-solving device when he applied the faith-rest drill to the future of the Jewish people. While a teenager, Daniel was taken to Babylon as a POW following Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Through Jeremiah, the Lord prophesied this event and revealed that the captivity would last 70 years:

Jeremiah 25:11 'And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.' (NASB)

Later the Lord makes a promise to the Jews that at the conclusion of this captivity they would be returned to the land:

Jeremiah 29:10 "For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.'" (NASB)

In Daniel 9, Daniel realized from these prophecies that the time was drawing near for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and prays that God would confirm this to him. Gabriel is sent to Babylon to answer his prayer and his response is quite familiar to this congregation:

Daniel 9:24 “Seventy weeks [שבעים *shavua'*: heptads of years: $70 \times 7 = 490$ years] are determined [חָתַךְ *chathach*: to cut out of time] for your people [Israel] and for your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression [terminate the 5th cycle], to make an end to sin [the baptism of fire for the Jews], to make atonement for iniquity [the regathering of the Diáspora], to bring in everlasting righteousness [resurrection of Old Testament saints], to seal up vision and prophecy [terminate the dispensation of Israel] and to anoint the most holy place [the Lord’s dedication of the millennial temple]. (NASB)

This timeline is interrupted by the Church Age with seven years remaining. Israel’s dispensational clock will not begin to tick again until the Rapture of the church occurs and this final heptad, called the Tribulation, takes place. Details of this future dispensation, which concludes the dispensation of Israel, are prophesied in Daniel 11-12.

It is in Daniel 12 that Gabriel provides Daniel with a prophecy which he can apply as a problem-solving device. In the faith-rest drill, the resurrection of Jewish believers at the Second Advent is provided as the doctrinal rationale by which Daniel can reach a doctrinal conclusion of absolute confidence regarding his and his fellow Israelites eternal future:

Daniel 12:1 “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book [the book of life which lists all believers of the dispensations], will be rescued.

v. 2 “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.” (NASB)

Daniel is therefore prophetic about the resurrection and reveals it to be a future reality for all Old Testament saints and Tribulational martyrs at the Second Advent of Messiah.

C. Job

As you know Job was placed under evidence testing during which he was required to utilize maximum recall of doctrine. He, too, was sustained by his confidence in the resurrection which he expresses in:

Job 19:23 “Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!

v. 24 “That with an iron stylus and lead They were engraved in the rock forever!

Job 19:25 “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives [**First Advent**], And at the last He will take His strand on the earth [**millennial kingdom**].

v. 26 “Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;” ... [**resurrection of Old Testament saints and Tribulational martyrs**] ... (NASB)

D. Abraham

The writer of Hebrews presents the Hall of Fame of faith-rest heroes in chapter 11. In this context we read about the exploits of Old Testament believers who utilized the faith-rest technique to resolve the challenges they faced. Conspicuous in this report is Abraham.

The first occasion we find the senior patriarch of Israel mentioned is in Hebrews 11:9-13 which chronicles the faith-rest decisions he made from his conversion in Ur through his life in Canaan.

Abraham understood that his eternal destiny was to live in heaven with the Lord and was determined that he would never cease to search for the Eternal City until he discovered it.

Hebrews 11:8 By means of faith-rest in a doctrinal rationale, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out [**from Ur**] to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance [**Canaan: Abrahamic & Palestinian covenants**]; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

v. 9 By faith-rest in a doctrinal rationale he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise.

v. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with firm foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

v. 13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (EXT)

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were able to focus on the unseen future where they were confident they would reside in a permanent eternal city “whose architect and builder is God.”

If they were to live in an eternal city, they would also have to have the capacity to exist in such an environment which implies an understanding of a resurrection body.

This wisdom had already been manifested by Abraham when he was ordered to offer Isaac as a sacrifice in:

Genesis 22:1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested [נָסָה *nasah*] Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

v. 2 And He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”
(NASB)

Typology is replete in these mandates. Isaac becomes a type of Christ while Abraham illustrates God the Father. Abraham’s only son portrays the Messiah as the uniquely-born Son of God and Abraham’s love for Isaac speaks of the Father’s personal love for Jesus.

God the Father, although He loved His Son in an immeasurable way, was willing to offer him as a sacrifice for the entire human race. Abraham loved Isaac in the way any father would love his son. That he was being asked to offer Isaac as a sacrifice posed the maximum test for Abraham’s faith in the reality of God’s eternal city.

We are also told that the place of sacrifice is the “land of Moriah”: מֹרְיָה (*Moriyyah*). This word is a compound made up of three elements: (1) the prefix *mem*: “the place”; (2) the root *ra’ah*: “to see”; and (3) the name of deity: *Yahweh*. It literally means “the place where Jehovah provides.” This location was the future site of the temple of Solomon and is presently occupied by the Islam’s Dome of the Rock.

The explanation given for why God would command Abraham to do such a thing is that He was testing him. The Hebrew word for “testing” is נָסָה (*nasah*) which carries the idea of testing or “proving the quality of someone or something.” Often it is God who is responsible for bringing testing upon man and this is frequently administered through adversity or hardship. This type of testing is never without the intent to refine the character of a positive believer by challenging his faith. For the negative believer such pressure would be discipline designed to motivate rebound recovery. Abraham was up to the challenge of the former:

Genesis 22:9 Then they [Abraham, Isaac, and two attendants] came to the place of which God had told them; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

v. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took a knife to slay his son.

v. 11 But the angel of the Lord [a theophany of Jesus Christ] called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

Genesis 22:12 And He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” (NASB)

Abraham had been placed under a maximum level of testing and had passed the test. However, from the standpoint of the casual observer this testing not only seems to be unusually demanding, but also quite dangerous.

It must be remembered that the Lord knew what He was doing. With omniscience He knew beforehand that Abraham had the doctrine and the strength of faith to execute the commandment. The Lord had no intention of allowing Abraham to follow thorough on the assignment. The issue was to put Abraham in a situation where his faith would be put to the test. If he complied, then the Lord would know that Abraham’s faith was strong enough to obey the most pretentious of commands that would result in the severest consequences and require the most arduous means of execution. If Abraham could pass this test, then whatever else he would face later would be rendered insignificant by comparison.

We do not know the strength of our doctrinal inventory until we are forced to use it under pressure. When we have faith in the guidance provided by the doctrine that we know and are willing to apply it to the exigencies we face, on a daily basis, we prove nothing to God that He doesn’t already know. We prove it to ourselves and as we do the strength of our faith increases so that we can handle more demanding tests later.

What Abraham has done, like Job before him, is pass the Old Testament equivalent of evidence testing.

And what was the doctrinal rationale that Abraham applied in his use of the faith-rest drill on Mount Moriah? We lean the answer from:

Hebrews 11:17 By faith [By means of faith-rest in doctrinal rationales], Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up [present passive participle of the verb *πειράζω* (*peirázō*)] his only begotten son;

v. 18 it was he to whom it was said, [Genesis 21:12] “In Isaac you descendants shall be called.” (NASB)

We translate “doctrinal rationales” in the plural on this occasion for a reason. Abraham will apply several doctrines to reach a doctrinal conclusion that will enable him to go forward in compliance with the Lord’s order to sacrifice Isaac.

Here we see in the Greek that Abraham was being tested. The word is the present passive participle of the verb, **πειράζω**, (*peirázō*), whose definition is virtually the same as the Hebrew verb, **נָסָה** (*nasah*): “this term often refers to God testing the faith and faithfulness of human beings.”²

The application of this kind of testing is described as follows:

πειράζω, *peirazō*: Complete submission to God’s will, even in incomprehensible suffering, constitutes the essence of the obedience demanded. With this the test is passed. When a man is tested, it is his readiness to commit himself wholly to God which is on trial.³

Under this testing, when Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac, his first doctrinal rationale is stated in the phrase, “and he who had received the promises.”

Abraham had received two unconditional and immutable covenants from God: **(1)** the Abrahamic which promised that he would be the patriarch of a great nation in Genesis 12:3 and **(2)** that this nation would occupy a Promised Land described in Genesis 15:18-21; 17:6-8.

These covenants were later granted to Isaac when the Lord informed Abraham and Sarah that she would become pregnant with a son. Abraham, who was 100 years old, did not believe this at the time and offered this compromise:

Genesis 17: 18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!”

v. 19 But God said, “No, but Sarah you wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.” (NASB)

Typology is also introduced in Hebrews 11:17 when Isaac is described as Abraham’s “only begotten son” who he “offered up” as a sacrifice.

The second doctrinal rationale appears in verse 18 where the Abrahamic covenant is again confirmed through Isaac—not through Ishmael: “Through Isaac your descendants shall be called.” Isaac must be alive for these promises to be kept.

Abraham was confident that because of the two covenants given to Him by God that there was no way that the sacrifice of Isaac could possibly prevent them from being fulfilled, not only to him but also to Isaac and his descendants.

² Baker, Warren and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 736 [5254].

³ Kittel, Gerhard and Friedrich, Gerhard (eds.). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 6:25.