

## 121 The Lord is risen indeed!

"Of course it never really happened you know".

In I Corinthians 15 the Holy Spirit, through His servant Paul, addresses head-on those who, even at that early date in the existence of the Christian Church, were saying that the resurrection of the Lord had never happened. "Oh yes it HAS happened!" He tells us, and lists various people to whom the risen Lord appeared as proof that His resurrection was no myth (vv 3-8), adding words to the effect, "Many of these are still alive, so go and check this out with them!" (verse 6).

And then in one of the most wonderful and crucial passages within God's Word - and hopefully also one of the most familiar to us - the significance of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is plainly set out for us (vv 13 - 32).

The whole thrust of these words springs from the statement - "If the resurrection did not happen, then ....". But it is also helpful to turn these truths round into the positive as well - "The resurrection DID happen, therefore ...."!

So here we go - "Because the resurrection is a true, factual historical event" -  
1 There is a resurrection from the dead (v 12b). We know from elsewhere in Scripture that this resurrection applies to everyone who has ever lived (eg., among many others - Exodus 3.6 / Luke 16.19-31 / Mark 12.26-27 / Matthew 17.3 / Hebrews 9.27 / Revelation 20.11-15). The widespread notion around today, that physical death is simply the end of existence and can thus be viewed from here with a shrug of the shoulders, is as false, foolish and dangerous as it has always been.

Is not one of the causes of the Church struggling with evangelism these days her near-silence over this central truth? - that we shall all continue to "be" for ever. This means that what is at stake right now is our deciding where we shall spend that future state of eternal being which awaits us all beyond the grave. Put like that, suddenly the Good News of salvation by faith in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ makes people sit up and listen.

2 Christian preaching is NOT in vain (v 14), and Christian preachers are NOT false witnesses (v 15). Christian preaching is the holding-forth of the Word of life, and God's Word will not return to Him void (Isaiah 55.8-11).

3 Our faith is NOT in vain (vv 14b, 17)) - that is, the faith we have in who the Lord Jesus Christ really is, and in what He has done, and why He has done it, and where He is now, and what He is doing now, and what He is yet to do in the future. Yes, it is in one sense "our" faith, but it is also helpful to think of it as THE Faith, into which we, by God's call and grace, have been allowed to enter.

4 We are NOT still "in our sins" (v 17b): "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ .... There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Romans 5.1 and 8.1). There it is, the significance of the Gospel in a nutshell - forgiveness of our sins, peace with God, the assurance of salvation, the gift of Christian hope. In Christ, all is well, all shall be well.

5 Those who "have fallen asleep in Christ" have NOT perished (v 18), are NOT eternally lost.

6 We have hope both in this life and in the life we know lies beyond physical death, and therefore, far from being "the most miserable people on earth", we can be, and are to be, the most joyful people on earth! (v 19).

No wonder we come to the great declarations (v 54b-57) - "Death is swallowed up in victory .... O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? .... But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"!

In the light of all that has been said in this marvellous chapter, the Holy Spirit ends with the "So what?" - "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (v 58).

Yes, "The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!". The great shout of resurrection rings forth from Christian lips - a shout of truth, of fact, of hope, of life-changing significance for all of humanity.