

The Sunday-School.

SECOND QUARTER,
LESSON II.—April II.

THE RESURRECTION.

I Corinthians 15: 20, 21, 50-58.
Read the whole chapter.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*—I Cor. 15: 20.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time.*—This Epistle was written toward the end of Paul's stay at Ephesus, A. D. 53-56.

Place.—Sent to Corinth from Ephesus, the Roman capital of Asia. See First Quarter, Lesson X.

Place in the History.—Acts 19. Nero, emperor of Rome; Felix, governor of Judea.

The Epistle was sent to the church at Corinth by Titus and an unnamed brother, its purpose being to warn the Corinthians against certain false doctrines and practices. See first Quarter, Lesson VII.

Four questions are answered by the chapter: (1) Did Christ rise from the dead? (2) What does his resurrection signify? (3) How are we to rise again? (4) What bearing have these truths on our present life?

THE CERTAINTY OF THE RESURRECTION.—I Cor. 15: 1-11. Six proofs are of special importance.

First Proof (V. 3). The statements Paul had received from eye-witnesses of this event, which had occurred only twenty-five years before.

Second Proof (Vs. 5-8). The large number of independent witnesses, of whom Paul instances Peter, the twelve (on two occasions) James, Paul, himself, and more than five hundred at once, most of whom were still living.

Third Proof (Vs. 8-11). Paul's own conversion—an event inexplicable unless we accept his story of Christ's appearance to him.

Fourth Proof. The thousands of martyrs who were ready to give their lives in testimony to their belief in Christ's resurrection.

Fifth Proof. The four independent accounts of the resurrection, so simple, clear, and manifestly honest.

Sixth Proof. The impossibility of believing any other theory, since if Christ did not rise, why did not the enemies of Christianity produce his body?

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION.—I Cor. 15: 12-34. Paul gives six reasons why he considers the doctrine of the resurrection to be of the highest importance.

First Reason (Vs. 12-14). Christian preaching and faith were based on it, because it constituted the best evidence that Christ was divine. Upon the fact of the resurrection depends not only the whole doctrinal system of Christianity, but the whole question of the credibility of the gospel history.

Second Reason (V. 15). The honor of the apostles depended on the truth of the resurrection, since they testified to having seen the risen Lord.

Third Reason (Vs. 16, 17). Christ's death was no atonement for sin if he was a mere man and perished in the grave.

Fourth Reason (Vs. 18-23). The Christian's only hope of immortality depended upon Christ's resurrection, and his promise that where he was, his disciples should be also (John 14: 3, 19; 11: 25).

Fifth Reason (Vs. 24-28). If Christ could not even conquer death in his own body, what became of the triumph of his kingdom which he foretold, when he should conquer the last enemy, death, and reign supreme over all?

Sixth Reason (Vs. 29-34). If death ended all, what was the use of the hardships the disciples endured, in hourly risk of their lives?

Of these six reasons for the importance of the resurrection, the chief is the fourth, which is summed up in the verses selected for our special study.

But now is Christ risen from the dead. The early Christians were in the habit of greeting each other Sabbath morning with these words: "The Lord is risen indeed!" *And become the first fruits of them that slept in death.* Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection because his resurrection is the pledge and assurance of the resurrection of his people. *For since by man, Adam, and his sin. Came death.* Compare Rom. 5: 12-21. *By man.* By Christ, "the second Adam," who was complete man as well as complete God. *Came also the resurrection of the dead.* This close connection between Christ's resurrection and ours is the chief reason for the importance of the doctrine.

THE MANNER OF THE RESURRECTION.—I Cor. 15: 35-53. Having shown the certainty of the resurrection and set forth the importance of the doctrine, Paul sets forth the doctrine that (1) there is a continuity of life after death, just as the oak continues the acorn; (2) our souls after death are to have bodies; (3) the spiritual body is not the same as the earthly body.

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The kingdom is heaven, the blessed life after death. *Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* Our earthly bodies are apprenticeships to the beautiful and powerful heavenly bodies we are to obtain.

But the question was sure to arise, "What of those that are on earth, alive, at Christ's second coming? What becomes of their bodies?" Paul answers: *Behold, I show you a mystery.* Something hidden from the ordinary understanding. *We, all believers who have lived, were living, or ever should live. We shall not all sleep in the grave.* At the judgment one generation will be alive on the earth. *But we shall all be changed.* Those that are alive at Christ's coming will be transformed "into his glorious body."

In a moment. The change is not to be slow and painful. *In the twinkling of an eye.*

At the last trump (which Christ said, Matt. 24: 31) was to sound on the last day. *And the dead shall be raised incorruptible.* Bodies which shall be fit servants of the immortal souls within. *And we shall be changed.* The dead shall be changed by resurrection, the living by transition, into a glorified body. *For this,*

corruptible, as if pointing to his own body, must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. Our resurrection bodies will be as real to us as these of earth.

THE RESULTS OF RESURRECTION.—I Cor. 15: 54-58. Paul names seven results that flow from the resurrection.

First result: The fulfilment of prophecy. *So when this corruptible, etc.* The truth was new and strange to the Corinthians, so Paul repeats it. *The saying that is written.* In Isa. 25: 8.

Second result: The conquest of death. *Death is swallowed up in victory.*

Third result: The Christian's exultation. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

The sting of death is sin. Death is made sad by remorse for wrongs done. It is consciousness of an evil heart that makes death terrible. *And the strength of sin* (the power of the sting) *is the law.*

But thanks be to God. The bodily diseases may remain, but the chief anguish is gone, and he can sweetly fall asleep in Christ (Vs. 18, 20). *Which giveth us the victory.* The victory is first over sin, through faith in Christ. That means victory over death. *Through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Our victory over sin and death comes through Christ, because he has suffered for our sins, his words teach us, and his Spirit guides us.

Fifth result: The Christian's steadfastness. *Be ye steadfast in faith.* False views of truth always weaken Christian work. Unmoveable when assailed by temptation and persecution. Be "steadfast" when all goes well, and "unmoveable" when it goes otherwise.

Sixth result: The Christian's work. *Always abounding in the work of the Lord,* that is, the work the Lord commands. No one can go forward in the Lord's work until he is steadfast in the Christian faith.

Seventh result: The Christian's confidence. *Your labor is not in vain,* fruitless, done under his leadership. Everything a Christian does should be done "in the Lord."

THE SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS.

Continued from page 2.

learned from it to be very tender with all fellow-sufferers. The Lord have mercy on them, and help them out of the slough of despond; for, if he does not, they will sink in deep mire, where there is no standing.

I pray God especially to bless this inference from our text. There is hope for you, brother, or sister, if you are in this condition. Christ came through it, and he will be with you in it; and after all, you are not forsaken as he was, be you sure of that. With you, the forsaking is only in the apprehension; that is bad enough, but it is not a matter of fact, for "the Lord will not forsake his people," nor cast away even one of those whom he has chosen.

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