

Sermon Mark 6 14 29 7th S af Pentecost S B

Sermon: 7th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Mark 6:14-29 (v.14)

Theme: The resurrection of the body

Goal: The resurrection of the body is not just a hope, but it is assured by God's Word and by Jesus' resurrection.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: King Herod became very disturbed when he heard about the miraculous power of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus' name had become well known all around the country because of His preaching and because of His signs and healing. Even the King heard about the simple man of the north of the country. The first impression of the king and of many people was that Jesus was John the Baptist that had been raised from the death, and that is why miraculous powers were working in Him.

Herod had beheaded John the Baptist, as we heard in the Gospel. The King was troubled in his conscience, because he knew that he had killed a “righteous and holy man”, instigated by Herodias. She used to be the wife of Herod's brother Philip, but Herod had taken her to be his wife. Even though the king was not a faithful follower of the Law and of the church's precepts, he had some knowledge about the Scriptures and believed in the resurrection of the body. This is an important detail in this text that I want to highlight (and not just the story itself). What do you believe about the resurrection of the body?

I – The resurrection of the body in the Old Testament

We have very few teachings about the resurrection of the body in the Old Testament. Some scholars even say that the believers of the OT didn't have the hope of the resurrection of the body. One very important sect (segment) among the Jews at the time of Jesus was the Sadducee. They didn't believe in the resurrection of the body, neither in angels nor

in spirits. - They have lot of followers nowadays: the materialists and those who live their lives only for “here and now”. They are not concerned and do not care about their future and about their spiritual lives.-They will have a big and sad surprise at the end of the days!

The fact that Herod and some people reckoned that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead shows us that many believed in the resurrection of the body at that time. Although we have few references in the OT, but those few are very clear. One of the most well known is the confession of faith that Job did in the midst of his suffering and sickness. He confessed: “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25-27)

Daniel is very clear as well when he wrote: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” (Daniel 12:2-3)

Prophet Ezekiel wrote the famous chapter 37, where he had a vision of a valley full of dry bones; and the Spirit of the Lord gave them life again.

We even have some cases of resurrection in the OT: Elijah brought the son of a widow back to life (1 Kings 17:22); and a man was raised from the dead just after Elisha's ministry (2 Kings 13:21).

Based on these promises, the faithful people of the OT believed in the resurrection of the body, as Martha confessed clearly when her brother Lazarus died: “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” (John 11:24).

The focus of the OT is not on the resurrection of the body like in the NT because the main focus of the OT was on the promised Messiah, the Redeemer. When He came, died as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and rose again on the third day, all these became clear to the disciples and they proclaimed salvation through faith in

Jesus and the resurrection of the body to the four corners of the world.

II – The resurrection of the body in the NT

Jesus brought back to life only three people during His ministry: The daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:40-56), the son of the widow of Naim (Luke 7:11-17), and Lazarus (John 11). But the three of them followed their normal course of life until they died again. The most remarkable event that affects human history till now is Jesus' own resurrection! We count history as “BC – Before Christ, and AC – After Christ, or AD: Anno Domini (in Latin: The year of the Lord); or: BCE – Before Christian Era, and ACE – After Christian Era. Jews and non believers changed this to “Before Common Era and After Common Era”. They can change the terminology but they cannot change the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead on Easter Sunday and that Jesus is the reference to human history.

The sermons of the Apostles, which we have recorded in the Book of Acts, all highlighted the resurrection of Christ. And Paul, in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, wrote a long argument showing that Christ's resurrection really happened and that we will also be resurrected at the end of the time.

Even if the preaching of the resurrection of the body makes some people afraid of the judgment, like it happened with Governor Felix when Paul preached to him (Acts 24:25), for us Christians it is a message of comfort and hope. It is not just so that “we hope to rise again”, as we say: “I hope we will have good weather this week”; but it is really our faith, assured by God’s promises and by Jesus' resurrection. We confess every Sunday in our Services: “*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting!*” (Ap.Creed).

Writing to the Thessalonians (1 Thes 4:13-17), Paul says: “We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him... the dead in Christ”

will rise first... and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

Conclusion: In our visit to Israel, we visited the Bahá'í Gardens. Bahá'í is a religion founded in 1844 that believes his founders were the last messengers of God. These are beautiful gardens, perfectly well cared, with lots of trees, flowers, grass and fountains. They are famous world wide. Why were they built? They were built to honor the two founders of this religion, whose tombs are in these gardens. They honor their dead leaders.

We visited the tomb of Jesus as well. It is not so fancy as the Bahá'í gardens. It's inside a big church and lots of pilgrims wait in a queue to enter the specific place where Jesus' body was laid on the tomb after His death on the cross. Can you see a corpse there? Can you see bones? NO! The tomb is empty! Jesus rose again after three days, and this is the golden event that crowned the entire life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, showing and confirming that He is the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world! Our faith and our hope are based on a living one, and not on a dead leader. Praise the Lord!

Let us not be deceived by new and old theories and false promises. Our Savior lives and promises eternal life with Him in heaven. Let us confess with the old patriarch Job: “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes —I, and not another.” Amen.

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