

Three Glorious Truths About Jesus!

Acts 1:1-11

It was George Noel Gordon, Lord Byron, who first said that truth is stranger than fiction, and every once in a while we are reminded that he was correct. Take the case of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, a prominent 19th century nerve specialist in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He had fallen asleep in his chair one winter evening, when he was awakened by the persistent ringing of the doorbell. There on his doorstep was a thin, shivering girl with a threadbare shawl around her shoulders. She begged the doctor to come treat her mother who was desperately ill.

Dr. Mitchell followed this little girl through the snowy streets to an old tenement house, and upstairs to the room where the mother lay dying with pneumonia. The doctor sent for the medicines she needed, made the woman as comfortable as he could, and then remarked at how dutiful the woman's daughter was to fetch him on such a stormy night. A look of surprise came over the woman's face as she said, "My daughter died a month ago. Her shoes and shawl are there in that little cupboard." The doctor looked and found the same threadbare shawl that had been draped over the shoulders of the frail little girl that had stood on his doorstep. But the shawl was folded and dry, and could not possibly have been worn outdoors that same night. And of course, the little girl was nowhere to be found.

Or consider the strange coincidences surrounding the tragedy of the *Titanic*. You will recall that the supposedly unsinkable luxury liner set out on her maiden voyage, only to ram an iceberg and sink on April 14, 1912. However, fourteen years earlier, in 1898, a novelist named Morgan Robertson had written a book in which he described "the biggest and grandest luxury liner ever built," also on her maiden voyage. But in the novel, entitled *Futility*, the ship was ripped open by an iceberg and sank with heavy loss of life. What was the name of the ship in this novel which had been published in 1898? The *Titan*.

There are other similarities. The *Titan* of Robertson's novel and the *Titanic* of real life were roughly the same size, had the same speed and the same carrying capacity of about 3,000 people. Both were supposedly unsinkable, and both sank in exactly the same spot in the North Atlantic. (Above stories from *Strange Stories, Amazing Facts*, published by Reader's Digest Association, Inc., 1976)

Yes, sometimes the truth is indeed stranger than fiction. Entire books have been written about strange truth, amazing facts and unsolved mysteries, yet often we call 'strange' that which we have not yet experienced. There still seems to be so much more truth waiting to be discovered. Sir Isaac Newton is best known for his discovery of gravity, his experiments with light and color, and his invention of a branch of mathematics known as calculus. Yet his last words were reported to have been: "I do

not know what I may appear to the world. But to myself, I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

In the spiritual realm also there lies a "great ocean" of undiscovered truth. While some of it may appear to be stranger than fiction, I submit to you that that is because we have not fully experienced all that God has designed for us. At the trial of Jesus, Pilate asked, "What is truth?" because he had never fully experienced the truth of God. Quite often it happens that when faith is first beginning to bud, some of these truths make no sense to some. Paul acknowledged this when he wrote to the church in Corinth, *"This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1Co 2:13-14). Even after a lifetime of studying God's Word, we are not able to understand everything we know about God. Through His Word God has revealed so much to us, yet even the Scriptures tell us that *"no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."* (1Co 2:9).

In looking at the truths surrounding the Resurrection we are amazed at God's might and power to do such a marvelous thing! Yet as we contemplate God's goodness and majesty, we are overwhelmed by the sudden realization that there is so much more about God than our minds are able to comprehend. He cannot be adequately explained or explored through codes of moral conduct, philosophy, science, knowledge or even religion. With that in mind, we make no claims today to have all the answers, nor do we claim to be able to explain all the truths about the Resurrection in one half-hour sermon.

But today let us celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and let us stand together on the seashore of this great ocean of undiscovered truth. Let us look to God through the eyes of Resurrection Faith, and as we watch the waves of truth washing on the shore at our feet, let us examine **THREE GLORIOUS TRUTHS ABOUT JESUS!** We find all three in the first chapter of Acts.

1 He is risen

Verse three reads: *"After his suffering he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive."* Jesus had predicted His own resurrection earlier as we see in Mt 16:21-- *"From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."*

The glorious truth of His resurrection transformed His disciples. Over and over again in the Book of Acts we read that the Resurrection of Jesus was a major theme of their witnessing and preaching. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed to the crowd, *"This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."* (Acts 2:23-24)

Peter told the onlookers at the Temple one day, *"You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead."* (Acts 3:15) We read in Acts 4:33 that *"with great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all."* Paul did the same thing in the city of Thessalonica: *"As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead."* (Acts 17:2-3a)

Romans 1:4 tells us that the Resurrection declares Jesus to be the Son of God: *"...who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord."*

The Resurrection of Jesus makes our own salvation possible! *"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."* (Ro 4:25) *"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* (Ro 10:9) *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* (1Pe 1:3)

His Resurrection also means that we can have life! *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die "* (Jn 11:25-26) *"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."* (Ro 8:11) *"...we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence."* (2Co 4:14)

2 He is reigning

This is what we see in the latter half of Acts 1:3--*"He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."* In verse 4, we see the word *"command;"* in verse 6, a reference to the *"kingdom of Israel,"* and in verse 7, we find the word *"authority"*—all of them used to refer to One who is in charge—all of them pointing to a reigning King.

His reign was foretold in the Old Testament. *"Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."* (Is 9:7) *"...His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth."* (Zec 9:10)

We see the themes of the Resurrection and Christ's Rule appearing together in several places in the New Testament. Paul wrote about *"...His mighty strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church."* (Eph 1:20-22)

We read in 1 Peter 3 that a good conscience toward God *"saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him"* (1Pe 3:21b-22). We even see it in the Revelation to John: *"...Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth"* (Rev 1:5).

The Kingship of Jesus is a truth explored again and again. Paul tells us that because Jesus became a human being and suffered on the cross *"therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Php 2:9-11) *"They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."* (Rev 17:14) *"On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."* (Rev 19:16)

3 He is returning

Look at Acts 1:11--*"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*

The truth of the glorious return of Christ plays too important a role in the New Testament to ignore. Jesus said about His return, *"In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven"* (Mt. 26:64). He told us that we could not know when He would be returning: *"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not*

expect Him" (Mt. 24:44). He also said, "At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Lk 21:27).

His return is such a glorious truth that the early Christians emphasized it greatly in their teaching of Christian doctrine. The writer of Hebrews included these words in his letter: *"So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him" (Heb 10:5).* Peter accepted this glorious truth: *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1Pe 5:4).* Paul wrote: *"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Php 3:20).* He wrote to Titus that we were waiting *"for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).*

And of course the New Testament could not come to a close without reemphasizing the glorious truth of His return. In the first chapter of Revelation we read, *"Look, he is coming with the clouds, [which confirms what the angels said in Acts 1, and what Jesus Himself had said in Mt 26] and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him "* (Rev 1:7) And the next to the last verse in the entire Bible tells the glorious truth of His return: *"He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."* (Rev 22:20) If we had no other promise but that, we would know He was returning!

Henry Ziegland of Honey Grove, Texas, jilted his girlfriend in 1883. She was so grieved that she killed herself. Her brother tried to avenge her death by shooting Ziegland, but the bullet only grazed his face and buried itself in a tree. The brother, thinking that he had killed Ziegland, then killed himself. Thirty years later, in 1913, Ziegland was cutting down the same tree with the bullet lodged in it. The work was difficult so he decided to use dynamite. The explosion sent the old bullet through Ziegland's head and killed him. (*Ripley's Believe It Or Not!*, p. 133)

Truth is indeed sometimes stranger than fiction, and there is an ocean of undiscovered truth out there before us. So it is with God. There is so much about Him we do not yet know, because we have not yet experienced all He has stored up for us. Yet our Father has chosen to reveal certain glorious truths about His Son which we celebrate today: ***Jesus is Risen! Jesus is Reigning! Jesus is Returning!*** These glorious truths may be difficult for us to comprehend sometimes, but truth does not depend on whether or not we understand or believe it.

Is Jesus risen in your life today? Do you know the power and glory of the Resurrected Christ alive in your being this morning?

Is Jesus reigning in your life today? The Father has given Him a name which is above every name, and has set Him up as King of kings and Lord of lords, yet He cannot reign in your heart and life until you surrender to His rule.

And when He returns, will He return for you? Are you waiting for Him, living as if He could return at any moment?