

# Meeting With Christ

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Practical and Exegetical Studies on the Words of Jesus Christ

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Based on sermons of Pasteur Eric Chang

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## BAPTISM (4): RAISED WITH CHRIST

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### Colossians 2:12-13

Today, I would like us to look at another aspect of the meaning of baptism. We have seen in this series on baptism that baptism is a union, union with the Lord Jesus. In this union with Christ, we identify ourselves to Him in His death on the cross. But it doesn't stop there. This union applies also to His resurrection. Colossians 2:12 says, *and you were buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God...* In baptism, you were buried with Him. But you were also raised with Him into a new life.

### The resurrection of Christ and baptism

What I want to do in this lesson is to explain the meaning of baptism from the point of view of the resurrection of Christ. And especially, I want to answer the question of the importance of the resurrection. How important is Jesus' resurrection with regard to baptism? What is the meaning of the resurrection for the person who has been baptized? The fact that Jesus rose from the dead historically is not a point that I will bother to discuss. I prefer that we spend our time together to consider the question of the relevance of the resurrection for the Christian. How can the resurrection of Jesus be a reality to you and to me? What is the importance of the resurrection?

You see, I would like you to realize this point. For Jesus to be a savior, he did not have to rise from the dead. Does that surprise you? If Jesus died for you and for me, and He didn't rise from the dead, would He be any less a savior? He is still my savior!

### Saved by the death of Jesus

Let me explain this with this illustration. Supposing we were in a state of war. Bullets are flying everywhere. Then somebody sees someone aiming a gun at me. At that moment, as the bullet is fired, this person jumps in front of me. He takes the bullet and is killed. Because of his action, my life is spared. Now, does the fact that he dies and does not rise again make it any less true for me to say that he saved me? It is not less true. He doesn't have to rise from the dead for me to say that he saved me. The fact is that my life was spared by his death.

Now, think about the Lord Jesus. I was about to be executed for my sins. Then Jesus comes. He takes my place. He takes the penalty of my sins by dying on the cross. By His death, He becomes my savior. Jesus did not have to rise from the dead to be our savior. If He never rose from the dead, He would still be our savior. Now you begin to see what I mean.

But if Jesus did not have to rise from the dead to be our savior, then what is the importance of the resurrection? Think about this question very carefully. Consider it in this way. It is a wonderful thing that Jesus did not have to remain in the grave. I'm very happy about that. But it seems to be something that related to Him, and it had nothing to do with me. In other words, His dying was for me. His resurrection was for Himself. He died for me, and so He became my savior. He rose again, and that was very good for Himself, but it had nothing to do with my salvation. Right? Wrong.

### **Saved by the life of Jesus**

You know, without His resurrection, we have no hope of salvation. Let me read to you Romans 5:10: *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* This life is of course the life of Jesus after His death on the cross. It is His resurrection life. Look carefully at these words. ...*much more ... we shall be saved by His life.* Paul says that we are saved not just by His death, but much more by His resurrection life.

What does His death do? This verse tells us. His death reconciled us to God. ...*when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son...* That means to say that His death removed the guilt of sin that we had before, the sin that stood between God and us. And a reconciliation took place when the offence between God and us was removed. The sin that stood between God and us, Jesus removed by His death.

But you see, reconciliation is only one step in the process of salvation. There is much more to salvation than the forgiveness of sins. Don't think of salvation only in terms of forgiveness. Salvation is a lot more than forgiveness. ... *much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* Being a Christian is 'much more' than just being forgiven.

I said at the beginning of this message that Jesus can be our savior without rising from the dead. I gave you the illustration of the person who died for me by taking the bullet that was aimed at me. He became my savior. But he is not my lord. He cannot be my lord. He is dead. Only a living person can be your lord. And that is why Jesus is our Lord and Savior. We wouldn't call Jesus 'Lord' if He didn't rise from the dead. Otherwise, 'Lord' would simply be an empty courtesy title. Lordship can only have to do with the resurrection. Jesus cannot be my Lord, He cannot be in control of my life if He is dead. And unless Jesus becomes Lord in your life, He cannot be your savior. He saves us not merely by His death, but much more by His life. Remember Romans 5:10. ...*much more ... we shall be saved by His life.*

Now, how does His life save us? We know how His death saves us. We were due to be executed because of our sins. And Jesus took our place. He was crucified to pay the wages of our sins. By His death on the cross, He saved us. This, we understand very well. But how does Jesus save us by His life?

### **Regeneration through the resurrection of Jesus**

I'm going to discuss this question under three points. The first thing that He does in saving us by His life is to impart that new life into us, that resurrection life. In other words, He transforms us into new persons. Do you know that regeneration in the NT does not have to do with Christ's death, but with His life? It is His resurrection life that makes possible our regeneration. That's how He saves us by His life. Through the power of His resurrection, He makes us into a new person. It is His life that saves us.

Becoming a Christian is not a matter of moral reformation. It is a matter of recreation. It is a matter of resurrection, rising from the dead. Christianity is about Christ making of you a new person by the power of His resurrection.

Let me read to you 1 Peter 1:3 so that you can see the biblical foundation of what I'm saying. 1 Peter 1:3: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope...* Don't stop there. The sentence goes on to say, *... His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that causes us to be born again, to be regenerated. So it is in that sense that a person who is saved experiences the reality of the resurrection in his life.

Think of baptism. What happened when you got baptized? Well, you died with Christ. You were buried with Him when you went into the water. But you didn't stay in the water. You rose again from the water to a newness of life. That is what baptism is there to signify right at the beginning of the Christian life. It is not just that you have died with Christ. Baptism symbolizes that you have risen to this newness of life in Christ. And it is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that we become new persons. Do you see that without His resurrection, we cannot have a new life? We could not have this power of God to break the power of sin in our lives.

### **Christ lives in us**

So we see that regeneration has to do with the resurrection of Christ. The second thing is the continuation of the first point. He doesn't raise us up into a new life to leave us on our own. Baptism is not something that gives you a spiritual charge as it were and then, the battery goes down, down, and down, until nothing is left.

Becoming a Christian is to be so united with Christ that His life is constantly flowing into you. That's what being a Christian is about. It is the resurrection life of Christ constantly flowing into you, moment by moment. And it is precisely to illustrate this point that the Lord Jesus speaks about the vine in John 15. I am the vine. You are the branches. As long as you stay in Me, My life will flow into you and you will bring forth much fruit.

Becoming a Christian is not just knowing that Jesus took your place. It is not just knowing that you have become a new person. It is drawing upon His life, moment by moment. Now you understand what Paul means in Romans 5:10. *... much more ... we shall be saved by His life.* It is much more. Much more important that you, having been reconciled to God, constantly draw upon His life.

We see the same spiritual insight of Paul in Galatians 2:20. He says, *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. His resurrection life is flowing into me and through me. That is the dynamics of the Christian life.

### **Christ lives to intercede for us**

Let's go to the third point. Because His life now flows into us, Christ lives in us. We therefore become Christ's manifestation in the world. When people look at you and me, they think about Christ. They associate us with Christ. And anything that we do, whether good or bad, is going to affect the name of Christ, whether it is for His glory or for His disgrace.

When you become a Christian, remember that you have Christ living in you. You carry the name of Jesus. And the standard that is required of you in terms of the spiritual quality of your life is extremely high. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, *... you are to be perfect, as your heavenly*

*Father is perfect.* The aim of the Christian living is perfection. Different people have different interpretations of this verse. But no matter how we interpret the word 'perfect', everyone will agree that it points to a standard that should be outstanding.

Now, we have to recognize that even though we live by the resurrection power of Christ, from time to time, we do stumble. We fail to do the will of God. What happens when we fail? Well, that's when you need the third thing. We need an intercessor, somebody who pleads our case, somebody who stands to defend us and to protect us here and now. And Christ lives to intercede for you and for me.

This is the beautiful picture that we have in Hebrews 7:25. Let me read to you this verse. Hebrews 7:25: *Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

In the OT, one of the main functions of the priest was to offer sacrifices, particularly those offered for the remission of sins. The priests made sacrifices for sins by the shedding of the blood of animals. In the sacrificial system, blood means death. It is the termination of life. In the sacrifice, the blood symbolizes that life had been taken in payment for the sins of the people. It is presented to God through the intercession of the priests. That's how people could be forgiven under the old dispensation.

The problem with the Levitical priesthood was that its continuity was repeatedly disrupted by the death of the priests. Every one of the priests was prevented from continuing their work by the simple fact that they eventually died. That's why we read in v. 23, *And there are many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing.*

### **An eternal priesthood**

Jesus is our High Priest. But unlike the Levites, His priesthood is forever. V. 24: *But He (Jesus), because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.* If Jesus is dead and gone, how can He intercede for me? This is the third point. Because He is risen from the dead, He can constantly intercede for me. He can secure for His people the benefits of the blood that was shed on the cross so that I can be forgiven today.

You know, forgiveness is not just a matter of saying sorry to God. It is not quite as simple as that. It is Jesus' constant intercession for us that makes His blood effective for us when we repent here and now. In 1John 2:1-2, we read that ... *if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, JC the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins...* When Jesus pleads the case of a believer who sinned, He pleads His own righteousness and death, and God accepts Jesus' righteousness and death for this man. It is by the blood of Jesus for our sins that we become acceptable to God. And so, Jesus intercedes for us at this present time, making provision for us when we sin so that we can remain in the forgiveness of God.

Let's summarize. Jesus lives in order to impart His resurrection life to us so that we become new persons. Secondly, He lives not only for that one act of regeneration but that He constantly imparts His life to me. And thirdly, whenever I fail to make full use of that life in me, then He intercedes for me. These are three reasons why it so essential that Jesus, not only He died for me, but He lives to save me.

On this matter of the resurrection, I would like you to notice that the Bible speaks of resurrection in two tenses. Both in the present tense and in the future tense. The resurrection in the present tense is a spiritual one. The resurrection in the future tense is a physical one.

## **The resurrection of the soul**

Let's talk about the present spiritual resurrection. We find this for example in Colossians 2:12-13 that I quoted at the beginning of my message. Paul writes these words. You were *buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead* (in baptism, not only you die spiritually, but God raises you up from a spiritual death). *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses...* Again, in baptism, He has made you alive because He has forgiven your sins. This is resurrection in the present, a spiritual resurrection.

If you have been spiritually resurrected, you know that some things happen to you. There is a transformation that happens because you experience the resurrection power of Christ. You walk in a new quality of life. When people look at you, they notice that you are different from other people. They don't know why but you know why. You have been raised with Christ in a newness of life, the life of Christ in you. This is resurrection in the present.

## **The resurrection of the body**

But there is also a resurrection that will happen in the future. Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:14: *And God both raised up the Lord and will* (notice the future tense here; and will) *also raise us up by His power*. In the context of this passage, Paul is talking about the body of the Christians, and he says for example that *your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*. And concerning this physical body, Paul declares that God will make it alive in the future. There is the salvation of the whole man. God doesn't just save our soul. He saves our body too.

And Paul states that just as God raised the body of Jesus from the tomb, so He will raise our body from the grave. The resurrection of our body is based on the resurrection of Christ. The power that was used to raise Jesus is the same that will be used to raise our body in the future.

Now understand this. Understand that the guarantee that you will experience physical resurrection in the future is that you experience the power of Jesus' resurrection now. Unless you experience His resurrection power now, then your hope to experience His resurrection power in the future would all be pie in the sky. How can you have faith that one day you will rise from the dead? What is the basis of your assurance? The fact that Jesus rose from the dead does not prove that you will rise from the dead. If you don't experience His resurrection power in your life now, then your hope to experience resurrection in the future is pure presumption. That is not faith. Faith has to do with power. I know I will rise from the dead. Why? Because I have experienced His resurrection power here and now.

And when we are baptized, we are entering into this resurrection life of Christ. It is the beginning of a new life, a life that is empowered by God.