

Eleutheros Newsletter

May 2019

News of Interest

The first book in the Eleutheros series was entitled [*The Ramifications of Our Salvation*](#). That book has been translated into Spanish and made available to a missionary in Argentina. Pastor Brian George has indicated that he intends to have books printed there for usage as a text in a Bible College that will start later this year!

Please pray for this project.

Continued Thoughts on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

[**Acts 17:2-3**](#). *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, Whom I preach unto you, is Christ.*

Now on his second missionary journey, Paul came to Thessalonica and preached in their local synagogue.

The results there were good: “some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

Of course, there was opposition, “and the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea” ([**Acts 17:10**](#)).

It is significant that Paul consistently used the Scriptures in his preaching and emphasized both the resurrection of Jesus and His anointing from God (the meaning of “Christ” = “anointed one”).

In Old Testament times there were three categories of people who were anointed. These were prophets, priests, and kings.

Jesus, of course, according to the Scriptures, is a prophet. The Greek noun for “prophet” is *prophetes*. The word is compound: *pro* means “forward” and *phetes* means “speaking.” Old Testament prophets received a message from God and spoke it to the people. Sometimes they preached a very convicting message. At other times they predicted future events. It is clear that Jesus as a prophet both “preached” and “predicted.”

Jesus is also a priest. This is a major theme in Hebrews. Old Testament priests listened to the needs/sins of the people and prayed to God, often offering sacrifices. Jesus listened to the needs of people (and still does!). He prayed for people (and still does!). And He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the people according to the will of the Father.

Further, Jesus is a king. While “on trial” He declared that he is the king of the Jews, and the Apostle John saw Him returning to earth as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS ([**Revelation 19:16**](#)).

One day “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...” ([Philippians 2:10-11](#)).

Obviously, no Old Testament prophet, priest or king was raised from the dead, but Jesus certainly was, and Paul preached that message boldly!

What a Savior we serve! He is the Prophet Who has declared the truth and showed us things to come. He is the Priest Who makes intercession for us constantly and actually died so we could be saved. He is the King Who is sovereign over all the universe! He does all this as the risen Son of God!

This great Savior (true Jews refer to Him as their Messiah) maintains all these ministries and rose again to make the offer of eternal life legitimate!

[Acts 17:18](#). *Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? Other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.*

Paul is now in Athens, the intellectual center of the ancient world. Many of the early Greek historians (such as Herodotus and Thucydides), authors and poets (such as Aeschylus and Euripides), mathematicians (such as Thales and Phythagoras), architects (such as Agnaptus), and philosophers (such as Plato and Aristotle) made significant contributions from this city.

In Paul’s day there were a number of intellectuals, particularly philosophers, residing in Athens.

Even more challenging was the influence of idolatry and polytheism there. Paul recognized this fact when he stood in the Aeropagus and presented the Gospel to the Stoicks and Epicureans assembled there.

These erudite and arrogant men “mocked” Paul, suggesting that they were willing to hear him again.

In many respects this was a very difficult time for the Apostle. He “departed from among them” ([Acts 17:33](#)). Among the few believers in Athens were a man name Dionysius the Aeropagite and a lady named Damaris ([Acts 17:34](#)).

Paul had preached a message that these philosophers could in some ways respond to, even quoting one of their ancient poets Aratus: “For in him we live and move, and have our being” ([Acts 17:28](#)). Paul was learning to become “all things to all men” ([I Corinthians 9:22](#)).

He also understood that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” ([I Corinthians 2:14](#)).

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” ([I Corinthians 1:23-25](#)).

Unfortunately, “educated” people often (not always!) do not and cannot accept the Gospel, and Paul’s presentation to these Athenian philosophers emphasized our Lord’s resurrection twice (sometime before [Acts 17:18](#) and again in [Acts 17:31](#)).

No doubt Paul was frustrated with their lack of faith, but he surely would not change the message, including that all important point that Jesus is the crucified and risen Son of God Who paid for the sins of all mankind.

His methods changed from time to time, but his message never changed!

[Acts 23:6-8](#). *But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.*

In this passage Paul is now in Jerusalem. Many believers to whom he had ministered warned him that he would be hated there, probably arrested or even killed.

The religious leaders felt about the same toward him as they did toward our Savior.

The warnings of Paul’s Christian friends had merit. He is now standing in front of the hostile Jewish council.

In his defense he emphasized that he had always “lived in all good conscience before God” ([23:1](#)).

The high priest Ananias “commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth” ([23:2](#)).

Paul indicated that God would smite him and called the high priest “a whited wall” ([23:3](#)), perhaps keeping in mind that Jesus called many of the same religious leaders “whitewashed sepulchers” ([Matthew 23:27](#)) years earlier.

When Paul realized that he had thus spoken to the high priest he apologized and then continued his defense.

He was not timid in his defense but was respectful to the high priest.

What amazing character Paul showed here!

Paul remained calm and evaluated the situation. He soon realized that the council was made up of members who believed in the possibility of a resurrection and those who rejected such a doctrine (the Sadducees).

He then emphasized his staunch belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is always a good thing to do!

After “a great dissension” the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle ([23:10](#)).

Soon the “Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” ([23:11](#)).

God has a way of encouraging His own people when they have been faithful to Him! After many painful experiences on his second missionary journey, while at Corinth, He encouraged Paul by saying in a night vision, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” ([Acts 18:9-10](#)).

Paul was then empowered to preach and teach the word without harassment in that worldly city for eighteen months ([Acts 18:11](#)).

Now because Paul totally trusted in His Savior and would never compromise the resurrection message, he had *renewed assurance* that God had granted further ministry opportunities to him.

We will continue this series in next month’s newsletter.