



“From Surrender to Sacrifice, From Triumph to Transcendence”

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Matthew 26:36-42; 27:45-50; 28:1-10 and 16-20



Today, April 21, 2019, we celebrate RESURRECTION. Yes, and, well, we should. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead changed the course of world history forever. Beloved, Jesus was dead; but He was not defeated. So, on Sunday morning, He realized an AMAZING TRIUMPH! Why amazing? Because nobody really knows quite “how” it all happened. But, the things we do know about that epic event, indeed, are pretty amazing.

One thing we know is this: His was a Seismic Triumph. This term is associated with earthquakes. The Scriptures record that Christ’s resurrection was punctuated by a strong quaking of the ground where the lifeless body of Jesus had been laid (Matt. 28:2). It was a Startling Triumph. Along with the quake, there appeared an angel, who authoritatively moved and audaciously sat upon the stone, which had been set and sealed to secure the tomb (v.2). The century of soldiers stationed there were so alarmed and astonished by this seismic event that they fell like dead men (v.4). But, for the women who came to anoint His body, and a few of His other disciples, it also was a Sensational Triumph. Seeing His freshly raised body and hearing His familiar voice, evoked feelings and utterances of great joy from those brave women who encountered Jesus as they raced from the sepulcher to tell Peter and the other disciples, “I’ve just seen Jesus; I know that He’s alive!” (John 20:18). Yes, for Him and all who place their faith in Him, it was an Amazing Triumph.

While we focus our attention on His glorious conquest over death and the grave, it’s critical to acknowledge that it wouldn’t have been possible without His selfless surrender. Following the upper room Seder meal, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn and walked together to the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:30, 36, 37). As He had done on other occasions, Jesus requested the exclusive company of Peter, James and John. Often, had they gone away together, apart from the others. But, this time was different. As Jesus prepared to face His darkest moment to date, this was a more strategic separation. While they sat, supposedly to pray, Jesus went, yet, a little farther. And there He granted the Father His full surrender (v.39).

Now, let’s be clear, the Bible suggests that this surrendering was not easy. In fact, it was an AGONIZING SURRENDER. “Agonizing in what way?” some might ask. First, we’re told that it was a Sorrowful Surrender. While in the Garden, Jesus described to His inner-circle, His innermost feelings. “And now, My soul is deeply sorrowful,” he said (v.38). Beyond the sorrow, it was a Stressful Surrender. Soiled with drops of blood, fallen from our Savior’s brow, was the ground where He knelt (Luke 22:44). Medical experts acknowledge that under extreme pressure, persons can release

blood through their pores, very similar to discharging sweat. Lastly, inasmuch as it emerged from the sacred discipline called prayer, it can be considered a Solemn Surrender.

What made this moment so sorrowful, stressful and solemn? Might I suggest that contemplating the contents of the Cup made it so. Jesus prayed twice to discern the Father's will concerning this Cup (Matt. 26:39, 42). During this Holy season, not only do we pause to remember His agonizing surrender, we rejoice over His ATONING SACRIFICE. When Jesus yielded to the will of the Father, He knew what He would be drinking from that Cup. Among other things, He knew that a Condemnation was in the Cup. He knew that a Crucifixion was in that Cup. But, He also knew that a Cause was in the Cup. In fact, our case was His cause (Isaiah 53:4,5).

What was or is "our" case? Through the sin of one man (Adam), all people were cut off from the loving relationship, once enjoyed and always intended, with the Father. Instead, we were left and lost, without Him, help or hope, in the world. The way back into relationship would be very costly. Motivated by His love for us, though, God established a sacrificial system, which afforded opportunity for people, who satisfy His conditions, to experience restored relationship with Him. Jesus, however, brought to fulfillment the intent of that system, when He became that unblemished Lamb, Whose precious, priceless life-blood, atoned or covered the sins of the world, once and for all time (Lev. 17:11). We are eternally grateful that Christ died in order that we might live. Thank God for providing such an atoning sacrifice.

Hallelujah, the story doesn't end with death. No, it continues with life...**Resurrection Life**. As spectacular and irrefutable as was His triumph over death and the grave, it also was controversial and confounding. Some of His own disciples found it difficult to believe, despite interacting with Him multiple times over a forty-day period. Then, something mind-blowing and soul-stirring happens. He leaves them standing flat-footed and spell-bound with His ABSCONDING TRANSCENDENCE.

For a moment, imagine yourself there among them on the mountain where He convenes a "call meeting." There, He announces His absolute authority and authorizes you to represent Him and reproduce other followers of Him (Matt 28:18-20). Pretty cool, huh? Then, without warning, He's taken from you again. This time, it's not by an angry crowd, but by a cloud. It's up, up and away...right before your eyes. That, my friends, is the sacred record (Acts 1:9). It's as though Jesus said to His disciples, "Now you see Me; now you don't." He transcended their presence. It was absconding in that it was so Surprising, Sudden and Secret a departure. Where was He taken? He had told them before, "yet a little while and you will see me no longer" (John 16:16). No wonder they stood gazing into heaven. Wouldn't you? It's no wonder that they had to be shaken from their shock by two angelic beings adorned in white raiment, who assured them of their Master's return in just as surprising a manner (Acts 1:11).

So now, with that Great Commission and awesome cliff-hanger, during this season between His resurrection and His return, let's make sure that when He comes, He'll find us about His business. We can tell a dying world about His Agonizing Surrender, His Atoning Sacrifice, about His Amazing Triumph and His Absconding Transcendence. We've a story to tell to the nations! We serve a risen Savior!

In the words of John Mark Hall and Michael Bleeker:

*Living, He loved me. Dying He saved me.
Buried, He carried my sins far away.
Rising, He justified, freed me forever.
One day He's coming,
Oh, glorious day!*