

(T) Welcome to Discipleship training On The Air. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Two teachers will teach from the Bible about the Christian festivals. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: EASTER, the Christian festival in which we commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We will learn what the Bible teaches about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its effect on Christians. We will learn how his resurrection has been prophesied, what happened when he was resurrected from the dead, and why his resurrection is important for you.

(S) **POINT 1. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.**

First. The important prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the resurrection of Jesus.

1900 years BC Job said, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet, in my flesh I will see God!" (Job 19:25-27). He knew that in the end of history his Saviour and he himself would live.

1000 years BC king David prophesied that God would not abandon Jesus Christ to the grave and he would not let his Holy One see decay (Ps 16:10; Act 2:27).

Psalms 118:22-24 prophesied that the stone, which the builders rejected, would become the capstone, that is, the most important and most decisive stone in a building. The Jews would reject and crucify the Messiah, but he would become the resurrected Saviour, who would decide the destiny of every man on earth!

700 years BC the prophet Isaiah prophesied, "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:11). He would suffer on the cross in order to bear the iniquities of his people. Afterwards he would see the light of life, that is, he would be resurrected. By his knowledge of God's revelation he would justify very many people. The prophet Isaiah also prophesied, "The Lord Almighty will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces ..." (Isa 25:8).

At the second coming, Jesus Christ will resurrect both the righteous and the wicked people (Jn 5:28-29). He will judge them on the basis of their faith or unbelief. The believers will inherit eternal life, while the unbelievers will inherit eternal punishment (Mt 25:46).

(T) Second. The important prophecies in the New Testament concerning the resurrection of Jesus. At least three times before his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ prophesied that he would die and be resurrected. In Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33-34 he clearly prophesied that he would be resurrected three days after his crucifixion.

(S) **POINT 2. THE EVENTS AROUND THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.**

First. The time of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Three days after Good Friday, when Jesus Christ was crucified, he was resurrected. He was resurrected on Sunday, the first day of the week, very early in the morning. Because Jesus Christ was resurrected on a Sunday, Christians all over the world celebrate Easter on Sunday and also gather together every Sunday during the year to worship God and to learn from God.

(T) Second. The women who came to the tomb. There is no contradiction between the accounts of the Four Gospels concerning the women who went to the tomb. Luke indicates that there were more than three women. Matthew abbreviates and mentions only the two Mary's. Mark adds Salome. Luke mentions Joanna. John assumes that his readers are acquainted with the other Gospels. Although John 20:2 refers to more than one woman, John confines his story to Mary Magdalene. There is also no contradiction between the accounts of the Four Gospels concerning the time the women went to the tomb. They went to the tomb very early in the morning (Luke), at dawn (Matthew). It was still dark when the women started to go to the tomb (John), and the sun had already risen when they arrived at the tomb (Mark).

(S) Third. The guard placed at the tomb. In order to prevent anybody from stealing the body of Jesus, the tomb had been sealed with the Imperial Seal of Rome and the stamp of Pilate. A guard of about 10 to 30 Roman soldiers had been stationed outside the tomb, so that nobody could come near it. However, during the earthquake at his resurrection, these soldiers first became paralysed with fear and then ran away. Later the Jewish religious leaders bribed the soldiers with a

large sum of money to spread the rumour that the disciples of Jesus Christ had stolen the body at night while the soldiers were asleep. This false rumour is still spread by some people today (Mt 27:62 - 28:15).

(T) Fourth. The stone that closed the entrance of the tomb. The tomb was closed by a round flat stone, which was so heavy that four strong men were needed to roll it away. In Matthew we read that there was an earthquake and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven. This angel removed the stone by actually lifting it out of its groove so that it was lying flat on its side on the ground and the angel sat on it. This was a sign of God's victory over death! The women did not see this happen. They only saw the result. The angel removed the stone, not to let Jesus Christ *come out* of the tomb, but to let the women and others *come into* the tomb!

(S) Fifth. The angels at the tomb. Matthew mentions one angel who sat on the huge tombstone. Mark mentions one angel sitting on the right, inside the tomb. Luke mentions two angels, who suddenly stood beside the women inside the tomb. John mentions that Mary Magdalene also saw two angels inside the tomb. There is no contradiction between the Four Gospels concerning the number of angels, because Matthew and Mark do not state that there was only one angel. There were at least two angels, who moved around and spoke to the women.

(T) Sixth. The linen strips lying in the tomb. When Jesus was buried, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus wound long strips of linen many times around the body of Jesus together with sweet smelling spices. When the women arrived at the tomb, the angels invited them to enter the tomb and see the place where Jesus had lain. The women saw only the linen strips lying there without the body! They also saw the cloth that had been wrapped around the head of Jesus, lying separate by itself. The strips of linen probably formed an empty cocoon, showing that at his resurrection, the body of Jesus Christ could not be held back by the linen strips! This fact clearly proves that although the body of Jesus Christ was not there, no disciple or enemy could have taken his body away, because otherwise the strips of linen would not have been lying there (Jn 19:38 - 20:9).

(S) Seventh. The meeting in Galilee. The angels said to the women that Jesus Christ was going ahead of his disciples to Galilee. However, it seems that the first appearances of Jesus Christ were not in Galilee, but in Jerusalem! This is not a contradiction, because Jesus Christ has the right to do more than he promised. Moreover, when he went to Galilee, there is no evidence that he did not reach Galilee ahead of his disciples (Mt 28:7, 16-17).

(T) Eighth. The eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ did not happen in secret. There were hundreds and hundreds of witnesses! It is a *historical fact* that cannot be denied by any modern science! In Acts 1:3 we read that after his suffering, Jesus showed himself especially to his disciples and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days. When you read the Four Gospels together, you will discover that on the Sunday he was resurrected, he appeared to the following people: First, early in the morning, he appeared to Mary Magdalene close to the garden tomb (Jn 20). Then he appeared to the other women, who had just seen the empty tomb (Mt 28). In the afternoon, he appeared to Peter and later to two followers who walked to Emmaus (Lk 24). In the evening he appeared to his disciples without Thomas (Lk 24). One week after his resurrection, he appeared to all his disciples including Thomas (Jn 20). Afterwards he appeared to seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (Jn 21), to eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Mt 28), to more than 500 of the brothers at one time, to James, to all the apostles (1 Cor 15:6-7), to the apostles in Jerusalem (Act 1:4), to the eleven disciples on the mount of Olives at his ascension into heaven (Act 1:6) and finally to Paul on his way to Damascus (1 Cor 15:8). The resurrection of Jesus is a well established historical fact!

(S) **POINT 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FOR US.**

No other prophet who ever lived in history or made a claim to be a prophet has been *resurrected* from the dead! All the prophets of other religions in this world still lie in their graves. Jesus Christ is the only human being who has ever been resurrected from the dead and still lives! This fact proves that Jesus Christ was the Greatest Prophet of all times!

First. Jesus Christ was resurrected to vindicate God's acceptance of the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ. His resurrection *proves that God accepted his death to save us and that God vindicated all the claims that Jesus made about himself and his work!* The resurrection of Jesus is the visible manifestation of his exalted state. It is the conclusive evidence of the validity of all his claims. It is the effective and powerful declaration of the truth of all his teachings.

In Romans 1:3-4 we read that by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ was "appointed (declared) to be the Son of God with power". The contrast between verse 3 and 4 is between two elements within *his human nature*. Verse 3 says what Christ *was* before his resurrection and verse 4 says what he *became* by virtue of his resurrection. The contrast is between Christ's state of humiliation and his state of exaltation! Jesus Christ was always the Son of God, that is, he always possessed the complete divine nature. But before his resurrection, his human nature is described as "flesh", that is, as weak due to sin and death. His human nature was weak, not because he himself had sinned, but due to the sin of

the world that he took on himself and due to the fact that he was still going to die for these sins. But in his death, he laid aside the weakness of his human nature and severed every connection with sin and death.

At his resurrection, his *lowly* human body became his *glorious* human body (Phil 3:21). After the resurrection of his human nature, his human nature was transformed and is described as “Spirit of holiness” in Romans 1:4 or “life-giving Spirit” in 1 Corinthians 15:45. His resurrected human nature is so powerful and so endowed with the Holy Spirit and in control of the Holy Spirit, that he is identified with the Holy Spirit and called “the Lord, who is the Spirit” in 2 Corinthians 3:18. The resurrection of Jesus instated him in “*a lordship that is totally conditioned by the Holy Spirit*”!

(T) Second. Jesus Christ was resurrected to establish a new temple with a new cult, namely, the Christian Church with its worship of God the Father in spirit and in truth. What is the meaning of John 2:18-22, which says, “Break down this temple and I will raise it again in three days”? More than three years before he was crucified and resurrected, Jesus Christ made this significant prophecy about his death and resurrection. This prophecy is “*a type*” of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a kind of *riddle*, because the words have two meanings. The word “temple” may refer to “the temple built of stones” standing in Jerusalem, or it may refer to “the temple of his body”. And the words “break down” may refer to “the tearing down” of the temple building, or they may refer to “the destruction” of his body. And the words “raise up” may refer to “the reconstruction” of the temple building, or they may refer to “the resurrection” of his body!

The meaning of the entire saying of Jesus is the following. “Even though by crucifying me you Jews are breaking down the temple of my body, nevertheless, in three days I will be resurrected! And even though, as a result of murdering me, you Jews also break down your own temple of stone and the entire system of religious practices connected with it, nevertheless, as a result of my resurrection, I will establish a new temple with a new cult, namely, the Christian Church with its worship of God the Father in spirit and in truth.”

The “type” and the “antitype or fulfilment” cannot be separated in the Bible. The “type” is Israel’s temple and was regarded as the place in which God dwelt. The “antitype or fulfilment” is Christ’s body, which is in a far superior sense the dwelling-place of God (cf. Col 2:9). Therefore, if anyone rejects and destroys the second, namely, the body of Jesus Christ, he also pulls down the first, namely, the Jerusalem temple with its Jewish cult! Thus, when Jesus Christ was crucified, the temple building and its entire cult ceased to have any more meaning! When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mt 27:51). This signified the end of the temple and its ceremonial or ritual cult. Soon after the temple building and the city of Jerusalem with its people were destroyed.

In exactly the same way, the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ implies the establishment of the new temple, another temple, which according to Mark 14:58 is “a temple not made by man”. In the New Testament, according to 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:21-22 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4, “the body of believers or the Christian Church” is clearly taught to be “the temple of God”, “the temple which is not made by man”.

However, the Jews failed to see the antitype in the type. They failed to see the relationship between Jesus Christ and the temple. They only saw the literal temple of stone, which took 46 years to construct. If they had studied the Scriptures with a believing heart, they would have known that *the temple of Jerusalem, together with its furniture and its ceremonies, was only a type, destined for destruction*. In the Greek Old Testament in Psalm 40:6-7 is written, “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. Burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, ‘Here am I, I have come ...desiring to do your will’” (Heb 10:5-7). And in Jeremiah 3:16, Jeremiah prophesies that the ark would not be missed, it would not be remembered and another ark would not be made! Even the disciples of Jesus failed to see that “the temple” of which Jesus was speaking, was the temple of his body. Only after Jesus was resurrected on the third day after he was crucified, did they understand the spiritual meaning of the words of Jesus!

(S) Third. Jesus Christ was resurrected to rule the world in the interest of his Church. In Ephesians 1:20-23 and 1 Peter 3:21 we read that Jesus Christ was resurrected and sits at the right hand of God in order to rule the whole universe as well as the whole Church on earth. God placed all things under his feet. God appointed him to have authority, power and dominion over every title or position that exists at any point of time in history. All angels in heaven and all authorities on earth are put in submission to him. He is the Head of the Church and he is the Head of the whole universe. In this way he is able to rule the events happening in the universe to serve the interests of the Church. The resurrected Lord Jesus Christ is “the King of kings” and “Lord of lords”! Nothing happens on earth without his sovereign permission!

(T) Fourth. Jesus Christ was resurrected to give Christians a new and sanctified life now in the present. Romans 6:4-7 teaches that a believer’s intimate spiritual union with the death of Jesus Christ cannot be separated from his intimate spiritual union with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as Christians have been spiritually united to Christ’s death and burial and this fact resulted in their “once-for-all justification”, likewise Christians are certainly spiritually united to Christ’s resurrection and this fact results in their “continual sanctification”! Just as the death of

Christ as an atonement for sins is necessary and certain for justification, likewise the resurrected life of Christ is necessary and certain for sanctification. Christians shall be conformed to Christ in a holy life here and now on earth. The whole discussion in Romans 6 revolves around the necessary connection between justification and sanctification.

(S) Fifth, Jesus Christ was resurrected to guarantee the future resurrection of the body of Christians.

The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee that the bodies of believers will also be resurrected and transformed to be like the glorious body of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:21). At the second coming of Jesus Christ, all Christians, who have died, will be resurrected and united to their eternal souls. And all Christians who are still alive at the second coming will be instantly transformed. Thus all Christians will be conformed to Jesus Christ in a life of glorious immortality of soul and body hereafter!

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Teach new believers the meaning of Easter - the festival commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".