

Christian Life After Easter

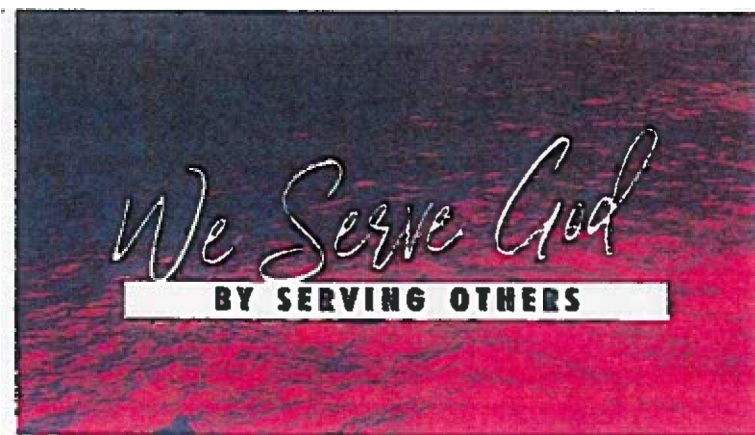
"Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the death, and indeed, he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.'"

This is my message for you. "Matthew 28:7

The biblical text above is the angel's message to "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary" when they went "the first day of the week" to see the tomb where Jesus had been buried. This message is highly significant not just because it entails the message of the resurrection in the form of a third-person responsibility/action -Jesus' resurrection here is the act of the Father (He has been raised)- but because the deferred of the public appearance of the resurrected² because a matter of location. The risen Jesus wants to see his disciples in Galilee, not any other place.

Galilee was a unique geographical area for Jesus and the disciples. In Jesus's time, this province included the country's northern section, part of the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee, and surrounding areas. This is where Jesus grew up because Nazareth was part of this province. More importantly, this is where the old northern kingdom of Israel was established.

According to Collins³, in the second half of the book of Joshua, the allotment of territories to the tribes is explained. It is the song of Deborah in Judges 5 that commemorates the battle for the conquest of the northern regions in Palestine. It is significant to notice that in such an alliance in the fight against the Canaanite kings, the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Levi are not mentioned⁴. The relevance here is that this division of tribes, mentioned in Judges, ends up in two kingdoms of related tribes. The Northern Kingdom, named Israel, with its capital Samaria, and the Southern Kingdom, named Judah, with its Jerusalem. This history between the North and the South is highly relevant to understanding the risen Jesus' reference concerning his request in the gospel of Matthew to reveal himself to the disciples in Galilee.



Since the beginning of the establishment of the tribes in the North of the region, the book of Joshua, chapter 23:12-13, warned such tribes¹ about the unconcluded task of destroying the Canaanites and the risk of intermarriages. This warning was not just about the need to develop a proper identity between the sons of Jacob but about dualistic practices of

purity/impurity that are perceived, in the Hebrew Bible, as exclusive when it comes to God's relation to his people.

For texts like Leviticus 12-15 and the Holiness Code in Leviticus 17-26, purification was necessary when it came to sacrifice laws (Lev 1-10) or the day of Atonement (Lev 16). In conclusion, these texts show that the relationship with YHWH is related to the state of individual/collective purity.

This idea of righteousness and purity, plus the fact that the Northern Kingdom was conquered earlier than the South⁵, forced its people to live in exile with new social and religious ties to pagan practices, making the Northern and Southern people religious enemies. The North was an impure place with impure people. Despite this, Christ convoked his disciples there. Although Jesus' resurrection was in Jerusalem, the South, he preferred to show himself in the North. This text element is significant regarding our calling to follow and encounter the exalted Christ. There is no doubt that through this particular request, Christ is challenging the religious purity code of his time.

Through this narrative of the Risen Christ, we are called to keep seeking the blessing of the resurrection in those places where the religiosity of our time disavowed it as unclean. Following and seeking a pick of God's glory through the risen Christ is a call to go where the religious mentality is afraid to visit. Ministering with Christ is seeking and serving the poor, the lame, the blind, the disenfranchised, or our time. Going to Galilee to see Christ is a call to action for all of us. As we pass Easter Sunday, let us go together into Galilee.

I invite you to consider to whom you teach the gospel and how. Where is your Galilee (those places where our religion does not let us in)? What do I need to do to keep actively seeking the resurrected Christ? May the good Lord help to answer these questions humbly and proactively.

God Bless All of You

Pastor Eric

¹ it is relevant to know that the four biblical Gospels -Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John- have different narrations of the Resurrection. For example, in Matthew, there are just two women in the morning of the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary; in the gospel of Mark, there are three women -Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome. Concerning the gospel of Luke, there were an undisclosed number of women (in this case, just three are mentioned: Mary Magdalene, Johanna, and Mary the mother of James), and finally, in the gospel of John, just Mary Magdalene was there. For the biblical and theological differences and the significance of having Mary Magdalene as the only constant through the four narrations, please refer to the Sunday Adult Bible Studies at 9:15 every Sunday.

² This account of deferring in the gospel of Matthew contrasts with the account on the gospel of John where Jesus' impossibility of any physical contact with Mary Magdalene on what could be interpreted as a matter of purity in connection with the Law (Numbers 19:11-22).

^a Collins, John J. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018. (p.130).

⁴ Ibid. p. 131.

⁵ The Northern Kingdom was conquered in the year 721 BCE by the Assyrian Empire (2 Kings 17:5-23) while the Southern Kingdom was destroyed by the Babylonian Empire in 587 BCE. These two events are highly significant understand/unpack most texts in the Hebrew Bible (2 King 24-25).