

Resurrections At Pivot Points In Christian History

St. Seraphim of Sarov (1754 – 1833) prophesied his bodily resurrection would be the event that would be the catalyst for the long expected and unprecedented end-time Russian national spiritual awakening. He stated it would start a global repentance focus. Many in the Russian Orthodox world are awaiting this event. Basically, the Western Evangelical Church is unaware of this proclaimed event and/or have no confidence in its validity. This paper is intended to minimally address the place of resurrections in the history and future of the Church. Greater works have been promised by Jesus. Jesus also commanded His disciples to ...raise the dead... in Matthew 10. St. Seraphim's resurrection may very well be among the initiating greater works Jesus announced. It is impossible to overestimate the place of resurrection in Christianity. It is at the very center of our faith in Christ. The apostle Paul clearly pointed to this.

*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.
And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty*
1 Corinthians 15:10-11 NKJV

Actually, resurrection has been a most essential element of pivotal junctures in the development of the nation of Israel and Christianity. It certainly appears that this was the deliberate plan of God. He would start at the very beginning of the nation of Israel. All of this world as we know it, will terminate in the resurrection of all of those who are dead (asleep). It is certainly possible that it is yet to play a continuing pivotal element as we move into the time of the final and great harvest at the end of this age. The scriptures reveal several diverse forms of resurrection. The first occurred with Abraham and Sarah. They had a nearly 25 year promise from God of a child who would be born to them. In the 24th year since the promise, they were both past the time of child bearing. Scripture clearly speaks of the time of their reproductive capability was over.

*And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)
Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Genesis 18:10-11 NKJV*

This was the beginning of the nation of Israel-the lineage of Christ. A resurrection, of sorts, had to happen. It is believed that God was overseeing the flow of events here. The very start of Israel and the eventual Christ would not have occurred through Abraham and Sarah, had there not been a form of resurrection. Sarah's ability to bear a child was returned or resurrected in her. Her reproductive capability was biologically "dead." This can be understood as a fundamental type that would occur again. It was a preview or precursor of what was to become identified with the very core of Christianity. God chose to begin the lineage of Christ with a needed resurrection. We now understand it was an indication of what was yet to come.

Moving forward several thousand years, the pivotal time had come for the Christ to be born. Actually, scriptures reveal that first came the forerunner, John. Interestingly, John's parents had never had a child as Elizabeth was barren. She and Zacharias were now quite old. Zacharias was told that Elizabeth would bear a son to him. Elizabeth for sure and possibly Zacharias experienced a similar form or type of resurrection of their reproductive capability.

But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. Luke 1:7 NKJV

While John was at six months of development in his mother's womb, the chosen Virgin Mary had a different and exclusively unique conception in the history of mankind. She did not have a form of resurrection but she miraculously conceived through the involvement of the Holy Spirit. The Christ was conceived and eventually born.

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Luke 1:35 NKJV

More than thirty some years had passed and a most unusual event took place. It was not a resurrection but certainly an appearing. Jesus had called three of His disciples to accompany Him to ascend a high mountain to a more secluded location. At that time Jesus was visited by Moses and Elijah. Those of the ancient past are still alive. Matthew, Mark and Luke mention this event. Luke's account states that they appeared in glory and spoke with Jesus about His pending decease in Jerusalem. Both of these men had left the land of the living for hundreds of years. While we have no record of Elijah's death, Moses died and scripture reveals his body was buried and hidden by God (Deuteronomy 34). Jesus spoke of God as the God of the living. These two men were certainly alive and were ordained, in this instance, to serve as messengers of things to come. They appeared, after hundreds of years, to Jesus and were recognized by His disciples.

*and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.
And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Matthew 17:2-3 NKJV*

Not much more time passed and the pivotal time had come. It was only days away from the time of the cross in the life of Jesus. In the planning of the Father, a significant resurrection was a part of/preceded the most pivotal time in history. Lazarus had been dead for four days. The scriptures teach that many believed due to the resurrection of Lazarus. It was an event that stood on its own. It was going to reveal the glory of the Father. It was a type of what was to soon take place. It was a profound resurrection that preceded Christ's resurrection and His return from the dead.

*And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe.
Nevertheless let us go to him."
Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."
So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.
John 11:15-17 NKJV*

The time of The Cross had come. Jesus knew it was coming and knew the Father had promised He would rise from the dead after 3 days. No one really understood what was happening and what would be the full consequences of His resurrection. He was brutally beaten. Isaiah 52 reveals He was beaten so badly and thoroughly that he was essentially unrecognizable as a human being. The Father placed the sins of all humanity upon Him. Jesus became sin for us. In His own person, He was sinless and thus able to serve as the spotless lamb for the sins of the world. His sinless life also opened the door for his eventual resurrection. As a sinless man, He would not remain in hell. He was the innocent sin-bearer and long awaited blood offering for sin. He had spoken multiple times of His pending death and resurrection. The time had come. Jesus died in faith, trusting in the promises of the Father. He released His spirit into the "hands of the Father!" Instantly a number of things happened. The massive veil of the Temple was torn in two, the earth quaked, rocks split and many graves opened upon His death. After His resurrection, another astounding thing happened. Many of

the saints who were in the tombs that opened, were also resurrected. They went into Jerusalem and were seen by many. Scripture does not address specifically who those resurrected saints were or how long they had been dead (asleep). Some believe those resurrected were part of the fulfillment of Ephesians 4. If that be the case, some of the total raised at that time could have been dead hundreds of years. Astoundingly, Jesus death and resurrection was preceded and followed by other resurrections. We know so little about the events recorded in Matthew 27. The Holy Spirit chose to include this revelation in Matthew.

*And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.
Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,
and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. Matthew 27:50-54 NKJV*

Moving ahead several more years, Acts 9 & 10 detail the time when the gospel was beginning to be proclaimed to the Gentiles. These chapters detail Jesus stopping and calling out Saul of Tarsus for his new intended role of apostle to the Gentiles. God was also discipling Peter into a his assignment of being the first proclaimer of the gospel to the gentiles. There were many steps along the way for Peter. The final step, prior to his vision of the food God had cleansed, was the resurrection of Dorcas. Again, at a pivotal time in the development of Christianity, a resurrection occurred. Peter was summoned to Joppa where a beloved lady in Christ died. The church in Joppa had heard of Peter's nearness and called for him to come following Dorcas' death. Peter came, prayed for her and she arose. While Peter stayed in Joppa, an angel was sent to a Gentile Roman centurion named Cornelius in Caesarea. Peter was summoned to Caesarea and Cornelius and his household accepted Christ. The Gentiles were now also in focus.

Revelation 11 also documents two other dramatic resurrections coming to the earth. The two witnesses are described who eventually are slain. The whole world will see this. After a set time, the two will dramatically resurrect and the world will watch. The indication from the text is this event will have great impact!

Great controversy swirls regarding the timing and order of events that will be occurring as this age comes to completion. One thing is for certain. There is a time of the Lord's coming that will be preceded by the resurrection of those who are dead in Christ. Again, the pattern will be observed. A resurrection of the dead will take place, in anticipation of or at the time of the His return. This may be only those who died in Christ after those raised at His own resurrection. If so, the eldest to resurrect will have been asleep (dead) for 2000ish years.

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.
1 Thessalonians 4:16 NKJV*

There is yet another and final pivotal time to come, after the event just named. Revelation 20 speaks of the Great White Throne Judgment. Preceding this judgment will be yet another resurrection of the dead. It seems that this final resurrection will be the lost of all time who will resurrect to the Great White Throne Judgment. While great differences of opinion exist regarding this judgment, at a minimum it will be the lost of all time and may be also those whose names are still in the Book of Life.

*And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened.
And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.
The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up*

the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.
Revelation 20:12-13 NKJV

Seraphim of Sarov, later to become St. Seraphim of Sarov, predicted his own resurrection nearly 190 years ago. While the timing of this seems very near, it is in the Lord's hands. He proclaimed his resurrection would proceed and actually set in motion the great end-time national awakening of Russia and then the world. The Evangelical Church world, in general, tends to have great disregard for even the possibility of this kind of event happening. At the same time, the Orthodox world, in general, tends to see such an event as possible. It is especially true given the respect and legacy St. Seraphim of Sarov left. Greater works are coming. While we may acknowledge the declaration of Jesus regarding greater works, our faith in such really happening may be greatly lacking. It would be in keeping for God to choose a vessel that almost no one else would choose. While that is a consistent theme in the scriptures, that is another article. We still await St. Seraphim's resurrection. He stated that his resurrection would be a wonder to the world and he would begin to proclaim the message of global repentance. He proclaimed there would be a significant lack of belief in a resurrection of all the dead in the Orthodox Church. He said many would come from all around the world to see and be impacted by this event. Numerous prophecies exist that proclaim the great end-time harvest will actually begin in Russia and then spread to the rest of the world. This will certainly be a pivotal time in the journey to the end of this age. While none of the above prove St. Seraphim's prophecies to be true, a pivotal resurrection preceding or a part of the beginning of the final time of global harvest would be in keeping with a long established pattern in the scriptures.

A concern exists regarding a statement Jesus attributed to Abraham in Luke 16. In context, Jesus was addressing the love of money and valuing it over loving God. The Pharisees were present and expressed great derision at His teaching and directed comments. Jesus spoke of a rich man who lived luxuriously and a beggar, Lazarus, who sometimes resided at his door. Lazarus sought crumbs from the table of the rich man. At the end of their lives, the rich man went to hades and Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. The rich man was in torment and Lazarus was in comfort. Ultimately the rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus back to the living to turn his 5 brothers from the path he had taken. He expressed that if someone came back from the dead, his brothers would be influenced by that event and they would change their lives. Abraham stated that if they were not going to heed the voice of the Law (Moses) and the Prophets, then they would not heed the voice of a resurrected one. It can be taken that Jesus was making the point here that a resurrected life would not influence a person who had rejected the voice of the Law and Prophets.

But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" Luke 16:31 NKJV

The story Jesus told fully stands on its merit as inspired scripture. At the same time, this account is not the only time this weighty matter is addressed in the New Testament. In Matthew 10 Jesus commissioned His disciples to among things...*raise the dead*.... In John 11 Jesus was led by the Father to raise a good friend, also named Lazarus, from the dead. In response to that resurrection, many in Jerusalem believed in Jesus. Some of the Pharisees decided they needed to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. They validated, by their actions, the declaration of Abraham to the rich man. The Pharisees did not believe the scriptures were speaking of Jesus as the Christ. They also did not accept the resurrection of Lazarus as having any beneficial meaning. I believe this is a classic illustration of the kind of thing Jesus was pointing to in His recounting of the story of the rich man, Lazarus and Abraham.

It is certainly the resurrection of Jesus that has changed everything. St. Seraphim made it clear that his future resurrection was not about him but to impact a very secular world. The dead live and a

resurrection for all is in the future. His prophesied message will be the same as that of John the Baptist. Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.