

Monday, August 13, 2018

Schooling a Groundless Gospel Advocate in the Scriptures



Are the resurrection appearances of Christ to His disciples ever prophesied in the Old Testament? This question is important because it relates to the Gospel. When the apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian church of the Gospel which he had preached to them, he included the fact that Christ "appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" ([1 Cor. 15:5](#)).

Another reason this is an important question is because in the book of Romans the apostle Paul writes: "The Good News was promised long ago by God through His prophets, as written in the Holy Scriptures" ([Romans 1:2](#), Good News Translation). Those who hold to the Free Grace groundless gospel argue that the resurrection appearances of Christ to His disciples are not prophesied in the Old Testament, and therefore the resurrection appearances are not part of the Gospel. One groundless gospel advocate named Greg Schliesmann puts it this way:

Paul says this gospel [in 1 Corinthians 15] is "according to the Scriptures". This phrase only modifies Christ's death for sins and resurrection in v. 3 and v. 4 about the death and resurrection of Christ "He died for our sins according to the Scriptures" and "He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures". Aside from that, we know the Scriptures did not predict anything referenced in [[1 Cor. 15](#)] vv. 5-10 regarding who saw Christ. In [Romans 1:2](#), Paul indicated that the gospel was promised before in the Scriptures. The extra elements Paul mentions do not constitute the truths promised before in the Scriptures but serve as proofs of them.¹

What I noticed after reading Mr. Schliesmann's statement is that he actually had to re-write the Bible to fit his groundless gospel. In [1 Corinthians 15:4](#), the apostle Paul says that Christ was raised "on the third day according to the Scriptures". But in Mr. Schliesmann's quotation of [1 Corinthians 15:4](#), the words "on the third day" are nowhere to be found! It reminds me of the Bible created by Thomas Jefferson, commonly referred to as the [Jefferson Bible](#). If any part of the New Testament didn't fit with Jefferson's theology of Jesus, he literally cut those

statements out of the Bible. When Jefferson got through with it, his New Testament looked like Swiss cheese - there were lots of holes in it! The Bible has severe warnings against those who take away from the Word of God (see [Deut. 4:2](#), [12:32](#); [Rev. 22:18-19](#)). "So dangerous a thing it is to meddle ever so slightly with the words of – GOD."² The fact that groundless gospel advocates must re-write the Bible to fit their unique interpretation of the gospel is a glaring problem! Maybe Mr. Schliesmann took a cue from the agnostic Bart Ehrman who also omitted the words "on the third day" when he misquoted [1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#). (See my blog post titled "[Bart Ehrman's Misquoting Jesus on 1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#)".) But regardless, when someone in the Free Grace Movement meddles with the Word of God, it's truly a tragedy.

What's more, the groundless gospel error is even more extreme because it actually contradicts the Bible. Does Mr. Schliesmann really expect us to believe that the resurrection appearances of Christ to His disciples are *not* "according to the Scriptures" – i.e., that they are *not* predicted in the Old Testament? The truth is, both Christ's burial ([1 Cor. 15:4](#)) and His resurrection appearances to His disciples ([1 Cor. 15:5](#)) are prophesied in the Scriptures! Isaiah chapter 53 is a key passage, and it predicts both Christ's burial ([Isa. 53:9](#)) and His resurrection appearances to "His followers" ([Isa. 53:10](#), The Berkeley Version).

Isaiah 53: The Gospel in the Old Testament

Christ's death for our sins: [Isa. 53:5-6](#)

His burial: [Isa. 53:9](#)

His resurrection: [Isa. 53:10b](#)

His appearances: [Isa. 53:10b](#)

There are also other Scriptures in the Old Testament which predict Christ's burial and His resurrection appearances, such as Psalm 22 and Psalm 40. These are Messianic Psalms, and these two passages of Scripture also predict Christ's burial and His resurrection appearances.

Psalm 22: A Prediction of the Gospel

Christ's crucifixion: [Psa. 22:16](#)

His burial: [Psa. 22:15](#)

His resurrection: [Psa. 22:22](#)

His appearances: [Psa. 22:22](#)

Psalm 40: A Prophecy of the Gospel

Christ on the cross: [Psa. 40:1](#)³

His burial: [Psa. 40:2a](#)

His resurrection: [Psa. 40:2b](#)

His appearances: [Psa. 40:3](#)

In response to Mr. Schliesmann, I will focus on the fact that Christ's resurrection appearances to His disciples are predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. I already wrote about this in my paper *Getting the Gospel Right*, but it bears repeating:

Christ's resurrection appearances were prophesied in the Old Testament like the other elements of the gospel ([Rom. 1:1-2](#); [1 Pet. 1:10-12](#); cf. [Psa. 22:22](#); [Isa. 53:10](#)). . . . Commenting on the gospel in Isaiah 53, Herbert Lockyer relates the following true story from the life of D. L. Moody: "When Moody was asked to conduct his first mission in London in 1874, union meetings were comparatively new. The committee asked him to explain his methods. Everything went smoothly until one member asked him his creed. Moody calmly replied, 'My creed is already in print.' A member seized a paper and pencil and asked where it could be found. 'In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah,' Moody answered."⁴

Commenting on Psalm 22, notice how C. I. Scofield draws attention to the prophecy of Christ's resurrection appearance to His brethren:

Psalm 22 is a graphic picture of death by crucifixion. The bones (of the hands, arms, shoulders, and pelvis) out of joint (v. 14); the profuse perspiration caused by intense suffering (v. 14); the action of the heart affected (v. 14); strength exhausted, and extreme thirst (v. 15); the hands and feet pierced (v. 16); partial nudity with the hurt to modesty (v. 17), are all incidental to that mode of death. The accompanying circumstances are precisely those fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ. The desolate cry of verse 1 ([Mt. 27:46](#)); the periods of light and darkness of verse 2 ([Mt. 27:45](#)); the contumely [insults and harsh treatment] of verses 6-8, 12, 13 ([Mt. 27:39-43](#)); the casting lots of verse 18 ([Mt. 27:35](#)), all were literally fulfilled. When it is remembered that crucifixion was a Roman, not a Jewish, form of execution, the proof of inspiration is irresistible. At verse 22 the Psalm breaks from crucifixion to resurrection; fulfilled in

the "Go to my brethren," etc., of [John 20:17](#). The risen Christ declares to His brethren the name, "Father."⁵

And commenting on Psalm 40, similarly notice how Scofield makes a point to highlight the prediction of Christ's resurrection testimony to those who saw Him:

The 40th Psalm speaks of Messiah, Jehovah's Servant, obedient unto death. The Psalm begins with the joy of Christ in resurrection (vs. 1, 2). He has been in the horrible pit of the grave, but has been brought up. Verses 3-5 are His resurrection testimony, His "new song." Verses 6 and 7 are retrospective. When sacrifice and offering had become abominable because of the wickedness of the people ([Isa. 1:10-15](#)), then the obedient Servant came to make the pure offering (vs. 7-17; [Heb. 10:5-17](#)).⁶

The Gospel ([1 Cor. 15:3-5](#)) was promised beforehand in the Holy Scriptures ([Rom. 1:1-2](#)); all four elements of the Gospel were predicted in the Old Testament – not just part of it, but all of it!

Praise the Lord!

ENDNOTES:

¹ Greg Schliesmann, "[The Technical Meaning of the Term, 'THE GOSPEL,' Part 3](#)," *In Defense of the Gospel* blog (December 19, 2007). Note: Mr. Schliesmann was a member of Tom Stegall's church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It was Mr. Schliesmann who compiled the Scripture Index for Stegall's book *The Gospel Of The Christ*. I have responded to Mr. Schliesmann's views elsewhere, such as in my article "The Free Grace Gospel Debate".

² Ivan Panin, Editor, *The New Testament From The Greek Text* (Toronto: The Book Society of Canada, 1979), p. xiii, italics and caps his.

³ Commenting on [Psalm 40:1](#), C. H. Spurgeon writes: "'I waited patiently for the Lord.' Patient waiting upon God was a special characteristic of our Lord Jesus. Impatience never lingered in

his heart, much less escaped his lips. All through his agony in the garden, his trial of cruel mockings before Herod and Pilate, and his passion on the tree, he waited in omnipotence of patience. No glance of wrath, no word of murmuring, no deed of vengeance came from God's patient Lamb; he waited and waited on; was patient, and patient to perfection, far excelling all others who have according to their measure glorified God in the fires. Job on the dunghill does not equal Jesus on the cross. The Christ of God wears the imperial crown among the patient." (Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 7 Vols., Vol. 2, p. 261.)

⁴ Jonathan Perreault, *Getting the Gospel Right*, p. 10.

⁵ Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (1909), p. 608, note 3; p. 609, note 1. Although Scofield does not specifically mention Christ's burial here in connection with Psalm 22 (it's implied, not denied!), his statement still supports my overall point because he does highlight how this passage of Scripture predicts the resurrection testimony of Christ to those who saw Him ([Psa. 22:22](#); cf. [Jn. 20:17](#)). And concerning Christ's burial, Scofield clearly sees predictions of it in other Old Testament Scriptures, such as in the book of Jonah. In the introduction to the book of Jonah in *The Scofield Reference Bible*, Scofield writes: "THE historical character of the man Jonah is vouched for by Jesus Christ ([Mt. 12:39-41](#)), as also that his preservation in the great fish was a 'sign' or type of our Lord's own entombment and resurrection." (Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1909, 1917], p. 943.)

Furthermore, Mr. Schliesmann even admits that Christ's burial is predicted in the Old Testament. Schliesmann says: "I agree that Christ's burial was prophesied in the OT." (See Schliesmann's comment for the blog post "*The Technical Meaning of the Term, 'THE GOSPEL,' Part 3*," *In Defense of the Gospel* blog.) This admission by Schliesmann highlights the error of his groundless gospel, because although the apostle Paul doesn't specifically say in [1 Corinthians 15:4](#) that the burial of Christ is "according to the Scriptures" – it's obviously "according to the Scriptures" because it was promised beforehand in the Old Testament!

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 618, note 1.