

**“HE IS RISEN!”**

**1 Corinthians 15:15, Acts 2:32, Colossians 3**

**One of the distinguishing marks of man is that he is a myth-maker. From his most primitive mutterings to his latest scientific concepts, he creates heroic images to catch and speak, through some figure he can grasp, his death fear and his life wish, his sense of doom and his resurrection hope. He finds this death-life pattern in nature, in winter's death and the new life of spring, and sensing doom in his own aging flesh, yearns with a great yearning.**

**Who reads the New Testament anymore? Certainly not all Christians. And yet...and yet... in spite of our neglect, even after its almost two millennia of existence, the New Testament, for an ever widening segment of humanity, is still a lively and still a true word.**

**The New Testament determines more lives today than ever before in its history. It's influence is greater today than in the era of the early church. Far more people read and study it seriously in this scientific century, more now look upon it as the word of God for their lives, than in any other so-called past “Age of Faith”. This is far from being the post New Testament era. Indeed the New Testament has had a continuing and growing influence, from the century of its writing onward. It has had a positive effect upon the life and thought of each succeeding generation, each one of which has felt itself to be the new generation, the modern man, marching freely into the future, yet, age after age, taking with him this slender volume, unwilling to leave it behind. The New Testament has survived the fall of whole civilizations and uncounted cultural revolutions.**

**Why? Because the New Testament is the Christian's Book of the Dead? No. If it were simply another rule book on how to cross the River Styx, it would long have been in time's ash-can, along with the Egyptian Book of the Dead, and similar books of magic.**

**No. Each generation, for 20 hundred years, through stylus, quill pen, printing press, to computer, has translated and carried the New Testament into its own “brave new world”, because the New Testament is, and always has been, for Christians, the Book of the Living, not the book of the dead. Another name for it might have been The Book of the Resurrection, for that one fact alone, the fact in history of the continuing life of Christ, is what wrote it. “ The rising of Christ from the dead is the very heart of our message”, wrote**

Paul to the Corinthians, adding "if Christ was not raised then neither our preaching nor your faith has any meaning at all". (1 Corinthians 15:15 - Phillips)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ to life by the power of God, and the new life which faith in this fact brings to all men--these two things wrote the New Testament and will maintain it in its original intent.

"God raised Jesus", preached Peter, "of which we all are witnesses." (Acts 2:32). The church did not create the resurrection, the resurrection created the church. The gospels did not write it, it wrote the gospels. It turned a world to worship on a Sunday. Remind you, Jesus' teaching, as enlightening as it was, did not do this. One could have shouted, "Love thy neighbor!", "Forgive thy enemy!" at Romans, Greeks, and other assorted pagans for centuries and what would they have done? They would have but crucified it again and again as pagans did and do. No. It was "He is Risen"! That was the fact that made them Christian men and women. The resurrection came first in the spread of Christianity and the moral teaching came with it, for it was this sense of the personal presence of the living Lord that empowered his noble principles of love. It was men's faith and hope in him. He made the difference. He still does.

One can this day hear and know all the noblest moral principles, all the Jesus virtues, "love thy neighbor", "love thy enemy", and what happens? Why, the might of human pride rises up and cries "Crucify!" Crucify!" We laugh, we scorn, we hate the Jesus virtues to death, and try life by our own myths: We try to make money make life make sense, but the money myth makes no sense of death, or we try deifying scholarship, or (...), or sex, or what have you, but their combined satisfaction, though they are satisfying, are all too short, and our latest heroes look silly, even to us, in a god's dress. Dress one's possessions or one's profession in a god's clothing and what happens? We laugh at our own pretentious myths, that satisfy us not at all, and like the ancients, we sit in the warm sun of our civilization; but we listen to the cold wind blowing, and we despair that our life, by our own myths, is as brief as a sparrow's flight through the great hall, "what is before it, what after it, we know not".

Our latest myths have made us not strong, not good, not loving men and women. So maybe we need to hear the gospel again--once more as pagans--some Paul, some Augustine, saying

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to us not "Be good! Be good!", we've heard that and cannot. But saying instead, "He is Risen!" As strange a gospel now as ever--strange to our myths--but maybe, if we could find a living Lord for our lives, "call his name, Jesus", who could himself tell us with authority what we have to do, no myth any more, but a man of history, so God-like, we could call him not only Son of man, but Son of God, then maybe we men and women could live more like the God, putting off, as Paul said to the Colossians, as an old winter's coat, our death-like "anger, wrath, malice, slander," and putting on, as an outfit for spring, "compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearing, forgiving." In short, maybe, by this "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ," we could stop our constant dying and start living, living again a quality of life the early Christians could not help but call "eternal".

"He is Risen!" Three mysterious words that have the power of God in them to raise men from the dead. They have done it before. They can do it again. So--

"Come, ye faithful, raise the strain  
of triumphant gladness:  
God hath brought His people forth  
into joy from sadness.

.....

'Tis the spring of souls today:  
Christ hath burst his prison,  
And from three days' sleep in death  
As a sun hath risen;

.....

All the winter of our sins,  
Long and dark, is flying  
From His light, to whom we give  
Laud and praise undying."

John Damascus, 8th Century

#### PRAYER

O Christ, our Lord, by the power of Thy resurrection, resurrect us today to a new perspective, to a new life of trusting in Thy love rather than in our own cleverness, to a fresh clean start in our living together, that we may live in kindness and not in malice. Roll

away the stone from the dark tomb of our unwashed sins, that we may come out by the door of repentance, into the clear shining of Thy presence, that justice and mercy may light our path and goodness may abound turning the battleground of the world into a garden. Let no fear discourage or pain blight this ancient dream, but through all things may we even hear Thee calling us by name, and knowing surely what life can mean, may we live it fully as unto Thee. Stand by us today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen