

## THE GLORIOUS RESURRECTION OF CHRIST (I Cor. 15:1-8)

The Christian Gospel is founded upon the Lord Jesus. It is the only true religion for Jesus made it abundantly clear, **Jn. 14:6** *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* ... Jesus is not one of many ways to God, for He is the *only* way, **Acts 4:12** *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved ... and salvation comes through knowing, believing and understanding personally that God so loved you that He gave His only-begotten Son to die in your place at Calvary to take away your sins. ... You can be as good as you could ever hope to be, but if Jesus Christ is not your Saviour and Lord, Heaven will not be your eternal destination.*

To many it is a negative message and unfairly restrictive. Surely, they say, if you worship whoever you choose to worship, in whatever way you want to worship, that's enough! No, it's not for even though there are a multiplicity of idols and objects of worship, God's message is clear, **Ex. 20:3** *Thou shalt have no other gods before me ... Is. 43:11* *I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour ... 45:5* *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me ... He is not called by another name in another religion for there is only one God, Who is the only Saviour.*

In highlighting the uniqueness of the Gospel, Paul emphasised to the Corinthian believers, **I Cor. 15:1** *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; <sup>2</sup> By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received. ... On this Easter Sunday morning, that is what we are gathered here for, "Jesus Christ is alive today, I know, I know it's true". We have not seen Him with our own eyes. Neither have we touched Him with our hands ... but we know Jesus Christ came into this world, He died on a cross, He was buried, and He rose again.*

Can you remember before you became a Christian what you thought of it all? ... You may have grappled with some aspects, - and you may well *continue* to grapple with some aspects, - but the fundamentals of the faith you have secured for you know that Jesus Christ died for you, and He is your Saviour and Lord. ... You now have a personal relationship with Him for He knows your name ... and your name was upon His heart when He died for you at Calvary. Jesus did not die *hoping* you would believe in Him ... Jesus died *knowing* you would believe in Him, and that is why He *did* die. He wasn't dying on the 'off-chance' anyone would believe for He had it all worked out in advance.

He knew you before you knew Him. Before you ever heard of Him, He loved you. Even when you were going your own way and ignoring Him, He loved you. When you heard about Him but didn't want to listen or to know, He loved you with the love that does not give up on you. You may have tried to stubbornly resist, but you could not stray out beyond the limit of His grace. He worked in your heart and in your life, to bring you to realise He died for you and He loves you ... and that realization brought you to become a child of God, - you invited Jesus to be your Saviour and Lord.

Now, at the same time, Paul gives a word of caution, **I Cor. 15:2** *By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.* ... That is not saying it's up to you to keep your salvation, because salvation is all about how Christ keeps you. No, what Paul was referring to is the kind of person who *thinks* they are saved, but who is not showing the evidence. In a later correspondence with the Corinthians he wrote, **II Cor. 5:17** *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* ... Becoming a Christian invokes a change, and the evidence of that change is demonstrated in your life. That change is due to your faith in the Lord Jesus for He has become your Saviour.

So, the crucifixion of Jesus began at nine o'clock in the morning, and until twelve o'clock He suffered the terrible pain, as did also the two men on either side of Him. Then at twelve o'clock, - when the sun should have been at its highest, - there was a complete darkness until three o'clock (Mt. 27:45), and during those three hours Jesus suffered the most horrendous wrath of His Father as the atonement for our sins, and then He died, having finished His work on the cross.

Then He was buried, - He was not abandoned to rot on the cross, or to be disposed of by strangers. His body was taken down from the cross by His friends ... just before the Sabbath began on the Friday evening, **Lk. 23:50** *And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor [a member of the Sanhedrin]; and he was a good man, and a just: 51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. 53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. 54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. 55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. 56 And they returned, and*

prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. ... Because there was so little time between Jesus dying at 3 pm in the afternoon, taking His dead body down from the cross, - removing the nails, wiping away the blood and stains, wrapping Him up in a certain type and length of cloth, - and carrying it with dignity along to the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, laying it in the tomb ... between all *that* being done and the start of the Sabbath, the women had only a brief time to prepare His body for burial. They had such respect and reverence for Jesus, they weren't content with rushing so they only managed to carry out the very basics before the Sabbath began. Therefore, they planned to come back early when the Sabbath was over.

When the Sabbath *was* over, they arrived at the tomb, but they went into a panic when they saw the stone rolled away and the body of Jesus gone! However, God sent an angel to them with the very personal message, **Mt. 28:5** *Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here: for he is risen. ...* What an announcement! The light was beginning to shine ... *a new light for a new day!* The angel was telling them Jesus Christ had risen from the dead! He is alive!

Wouldn't you have loved someone to have been there to see the very moment Jesus opened His eyes, and came back to life ... just to see how it happened, - His actual resurrection? The last those women saw of Jesus was, - before the Sabbath began, - Him laid out on a slab in a tomb. His eyes closed in death, no movement in His body, His body was cold. When they left Him, that's how He was. I can see them ... Just before they left ... I can see them standing quietly together, tears in their eyes, with their beautiful memories of Jesus. They did not want to leave Him, but they had to before the Sabbath began. ... They stood looking at Him for as long as they dare ... but then they *had* to go.

*However*, - and we continue reading, - **I Cor. 15:3** ... *Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ... that's the victory on the cross where He dealt with our sin ... <sup>4</sup> And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day. ...* He had also won the victory over the grave for He was alive!

Then Paul leads us from the resurrection of the Saviour to another great truth, **I Cor. 15:20** *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. ...* If Jesus did not rise from the dead, He is no different to any other religious leader ... but He *did* rise from the tomb, and *that* has repercussions for God's people ... this is how Paul explains it, **Rom. 10:9** *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. ...* And that was the testimony of the early

Church, as Paul indicates, **I Cor. 15:5** he [*the risen Jesus*] was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: **6** After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. **7** After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. **8** And last of all he was seen of me also.

Jesus taught the truth of His resurrection to the two on their way to Damascus, **Lk. 24:26** Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? **27** And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. ... And it is what Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, **Acts 2:24** Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death.

The Gospel is that Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried, and He rose again from the dead ... and here is the impact it has on us ... First of all, *in the past* He defeated death, sin and the devil at Calvary, - that has been done, and it does not need repeating. ... *In the present*, - as a consequence of His victory over death, - He is working and reigning through His people, who are His Church, His body. ... Then, *in the future*, here is what will happen and how we shall be part of it, **II Cor. 4:14** Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus *shall raise up us also by Jesus*. ... Just as *Jesus* rose from the dead, *He* is our guarantee *we* shall rise also, **I Cor. 15:23** every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. ...

He conquered death ... that does not mean we won't die, but what it does mean is that death does not annul/cancel our fellowship and relationship with God. Death is the consequence of sin, - **Rom. 6:23** *the wages of sin is death*, - we die because of sin ... But for the Christian, death is the doorway *out of* this present temporary state and into the eternal presence of God *forever*. We shall not move on to another stage, and another, and another ... when the Lord calls us onto Himself, we shall never be parted from Him ... And that is all based upon the fact Jesus Himself first arose from the dead ... He, in that way, was the 'firstfruits' ... so that because *He* rose from the dead, *we shall* also. ... Of course, we mourn when we lose a loved one, but when that loved one is a child of God, they are in Glory with Jesus and we shall see them again! ... That is one of the great hopes of our resurrection!

Here is something else Paul said, **I Thess. 4:14** *if we believe that Jesus died and rose again*, ... here is the promise, *even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*. When? ... when Jesus returns. Where? ... to this earth, where Christ will reign. And how can He make that happen that they will come back with Him? ... Their bodies were placed in a coffin and laid in a grave ... aye, but

when Jesus returns ... because He defeated death by rising from the dead, so also, - when He comes back again, - **I Thess. 4:16** ... **the dead in Christ shall rise first** ... They will not be in their old bodies for they will have decayed and turned into dust, but they will rise to meet the Lord in the air and they will be clothed in the immortal ... they will be the first to rise when Jesus returns ...

Do you understand all this? ... No, you don't ☺, and neither do I, and neither did Paul, for he wrote, **I Cor. 15:51** Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, **52** In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. **53** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality

Then when Jesus returns to this earth, and after those Christians who have died rise to meet Him, **17** Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ... Our resurrection will be because of *His* resurrection, **II Cor. 4:14** Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus ... **I Thess. 5:9** For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

What a subject, *the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ!*

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won!