

Miracle of Resurrection of saints

“And the bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matthew 27:52-53).

Another Calvary miracle was the resurrection of saints that accompanied the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our text reveals that *“saints who had died”* came out of the graves that had opened three days before. The graves had been opened by the earthquake at the death of Jesus Christ, and that the dead bodies arose and came out of them after Christ Himself had risen, and that they went into Jerusalem and appeared unto many. It is a statement of one of the grandest miracles, a gigantic, supernatural exploit by God in the sense of being wholly miraculous. This statement that the bodies arose and went into Jerusalem are self-luminous and their meaning as visible as light. Not only are these words a part of Scripture, but the concept of their rising at this time of Christ’s death is so interlaced with Scripture that it could not but be there.

These saints coming out of the grave stands in line with the miraculous events of the happenings at Calvary. It harmonizes with and explains the wonder of the opened graves, just as that wonder was the product of the wondrous earthquake, and the earthquake was the counterpart of the wondrous rending of the veil, that rending of the veil answered back to the shout of victory from the Cross whose dying sufferer had just emerged in triumph out of the almighty horrors of the symbolic darkness!

The resurrection of these saints, like the first fruit of the Jewish harvest, was an expressive pledge of the coming general resurrection, when, from all the graveyards of the world, wherever the mortal remains of a saint may lie, *“this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality!”* Our body that *“is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body”* (1 Corinthians 15:53; 43-44).

Matthew tells the story of wonder, *“departed saints arose, and left their graves and went into Jerusalem, and appeared to many”* And he says nothing more. Did they go into the houses of the people or only walked the streets? Did they appear only once, or from time to time during the forty days of the Lord’s appearing after His resurrection. Matthew doesn’t say. How they were affected by their return to this life; whether they spoke of the realms of the dead or of the recent entrance of Christ into those realms; how and when they finally disappeared or whither they went, on all these topics not a word, not so much as the faintest recognition of the possibility of such questions being asked. No merely human pen, having said so much, could have said so little.

Matthew tells us, *“They appeared unto many.”* Why should they appear except to be recognized and identified? However, Moses and Elijah were recognized by the disciples at the transfiguration although they had never seen either one of them before. The Holy Spirit is able to make known to one another those who before were strangers. He is able to do it as easily and quietly as the light shines or as a new thought comes into the mind.

The Greek word translated “*appeared*,” that appears in our text, does not fully express the original meaning that has more to do with, “*they were manifestly made known*.”

1 Corinthians 15:22-27 will help us a great deal in understanding what was happening. The passage states, “*For as in Adam all die, **even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order**: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him.*”

The passage assures us that “*all who die in Christ shall be made alive*” – will rise from the dead – but everyone in their own order. The “*saints who came out of the graves*” at this time harmonizes with the teaching of Scripture of “*three stages of the first resurrection*,” this being the first stage – of the first resurrection. It is necessary to be familiar with this passage above, that teaches, “*Every man is his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end 'ones,' when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.*”

The New Testament teaching concerning the first resurrection was understood with the Jewish harvest in mind. This harvest, of which the first resurrection is patterned, has three “*groups*” – the first fruit, the main harvest, and the gleanings.

These bodies, coming out of open graves, were the believer's first stage of the first resurrection, “*every man (will be raised) in his own order.*” The word “*order*” is translated from the Greek word “*tagma*,” a military word meaning, “*troop*.” This verse states, “*Every man – [every born-again believer] – will rise from the dead but in his own troop, or group...*” “*Christ, the first fruits*” (**troop #1**); “*then, when He comes, those who belong to Him*” (**troop #2**). “*Then the end will come...*” (**troop #3**)! Note, three troops (groups) are mentioned here in 1 Corinthians 15:21-24.

1. THE FIRST GROUP of the first resurrection are these saints who were raised when Christ rose from the dead...when He was “*resurrected*.” These saints who rose at Christ's resurrection are referred to as “*first fruits*” because they are equivalent to the “*sheaf*” of first fruits of the Jewish harvest that was taken unto the priest and waved as a “*wave offering*” before the Lord. The “*first fruits*” of the Jewish harvest were just that, they were the first few grains (“*fruit*”) that had ripened *prematurely*, before the main harvest ripened, when Israel would gather a handful of this very first ripe grain and bring it to the priest in the Tabernacle and there offered as a promise, (pledge) and assurance, (guarantee) of the coming great harvest (Exodus 23:19, 34:26 and Leviticus 23:9-14).

When Jesus rose from the dead, He was the “*First Fruits*” along with the company of the dead – (probably all the Old Testament saints) – that He took with Him into heaven as a token of God's assurance of a future resurrection.

2. THE SECOND GROUP of the first resurrection will be the saints who will be raised at Jesus' second coming – when He returns for His Bride, the Church.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 states, "*Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.*"

The second part of the Jewish harvest was the "*main harvest...the great ingathering of the grain*. This resurrection, at Christ Jesus' second coming, will be the great ingathering of the main harvest, the great host of believers, whose bodies will be raised at this time!

Note that **only** the "*dead in Christ*" will rise at this time, there will not be one sinner who will rise at this time.

3. THE THIRD GROUP of the first resurrection will be the saints who will be raised at the end of the tribulation period.

Revelation 7:14 states, "*I (John) answered, 'Sir, you know.'* And he (One of the 24 elders around God's throne) *said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'*"

Revelation 20:4 states, "*And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the Word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*"

In the Jewish harvest, after the main body of the harvest had been gathered in, there was the gathering in of "*the gleanings*," the grain that ripened late.

1 Corinthians 15:24 makes reference to "*the end ones*" who, evidently, are the "*Tribulation saints*" who are referred to in Revelation 4:14 and 20:4 and who are raised after the tribulation.

A question comes to mind that I am sure many others have thought of, "*If Jesus Christ was the first fruit of the resurrection, what about those who were brought back to life before Him?*" How could He be first, if there were others before Him? What about the widow of Sarepta (1 Kings 17:21), the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:34), the resurrection caused by the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13:20-21), the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:25), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14), Lazarus (John 11) and, of course Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:3)?

The simple answer, of course, is that these were only "*restorations*" back into this present natural life! In all these instances it was only a revival of the natural body that would, unquestionably, die again

The "*firstfruits*" is first mentioned in Leviticus 23:10, where God tells Israel they were to bring a "*sheaf*" of the early ripening grain to the Tabernacle and "*wave it before God*" as a guarantee of the main harvest that would be coming in a few weeks. These "*bodies of the saints, who were dead, came out of the graves after Christ's resurrection*"

as a part of the firstfruits demonstrating God's promise of a general resurrection "*that are Christ's at His coming.*"

Jesus Christ, by His death, exhausted the curse of sin – death! He triumphed over death, sin and Satan. He succeeded in removing the curse from His people.

As the Sin-bearer for us, had He not become personally justified before the Father, in the efficacy of His sufferings, we could never be justified by faith in Him. Had Jesus not attained in His own person to the true resurrection, we would never be able to attain to it. Every believer is "*in*" Him, and one with Him! His death was our death; His life is our life. Jesus said, "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*"

Oh, the inestimable certainty of our promised heritage! We are bound up with Christ in the same bundle of life. Even not "*our life is hid with Christ in God;*" and a time is coming when "*our vile body shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body.*"

Only those who are "*Christ's*" will attain the resurrection body of 1 Corinthians 15. Only those who were "*Christ's*" came out of the grave when Christ arose -- they were the guarantee of the great harvest – the general resurrection "*who are Christ's at His coming.*"

Scripture teaches that those who are not Christ's will rise out of their graves (after Christ's millennial reign on earth) and "*shall come forth unto the resurrection of damnation.*" They shall enter into the second death – eternal separation from God!

Only the saints of God will come forth "*unto the resurrection of life.*" None but saints, but every saint -- and all who believe on Jesus is a "saint," -- and they that believe on Him hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation.