

"Why Did Christ Rise?"

FINGER POST No. 17

THAT Christ came bodily forth alive from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, in which he was laid after his crucifixion, is the most conspicuous feature of the testimony delivered by the Apostles after his ascension. This may be seen from Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30; and many other passages. Rather than withhold their witness to this fact, they went to their death.

Christian teaching professes to continue this testimony; yet how many people could say that they believe literally in the resurrection of Christ? Even professional theologians interpret the doctrine in such a way that they need no longer hold it as a literal fact.

The reason is to be found in the unscriptural belief that "There is no death: what seems so is transition". If there is no death, there need be no resurrection from death; and belief in resurrection will be a mere tradition without roots, which will in time wither away.

Theories of atonement have also tended to undermine belief in the resurrection by minimizing the necessity for it. If Christ by dying paid our debt so that we are free, our deliverance must be due to his death alone. There is equally little need for his resurrection if the only object of his death was to influence men by a sublime example of love.

Yet the apostles teach in the plainest words that unless Christ rose, his death on the Cross was fruitless.

"If Christ be not raised, YOUR FAITH IS VAIN, ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17).

How is it that the resurrection of Christ was a necessity before human salvation was possible? Because, without a risen, living Christ (in whose crucifixion God's righteousness had previously been declared), there would have been no forgiveness of sins, and no attainment of immortality following upon his death. God cannot look upon sin. Adam's expulsion from Eden, at the beginning, and His holding sinners at arm's length ever since, exemplify His relation to sin, which is as much an established law as any physical ordinance of the universe.

1. God saves, but it is BY CHRIST, whom He makes the Saviour, by first bestowing salvation upon him for his obedience, and then giving him Power over all flesh to give eternal life to those who believe.

Jesus made "supplications, with strong crying and tears, to him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7). He "obtained

eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). "He became the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9).

"Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:2). "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience" (Heb. 5:8). "The captain of their salvation, bringing many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10). "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also, BY JESUS" (2 Cor. 4:14). "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ... and shall come forth" (John 5:25-29). Jesus "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21).

2. Forgiveness of sins leading to eternal life is only obtained through the request of a living Christ, whose approach to God as an intercessor was the foretold means of reconciliation between God and men.

"I (the Lord) will cause him (Israel's governor) to draw near, and he shall approach unto me" (Jer. 30:21). "He made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). "THROUGH THIS MAN is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38). "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). He is the "one mediator between God and men" (1 Tim. 2:5). "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession ... Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16).

3. Christ has been made the judge as well as priest of his people; and before him, at his coming, they must all appear to render account of their lives, and to receive from him according to their deeds --acceptance and immortality if approved; rejection, shame and a return to death if he refuse them.

"The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). "It is he (Jesus) that is ordained of God to be the judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42). "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that we may receive in body according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). "I (Jesus) will give to every one of you according to your works" (Rev. 2:23). "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). "The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1).

Is it not clear that if Christ had not risen, his death would have been of no value? What was needed was a way out of death. This was effected in Christ's resurrection, after submission to death. There was then provided a living Mediator, through whom God's forgiveness could be obtained, and a living dispenser of immortality in the day of judgment, to all who come to God by him.

It is not enough to look to the death of Christ. Having accepted him, our life depends on doing his commandments. On this theme read: Matt. 7:21-22; John 15:14; Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 6:8; 1 John 3:7-8.