

Acts 10: 34-43
Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24
I Corinthians 15: 1-11
St. John 20: 1-18

Easter Day 2024

“For God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear.”

Acts 10: 40

When a relationship has changed, there is evidence by a new companionship... To take an example from daily life, when a couple exchange vows during a wedding ceremony, their relationship with one another has changed... When the man or the woman wake up the morning after their wedding, on their honeymoon, there is a new companionship, and very likely, a new sense of joy. The feelings aren't always there – I know of a couple whose boat sank under them during their honeymoon – but the joy very often is there, and that's “icing on the cake.” The change in the relationship took place during the marriage vows. The evidence, or “first-fruits” of the changed relationship, is the new companionship which follows. Very often, this is accompanied by a sense of joy...

This is a human analogy to the changed relationship between God and humanity which took place through the crucifixion of Christ. The penalty of the injustice of sin had to be re-dressed. That is part of the nature of true justice...

Yet, as we all know, that is not the end of the story!... Because of what Jesus Christ did on our behalf – yes, on our behalf, all of us – Jesus Christ is risen to new life, and he shares this new life with us by his Spirit...

Just as marriage is not merely a nice feeling, but a commitment of spirit, soul and body, so too Jesus' resurrection is a physical transformation of his entire self in history. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a reversal in time to *before* his death. Rather, death is defeated. The resurrected life of Jesus is a glorious new chapter on the other side of death. Jesus is filled with radiant new life...

The historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is very compelling... No one could survive a Roman crucifixion. The records of Jesus' resurrection in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John include different details, but are completely consistent in the core of the story, which is just the way witnesses to a true historical event behave... The early Christians were so confident of the facts of the resurrection, many of them went to their deaths to defend what they had experienced... Women were the first witnesses to the resurrection (further evidence of its truth -- because the testimony of women was not accepted under Jewish Law, and so would not have taken place if the resurrection were fraudulent)... As well, we might note the historical records of the time *outside* the New Testament, by Jewish and Roman historians, which record the curious story of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth...

So, Jesus Christ is alive again, *after* his death – an amazing miracle... This is the first piece of compelling evidence of the changed relationship between God and humanity, through the self-offering of Jesus the Christ...

Yet, there are even more extraordinary points to ponder... It is not only Jesus of Nazareth who experiences resurrection because of this new relationship... We – you and I, and all the faithful – share in the resurrection of Jesus in 2 ways. First, as we respond to God's love through Jesus Christ, as we are baptized, we share in his resurrection. St. Paul explains that baptism is a death of the old, and a new spiritual beginning, a new life, in the Lord Jesus. Romans 6: 4:

Therefore we have been buried with [Jesus Christ] by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

We share in Jesus Christ's resurrection, by his Spirit. A new life has begun in us. That's what's happening now...

There is a second sense in which we share in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus... (It hasn't happened yet; but one glorious Day, it will...) This world has been in motion for a long time, and might – *might* – for a very long time yet... But this life is not for ever. God will bring together a new heaven and a new earth. We will be joyful sharers in the general resurrection. *These* bodies will come to an end. Yet, our identities will not end on the final Day. There will be a final, glorious renewal of our entire selves, one glorious Day. Then there will be no more sin; no more sorrow; no more pain – for the former things will have passed away...

Jesus Christ is risen!... As well (by the grace of God), we experience a new resurrected life now – this is illustrated in our baptisms... Even more wonderful, we will share in the general resurrection of the dead, through the finished work of Jesus Christ, our true King...

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Thanks be to God!