

Countryside Bible Church

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Easter Parade



1 Corinthians 15:20

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

The greatest Easter Parade is yet in the future when those who have “*fallen asleep*” in Christ will step from their dusty beds of death even as their Master stepped from the tomb, because Jesus is only the “*very first to rise of all who sleep the sleep of death*” (Phillips).

This is the real meaning of Easter for the Christian. Victory over death. Victory for the faithful of all ages will be precisely the same as it was for Jesus Himself, resurrection. (Daniel 12:2, 13)

In reality, much of the Christian world has somehow missed the meaning of Christ’s resurrection, teaching that man is already immortal. If man is immortal, as the ancient Greeks taught, then resurrection is nonessential. For one who does not die need not be raised to life.

Easter is celebrated as an isolated event since the popular teaching today is that Christians who die (?) are immediately taken to heaven to live without benefit of any resurrection. This is a tragic disconnect. How can we celebrate resurrection as Jesus’ victory over death while teaching, in effect, that death becomes the emancipator of Jesus’ followers?

The immortal soul doctrine does not fit into the Christian gospel. Clarence Craig, for The Interpreter’s Bible writes,

“Of one thing we may be sure: Paul did not believe that man was by nature immortal. Participation in the life of the age to come depends on God’s act of raising the dead”. Vol. 10, pg. 12.

The immortal soul doctrine teaches that Christians, in fact everyone, possess immortality now. The resurrection doctrine teaches that immortality is a future hope.

“For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise immortal.” (1Cor.15:52, NEB)

Present mortality will be discarded for the new clothes of immortality.

“ . . . *what is mortal must be clothed with immortality*”. (1Cor.15:54)

This happens, not at the moment of death, but at the moment one is raised from the dead when Jesus returns to earth.

As members of a sinful race, all men die; as members of the Christ of God all men will be raised to life, each in his proper order, with Christ the very first and after him all who belong to him when he comes.” (1Cor.15:22. Phillips)

This was also Paul’s message of comfort for the family and friends of Christians who had died.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, . . . and the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thes. 4:16, NIV)

This is what the church originally taught. In time (principally in the 2nd and 3rd centuries), men steeped in Greek philosophy began to influence the formation of Christian creeds. The mainline church turned a corner and embraced immortal soul and related doctrines. In his book, The Fire that Consumes, Edward Fudge explains that early on these concepts entered the stream of Christian thought from which the church has never recovered.

God gave His only begotten Son. What does that mean? It means that Jesus was God’s sacrificial Lamb. He sacrificed the life of His own Son to redeem my life and your life from death. The prophet Isaiah foretells Jesus’ death.

Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days . . . (Isaiah 53:10)

Was this not accomplished? Was the “*guilt offering*” not completed? Was Jesus allowed to retain His life in some form? Was His death a charade?

If so, then the resurrection of Jesus cannot be claimed as victory over death. It was merely a transition from one form of life to another.

To teach that the dead are alive in the spirit world is not the stuff of Christianity but of the occult. When the bible again and again says that Jesus gave his life, that he died; that is what it means.

There is no gray here, only black and white. Easter for Christians is not a facade but a reality. The Christ, who was dead, is alive! Jesus said,

“ . . . *I am the living one; for I was dead and now I am alive for evermore . . .*” (Rev. 1:18)

God gave His Son for us. Jesus laid down His life for you and for me. We are therefore all given the same, glorious opportunity. The opportunity to sign up now to be in that great Easter Parade event when God’s people will themselves shout aloud the victory cry of their Master, “I am he that was dead, and now I am alive forevermore”.

<http://www.countrysidebiblechurch.org>

<http://www.mindspring.com/~anthonybuzzard/articles.htm> or

<http://www.comingkingdom.org/ATCmag.html>