**VOLUME 5; CHAPTER 09 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE TEACHING OF THE RESURRECTION by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*This Jesus did God raise up.*

*Acts 2:32*

"THIS JESUS"! THAT OPENING WORD FASTENS ATTENTION upon a particular Person, and compels us to consider Him, even before we pay attention to the declaration of the apostle.

The lesson we read constitutes the second part of the first message delivered by an apostle of Jesus Christ after the Pentecostal effusion. Having claimed that this outpouring of the Spirit was in fulfilment of prophecy, Peter proceeded to declare that this fulfilment was the result of the mission of Jesus of Nazareth. Commencing with words intended to arrest anew the attention of his hearers, he said, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words," and his discourse then became descriptive of this Person and His work, up to the statement of our text, "This Jesus did God raise up." Thus, between the opening words of the paragraph which we read for lesson and those of our text, we have the picture of the Person to Whom reference is made by the text.

This description was first historic. Peter drew the attention of these people to One Whom they knew. "Jesus of Nazareth" was the name by which He was well known through all that region.

He reminded them next that the Person of Whom he was speaking was a Man separate and distinct from all other men in the perfections of His humanity, that having been evidenced by the wonders he had wrought, or more accurately, as the apostle put it, by the wonders God had wrought through Him. Finally, he further reminded them that they, the men of Israel, had delivered this Man over to the Gentiles, men without law, who crucified and slew Him. Of Him Peter declared, "This Jesus hath God raised up."

In the course of that description of the Person, the apostle claimed that He was in very deed that Messiah for Whom they had been looking, citing from their own psalms the words of David, and showing that the words David uttered could not have been fulfilled in the experience of David.

This Jesus Whom ye knew; this Jesus Whom ye slew; this Jesus Who is the Messiah for Whom you so long have been waiting; "This Jesus did God raise up."

Let us now consider what this act of God in the case of this Man really meant. Once in the history of the human race, a Man murdered by His enemies was raised from the dead, and exalted by God to the place of universal power. What is the significance of this fact?

Let me at once summarize the things I desire to say. The fact that God raised Jesus of Nazareth from among the dead signifies first, His absolute approbation of Him. It signifies secondly, His rejection of all other men. It signifies finally, the Divine appointment of the approved One to the right of restoring the rejected many.

Take the first of these facts, the Divine approbation of Jesus of Nazareth. I am constrained to say that this particular phase of our consideration needs emphasizing. Has it occurred to you, or am I wrong in my suspicion, that we are a little in danger of asking too constantly today whether Jesus satisfies us? Thank God for every man and woman in this house who can say, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want"; but that is not the profoundest question. If this Jesus is to be to me anything other than One Whom I admire, if He is to be to me the central force and fact of my religious life, the profounder question is, "What is God's estimate of Him?"

The whole story of Jesus presents constant and cumulative evidence of the Divine approbation of Jesus. There were remarkable signs of this at His birth. We very often speak of the humility of His coming, but that coming was accompanied by many wonderful signs. All the worlds known to men were moved there at. Angels broke silence and sang over Bethlehem's plain. Kings from afar were moved to follow the guidance of a star and to bring gold, frankincense and myrrh. The underworld of evil was shaken to its very center, and found earthly manifestation in the malice of a king and the murder of innocents. The world was not ready to receive Him, but the Divine approbation of the holy child was manifested by external and material signs of the most surprising nature.

Through the years of His public ministry that approbation was thrice declared. On the day of baptism a voice declared, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." On the holy mount the voice declared, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." A little nearer to the darkness of Calvary, when the Greeks were asking to see Him, out of His sorrowing soul there came the wail, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." The Heaven's silence was again broken, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The Divine approbation was marked in all the miracles of Jesus. That to me is a subject full of fascination. The miracles do not prove His Deity, but the perfection of His humanity. Mark the carefulness of the apostle here when he said, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you." The doing of the wonders and signs was the evidence of the perfection of His humanity, not of His Deity. It was through the absolutely perfect Man that God was able to do works which were wonders and signs to imperfect men, because they were operations in realms higher than fallen man had yet discovered, but which were perfectly familiar to the perfect Man. In all these things, we have manifestations of the Divine approbation.

At His death supernatural seals were set upon Him, giving evidence of God's approbation. The quaking earth, the darkened sun, the yawning graves; these were all God's evidences that the thing being done was a thing of sin against the cosmic order.

But the supreme sign, the final manifestation, the ultimate seal was this, that He did raise Him from the dead, and we must always add, what Peter immediately added, "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted." Not merely resurrection from among the dead, but resurrection immediately followed by exaltation. Easter must be linked to Ascension before we understand perfectly the values of this demonstration. Others were brought back from death in the economy of God for purposes of His own, but only to pass back into death. Lazarus was raised by Jesus, but only to pass back into death and through death to the life beyond. The child of Jairus was raised from the dead, but to pass back into death again. This Man; raised in actual bodily life, not the same as that laid down, but different; exactly the same, but transformed; this Man never saw death again. He tasted death for every man. "Death no more hath dominion over Him." So we must ever add to the resurrection the fact of Ascension when we think of the Divine demonstration.

What then is this demonstration? The resurrection first attests to the perfection of the life of this Man. The resurrection declares in human history that this Man, rejected of men, is accepted of God; that this type of human life, for which the world cannot find any room, is God's type of human life.

What is the type? I can only state the great subject in phrases. God-centered; self-emptying; man-serving. That is the whole story of the life of Jesus. If as rapidly as memory can do its work, you will think of that story from beginning to end, you will find these things include all the facts; and the resurrection declared in the midst of human history. This is the Man of God's right hand. This is the Man of God's pattern, of God's purpose. This is the type of human life that satisfies God.

The resurrection further demonstrates the fact that in this Man the type was triumphant. There was never a single moment in His life when He moved from the true center of His life, which center was God Himself, He never became eccentric. I pause a moment because the worldly man calls the Christian man eccentric; while in reality it is he who is eccentric, away from the true center, not the Christian man. His life then was not eccentric; but always God-centered, though all the forces of the world, the flesh and the devil sought to draw Him aside, out of the true orbit of His life, or in the words of the writer of the New Testament concerning the angels, sought to make Him move out of His proper habitation. This Man was not only the type in the sense of being an idealist in His teaching, He was in His own life triumphant, and the resurrection is the great demonstration of God's approbation of that type of life.

The resurrection attests also to His accomplishment of purpose. Not only personal victory, but relative accomplishment. His purpose in the world according to His own teaching had been that of revelation and of mediation. He was in the world to reveal the Father, to bring men to the Father.

Did He succeed? Was the presentation of God which He made in life true? Was the unveiling of God which He suggested in death true? Has He mediated by true speech, and has He mediated in the mystery of that passion baptism prior to which He declared Himself straitened? Has He been successful? How shall I know? I stand in imagination on the eve of Easter day outside the tomb. I want to know whether He has succeeded in the purposes of revelation and mediation.

Angel hands roll back the stone, and I look in and see those grave-clothes, and know that He is risen, and know not only that this is the perfect Man, but that this Man has fulfilled His purposes of revelation and of mediation.

Consequently, the resurrection attests to the completeness of His victory. It was a victory over death, and in this selfsame sermon Peter said, "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." This is one of the passages in God's word which I always wish I could recite with the emphasis which would express the emotion the words create in my own heart. I think there was a touch of contempt when Peter said "it" in reference to death; and infinitely more than a touch of reverence and of worship when He said "He," with reference to the Risen Lord. "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." Why not? Because He had dealt with sin, which is the sting of death. In some unutterable, unfathomable mystery in the darkness, He had taken its power out of death; by dealing with sin, He had robbed it of its sting, and made it forever more a porter at the gate of life. When I see Him raised, exalted, I know that He has won the final, perfect victory over sin, over sorrow, over Satan; and I know it, because I see His victory over death.

All that involves the second matter which I suggested. If God raised Jesus, He did by that act show His rejection of all other men. This is an aspect of the truth which we are in danger of overlooking. We cannot believe in the resurrection without, upon consideration, seeing how true this is. In accepting the perfect One, God rejected all imperfection. Imperfection is to be known by perfection. What is the perfect type? Life God-centered, self-emptying, man-serving. The imperfect type is life, self-centered, self-seeing, and self-serving. God rejects that type of humanity forever. I do not pause to describe the more vulgar manifestations of human sin. Let us keep on levels admittedly somewhat higher. Humanity may be cultured with the culture of the schools, refined with the refinement of aestheticism, but absolutely self-centered; and God rejects that humanity. Morality in the sanctuary is a thing of the spirit. Morality in the economy of God is conformity to the type of humanity revealed in Jesus. We are in danger of being satisfied with something that does not satisfy God in ourselves and in our fellowmen. By that resurrection of Jesus; by that stretching out of the right hand of the Almighty power, and the taking of this Man out of the grave, this Man Who was crucified because of the type He had revealed; by God's taking Him out of death and setting Him at His own right hand; He said to humanity: "This is the one and only type acceptable with God, this is the one and only type of human life that can find entrance into fellowship with God, here or hereafter." The resurrection of Jesus is the severest condemnation of everything else than that which He revealed to men as the true ideal of human life. So that when I am testing my own life, I do so, not by my neighbor, by my friend, or by the averages of failing humanity, but by the one and only Man upon Whom God has set His seal of resurrection.

That is human life. There is a side, in this matter, full of comfort and encouragement, for when by that resurrection, God set His seal upon the type of human life revealed in Jesus, He revealed to every human being the true meaning of human life. When I look upon this Son of man, risen from the dead, and when I contemplate His life in its beauties and perfections and glories, in those glories of grace and truth which John referred to, in all the rich and beautiful character of absolutely unselfish living, I not only know what God's ideal is, but I know of what I am capable by Divine creation. For that life God made me, not for a life of human refinement and human morality which is careless of the woes and wounds and weariness of humanity; not for that self-centered life which is of the very essence of devilism; but for fellowship with Himself and for service of my fellowmen; for that self-emptying which pours out life in order to help others. That is God's humanity, and He rejects every other type. For that He has made every one of us; however hard the heart may be, however blind the eyes in the presence of humanity's woes, however perverse the will that refuses to serve; the heart is made for compassion, the eyes are made for seeing, the will is made to be the driving power of sacrifice. So the resurrection, while it is condemnation of all failure, is the repetition of the fact that God made man for Himself, to be like Himself, in self-emptying love and in sacrificial service.

Finally, in accepting the work of Jesus, God refused all other methods of salvation. He said by the resurrection, "Neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." But we would prefer to work out our own salvation. We would prefer to accept the great ideal and see if it be not possible, without reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus, to work out our own salvation. God declares by resurrection that this is impossible, for every method of salvation attempted by man is doomed to failure and disaster.

By this resurrection God crowns Him Victor, and reveals the ultimate defeat of everything that is opposed to Him. Take one brief glance at the Cross in the light of resurrection. There, worldly power has won its victory over Him; there, worldly culture laughs at His folly, the Cross is foolishness to the Greek - and the Greeks are with us yet; there, ritualistic religion has put an end to the voice that spoke only of the spiritual, and to the Man who violated the traditions of men. Yet, in that Cross God has revealed to men that not by might of human effort, not by the culture of the human mind, not by religious observance of human invention can man come to victory, because these things have in themselves the elements of their own destruction.

The Resurrection is God's attestation of the perfect victory of His Son; His rejection of every other type, and of every other method of salvation.

The resurrection is the revelation of human failure, when we look back at the historic facts. When they nailed Him to the Cross, they did their last with Him. God never allowed another rude hand to touch the dead body of Jesus; only loving hands touched Him after He was dead, only the hands of loving disciples - secret disciples by the way, for in the day of unutterable tragedy all the confessors were gone - two secret disciples, Joseph of Arimathaea, and Nicodemus, took His body, and with loving touch laid it to rest in the tomb. This is a very gracious and blessed fact to my own heart. Man had done his worst, and his best; not even the disciples witnessed the resurrection. The resurrection was God's act, and in the very blindness which came to the disciples I have a revelation of God's rejection of humanity; they were not permitted to see Him rise.

Then notice how in that resurrection there was rejection of everything that rejected Him. The priests; if the matter were not altogether too sacred one could indulge in satire at the expense of the priests! They went to Pilate and said, "We remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I rise again," and they asked for soldiers to watch the body of a dead Man! Was there ever such confession of impotence? Yet, in spite of their shrewdness, that He be not stolen, He went; went without the unwrapping of the grave-clothes, without the rolling away of the stone, without the breaking of Pilate's seal! Wrapped in grave-clothes, shut in by a rolling stone, sealed with the Roman governor's authority, watched by soldiers under the inspiration of the priests; but He rose! Therein was demonstrated the truth that God rejects Roman power, Hebrew priestism, Greek culture, and even disciples who were unable to follow. They were all rejected in that great hour of resurrection.

But there is infinite compassion in the story. There, is the unveiling of the Divine love. If God by that resurrection rejects men, why does He do so? Because they are failing to fulfil the meaning of their own lies, as well as failing to satisfy the intention of His will. He only rejects the failure in order that He may make again the marred vessels, restore the years that the cankerworm hath eaten, make the desert blossom as the rose! By way of rejecting me, a failure, He makes possible my remaking, in His own image and likeness.

That resurrection is the Divine ratification of the new and living way. It is the acceptance of the Man Christ Jesus in a representative capacity. That resurrection said to these disciples, and says to us today: "There was more in the Cross than you thought." The Cross; how they had shunned it; how they had been afraid of it from the first mention of it at Caesarea Philippi; through all those weeks how they had shrunk from it! The Cross scattered them, drove them away from Christ. Yet, by the way of resurrection they saw that there was profounder meaning in that Cross than they had known. By the way of resurrection the Cross was seen as something sufficient for rejected men. Take up the New Testament and read the epistles, and see what these writers say of the Cross. What gave them their belief in the Cross? The resurrection. There is no more remarkable word in the whole of them than that of Peter who preached this sermon on the day of Pentecost, when in his letter he declared that they were begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Cross was their despair; it became their hope when they saw it in the light of resurrection; the Cross was the place of defeat, but when they saw Him alive they knew that the Cross was the place of victory.

By resurrection God declares that the Cross has within it healing for all wounds. The risen Man is accepted as the Head of a new race; and the life which He liberated through the mystery of the Cross is accepted in Him as Firstborn, and in all the newborn who enter into life by the touch of this risen Christ. By the resurrection God declares that He accepts man in Christ, and in Christ alone. Crucified with Christ, risen with Christ, seated in the heavens in Christ; these are the apostolic words unveiling the true meaning and value and issue of resurrection.

By this resurrection then God declares to all men everywhere that the humanity for which He looks is the humanity of Jesus. Let us make this thing personal and immediate. Is my humanity His humanity? Are my motives His, my impulses His? If not, then know that this day of resurrection and light and glory is a day that declares my condemnation.

Tear up the New Testament, deny the resurrection, and I have nothing to say; but if this be the central, established fact of Christianity - I am not arguing it, I am accepting it, preaching upon the basis of its actuality - then know this, the resurrection is not merely a song in the night, it is the thunder of an awful severity, forevermore declaring that God will not be satisfied with imperfection or with any type of human life save that which approximates to the type revealed in Jesus.

But know this also, weary heart and disappointed man, confessing your sin; saying, as in the presence of the resurrection glory, "If that be God's accepted type then am I rejected, for I am unlike that"; know this, that resurrection declares to you that the Lord in the very mystery of His dying did make provision for your living. In the cosmic order He never ought to have died. Unless there be this profounder explanation of His dying which the New Testament offers, His dying is the most terrible reflection upon the government of the universe. When these things are seen in the light of the resurrection and we are able to say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me"; then the resurrection is a song and an evangel; the bedrock of my confidence, the refuge of my soul, the assurance in my heart that I am not deceived and that God can, and will, have compassion upon me, and receive me in Christ; and through Christ communicate to me the dynamic force I need for the Christly life.

The resurrection was the end of the first man, the first Adam, and the doom of all the race that sprang from Him. The resurrection was the acceptance of the second Man, the last Adam, and the birth of a new race. As we believe in Him, we receive His life and we are accepted in the Beloved.

The final note of the resurrection is that of hope for every man however bruised, however spoiled; however in the grip of vice, lust, passion, and sin; however disappointed with himself as he stands in the light of the revelation which Jesus has given to him of the meaning of his own life; for it declares that he can be remade. The resurrection is the proof of the evangel.