

## Why Did Christ Rise From the Dead?

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

In one of the villages of Northern India a missionary was preaching in a marketplace. As he closed, a Muslim gentleman came up and said, "You must admit we have one thing you have not, and it is better than anything you have." The missionary smiled and said, "I should be pleased to hear what it is." The Muslim said, "You know when we go to Mecca we at least find a coffin. But when you Christians go to Jerusalem, which is your Mecca, you find nothing but an empty grave."

The missionary just smiled and said, "That is just the difference. Mohammed is dead; Mohammed is in the coffin. And false systems of religion and philosophy are in their coffins, but Jesus Christ is alive. He is risen from the dead and all power in heaven and on earth is given unto Him. That is our hope."

A living Christ means we can have a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3). Jesus Christ is not dead. He is alive forevermore. What a difference this makes! The resurrection of Christ is the hallmark of Christianity. It is also the cornerstone of the Gospel message as we will see in this study. If you take away the resurrection of Christ Christianity will collapse under lies, empty promises, and a false Christ.

Without the resurrection we can be sure that there would have been no Christian church. However, with the assurance that Christ was alive, the disciples and early church went forth everywhere proclaiming the resurrection of Christ, and multitudes became believers in their living Lord. The importance of the resurrection in the preaching of the early church is quickly seen by scanning the book of Acts (Acts 2: 22-36; 3: 13-18; 4: 10-12,33; 5:29-32; 10:37-43; 13:27-37; 17:23,30-32; 23:6; 24:14-16; 25:19; 26:68,22-23).

Similarly, in the epistles the resurrection is paramount (Romans 1:3,4; 6:39; I Corinthians 15:1-58; II Corinthians 4:10-14; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 1:19-23; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 2:12; I Thessalonians 1:10; 4:14; I Timothy

3:16; II Timothy 2:8-11; Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 1:21; etc.). Even where the resurrection is not explicitly emphasized, it is always assumed. The final book, Revelation, opens with Christ's identification of Himself as "the first begotten of the dead," and as the one "that liveth, and was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore" (Revelation 1:5, 18).

In this study we want to address the major purposes or reasons of the resurrection of Christ so we might conform in our minds and hearts why Jesus rose from the dead. Does the Resurrection of Jesus Christ really matter? Why is the resurrection of Christ so important? Why did Christ rise from the dead?

## **1. To validate His person (who He was)**

Romans 1:4

"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

The word "declared" means to "mark out, define, determine, decree" and suggests validation or confirmation. The text is saying that Christ's mighty miracles were performed in the power of the Holy Spirit and His miracles bore witness to the fact that He was the Son of God (John 20:30-31). Of course, the greatest miracle of all, that proved He was the Son of God, was His resurrection from the dead. This Bible passage also teaches that Christ was officially validated as the Son of God "by the resurrection from the dead."

In other words, His resurrection from the dead also bore witness to His personal claims to be God's Son. He was "declared" to be the Son of God "by the resurrection from the dead." This means the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ officially sanctioned or validated His claims to Sonship and deity.

We know that Christ, as the Son of God, in His eternal being (Col. 1:17), shares the same existence with both the Father and Spirit. He repeatedly made the claim that He came down from Heaven as God's Son (John 6:40, 41, 42, 51, 58). As the Son of God, Christ was linked to the Godhead, since all three members share the same existence as God. Christ's sonship therefore substantiates His deity as being part of the triune Godhead.

Colossians 2:9 says this of Christ:

“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”

This means Christ was part of the eternal Godhead even when He took on the form of a body. Jesus Christ was God with arms and legs! He was the only true and living God. His entrance into the world as the Son of God meant that He was part of the eternal divinity, deity, or Godhead. The Son of God shared God’s eternal existence. If a person is the Son of God, then He is God!

Many years ago, an old saint reminded me of a Bible conference he attended. Dr. Albert Hughes was the speaker. As he reminisced, he shared these words with me. “I remember sitting on an old wooden bench on the corner of the pavilion. Beside the bench was a large tree. I can tell you which tree it is to this day. I remember sitting there in the summer evening. The crickets and night bugs were making their sounds. It was as if God was trying to speak to me. Then Albert Hughes stood before the microphone and announced his message for the evening as ‘The Glory of the Godhead.’ I remember the message well. It brought the glories of Christ, as God’s Son, to my attention and heart like never before. There in the stillness of the evening, with the surround sounds of the night insects, I saw Christ as the Son of God high and lifted up as part of the eternal Godhead who had come to save my soul.”

Christ shared in the glory of the Godhead and Christ’s bodily resurrection declares, validates, substantiates, and proves that He was the Son of God and a member of the eternal Godhead. The cults are notorious for rejecting both the deity and bodily resurrection of Christ for both doctrines are inseparably bound together. Christ promised He would rise from the dead bodily.

Jesus said in John 2:19-21:

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.

Christ’s claims for being the Son of God and deity rested upon His own physical and bodily resurrection. To deny the bodily resurrection of Christ is

to make Christ into a liar and to discredit His claims for being the Son of God and God Himself in the flesh (John 1:1, 14).

The point is this. If Christ has not physically or bodily risen from the grave, as He said, then He is a liar who cannot be God. The cults and modernists know this, and therefore they try and create theories that undermine the bodily resurrection of Christ. Below are some of the major theories that have been proposed through the years.

➤ Stolen Body Theory

Some early opponents of Christianity claimed that the followers of Jesus secretly stole His body from the tomb and then invented the whole story of the resurrection.

➤ Missing Body Theory

Some suggest that someone else removed the body from the tomb without Jesus' followers knowing about it.

➤ Swoon Theory

This theory says that Jesus did not really die, He only swooned, therefore the disciples saw only a revived or resuscitated Christ. Christ was nailed to a cross and suffered from shock, pain and loss of blood. But instead of dying, He only fainted (swooned) from exhaustion. When He was placed in the tomb, He was still alive and the disciples, mistaking Him for dead, buried Him alive. After several hours, He revived in the coolness of the tomb, arose, and departed.

➤ Drugged-Body Theory

This is similar to the Swoon Theory, except that the apparent death on the cross is induced by a drug.

➤ Twin Theory

There are two main versions of this theory, both based on the idea that Jesus had a twin brother. In one version the twin dies on the cross instead of Jesus, and in the other version the twin appears as an impostor after Jesus dies.

➤ Vision Theory

The basic idea of this theory is that the earliest belief in the resurrection was based on an illusionary vision or a ghostlike apparition of Jesus. The people saw a vision of Christ but not the actually bodily resurrection of Christ.

➤ Hypnosis Theory

Some people have suggested that visions of a risen Jesus could have been caused by post-hypnotic suggestion. It's conjectured that if Christ could use hypnosis to cure people, then perhaps He could have also used it to implant a post-hypnotic suggestion into the subconscious of his followers.

➤ Spiritual Resurrection Theory

Others suggest that Jesus only experienced a spiritual (rather than bodily) resurrection. According to this view, his old body either vanished or was removed by God, and he reappeared in his eternal spiritual form.

All these theories can be easily debunked. They are the conclusions of liberal and unbelieving scholarship and not the Bible. The Bible only teaches physical resurrection (1 Cor. 15:22-23) and the New Testament insists that belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ is a necessary condition of the Christian faith. In short, no one can be saved apart from believing in the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Romans 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.”

The bodily resurrection of Christ is vitally important. Acts 13:34-35 and 37, which is based on Psalm 16:10, declares that Jesus' body would not see corruption (decay). This indicates that Christ's body was prepared for resurrection after three days. We know Jesus had a physical body upon resurrection because He could be touched (Matthew 28:9; John 20:27, 29). He Himself said He was a physical person and not a spirit (Luke 24:37-40) and He also had the ability to eat (Luke 24:41-43; Acts 10:40-41).

The empty tomb has never been explained except by the physical and bodily resurrection of Christ. The tomb had been sealed with the Roman seal. It was guarded by a detachment of Roman soldiers and a great stone was rolled in front of its entrance (Matt. 27:65-66). Nevertheless, on the first Easter morning the soldiers fled in terror as a mighty angel rolled away the stone and the body had vanished from the grave.

The importance of the *physical* resurrection cannot be overstated. Only the physical resurrection validates Christ's claims, which He made as the Son of God, while here on earth (John 2:19-21) and confirms that He actually is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4) - the very One who shares God's existence. Only the *bodily* resurrection of Christ can give us the promise of salvation and security from hell. This is because all of Christ's promises regarding salvation and eternal life (John 3:16-18, 36) are built upon the foundation of who He claimed to be and has proven Himself to be by His miraculous bodily resurrection.

The promises He gave regarding salvation are only true if He is the Son of God, who has physically risen from the dead, as He promised (John 2:19; Matt. 27:62-63; Luke 24:6). Both the person and promises of Christ rest upon His bodily resurrection from the grave. Lastly, only the *bodily* resurrection assures us of our own future bodily resurrection from the grave (1 Cor. 15:22-23; John 14:19).

The point is this, Christ's miracles along with the greatest miracle of all, His bodily resurrection from the dead, validates or substantiates His personal claims to Sonship and deity.

John 20:30-31

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

The fact that Jesus literally, physically, and bodily rose from the dead verified His personal claims to be the Son of God and a member of the eternal Godhead. It proves that He is Lord!

Romans 14:9 declares:

“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”

“He is Lord, He is Lord  
He is risen from the dead  
And He is Lord.  
Every knee shall bow,  
Every tongue confess,  
That Jesus Christ is Lord.”

Jesus said in John 10:30:

“I and my Father are one.”

In John 8:23-24 Jesus warned:

“Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”

The bodily resurrection proves once-for-all and forever that Jesus Christ is God. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead verified His claims that He was indeed God’s only begotten Son and a member of the Trinity (“declared to be the son of God ... by the resurrection from the dead” – Rom. 1:4). The resurrection of Christ was proof positive that He was God’s Son who had come to rescue us from hell. Without Christ’s resurrection we would never know that He truly was the Son of God who came save us. If Jesus had not risen from the dead and validated His Sonship, we would never know that

John 3:16 was true. The fact that He rose from the dead gives us the assurance of who He is and what He came to do.

“Thine is the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;  
Endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.  
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,  
Kept the folded grave-clothes where Thy body lay.  
Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;  
Endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.”

## **2. To vindicate His claim (what He prophesied)**

Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead authenticated who Christ was but also what He said He would do. Christ prophesied that He would rise from the dead.

John 2:18-22

“Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”

The Bible teaches that Jesus rose from the dead in order to vindicate (uphold, defend, maintain) His claim which He had made regarding His own resurrection. During His earthly ministry Christ prophesied that He would rise from the dead.

Matthew 16:21

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”



Christ had to rise from the dead to fulfill this resurrection promise and claim or else He would be shown to be a fraud. The truth is this. If Christ has not risen from the dead as He promised, then He is a liar and lunatic. However, since there is irrevocable evidence that Christ has risen from the dead this substantiates Christ's claims and authenticates His person. Jesus Christ was who He said He was and did what He claimed He would do.

Thomas Jefferson was an important man in the history of our nation. However, Jefferson could not accept the miraculous elements in Scripture. He edited his own special version of the Bible in which all references to the supernatural were deleted. When editing the Gospels, he confined himself solely to the moral teachings of Jesus. The closing words of Jefferson's Bible are these: "There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone at the mouth of the sepulcher and departed."

Thank God that is not the way the story really ends!

Matthew 28:6

"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Christ rose from the dead to vindicate His own prophecy regarding His physical resurrection from the dead. As a result, Christ has shown to the entire world that He is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4) and that His promises regarding salvation and eternal life are true (1 John 5:11-12, 20).

"Blest morning, whose first dawning rays  
Beheld the Son of God.  
Arise triumphant from the grave,  
And leave His dark abode!  
Wrapt in the silence of the tomb  
The great Redeemer lay.  
Till the revolving skies had brought  
The third, the appointed day.  
Hell and the grave combined their force  
To hold our Lord in vain;  
Suddenly the Conqueror arose,

And burst their feeble chain.  
To thy great name, Almighty Lord,  
We sacred honours pay,  
And loud hosannas shall proclaim  
The triumphs of the day.”

### **3. To verify our salvation (what He did)**

Jesus Christ rose from the dead in order to prove He had paid the penalty for our sins and can now save us from hell. The Gospel includes the message that Jesus rose again the third day to assure us that our sins are forgiven and that we are saved.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

D. L. Moody, the great evangelist of the nineteenth century, assigned some ministerial students to conduct evangelistic tent meetings throughout the city of Chicago. The students were to preach nightly sermons as a means of winning souls for Christ and to practice their preaching. Dr. Moody personally showed up one night unannounced at one of the meeting places to hear one of his fledgling young ministers preach the gospel. The young man did quite well expounding on the death of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world. At the close of the service, he announced that everyone should come back the next night when he would “preach on the resurrection of Christ.” After the people left, Moody said, “Young man, many of these people will not be back tomorrow night and consequently have only heard half the gospel!”

The Bible teaches that Christ died for our sins (paying sin’s penalty), He was buried (proving the finality of His death), and rose again the third day (providing evidence that the Father had accepted the Son’s sacrifice). The resurrection of Christ is part of the Gospel message for His resurrection gives the proof that Jesus Christ really did die “for our sins” or pay the necessary redemptive price which was to bear our judgment for sin (“bare

our sins” – 1 Pet. 2:24) and satisfy God’s requirement for sin. Sin must be punished. So, Jesus was punished for our own sins when He died on the cross. He took the wrath of God for us. He experienced our Hell, so we don’t have to go to Hell.

Jesus was “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5) and was made “an offering for sin” (Isa. 53:10). He was “made sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus died in our place, taking upon Himself the penalty for sin, which we deserved, so that we might go free. Let us never forget this. Christ experienced the death penalty for us so we might experience deliverance from sin’s penalty which was an eternal, dark, fiery, hell (“the wages of sin is death” - Rom. 6:23).

Now here is the glorious truth. The resurrection is the proof that Jesus paid the full penalty for our sins and that the Father has accepted His sacrifice on our behalf. In short, Jesus rose again to prove to the entire world that the Father had accepted His sacrifice for sin and that He can now deliver salvation to all mankind.

1 Corinthians 15:17-19

“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

The Bible makes it very clear that without the resurrection of Christ we would still be “in our sins” (without forgiveness and acquittal before God). This is a terrible position to be in today. To have our sins hanging over our heads means the sure judgment of God in the next life. We would die in our sins and go to hell (“perished”). We wouldn’t have any hope in the next life but only live a miserable and hopeless existence in this life like the unsaved people of this world (“we are of all men most miserable”). This is how important the resurrection of Christ is to our salvation.

The resurrection is a key link in God’s saving program for without the resurrection of Christ we would die and spend eternity in hell. This is because we would have no acquittal or acceptance before God. If Christ had not risen from the dead, there would be no proof that the Father had

accepted His Son's sacrifice for sin upon the cross and that we were freed from sin's penalty. There would be no evidence and assurance that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins to rescue us from hell and damnation. There would be no proof or pledge of our justification before God.

Christ had to rise from the dead to provide the world with the assurance that the Father had accepted His Son's sacrifice for sin. Without Christ rising from the dead and going back to Heaven, as our High Priest, there would be no evidence or guarantee that we are accepted before God's presence in Heaven.

“Now let the heavens be joyful,  
Let earth her song begin,  
Let the round world keep triumph,  
And all that is therein.  
Let all things seen and unseen  
Their notes in gladness blend,  
For Christ the Lord hath risen,  
Our Joy that hath no end.”

Romans 4:24-25 declares:

“But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences (THE PENALTY WAS PAID for our salvation), and was raised again for our justification” (THE GUARANTEED WAS MADE for our salvation).

The resurrection provides the guarantee and assurance that we have justification (legal acceptance) before God (based upon Christ's death – Rom. 5:9). This is because Jesus Christ is alive representing us before the Father's throne as fully acquitted, righteous, and forever saved from sin's penalty which is the damnation of hell (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).

Romans 8:34 asks:

“Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

In God's courtroom the resurrection becomes the EVIDENCE and PROOF that the Father has accepted the Son's sacrifice on the cross. It's the GUARANTEE of our salvation and justified (legally righteous) position before God.

Jesus was raised from the dead to secure or guarantee our justification before God by representing us in Heaven as forgiven and justified on the basis of His death upon Calvary's cross. It's in this sense that He was "raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). The resurrection assures us that justification has been applied to every Gospel believer and that God now accepts them as fully, finally, and forever in His presence.

We must understand that without the resurrection of Christ there could be no certainty of redemption, justification, or salvation from sin's penalty which is hell. In any court of law there is a need for undisputable evidence to prove that someone is guilty or innocent. We might view Romans 4:25 as the evidence which is needed to prove that Jesus Christ paid for the penalty of sin and that the Father has approved His sacrifice. The resurrection is God's evidence or proof that Christ's sacrifice has been accepted by the Father and that man can now be accepted in His presence through Jesus Christ's payment for sin.

This text reveals that Christ was delivered by the Father to death "for our offences" (trespasses). One again we see how Christ paid the necessary fine or penalty for all of our sins which caused us to violate God's holy commands. The Bible also says that Christ "was raised again for our justification." At this point we must explain the Biblical teaching of justification and how it is connected with the subject of Christ's resurrection.

The Bible teaches that the death of Christ is the *source* of our redemption (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14 – "redemption through his blood") and justification before God (Rom. 5:9 – "justified by his blood") while the resurrection of Christ becomes the *proof* of our redemption and justification before God (Romans 4:25 - "raised again for our justification"). Again, this is what Romans 4:25 is teaching. We know there can be no justification without redemption (Rom. 3:24); therefore, the bodily resurrection of Christ must

be God's validation (confirmation or proof) that the redemption price (Christ's payment for sin – 1 Cor. 6:20) on the cross was accepted by the Father, which resulted in our justified position before God's presence. The resurrection of Christ both ensures and secures our justified standing or position before God for "it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34). What assurance!

Hebrews 7:25

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Because Jesus rose from the dead and went back to the Father to intercede for us, we can have the assurance that the Father has accepted the saving value of Christ's death on our behalf. Jesus is with the Father today! He is not in the grave. Therefore, the presence of the risen Lord in Heaven gives us the assurance of safety and acceptance before God (1 John 2:1-2). No cult, modernist, or liberal will ever steal this truth away from the hearts of genuine converts to Christianity. The presence of the resurrected Jesus in Heaven demonstrates to all who believe in Him that the Father is satisfied with His son's sacrifice. The risen life of Christ in Heaven gives every Gospel believer the peace of mind that the Father has accepted His Son's payment for sin and that we are now accepted in the beloved Son (Eph. 1:6).

The fact that Jesus rose from the dead and is now in Heaven interceding on our behalf, as our High Priest, declaring His death as the sufficient payment for sin, gives proof that we are saved and justified in God's presence. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ rose from the dead to become our High Priest in Heaven, proving that He paid the penalty for our sins in full, and that we are completely acquitted, forgiven, and justified in God's sight. It's in this sense that we are "saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10).

In short, Jesus Christ rose from the dead to prove that the Father had accepted the redemptive price (Christ's ransom price for sin – 1 Cor. 7:23) and granted us a legal justified standing before God's presence. Jesus was raised from the dead to *secure* or *guarantee* our justification before God. It's in this sense that He was "raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

In raising Christ from the dead God testified that He was completely satisfied (“the propitiation for our sins” - 1 John 2:2) with the redemptive work of Christ and could justify us (declare us legally acquitted and righteous) in His presence. Without the resurrection of Christ there could be no certainty of redemption, justification, or salvation from sin’s penalty which is hell. We would remain in a state of unforgiveness and separation before God and have no advantage over unbelievers (1 Cor. 15:17-18). Christ, Christianity, and Christians would be a hoax.

Dr. Ian Richard Paisley said:

“Christianity is founded on the empty tomb. Its throbbing vitality is the fact that the Christ who bled and suffered on the Cross is gloriously risen from the dead and is alive for evermore.”

“Death could not keep its prey,  
Jesus, my Saviour!  
He tore the bars away,  
Jesus, my Lord!  
Up from the grave He arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes.  
He arose a Victor o'er the dark domain,  
And He lives for ever with His saints to reign!  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!”

1 Corinthians 15:14

“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”

If Christ did not rise from the dead, then our faith would be no different than people who place their faith in a dead Buddha or dead Mohammed to save them. You see, the resurrection of Christ is unique to all other religions in the world. Do you know why? All the other leaders of Eastern religions are dead!! But Jesus is alive! And this adds substance to our faith! Jesus is alive and for this reason my faith has a solid foundation. It rests upon a living Christ who is the Son of God, who is God of very God, and who now represents me before the Father in Heaven, providing me with the forgiveness and justification I need in His holy presence.

There is a cemetery located a half mile west of Hillsboro, North Dakota, which is dominated by a large statue of Christ hanging on a huge brown cross. A preacher passing by, seeing that startling figure in white marble, spontaneously whispered this prayer of gratitude: "Thank God, my Savior is not there!"

Jesus is no longer on the cross. He rose again from the dead and the bodily resurrection of Christ is important! It is *proof positive* that Christ's redemptive price ("the precious blood of Christ" - 1 Peter. 1:18-19) is accepted in Heaven and that "by faith in Christ Jesus" (His death and resurrection - Gal. 3:26) we can be sure that we are eternally justified and acquitted in God's sight (Romans 8:33-34). Today the resurrected, living, and interceding Christ gives us the assurance of our acceptance before God (Rom. 7:25; Rom. 8:34). Christ's death has the power to save us (Rom. 5:9 – "justified by his blood") and His risen life has the power to keep us (Rom. 5:10 – "saved by his life").

A Mohammedan and a Christian were discussing their religions and had agreed that both Mohammed and Christ were prophets. Where, then, lay the difference? The Christian illustrated it this way: "I came to a crossroads and I saw a dead man and a living man. Which one did I ask for directions?" The response came quickly, "The living one, of course." "Why, then," asked his friend, "do you send me to Mohammed who is dead, instead of Christ who is alive?" This is the basic difference between Christ and every other religious leader. All the others came into the world, lived, and died—but none of them lived again. The resurrection of Christ was the one event that persuaded His disciples once for all that He was the Son of God who could save them forever.

John 20:8

"Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed."

Thomas said, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). The Bible teaches that Christ's resurrection makes available the benefits or provisions of His salvation and justification, which He has



provided for every person when dying upon the cross. In other words, because Christ rose from the dead, we can be sure that His death can bring every believer into a justified position before God. Without Christ's resurrection Christ's claims are worthless. Without Christ's resurrection we have no guarantee of our salvation and legal standing before God. Jesus was raised again "for our justification" (Rom. 3:24) which means He rose again for the purpose of proving and validating our justification before God. This means He was raised to guarantee our justification before God, and He assures us of this standing by His present priestly ministry on our behalf in Heaven (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34).

A receipt marked "paid in full" is given to acknowledge or show that a debt has been paid in total. The resurrection of Christ was the receipt that God gave to the world to inform mankind that Jesus paid the penalty for sin (our debt) in full and that Jesus can now save us completely and forever (Heb. 7:25). The resurrection proves that Christ's sacrifice is accepted and that our salvation is completed. Think of it this way. If just one of our sins had not been paid for, when Jesus died on the cross, then He would not have come forth from the tomb. The receipt marked "paid" could not be given. But the fact that Jesus came out of the tomb signifies that He did sacrifice Himself for all of our sins providing total forgiveness, acquittal, and acceptance before God's throne. The resurrection is the cornerstone of Christianity. It verifies and assures us of Christ's saving work on the cross.

The resurrection of Christ is the seal of a finished work! The resurrection is God's "Amen!" to Christ's statement, "It is finished" (John 19:30). We can have the assurance that "It's finished" (John 19:30) because Christ rose from the dead officially declaring that the Father had accepted His sacrifice as payment for sin. Dear friend, a dead Christ on the cross or in the tomb cannot save us! Christ had to rise again to guarantee our salvation (justified position) before the Father's presence.

An agnostic professor once said to a little girl who believed in the Lord Jesus, "There have been many who have claimed to be Christ. How can you be sure who told the truth? Which one do you believe?" Without hesitation the youngster replied, "I believe in the One who rose from the dead!" The same is true for each one of us today who have embraced the

claims of Jesus Christ. We believe in the only One who has been raised from the dead! Have you embraced the claims of Christ and allowed the living Lord Jesus Christ to save you from hell and give you eternal life?

#### **4. To vanquish death (what He promised)**

Philip Henry used to call the Lord's Day the queen of days, the pearl of the week, and observed it accordingly. His common salutation of his family or friends, on the Lord's day in the morning, was that of the primitive Christians--"The Lord is risen, He is risen indeed;" making it his chief business on that day to celebrate the memory of Christ's resurrection; and he would say sometimes, "Every Lord's day is a true Christian's Easter day."

We wonder about the life of the man whose epitaph read:

"Don't bother me now  
Don't bother me never  
I want to be dead  
For ever and ever."

The truth is this. Because of Christ's resurrection no person will remain physically dead forever and forever.

In John 5:28-29 Jesus taught:

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

In this early revelation of God's resurrection program Jesus was simply teaching the universality of the resurrection of all people whether saved or unsaved. The details and timing regarding His resurrection program would be filled in later within the epistles (1 Cor. 15:22-23; Rev. 20:5-6). The obvious point Jesus was making is that because of His own resurrection He would have the authority to raise the dead.

Jesus rose from the grave in order to vanquish, defeat, or overcome both physical and spiritual death for His followers. Jesus Christ triumphed over death so those who embrace His claims might also triumph over death.

John 11:25-26

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

a. Christ vanquished physical death.

Christ is “the resurrection” for those who have believed and are physically dead. He gives them the promise of a bodily resurrection like His which is based upon His own power to raise the dead. When Christ said, “I am the resurrection, and the life” He was saying that He was the source of their future bodily resurrection. Jesus began His discussion by promising physical life to His followers (“though he were dead, yet shall he live”) based upon the power He has to raise the dead (“I am the resurrection, and the life”). Jesus was referring to physical life at this point.

A seed taken from a 600-year-old rattle necklace in South America has germinated and grown into a plant. The seed was imprisoned in a nutshell, as part of the rattle necklace taken from a tomb in Santa Rosa de Tastil. The seed germinated in 1968 and has grown to six feet and flowered. I have often said at the graveside that in every flower there is the promise of resurrection. And there is! Spring gives us the hope and promise of a physical and bodily resurrection that is based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ who conquered the realm of death.

Christ’s resurrection assures us of our own bodily resurrection. The Scriptures clearly teach this.

1 Corinthians 15:20-21

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”

Jesus Christ is called the “firstfruits” of a greater harvest to come. The “firstfruits” in Israel always anticipated a harvest. In the Old Testament they had the festival of firstfruits. The people would bring the first sheaf of grain to the Lord. This meant that there would be more to come, otherwise it could not be the first fruits. The expression “firstfruits” is an Old Testament expression (Ex. 23:16, 19; Lev 23:9–14). It’s used as a guarantee of more harvest to come.

Paul used this analogy to represent Christ’s resurrection and the believer’s resurrection. Christ was like the firstfruits that Israel presented to the Lord. However, the harvest that followed anticipates the resurrection of redeemed believers who are in Christ. Other believers would rise from the dead just as Jesus Christ did. Paul used the first fruit metaphor to assert that the resurrection of believers is absolutely inevitable. In other words, Christ’s resurrection would not occur without our future resurrection. Christ’s resurrection requires our resurrection, because His resurrection was part of a larger resurrection program where Christ’s redeemed will be raised from the dead. What a great future promise and hope we have all because Jesus Christ defeated the realm of death and rose again from the grave (Rev. 1:18).

Dr. Harry Ironside frequently emphasized to his friends and relatives that he didn’t want an elaborate funeral of an expensive tombstone when the Lord took him to Glory. He requested that his final resting place be marked only by a plain, wooden slab reading which said: “Harry A. Ironside, Sinner Saved By Grace, Moved until Renovated and Repaired.”

Theologically, the destiny of Christians is bound up in the destiny of Christ. Since Christ rose from the dead, we too are given the promise of a bodily resurrection like His. We will receive a new body that is “fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). God will bring sweetness out of bitterness and beauty out of ashes on resurrection day.

In one of his lighter moments, Benjamin Franklin penned his own epitaph. It seems he must have been influenced by Paul’s teaching of the resurrection of the body. Here’s what he wrote:

The Body of B. Franklin, Printer  
Like the Cover of an old Book  
Its contents torn out,  
And stript of its Lettering and Guilding,  
Lies here, Food for Worms,  
  
But the Work shall not be wholly lost:  
For it will, as he believ'd,  
Appear once more  
In a new and more perfect Edition,  
Corrected and amended by the Author.

Other verses present the truth that a believer's resurrection is based upon Christ's own resurrection. The very words that came from the lips of Jesus Christ verify that others will be made physically alive based upon His own resurrection and life.

John 14:19

"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

Christ's resurrection becomes the pledge of our own resurrection. Jesus gives this wonderful promise. Since He was raised from the dead His followers would also be raised from the dead. This is because He has the power and authority (John 11:25; Rev. 1:18) to raise people from the realm of death. He is Lord over the realm of death. In fact, He is Lord of all!

As a young man, D. L. Moody was called upon suddenly to preach a funeral sermon. He hunted all through the Four Gospels trying to find one of Christ's funeral sermons but searched in vain. He found that Christ broke up every funeral He ever attended by raising the dead! Death could not exist where He was. When the dead heard His voice, they sprang to life.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 also speaks of our bodily resurrection.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The sting of death is sin; and the strength of

sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

At the Rapture, God’s New Testament saints who have died will receive a resurrected body and those who are still alive will be changed instantaneously. This is the victory that Christ has promised to His redeemed followers because of His own death and resurrection. It’s a rapture and resurrection victory over physical death and the grave which leads to eternal bliss and joy with the presence of Christ (“and so shall we ever be with the Lord” – 1 Thess. 4:17).

Both living believers (“we shall not all sleep” – vs. 51) and those who have already died in the Lord (“the dead shall be raised” – vs. incorruptible” – vs. 52) will be instantaneously changed. Together we will escape the realm of death and the grave. The living believers will have escaped the realm of death and the grave through rapture. The saints who have died throughout the Church Age will escape death and the grave through resurrection. Together our mortal bodies will be changed, we will put on immortality, death will be swallowed up in victory, and we will sing the victory song over death and the grave!

Yes, both the living saints and dead bodies of God’s Church saints will experience a victory over the realm of death. This victory will be a transformation of their own bodies. Death and the grave will not overcome their bodies. Death will be swallowed up in victory! What a day of victory it will be! We’ll sing and shout the victory! The believer’s transformation of his body will be a trumpet note of victory.

In verse 54 Paul is speaking about victory over the grave (physical resurrection and transformation) but in verses 55-57 he seems to be speaking of the victory we have over spiritual death and God’s wrath. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (1 Cor. 15:55). The term “grave” is literally “hades” and Paul seems to be emphasizing that through the Gospel (Christ’s death and resurrection) we are delivered from spiritual death and “hades” (the place of departed spirits).

Why does Paul mention this in view of the resurrection of God's saints? It's because our spiritual deliverance becomes the basis for our physical deliverance. You cannot have one without the other. The victory note of redemptive deliverance from God's judgment (hades) reassures us that we will also receive redemptive salvation in relation to our bodies by receiving a new glorified body like Christ's (1 John 3:2). The shout of victory over "hades" at the time of the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:55) means that the saints will know that Christ has saved them from judgment (Hades) so that they might live with Christ in Heaven with a new, glorified body, as He promised (John 14:1-3).

Without the saint's spiritual deliverance from Hades there would no hope of any physical deliverance of their bodies from the grave and living with Christ in Heaven. This is why the saints are shouting their victory over "death" and "hades" at the resurrection and transformation day of the Rapture. Jesus bore the wages of their sins and died in their place to rescue them from "hades" so that they might be resurrected to live with Him forever in the place prepared for them with a new, redemptive body.

Instead of being part of the resurrection unto damnation or judgment we will share in the resurrection unto life and eternal bliss (John 5:29). This is because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins and delivered us from spiritual judgment. Therefore, we can have the complete confidence that we will someday be raised with a physical body like Christ's to experience our eternal heavenly inheritance (1 Pet. 1:5).

This is why Paul links the physical resurrection of God's saints with their spiritual deliverance. Our spiritual deliverance guarantees our future physical deliverance, a resurrection unto life and blessing. The shout of victory over spiritual death and Hades by God's saints at the Rapture becomes the foundation or basis for their physical victory that they have experienced in their redemptive bodies. Their deliverance from Hades provides them with the hope of living with Jesus Christ in the heavenly city with new glorified bodies (Rom. 8:17).

"In the resurrection morning,  
When the trump of God shall sound,

We shall rise, Hallelujah! we shall rise!  
Then the saints will come rejoicing  
And no tears will e'er be found,  
We shall rise, Hallelujah! we shall rise.

We shall rise, Hallelujah! we shall rise!  
Amen! We shall rise! Hallelujah!  
In the resurrection morning,  
When death's prison bars are broken,  
We shall rise, Hallelujah! We shall rise.

We shall rise, Hallelujah! we shall rise!  
Amen! We shall rise! Hallelujah!  
In the resurrection morning,  
When death's prison bars are broken,  
We shall rise, Hallelujah! We shall rise."

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 goes on to remind us:

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Death is a sting to every person who dies without Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is because unsaved people will ultimately be resurrected to live eternally in the Lake of Fire and experience God's wrath and judgment. The "strength of sin is the law" in that the Law condemns the sinner to an eternal death in the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 20:12-15

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God (*a resurrection unto judgment and damnation*); and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death (*the body*) and hell (*hades – the soul*) delivered up the dead which were in them (*to be reunited in resurrection*): and they were judged every man according to their works. And death (*reference to the body*) and hell (*hades – reference to the souls*) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."



How wonderful that the believer in Christ will escape this Second Death which is a bodily resurrection unto the suffering and judgment of God's righteous wrath. As God's saints, we have the victory over the second death. Our bodies will be transformed to live with God forever. Death holds no terror for God's children because they know their sins have been forgiven (Col. 1:14; 1 John 2:12), they stand before God in all the acceptability of His Beloved Son (Eph. 1:6), and they will be transformed to live in God's presence forever (1 Cor. 15:20, 51-58).

Because of Christ's sacrificial death (paying sin's penalty on their behalf) and victorious resurrection (proving His authority over death) God's saints will experience victory over the realm of death instead of judgment. Therefore, Paul exclaims, "thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). Through Christ's death and resurrection, we have the promise of a different resurrection unto life instead of a resurrection unto death (John 5:28-29).

The apostle Paul used the illustration of planting a seed and its germination of new life to describe the final bodily resurrection of the believer.

1 Corinthians 15:37-38

"And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."

Like a new plant coming forth from a seed, so every person will germinate with a new body on the resurrection day. In June 2006 Israeli doctors and scientists successfully germinated a 2000-year-old date palm, found at the Herodian fortress of Masada on the West Bank of the Dead Sea. The seed was tagged the Methuselah. Friends, there is coming a time when we are going to germinate and spring forth from the grave with a new body. It will be like a seed germinating and bringing forth new life.

There is a story of an 8-year-old boy who was learning in school how plants grow. He was intrigued how a tiny seed can germinate in the ground and later burst through the ground. In the same week he attended a funeral

where the pastor talked about the final resurrection of our bodies. Several days later as the family travelled past the cemetery the boy remarked "that's where they plant people" Seeds planted and bodies buried had made a connection in the boy's mind. Someday the seeds will germinate and bring forth a new body!

A closely sealed vase was found in a mummy pit in Egypt by the English traveler Wilkinson. In it were discovered a few peas, old, wrinkled, and hard as a stone. The peas were planted carefully under a glass, and at the end of 30 days, they sprang into life, after lying dormant in the dust of a tomb for almost 3,000 years. This is a faint illustration of our mortal body which will one day put on immortality. Because He lives, we shall live also!

b. Christ vanquished spiritual death.

Jesus goes on in John 11:26 to promise:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Jesus quickly moves from the realm of the physical to the spiritual as He often does in His teachings. In the last part of John 11:26, Jesus gives a wonderful promise to those who are still living. If people, who are still living physically, would believe in His death and resurrection ("whosoever liveth and believeth in me"), they would be given the promise of eternal life ("shall never die"). This promise is given since Jesus has the authority to bestow eternal life on all those who believe in Him (John 3:36; 1 John 5:11-12). If Christ had not risen from the dead, we would not have any hope of Heaven or spending eternity with God.

What a promise this is! You will never die! Jesus was referring to spiritual death or separation from God in the judgment of hell. If a person would place his faith in Jesus Christ, he would immediately be removed from the realm of spiritual death into the realm of spiritual life (Eph. 2:1-2; John 5:24). The person who believes would never be separated from God's presence and experience His punishment in hell (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 20:11-15). Life begins at the moment a person believes on Jesus Christ (John 6:47). Of course, the free gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23) is based upon the

resurrected Christ. A dead Christ could not promise physical or spiritual life to any person. Both spiritual life (related to the spirit of a person) and physical life (related to the body of a person) are based upon the resurrection of Christ.

Jesus repeatedly spoke about the promise of eternal, spiritual life while He was on earth (John 3:16-18; 5:24; 6:47; 10:28-29). There can be no question about this fact. Without a living Christ we would all be dead spiritually and have no promise of any future in God's presence. Only a living Christ can give the promise of eternal life. A dead Christ could never promise eternal life in God's presence.

Second Timothy 1:10 says that Jesus Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality (spiritual and eternal life) to light through the gospel" (the message of His death and resurrection). Paul was talking about salvation (vs. 9 – "hath saved us") and "our saviour" (vs. 10) and the "gospel" (vs. 10) which saves a person. Therefore, he has spiritual deliverance and eternal life in his thinking. The point is this, through the Gospel message of Christ's death and resurrection He has given us the assurance of eternal life and the hope of Heaven. This is because Jesus has taken the sting out of death for the believer ("hath abolished death" – "to make of no effect"). In other words, Jesus Christ has destroyed the effects of spiritual death and made it possible for us to live with God eternally.

We don't have to fear dying and going to Hell when we have Christ's life. The risen Christ has removed the sting from death. Physical death still exists, but it is no longer a threat or an enemy for Christians (1 Cor. 15:54, 55; Heb. 2:14). Death has become the door to life. We are suddenly "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). We suddenly depart "to be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:21). For believers, death is no longer a threat, no longer an enemy, no longer the end. It is the beginning! Death is a new sunrise in our lives.

It was not until the incarnation and the presentation of Christ and the Gospel message that God chose to fully make known the truth about eternal life ("hath brought life and immortality to light the gospel"). Bringing these truths to light means making them known in a very clear

fashion. Christ brought the truth about spiritual life and eternal life out into the open by the message that He shared when He was here on earth. It was a message concerning His own death and resurrection which results in eternal life. The Gospel message that was once in picture forms and shadows within the Old Testament is now brought out into the light by what Jesus spoke and what He accomplished in His own death and resurrection. The Gospel message of Christ's death for sinners and His resurrection brings all the types and shadows out of Scripture and puts a face and Savior to them!

In the midst of a storm, a little bird was clinging to the limb of a tree, seemingly calm and unafraid. As the wind tore at the limbs of the tree, the bird continued to look the storm in the face, as if to say, "Shake me off; I still have wings." Because of Christ's resurrection, each Christian can look the experience of death in the face and confidently say, "Shake me off; I still have wings. I'll live anyway." And we will! Since Jesus rose from the dead the sting is taken out of death, since we can receive the gift of eternal life, which only a living Christ can offer. We will live on forever throughout the eternal ages of time all because Christ arose, cancelled out the penalty of our sin, and has given us the free gift of eternal life.

Revelation 1:18 triumphantly declares:

"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."

In this verse, we discover that since Christ defeated death by His own victorious resurrection, He now has "the keys of hell and of death." Keys symbolize authority. This means Christ now has the authority and control over the realm of death due to His victory over death through His own resurrection. This authority is not only true regarding His own saints but those who are unbelievers. Sometimes in Scripture the two expressions of death and hades become a personification of the body (death) and the human spirit (hades), as is the case in the final resurrection of unbelievers, when both their dead bodies in the graves and their spirits in hades are brought together to be judged in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:14). Here the term "death" is an obvious personification of the graves or bodies of people whereas "hades" is referring to their actual departed spirits which

come from the place of hades. It is the body which dies and goes into the grave at the time of death (James 2:26 – “the body without the spirit is dead”) but the unsaved or unregenerate spirit lives on after death (Luke 16:23).

In one sense, Jesus Christ not only controls (has the keys) to the destiny of spirits but He also controls the graves of humanity or what will happen to the human body in the future. Jesus is in charge of everything that is related to death and dying – both the human spirit and human body! This authority is given to Him since He went through the realm of death and defeated it by rising from the dead. Someday both death (reference to the human body) and Hell (hades – reference to the spirits of wicked people) will be cast into the eternal Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:13-15). You see, Jesus not only has the keys (authority) to release believers from the place or realm of death but to judge unbelievers to an eternal place of death in the Lake of Fire. Jesus has the keys to death and He is in charge of the realm of death.

The story is altogether different for believers. Christ won the victory for them over the realm of death. Through Christ’s death and resurrection, He now has complete authority over the realm of death. Jesus took control of the realm of death, dying, and the destiny of human spirits since He has passed through death, defeated it, and rose again. One illustration of His victory over the realm of death was that He emptied the righteous compartment of hades at the time of His resurrection. The Bible teaches that Christ took all the spirits of pre-cross saints back to Heaven to live with Him in a victory march from Hades to Heaven.

Ephesians 4:8

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

“Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,  
Christ hath burst the gates of hell;  
Death in vain forbids him rise  
Christ hath opened Paradise.”

When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, He defeated the devil's power to keep men in the realm of death and the place called Hades (Abraham's bosom and inner paradise within the earth – Luke 16). When a believer dies today he goes directly to Heaven to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23 – “to depart and be with Christ is far better”). This is because when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, He defeated the devil's power and authority to keep men in the realm of death within the center of the earth.

Hebrews 2:14-15 records these victorious words for today:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Jesus destroyed the devil's power or authority over the realm of death. The Evil One no longer has the authority to keep men in the realm of spiritual death, bound to their sins, under sin's penalty, without any hope of Heaven or bodily resurrection. Satan's accusations have no weight with God. Christ's own death and subsequent resurrection defeats the devil's power and control over spiritual and physical death. The devil has no more say over the death of God's saints. He can no longer demand that they must face sin's penalty and die the sinner's death without any hope of Heaven and resurrection. This is because Jesus died and rose again from the grave.

Jesus said in Revelation 1:18:

“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.”

What an emancipating message this is for the believer! Jesus has already descended into Hell, announced Satan's doom, stolen the keys, and has risen victorious! This means we have the confident hope of eternal life. We can know that we are going to enter Heaven when we die and never experience separation from God. We can also know that we will one day be raised from the dead since Jesus has the keys to death.

1 Peter 1:3 declares:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to

his abundant mercy hath begotten us again (new birth and life) unto a lively hope (daily confidence) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Every believer can possess a living hope or daily confidence in their hearts that they are going to Heaven and will experience their full inheritance promises to them (1 Pet. 1:4-5). As God’s saints, we can possess the absolute assurance or certainty that we are going to enter Heaven when we die and receive a glorified body in the future. Why? It’s because Christ has risen from the dead and opened the pathway to Heaven for every believer (John 14:6). Through His death and resurrection Jesus Christ opened the entranceway to Glory for every Gospel believer. Jesus now has the keys and we can be sure that He is in complete charge! I know my spirit is in good hands (2 Cor. 5:8) and also my body (1 Cor. 15:22-23) for they are in the hands of the One who has defeated death, won the victory, and who now has the keys of authority to take me to Heaven and raise my body.

Why did Christ rise from the dead?

### **5. To victoriously share His life (what He gives)**

In the midst of “Desert Storm,” September 27, 1991, Ruth Dillow from Illinois received a heartbreaking message from the military. Her son, Private First Class Clayton Carpenter, had stepped on a mine in the Persian Gulf and had been killed. Mrs. Dillow wrote, “I can’t begin to describe my grief and shock. It was almost more than I could bear. For three days I wept. For three days I expressed anger. For three days I experienced true loss. For three days people tried to comfort me, to no avail because the loss was too great. However, three days after she received that message, the telephone rang. The voice on the other end was unmistakably that of Clayton. “Mom, it’s me, I’m alive!”

Ruth Dillow said, “I couldn’t believe it at first. But I recognized his voice and he really was alive.” She said, “I laughed, I cried, I felt like turning cartwheels, because my son, whom I thought was dead, was really alive. I’m sure none of you can even begin to understand how I felt.” She’s probably right in regard to you and me. In reality, her son was dead. And according to her way of thinking, her son came back from the dead.

Now think of what the original disciples and followers of Christ felt when He rose from the dead. It changed their lives forever! The same should be true of us as well. His resurrection life within us should transform and fill us with joy, satisfaction, and victory. Today Christ promises to share His resurrection life with every believer and give them victory as they rely upon His risen life and power (“the power of his resurrection” – Phil. 3:10) which is operating on the inside of them. The great union truths presented in Romans chapter six teach this to us.

Romans 6:4-5

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

Romans 6:8 goes on to say:

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”

Romans 6:11 then makes the application:

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In short, Christ rose from the dead to share or communicate His own life with ours. Christ’s life is linked to ours and we share a spiritual union together. Together with Christ! Together with the risen Christ! This is where our power lies. Paul knew that His spiritual union with Christ was the secret of victory.

Galatians 2:20

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

There is no other way to victory but the way of the risen Lord. Our spiritual tie or union with Christ allows us to draw upon the vine (John 15:1-4) and find spiritual sustenance and power for daily living. Today many Christians are trying to live by human therapies, the mind-sciences, and clinical



psychology. Dearly beloved, we don't need psychological living - we need resurrection living! We don't need self-esteem - we need Christ esteem. We don't need to meet with the pope - we need to have a meeting with the risen Christ! He is the great victor and we draw from His victory. Paul joyfully and triumphantly exclaimed, "Christ liveth in me!"

"As rays of light from yonder sun,  
The flow'rs of earth set free,  
So life and light and love came forth  
From Christ living in me.

Christ liveth in me,  
Christ liveth in me,  
Oh! what a salvation this,  
That Christ liveth in me."

## **6. To vex the lost with judgment (what He must do)**

Acts 17:30-31

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

You can't have court if the Judge is dead! Therefore, Jesus Christ rose from the dead to provide the assurance that all unbelievers will be eternally judged for their sins. Every unbeliever who rejects the salvation that Jesus Christ freely offers can be assured that they will suffer the judgment of a righteous God in hell forever since Jesus Christ rose from the dead to be their Judge. The sting of death will sting them for all eternity. The assurance of the unbeliever's judgment is based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. All future judgment is committed to the resurrected Son.

John 5:22

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."

The assurance of the unbeliever's future judgment is based upon the assurance of Christ's own resurrection. Since Christ is risen from the dead you can be sure that you will meet Him in the coming Judgment Day if you are not saved.

Many unsaved people attend church only on Easter Sunday. They come to celebrate Easter but in reality they are coming to church to celebrate their doom! Easter becomes a promise to the unsaved of their future doom and damnation! Dear friend, you can either be judged by the risen Christ or you can be saved by the risen Christ. Which do you choose? Every person must believe in the resurrection of Christ in order to be saved from hell ("and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" – Romans 10:9). If you will believe that Jesus died on the cross to save you from sin's penalty and that He rose again (1 Cor. 15:3) to guarantee your salvation and give eternal life, then you can be saved. Are you ready to be saved? Are you ready to settle the matter?

Some 2,230 miles off the coast of South America and more than 1,000 miles from its nearest neighbor island, Easter Island lies isolated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It was discovered on Easter Sunday, 1722, by the Dutch navigator Jacob Roggeveen. Only a few people now live there, but the island is an important navigational aid for aircraft crossing the Pacific. Easter Sunday and Christ's resurrection are like this island. The truth about Christ's resurrection is compared to a navigational island for people who need salvation and hope through Jesus Christ. It tells the never-ending story that Jesus is alive and ready to grant eternal life to those who by faith receive Him as their Savior. Revelation 1:18 once again reminds us that Jesus is alive forevermore! Shout it from the housetops!

"Crown Him the Lord of life,  
Who triumphed o'er the grave,  
Who rose victorious in the strife  
For those He came to save!  
His glories now we sing,  
Who died and rose on high,  
Who died eternal life to bring  
And lives that death may die."