

Session 5 Resurrection

Ash Wednesday/Lent collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Background ideas

Resurrection and afterlife is not a strong idea in the Old Testament although by the century before Jesus there was an idea that some great prophets such as Enoch, Moses and Elijah and those who had died as saints and martyrs would receive God's blessing in paradise or heaven.

Isaiah's suffering servant is promised a place amongst the righteous possibly after his death:

Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out himself to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors... (Isaiah 53:12)

The Maccabean martyrs (c165 BC) were promised life after death as a reward for their deaths. The Pharisees' belief in resurrection has its origins from this time; the traditionalist Sadducees on the otherhand did not believe in resurrection.

²³Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.' (2 Maccabees 7:23)

Experience of seeing those who have died

Alister Hardy has carried out extensive research of religious experience. One type of religious experience he categorised is that of 'seeing' someone who has died. There are strong parallels here with the Gospel resurrection stories but without the same transforming effect on the person who experienced it:

After the sudden death of my husband about nine years ago, I had several experiences, which proved to *me* that there is a life after death. I am not a Spiritualist, nor a Churchgoer, but I try to follow Jesus, and I am a great believer in meditation, as a way to God. After his passing, I both saw and spoke to my husband and held his hand. This hand was strong and

not at all ghost-like, nor was his appearance. I was alone at the time, so no medium there to act as a link. Probably this is not a detail to prove God's existence, but to me, it indeed did.

The Spiritual Nature of Man p.47

Resurrection 'body'

The Gospels (with the exception of Mark) attempt to present the risen Jesus, but struggle to express the reality of his presence yet in a transformed resurrected state. St Paul says Jesus appeared to 500 followers 'all at once' (1 Corinthians 15:6) and even to himself some years later (which was the cause of his conversion).

St Paul's describes the resurrection body as follows (using the metaphor of a seed dying in the ground and living again, transformed into a plant):

³⁵ But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?'

³⁶ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body...⁴² So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.

⁴³ It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:35-44)

Key events and questions

The Gospels often have very different stories and narratives. The main events held in common are:

- Women arrive at the empty tomb (Mark's Gospel ends here)
- Women encounter the risen Jesus
- Male disciples encounter the risen Jesus
- The risen Jesus commissions his followers to preach the good news

Questions: Gooder page pages 169

Final prayer

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen