

June 2018

Dear neighbours,

It concerns us all

“If a man die, shall he live again? (Job 14.14)

The Bible invites us to consider this question. It is a very practical consideration, very near to home.

We may ask ourselves why the Lord Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the dead. “Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus...cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go (John 11.31-45 – verses 38-44 quoted).

Jesus explains why He raised Lazarus. He said, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11.25-26)

The Bible teaches clearly that every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved and live (Acts 16.31).

Why was the Lord Jesus Christ raised from the dead?

After the crucifixion the soldiers “came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already...but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water” (John 19.32-34). The sequel is as follows:- “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24.1-7).

“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.” “God is not God of the dead, but of the living.” In dealing with those who did not believe in resurrection Jesus said, “As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matthew 22.31-32). Though they lived nearly two thousand years before, Abraham, Jacob and Isaac are alive. Jesus should know. He came from God and from heaven (John 13.3).

“Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15.20-22). Those that are Christ’s, that is, as verse 23 explains.

He was raised to show that resurrection is His reward for trusting Him. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4.12). Jesus spoke of those “which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead,” and said, “neither can they die any more” (Luke 20.35-36). Solely because of their faith in Christ.

It makes a life-changing difference

As we saw, Job asked the question “If a man die, shall he live again?” He went on to say, “All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands” (Job 14.14-15). Job is talking about himself.

If I could but believe **that**, he meant, it would transform my life here and now. And he did come to the place where he actually believed it, not merely hoping for it as a pipe dream:- “I know that my Redeemer liveth...” (Job 19. 25-27) “and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” He came to believe in a bodily resurrection. Not by proxy, but that he, the very same person as he’d always been, would be changed and raised.

What a difference such a faith makes to life. To know where you’re going after death. Job says that all his life long he will be excited; all his life long he will anticipate such a glorious future. It will also make all the difference to how I go about living. The Saviour will have a desire towards me. He will want me to be with Him. Indeed, Jesus prayed to His Father concerning His disciples, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17.24).

It is exciting to die when life’s work is over, for “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new...I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Revelation 21.4-7).

Yours affectionately,