

In a previous post I tried to show how the belief in Jesus' resurrection completely altered the disciples' perspective on who Jesus was. During his lifetime they thought he would be the future king of Israel; when he was crucified they realized they were wrong; when they then came to believe he had been raised they realized that they had been right, but in a way they did not at the time think. Jesus, for them, now that they believed he was raised, was far more than a human king. He was a divine being, the ruler of the world, the king of All. Yes, he would be the ruler of Israel as well. But that was when he came back from heaven as the victorious Son of Man, destroying his enemies and all those who were aligned against God, before bringing in his utopian kingdom. That was to happen very, very soon.

The resurrection of Jesus not only made the followers of Jesus rethink their views of who (and what) he was; it also made them understand the significance of his death in a radically different way. This new understanding of Jesus' death became the central teaching of Christianity.

As I have repeatedly argued, no one had ever imagined that the messiah would be crucified. That was just the *opposite* of what was supposed to happen to the messiah. And yet Jesus, for the Christians, was the messiah. And he did get crucified. How did they explain that? They explained it by arguing it was God's plan all along for the messiah to be crucified. The earliest Christians - well before Paul - created the idea of a suffering messiah.

The notion of a suffering messiah would have been (and was) nonsense to Jews in the time of Jesus. Until the Christians came along. But the Christian logic, for them, was irrefutable. Jesus was the messiah. Jesus suffered. Therefore...

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