

## *The Power of Yeshua's Resurrection*

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For Paul, without the resurrection, our faith is useless. This is more than a statement of his Pharisaic fundamentals—it is at the heart of his understanding of how God can remain just and still declare sinners righteous.

This is because first and foremost the resurrection of Yeshua is the greatest proof that His sacrifice was accepted before the bar of God's justice. The Torah describes the garments of the High Priest to include bells alternating with embroidered pomegranates on the hem of his outer robe. These were ancient symbols of life. Yet they adorned the robe of someone who was engaged in death, sprinkling the blood of a sacrificial victim upon the altar and mercy seat.

Here the picture of Yom Kippur becomes increasingly rich. For on Yom Kippur, the one day on which the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place, he did not wear the colorful vestments of the ephod nor the outer robe decked with bells and pomegranates. He simply wore the pure white linen garments of his office. Having removed the symbols of life, he entered the Most Holy Place bearing the blood of the sacrifice—identifying with the sacrificial victim as He approached the Almighty on behalf of the people.

Such duty could be dangerous, for history records what became of Aaron's sons when they failed to do as God had commanded. Yet the High Priest entered the place of sanctity, there to do business with the Lord of all the earth. At what point were the people able to know for certain that the offering had been accepted? Secluded from viewing the work that went on in the Most Holy Place, the people could only await the reappearance of the High Priest after he had finished his duties. His coming out of the Tabernacle after entering its hallowed space was proof that God had accepted the atonement.

Once again, the actions of the High Priest on Yom Kippur foreshadow and explain the work of Yeshua. His reappearance from the tomb was proof that His sacrifice had been accepted. Thus, the resurrection became the keystone in the arch of the gospel as it was proclaimed by His apostles.

Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant also viewed the resurrection as proof that God was satisfied with His offering. In Isaiah 53:10-11 we read:

But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.

The death of the Messiah as a guilt offering results in His seeing His offspring, prolonging His days, and experiencing the prosperity which the Lord gives. These are not activities associated with death! What is more verse 11 which is parallel to verse 10 notes that as a result of the anguish of His soul He will see it. The word "it" is not in the Masoretic text, but the translators have inserted it because the object of the verb "see" appears to be missing. Interestingly, both the Qumran Isaiah Scroll as well as the Lxx have the word "light" here: "He will see light and be satisfied." If this is the preferred reading (and it seems clear that it is, being found in the oldest manuscripts available), then a reference to "resurrection" is surely included, for "death" is characterized by "darkness," and "life" by "light." Note Psalm 23 with the expression "valley of the shadow of death," an idiom meaning "deepest darkness," using "death" as a superlative. Likewise Isaiah 9:1 parallels "shadow of death" with "darkness" (cf. Luke 1:79). On the other hand, Job 33:28, 30 use "to see light" as the opposite of "the pit" (grave). Paul proclaims "that the Messiah was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23).

The "satisfaction" which the Messiah experiences after the anguish of His soul is that He clearly sees His work to have accomplished its desired end—the eternal salvation of those for whom He died.

Similarly Paul claims that Yeshua was “declared to be the Son of God with power” via the resurrection (Rom 1:4) and that He was “raised with respect to our justification” (Rom 4:25).

But the resurrection of Yeshua was more than forensic proof that His sacrifice was accepted before the bar of God’s justice. Yeshua’s resurrection was also the paradigm for the pattern of life envisioned from Himself and His followers:

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Rom 6:4)

It was the “power of the resurrection” (Phil 3:10) that the Apostle prayed for as he attempted to live out the life of his calling, and it was this same power that he hoped for in the lives of those he taught and led.

This “resurrected life” was not some ethereal, mystical experience or philosophical meandering, but was living life with the recognition that there had been a very real and substantial change in the soul of the believer. The old self had died, and a new self had been resurrected. Desires and passions formerly enslaved the soul and dictated the path of one’s choices and actions. Conversely, the “new man,” recreated in the image of God, is free to become a “slave of righteousness,” to be led by the Spirit, to live along the patterns of the “obedience of faith,” and to honor God by living “soberly, righteously, and godly” in the present age, being “zealous for good works.” In short, the resurrection power that Paul longed for in even greater measure is the power of a new life, a life not only desirous of but also able to live in obedience to God’s Torah.

Such power for righteous living did not come from the Torah itself, not because the Torah was faulty, but because of the weakness of the flesh. This power came as the result of Yeshua’s work, and thus the righteous requirements of the Torah are actually lived out by those who walk not according to the flesh but by the Spirit.

But the resurrection of the Messiah also stood in the Apostle’s mind as positive proof of the future resurrection of all those redeemed by His death and life. Thus, Paul refers to Yeshua as “the first fruits” of those who had died. It is significant that he uses the metaphor of “first fruits” to describe Yeshua’s resurrection, because tied as it was to the Festival of Shavuot (Pentecost), Yeshua as the first fruits envisions a harvest of much more to follow.

Thus, the resurrection of Yeshua is eschatological in the sense that it sets the pattern for the resurrection of the righteous and their place in the world-to-come. For Paul, the resurrection of Yeshua was a fact he personally experienced, for he was confronted with the risen Messiah on the road to Damascus. Yeshua therefore became the proof par excellence for Paul that the resurrection was a reality, and something for which every righteous person could validly hope. For Paul, then, the pattern of resurrection life experienced now in the believer is but a foretaste of the life in the world-to-come.