

LESSON 5

THE RESURRECTION AND MISSIONS

Introduction

The discouragement the disciples felt after the crucifixion of Jesus finds illustration in the two disciples trudging along the road to Emmaus. They were discouraged; they were sad; and, what was worse, they seemed to have lost hope. Cleopas told Jesus (whom he did not recognize at first), "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel . . ." (Luke 24:21). He used the imperfect tense, meaning, "We did believe that, but after the cross, no longer do we believe it."

Peter, the stalwart of the disciples who had denied Christ, and the other followers met secretly, behind locked doors. But after these disciples met the risen Christ and received the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, they were willing to suffer before councils and face threats of imprisonment and death with words like, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29b). The confidence that we serve a living, risen Christ is a great impulse to Christian missions.

His Death, a Victory

Jesus' resurrection makes His death not that of a helpless martyr but that of a Victor. His conquest of death provides a deep and abiding dynamic for missions. As Mount Olivet stands close to Mount Calvary, the empty tomb stands close to the cross. Paul describes this victorious relationship well. "True, he died on the cross in weakness, but he lives by the power of God; and we who share his weakness shall by the power of God live with him in your service" (2 Cor. 13:4, NEB).

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection have a very close relationship. Neither alone can tell the complete story. Griffith Thomas says that apostolic preaching of the Resurrection gave assurance of the power of the Cross to save. "The primitive gospel included testimony to the resurrection as one of its characteristic features, thereby proving to the hearers the assurance of Divine redemption."¹

The Resurrection means that God spoke the last word about the Cross. The forces of hell did *not* win the day. Christ conquered through the Cross, and His conquest

¹ W. H. Griffith Thomas, "Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, 5 vols. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), 4:2569.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus were d _____ and s _____ and seemed to have lost h _____.

(discouraged, sad, hope)

After Simon Peter met the risen Lord and the power of the _____ filled his life, he was willing to suffer before councils and face threats of _____ and _____ with words like, "We ought to obey _____ rather than _____."

(Holy Spirit, imprisonment, death, God, men)

The Resurrection makes Jesus' death a v _____ and gives a deep and abiding dynamic to m _____.

(victory, missions)

The Resurrection gives assurance of the power of the _____ to save.

(Cross)

gives the imperative to tell the good news to every man and woman on the face of the earth. Christ's victory on the Cross was complete, but the Christian's task is to extend that victory in time and space.

As followers of Jesus, we must extend the resurrection victory into every area of human experience. The victory of the Cross and Resurrection become the stage on which the entire missionary drama is set.

His Resurrection, a Dynamic

After the crucifixion the disciples were down-hearted and afraid. They were not preaching Christ's message; they were not preaching any message. They were not missionaries. What is more, they were scared to death. They lacked the driving force they were to find in the Resurrection and the presence of the Spirit. After they had personally met the risen Christ, they went forth with a spirit of conquest that even flogging and imprisonment could not dampen. The fact that their Lord had conquered death made the disciples know that ultimately they too were deathless. Brantley describes this spirit:

Alive again! What a difference it made with the disciples. They were now willing to face any experience bravely and buoyantly. Nothing was too hard for them to bear for the cause of Him who had given them the assurance of eternal life. Every element of doubt in them was expelled with His resurrection. They heard Him gladly when He gave them the Great Commission. . . . They started out in haste to evangelize the world.²

The disciples on the first Easter morning trudged to the empty tomb to pay loving tribute to the dead. Instead of the dead, they found a new reason for living. Mary told Peter that she could not contain the good news. When questioned by the apostles, the essence of her reply was, "He lives; I know He lives. I met Him in the garden." The personal experience of meeting the risen Christ gave Mary an irrefutable testimony. The encounter with the risen Christ has provided the "heart power" for Christian disciples from that day to this.

Jesus' resurrection transformed eleven ordinary men into missionaries of the highest calibre. Within a few short years this dynamic drove disciples to the ends of the known world to share the good news. Before the close of the century, these missionaries of the Cross had reached the philosophers of Mars Hill, the aborigines of the Mediterranean Islands, and the rulers of Rome. The Resurrection continues to provide an impelling force for world missions. If it does not in our day, the fault lies in the fact that we modern Christians have not really understood its grandeur.

² Allen Brantley, *The Enchanted Cross* (London: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1937), p. 198.

The victory of the Resurrection gives the imperative to tell the _____ to every man and woman on the earth. (Compare your answer with the text.)

What gave the disciples the driving force to preach Christ's message? _____

(the Resurrection and the presence of the Holy Spirit)

The risen Christ gave His followers a new reason for _____.

Write Mary's reply when questioned by the disciples. _____

(living; "He lives; I know He lives. I met Him in the garden.")

List three diverse elements of population which Christians had reached by the end of the first century.

(philosophers of Mars Hill, aborigines of the Mediterranean Islands, rulers of Rome)

His Presence, the Supreme Authority

When Jesus spoke to the disciples on the mount in Galilee, He based the Great Commission on authority He had gained in the Resurrection. His authority is singular and sovereign. His authority had reached a cosmic scale. Listen again as He speaks the words, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Going therefore . . ." (Matt. 28:18-19 a, author's translation). As Jesus set forth His world-wide mission, He promised His permanent presence.

Jesus' unique claim to be "the way, the truth, and the life" now has the authentication of the Resurrection behind it.

In the Great Commission, Christ affirmed that He had been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Then He promised His presence to His disciples as they went out in obedience to His command. His presence assures the victory of His people's marching forth in His name. When Jesus met with the five hundred, His discourse did not concern their message as much as His authority.

The authority with which Jesus spoke the Great Commission resulted from His death, resurrection, and exaltation. His resurrection completed and authenticated the sacrifice He made on the cross. As His followers stream forth to distant places and meet difficult circumstances, they go with the quiet confidence that their message is true. The messenger knows that repentance and faith bring life because Christ defeated death.

Had the grave been able to hold Jesus, the Christian faith could not have advanced against the cold, hard facts of reality. Paul said, "If in this life we who are in Christ have only hope, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19, RSV). But in His rising from death, Jesus ripped away the seal of Rome and shredded death's bonds. The certainty of eternal life not only lights the world after death but also illumines the Christian's daily path in this world. The Christ who gave His disciples the Commission has promised to be their companion. In a day of upheavals and of crumbling foundations, this certainty of His presence gives us strength to live triumphantly in His name.

His Presence, the Source of Good News

Christ not only rose from the dead but also promised to believing men and women, as they struggle in a world that is coming apart at the seams, the resurrection quality of life here and now (see Col. 3:1). The good news of power for daily living, in an age like this, is news that demands sharing. One who calls himself a Christian but

Christ based the Great Commission on the authority He had gained in the R _____.
His authority is s _____ and
s _____.

(Resurrection, singular, sovereign)

The Christian's marching orders, which are found in Matthew 28:19-20, are called the _____.

(Great Commission)

If Jesus had not risen from the dead, there would be no _____ for the _____ now or after death. The certainty of eternal life not only lights the world after _____ but illumines the Christian's daily _____ in this world. His presence gives us strength to live _____ in His name.

(hope, Christian; death, path; triumphantly)

has no desire to share his faith has experienced something less than the New Testament experience.

Christ in the believer becomes the source of good news in the world. The sequence of the New Testament experience is, "Come see . . . go tell." Missions springs from an encounter with the living Lord and from the realization that He lives in the Christian's heart.

The Throne of the Universe

After giving the Great Commission to His followers, Jesus had completed His ministry on earth. He ascended to the Father (Luke 24:50-53). He promised to come again to the believers through the Holy Spirit. He went away from the few disciples in order to live in the heart of all disciples. He went to prepare a place for the believer (John 14), to intercede in the believer's behalf (Heb. 9:24), and to take His place of authority with the Father (Eph. 1:20).

In His ascension, Christ placed His kingly power at the disposal of the believer (John 15:24-26). The reigning Lord, through His Spirit and through His people, is at work in the whole of life and history to carry out His purposes. Only in the ascension could the risen Christ become spiritually present in His people everywhere. The ascension means that the religion of Jesus Christ is universal; it embraces the whole world and includes eternity.

The Resurrection makes today's Christian able to meet the onslaughts of today's realities and to know God will carry out His purpose in history. Although the Christian sees men living in oppression and suffering, with their rights ground under heel, he remembers the truth of the Resurrection as he seeks to right these wrongs. The same God who raised Christ from the tomb is at work in today's world.

The sequence of the New Testament experience is "Come see . . . _____."

(go tell)

Missions springs from an _____ with the living Lord and from the realization that He _____ in the Christian's heart.

(encounter, lives)

Jesus returned to the Father to--

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the third paragraph in the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Describe the attitude of the two disciples on the Emmaus road after the crucifixion. _____

2. Describe the change in Simon Peter after he met the risen Lord. _____

3. How does the Resurrection relate to missions? _____

4. What does the Resurrection say about the Cross? _____

5. Explain the Christian's task in light of the Resurrection. _____

6. Show how the Resurrection gave a new dynamic to missions. _____

7. Reread the quotation from Brantley. What difference did the Resurrection make in the disciples' desire to evangelize? _____

8. How did Mary answer the disciples' questions? _____

9. List three diverse elements of population Christians had reached by the close of the first century. _____

10. Describe the authority Jesus obtained in the Resurrection. _____

11. What do we call the marching orders He gave in Matthew 28:19-20? _____

12. What would have been the disastrous results had Jesus not risen from the dead? _____

13. How does the Resurrection relate to the Christian's daily life? _____

14. Give the sequence of the New Testament experience. _____

15. Complete this sentence. "Missions springs from an _____
_____ the realization that He _____."
16. List three reasons Jesus returned to the Father. _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3)

1. List at least four Scriptures other than Matthew 28:19–20 where Jesus gave a command to missions.
2. What is the meaning of the expression, “Thus it is written,” in Luke 24:46?
3. Why did Jesus tell His disciples in Luke 24:49 to tarry in Jerusalem?
4. Summarize in a paragraph the missionary message conveyed in this lesson.

Advanced activity (Level 3)

Read pages 11-24 in *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* by Peter Wagner and answer the following questions.

1. What part do you think personal witnessing should have in sharing the Gospel?
2. Define what Wagner means by missionary strategy.
3. How does missionary strategy relate to the Holy Spirit’s control?
4. What are the elements of a sound, biblical, missionary strategy?
5. What are the Christian’s duties with reference to the will of God?
6. Discuss the goal of the “Great Commission.”
7. Discuss the meaning of “to make disciples.”

Seminar Discussion

1. On the basis of what authority did Jesus give the Great Commission?
2. Describe the discouragement of the disciples after the crucifixion.
3. How does this discouragement prove the fallacy of the theory that the disciples were so emotionally disturbed after the crucifixion they simply imagined they saw the risen Lord?
4. Explain how the Resurrection authenticated the Cross.
5. How did the Resurrection message provide the dynamic of missions?
6. Explain James Stewart’s expression, “Too often we live on the wrong side of Easter Day.”