

Publishing Editor's column

IN ROMANS 4:24,25 the Apostle Paul says that, as God counted Abraham as righteous because of his faith, so He will count us as righteous, "if we believe on Him That raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification". It is not just the death of Christ upon the cross that enables us to be forgiven our sins and counted as righteous, his resurrection was just as much involved. Truly, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). The sufferings of Christ on the cross would have been of no avail if God had not raised him from the dead.

In fact, Christ's perfect obedience, even giving himself up to "the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8), ensured his resurrection. One cannot have the one without the other: God could not have left in the grave the Son who obeyed Him to such an extent; Jesus could not have risen to immortality without first having subjected Himself to his Father's will on the cross. We see here confirmation of our basic beliefs about the nature of man, of Christ in particular, and the purpose of his sacrifice. How could a pre-existent Divine being die and need raising? Why should he have been raised if he gave his life instead of us? Why be raised if we have immortal souls? The interlinking of the crucifixion and the resurrection shows that Christ was truly man, though Son of God through the miracle of his birth, that he shared our mortal nature, and that he is our representative, the one who has gone before, the first-born from the dead, the beginning of a new creation.

Reading the Acts of the Apostles we see continual emphasis on the resurrection of Christ. The preaching of Peter in Acts 2 and of Paul in Acts 13 place more emphasis on the resurrection than on the crucifixion. Time and again in the concluding chapters of Acts, where Paul is hauled before the authorities several times, the issue of the resurrection of Christ occurs a number of times. In the apostolic teaching, the resurrection of Christ is presented as ensuring that the promises, the gospel of the Kingdom, will be fulfilled.

In its early years, our community placed much emphasis on the promises of the Kingdom because of their almost total neglect by Christendom. More recently, to redress the balance, there has been more emphasis on what Jesus accomplished at his first coming. If we consider carefully what the apostles said about the importance of the resurrection, we shall bridge the gap between these two aspects; Christ's resurrection ensures the fulfilment of the promises. I have recently come to the conclusion that this aspect of Christ's work does not receive the attention that it deserves amongst us, and in my view that includes our 2000 Special Issue, The name of Jesus Christ. I certainly noticed this in reading a recently published book, which continually referred to, and at times dwelt upon, the crucifixion, but mentioned the resurrection much less often. Jesus Christ raised from the dead, having triumphed over sin, is truly the foundation of our hope.

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