

"Easter ~ 2010" 4.4.10

PRAYER: "Come Holy Spirit, Come!"

This story actually takes place in the time of the French Revolution; during the "Reign of Terror."

- People are being executed right & left & 3 men are waiting to be executed.
 - The 1st man is a priest ~ as he is brought to the guillotine, he is asked, "Do you have any last words?"
 - He answers, "I believe God's going to save me." He puts his head into the block, the blade comes down & it stops 2 inches from his neck.
 - The executioner says, "This is a miracle," & lets him go.
- The next man comes up. He's also a priest & they ask him, "Do you have any last words?"
 - He responds, "I believe God is going to save me." They put him in the block, the blade comes down, & once again it stops 2 inches from his neck.
 - The executioner says, "It's a miracle," & they let him go.
- Finally the 3rd man comes up. He's a skeptic & an atheist. He does not want to be associated with people of faith in any way.
 - The executioner asks him the same question, "Do you have any last words?"
 - He's looks intently @ the guillotine & says, "Well, I think I see your problem. There's something jammed in the gear mechanism." ☺

This past week a friend sent me this simple line from a Bill Board advertisement:
"After you die...you will meet God"

A SIMPLETHOUGHT but YET PROFOUND:

Old adage says = there are 2 things you can count on: DEATH & _____?

I'm thankful we don't know WHEN or HOW it's going to happen; BUT we can be certain of this fact ~ we will all die.

Scripture is also very clear about something else we can be count on: AFTER WE DIE we will all receive our eternal assignments from God.

So, my big EASTER QUESTION is this...If you were to meet God today, how would that work out for you?

These are NOT matters you want to put off NOR matters you want to neglect: Because WHERE you spend eternity matters!

From the very beginning of time, people have asked the question
Job asked centuries ago, "If a person dies, will that person live again?" Job 14: 14

It's because of this question that we are here today & it's because of the answer that we CELEBRATE EASTER TODAY!

The RESURRECTION of JESUS is the central truth & hope around which everything in heaven & on earth hinges.

Our entire faith ~ Our entire belief system ~ Our entire way of living is based upon the TRUTH of God's power "to raise Jesus from the dead."

It's the Resurrection that separates Christianity from every other world religion!

(R) I Corinthians 15: 12 – 20 or p. 879 in pew Bibles

I want to suggest 2 reasons WHY the resurrection is essential to the Christian faith: 1st reason...

- I. (Historically ~ B.C.) Israel had a vague understanding of the after-life
 - A. Even now, there is no consensus in Judaism about what happens after death. This is due in part to:
 1. The Torah = the 1st (5) books of the O.T. says very little about the subject.
 2. Book of Psalms = there are some vague references to a dark place deep in the earth called She'ol, alongside references to the dead going 'down to the Pit,' but they are not elaborated upon.

Elsewhere, death is described as a return to the dust from which the 1st man Adam was created.
 3. Ecclesiastes 3:19 - 20 reads,
"For people & animals share the same fate, both breathe & both must die. So people have no real advantage over the animals...Both go to the same place they came from dust & they will return to dust."
 - B. Interesting note there are just (5) concrete references in the O.T. concerning the Resurrection:
 1. (R) Job 19: 25 – 27 or p. 400 in pew Bible
 2. Psalm 16: 10 – 11 reads, "For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave. You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence & the pleasures of living with you forever."
 3. Isaiah 26: 19 reads, "But those who die in the Lord will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! For your life-giving light will fall like dew on your people in the place of the dead!"
 4. (R) Daniel 12: 2 or p. 678 + Daniel 12: 13
 - C. Consider this there are only 9 concrete verses out of over 23,000 verses in the entire O.T. that mention the Resurrection.
 1. Ever wonder WHY such veiled references to the most significant event in the history of the world?
 2. Ever wonder WHY God's plan of redemption ~ God's plan to send His beloved Son Jesus to die for all of us = to die for all of humanity was barely mentioned in the 1st 39 books?
 3. Ever wonder WHY God kept this amazing FACT somewhat of a mystery?

- D. Odd question did our enemy Satan understand God's plan for redeeming humankind from their sins; did he somehow grasp this veiled mystery & intentionally cooperate with God?
1. I don't think so = = (R) I Corinthians 2: 6 – 8 or p. 871 in pew Bible
 "But the rulers of this world have not understood it, if they had, they would not have crucified our glorious Lord."
 2. Could it be that our enemy Satan ~ the great deceiver had no clue that 'the coming Messiah' would have to suffer & die?
 3. Suppose for the sake of argument that Satan saw the Messiah like the O.T. prophets & the disciples early on in terms of Psalm 2: 9 is "a reigning Messiah King that would rule the world with an iron rod."
 4. As we studied last week except for two specific places in the O.T. = Isaiah 49 – 53 + Daniel 9: 26 – 27 the idea that the Messiah would have to suffer & die was an enormous surprise for the O.T. prophets & the disciples as well.
- E. IF Satan had understood this incredible truth of God's plan to redeem us from eternal damnation: thru His son's death on the Cross; you be assured, the enemy would have never co-operated w/God!
1. Never forget our enemy Satan is crafty + clever & a master deceiver; but he is not omnipotent = not all knowing; IF he had any clue that Jesus had to die, he would have done everything in his limited power to stop Jesus' death on the Cross!
 2. The RESURRECTION was God's final smack-down on Satan! The Resurrection was God's incredible SECRET of His amazing power & most importantly HIS AMAZING GRACE!
 3. (R) Ephesians 3: 8 – 11 or p. 896 in pew Bible
 "...this mysterious plan that God had kept secret from the beginning."

Finally the 2nd reason the resurrection is essential for our Christian faith is...

- II. Today ~ A.D. '...in the year of our Lord"
 we now have a clear & concise understanding about life after death!

(R) Romans 5: 6 – 11 or p. 860 in pew Bible

INSERT flooding cave

INVITATION to receive Jesus for eternity!