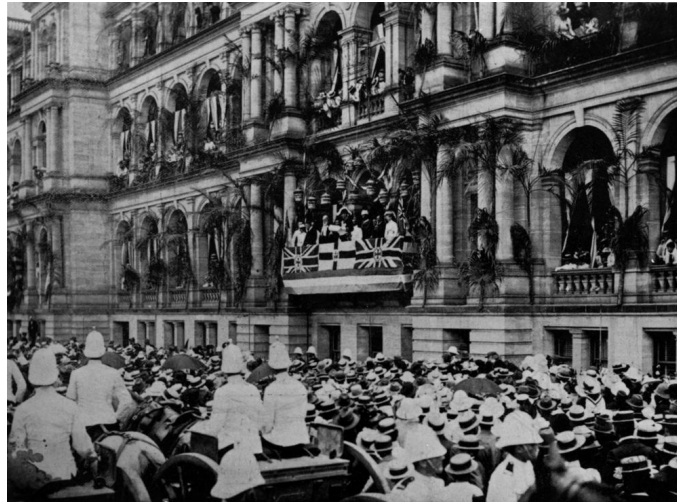


Jesus' Death & Resurrection: The End & a New Beginning

In Australia today, we don't understand the background, politics, pressures or civic desires that were at play leading up to our Federation on 1st January 1901. There were tussles over the national flag, the site of the capital city, whether the states wanted to lose their independence, and there was also the plebiscite to decide the go-ahead.



Looking back at this historic event today we cannot grasp or fully understand the atmosphere and heart attitude of the people. Nor can we understand the purposes of events and their impact, such as the the above photo of the Governor of Queensland, Lord Lamington, reading Queen Victoria's proclamation on Federation in Brisbane.¹

Looking back, also, what did the Jews interpret with the phenomena displayed at Jesus' death? They had experienced: The tearing of the temple veil; an earthquake; the opening of local tombs and the resurrection of the dead; and darkness covering the land.²

What did it mean to them, according to their ancient Jewish cosmology? This will be entirely different to our concept, because the phenomena were signs to them, not to us.

Christians in later centuries saw the events as the end the old system of law and sacrifice which were made obsolete by the death and resurrection of the Messiah. But not for the 1st Century Jewish believers. They would have seen the strange occurrences as the cosmic forces of chaos in action. This was the disorder that they believed existed before God's creative act in Genesis 1 and the same disorder that sweep over the world after the rebellion in Eden.

Michael Heiser describes their thinking this way:

“The formless and empty earth is characterized by darkness³, as is the realm of the dead⁴. The shaking of the foundations of the earth is a familiar description of the world not being the way it was intended at creation⁵, and the shaking indicates God's judgment on that disorder⁶...Matthew's strange account of tombs opening and raised bodies of the 'saints'⁷ coming forth would have drawn people's attention to Old Testament passages that foretold of resurrection at the day of the Lord—the time when God would set all things right.⁸ The result of God's judgment “on the great day of God the Almighty”⁹

1 – PHOTO: Item is held by John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland., Public Domain, commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26253254

(commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:StateLibQld_2_202947_Crowds_of_people_outside_the_Treasury_Building,_Queen_Street,_Brisbane,_Queensland,_1901.jpg)

2 – Matthew 27:51-56; Mark 15:38-41; Luke 23:44-49

3 – Genesis 1:2

4 – Job 10:21; 17:11-16; 38:17; Ecclesiastes 11:8

5 – Psalm 104:5

6 – Psalm 18:7, 15; 82:5

7 – Literally, “holy ones”

8 – Daniel 12:2-3; Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:1-10

9 – Revelation 16:14 (ESV)

would be a reset for the whole world—a return to the unspoiled perfection of Eden, this time on a global scale.¹⁰ The new Earth will have no darkness,¹¹ and death will be banished¹²—ideas familiar to Jews of Jesus’ day.^{13” 14}

Even the ripping of the temple veil had a different significance to them, initially.

“The first-century Jewish historian Josephus noted that, for many Jews, the design and partitioning of the tabernacle tent (and so the temple) was the pattern of the ordered universe.¹⁵ Consequently, when darkness, earthquake, and the tearing of the veil accompanied the death of Jesus, Jews of his day would have feared the end of the world—the victory of chaos. The signs three days later would have alerted them that a new age was at hand.”¹⁶

The resurrection following the awesome events informed them that God had reversed the Fall.

“Jesus’ resurrection is frequently linked with the overthrow of the principalities and powers that govern the nations disinherited by God since Babel,¹⁷ bringing the Gentiles back into God’s family through the gospel. The events that accompany Jesus’ death—darkness, the earthquake, the torn veil, the opened tombs—set the stage for the restorative power of his resurrection, signaling the return of Eden on a global scale.”¹⁸

The Israelites always looked around them for omens and they responded out of their understanding of what they saw. God also used signs to speak to the Israelites. The star over Bethlehem was a regal sign to the eastern mystics¹⁹ and to the inhabitants of Samaria & Judeah. Jesus’ time in the grave (Sheol) was the sign of Jonah²⁰ to that generation²¹.

So what was the sign to the Jews that was provided by the chaotic events at Jesus’ death and by his resurrection?

The end of the old order and the beginning of a new one

The foundational *ekklesia* of the 1st century got it right. The events of 30-70 AD were cataclysmic in the natural and spirit realm. The Kingdom had come and the old Israeli kingdom was gone. There was a new beginning – everything was fresh and exciting.

Today, the systemic church still has religious beliefs about that time and a complete misunderstanding of history. They (as I did once) have lost the plot – i.e. God’s Plan A that is still in play.

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10 – Revelation 21-22

11 – Revelation 21:25; 22:5

12 – Revelation 21:4

13 – Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 60:19-20

14 – Michael S Heiser “The Bible Unfiltered” p:103

15 – Josephus, Antiquities 3.123; 3.180–181; see Louis H. Feldman, trans., Judean Antiquities 1–4, vol. 3, Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, ed. Steve Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 280n. [referenced by Michael S Heiser]

16 – Michael S Heiser “The Bible Unfiltered” p:103

17 – Deuteronomy 32:8-9; Colossians 2:13-15; 1 Corinthians 14:20-28; Ephesians 1:15-23

18 – Michael S Heiser “The Bible Unfiltered” p:104

19 – Matthew 2:2-3

20 – Matthew 12:39-40

21 – Luke 11:29-30