



“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept,” I Corinthians 15:20.

Victory Over Death

Lesson Aim: To set for the Bible truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ without which Christianity has no basis.

L305. Date: September 1974. **Text:** I Corinthians 15:12-23. **Topic:** Christ: Resurrection of; Resurrection: Of Christ.

“I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today; I know that He is living, whatever men may say; I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer, And just the time I need Him He's always near. He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives: He lives within my heart”—Alfred H. Ackley.

Is it not wonderful how many of the great Christian hymns express so beautifully the doctrines of our faith? Alfred H. Ackley expressed ideally the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the words of the hymn quoted. It is a blessed doctrine, is it not?

“Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)” Romans 10:6-7. Why are such questions unnecessary? Christ's coming down from heaven in the incarnation and His rising from death in the resurrection are facts beyond the validity of questionings. Today's study intends “to set forth the Bible truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ without which Christianity has no basis.”

JESUS MUST BE RISEN, 15:12-19.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is hard to comprehend by human reasonings. “How can a body which has pulverized and returned to

dust be brought back together and filled with life?" man asks. In view of his own limitations, he replies, "It cannot." Even some Christians have a problem with the promise of the resurrection of the body. Paul wrote, **"How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"**

A denial of the resurrection of the dead is attended by serious implications. If there is no resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ is not risen. If He is still held in the clutches of death, the Christian religion is empty; and Christian hope is without foundation in fact.

Jesus must be risen for preaching to have power (verse 14). Paul declared, **"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain."** "Vain" means "empty of content; without truth; to no benefit." Why would preaching be vain without the resurrection of Jesus Christ? The very heart of preaching is that He is a living Savior who redeems believers from death.

Consider Romans 5:10: **"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life,"** What does that mean? (1) It was the death of Jesus Christ which redeemed us and reconciled us to God by paying sin's penalty. (2) It is the fact that He lives, having risen from death, which guarantees salvation to us. If He could not rescue Himself from the power of death, how could any person be sure Jesus could rescue him? Believers are reconciled because Jesus died, they are saved because He lives.

Take away the resurrection of Jesus, and there is no salvation left for man. That is one reason that each of the four Gospels records the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the reason that as many, or more, references are made in the New Testament epistles to His resurrection as to His death. He died and arose. Preaching has power!

Jesus had to rise for faith to be valid (verse 14). As preaching, without His resurrection, is empty and meaningless, so faith, apart from His resurrection, is empty and meaningless. Why? If Jesus is not risen from death, our faith is in a dead and helpless Savior. What would be the profit of such faith? Nothing.

Read Romans 10:9 and observe how faith in a living Savior is related to salvation; **"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."** There is no salvation where there is a denial of the life-beyond-death of Jesus Christ. Saving faith is no mere acceptance that He died; it includes a belief that He lives.

The primary message of Christian witnesses is that He who died now lives. Jesus bore such a testimony concerning Himself. **"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have**

the keys of hell and of death,” Revelation 1:18. The early disciples considered themselves specially commissioned witnesses of His resurrection (Acts 1:21,22). A living Savior saves; a dead Savior cannot. We testify that Jesus is a living Savior.

Jesus had to rise for Christian testimony to be true: “. . . **because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not,**” verse 15.

One of the ten commandments is, **“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,”** Exodus 20:16. It was a serious sin to break God's law and testify that a neighbor had done a deed which he had not. We agree with God's law that such an offence should be prohibited or, if committed, should be punished.

What about the person who bears false witness about what God has done? That would be a thousand times worse than bearing false witness against one's fellow. If there is no resurrection of the dead (if Jesus Christ is not risen), Christians are bearing false witness against God, saying that He raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus must be risen for our witness to be true.

Jesus had to rise for there to be forgiveness of sins, (verse 17). A dead Savior cannot save; such an one is no Savior at all. Men are saved, not only by the death of Jesus but by His life as well (Romans 5:10).

Any sense of forgiveness and security, apart from a risen and living Savior, is sheer self deception. The Bible refers to Jesus as one **“Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,”** Romans 4:25. Note the emphasis upon His death and His resurrection as essential to the justification of the repenting sinner. There is no forgiveness unless Jesus lives. That is why Simon Peter wrote, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”** I Peter 1:3. What is it that gives the believer a “living hope”? Peter would reply, “. . . the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Our only hope of forgiveness lies in the fact that He who died now lives.

Jesus had to rise for there to be any hope for our beloved Christian dead (verse 18). Without a resurrection, Paul argued, preaching is untrue, faith is ineffective, sins are unforgiven, God is blasphemed by an untrue testimony concerning His act of raising Jesus, and there is no basis for Christian hope. Those, therefore, who have died with faith in Jesus have eternally perished. All those terrible consequences follow logically upon a denial of the fact of resurrection.

The conclusion of the matter is: if Christ is not risen from the dead, we

can have faith and assurance only concerning this life; we can have no certainty as to what is beyond death. That is a very dreary prospect. The Apostle Paul viewed it and wrote, **“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,”** verse 19.

Most questions and denials of the resurrection of the body are proposed upon intellectual grounds. Man cannot fully comprehend; therefore, he questions or denies. Consider the consequences of a denial of the resurrection. It will discourage your acceptance, at face value, of the Bible testimony as to its certainty and manner.

JESUS HAS RISEN, 15:20-23

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept,” verse 20. The statement makes two great declarations. (1) Jesus Christ is alive, having personally risen up from among the dead. (2) The resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of those who belong to Him. He declared, **“... Because I live, ye shall live also,”** John 14:19.

The explanation of the resurrection is set forth in two statements. **“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,”** verses 21, 22.

Originally there was no sentence of death upon man. It came as a consequence of his sin in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Both physical death and spiritual death were the result of sin. Jesus came that sinners might be rescued from the curse of sin—death. Would He rescue us from spiritual death and not from physical death? Not at all. The redemption He provides is complete; it relates to body, soul, and spirit. Jesus' death and resurrection assured our resurrection out of physical and spiritual death. All who are related to Adam die because of sin. All who are related to Christ live because of His atonement.

The Bible goes one step further. A person is not delivered from physical death the moment he trusts Jesus as Savior. The vast majority of Christians will undergo physical death and then be raised from it. The difference is that Jesus takes the “sting” out of physical death for the Christian (I Corinthians 15:55-56) and then delivers him from the very presence of physical death (Revelation 21:4). **“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming,”** verse 23.

When will the dead be raised? **“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the**

trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air . . .” I Thessalonians 4:16-17. The dead will be raised when Jesus returns. Oh, that it were today!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an established fact. Do not permit Satan to disturb your joyful assurance nor defeat your positive testimony concerning a living Savior. Meet any doubts or questions with affirmations of faith. “You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart.”

“ . . . Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures . . . he was buried . . . he rose again the third day according to the scriptures,” I Corinthians 15:3-4. **“Wherefore comfort one another with these words,”** I Thessalonians 4:17.

Questions

1. What is resurrection?
2. Why do men tend to deny a bodily resurrection?
3. How are we saved by the life of Jesus?
4. Why must one believe that Jesus is alive in order to be saved?
5. What does Romans 4:25 mean to you?
6. How does Jesus' resurrection give us a living hope? .
7. How can we be sure that Jesus has risen?
8. How is His resurrection a “firstfruits”?
9. When will we be raised from death?
10. How has this study helped you?