



# The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

Bethany Library, March 52

VOL. XXXVIII.

MONCTON, N. B., MARCH 31ST, 1953

No. 315

## "Christ the First Fruits"

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So wrote the great apostle Paul in his unanswerable argument for the resurrection of Jesus. The reference is to the law of offerings in which the Jewish husbandman brought of the first fruits of ground and vine and tree and offered them to the Lord before the door of the tabernacle, and God accepted it with promise for all the harvest. The holy dead are by this figure regarded as the planting of the Lord, awaiting the time of harvest. Now Jesus Christ, the divine Lord, having submitted to the embrace of death, arises superior to its power and with His own body that was nailed to the cross and slept in the tomb, presents Himself alive forevermore before the tabernacle which is in heaven and waves His triumph as the first fruits of the harvest of all holy dead and secures the harvest, and declares to all who follow after Him, "Because I live, ye shall live also." His resurrection secures our immortality. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is basic to the faith of Christianity. There are those who say what difference does it make whether the resurrection was a real bodily resurrection or a spiritual one in which the spirit of Jesus is abroad in the world. We reply it makes the difference between truth and falsehood, between prophecies that failed or prophecies that were fulfilled, between reality and fiction, between cunningly devised fables and eternal truth, between a real Christ, and an imposter, between inspiration and guess work. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, yea and ye are yet in your sins." He died for our redemption and rose again for our justification. But if He did not rise, we can have no justification. Then those who have fallen asleep in Him, through the centuries, have perished, and the doctrine of immortality is a horrible mockery. And if Christ be not risen, then "we are found false witnesses of God because we testified of God that He raised up Christ; whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. If none of the dead can be raised, if resurrection is an impossibility, then, of course, Christ is not raised, our hopes have mingled with our bodies and the bodies of our friends in the dust of a never-ending imprisonment in the grave. But the shout of a victor, and the triumph of a mighty faith and certitude are in Paul's conclusion. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." His resurrection guarantees our resurrection and the salvation of all who believe on Him. We do not, therefore, at this

season memorialize a dead Christ nor celebrate a mere traditional religious festival. But we celebrate heaven's victory over hell. We celebrate the triumph of life over death, of holiness over sin, of God over Satan. We celebrate the mightiest stoop an infinite God could take, and the mightiest triumph an infinite God could achieve. Satan laid deep and hellish and strong his line of entrenchment and battle. Jesus Christ met him at the temptation, and day by day along the roads of Galilee and Judea, in Gethsemane's horrible shadows in the hellish injustice and mockery of the trials of His passion day. On Golgotha's shuddering darkened hill, in the city of the dead, in Joseph's borrowed tomb, and ground Satan's head beneath His heel of mastery and wrath. The sufferer of Wednesday, the pass-over lamb of God, becomes the victor of Saturday in the dying of the Jewish Sabbath, and the beginning of the Christian Sabbath. Out from Hades he comes, leading captivity captive and giving gifts unto men. He made a spoil of principalities and powers openly triumphing over all their powers. God touched the sleeping bed of His darling Son, by His holy spirit, and the earth quaked as He started into life, and so great was the power of His resurrection that many of the bodies of Old Testament saints awoke from their age long dwelling in the dust. He broke the gates of death and carried them away on His mighty shoulders. He broke the bonds of death and unfettered the hands of the pallid millions of death's dark domains. He banished the darkness and hopelessness of the tomb and planted there a light that shall never grow dim nor fail, until all earth's teeming millions shall have passed its narrow portals. "We do not like the galley slave, scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed with an unflinching trust, approach our graves, like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant slumbers." Since Jesus hath lain there, dread it not. "It was mighty to create. It is mightier to redeem." And yet redemption could not have been completed had not Christ arose from the dead. But now it is secure. Across the turbulent seas of time He throws the line of rescue. Across the darkness of this world the light of the sun of righteousness now shines, with healing in His beams. He is risen, let angels proclaim it in the midst of their shining ranks! He is risen, let the minstrelsy of the skies thunder out His victory! He is risen, let all the blood washed hosts around the throne sing in holy triumph! He is risen, let all the jubilant blood washed

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## Immortality Unveiled

Rev. O. G. Wilson

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ alone has unveiled immortality. The falsity of annihilation is clearly seen as the great fact of immortality is demonstrated by the vacated tomb in Joseph's Garden.

"Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," II Timothy 1:10.

Every other teaching makes this world the substance, and the other world the shadow; the gospel of the Resurrection reverses this idea and makes this world the shadow and the eternal world the substance.

The Bible reveals the eternal world as a place of moral pleasure or moral pain, as a place of "the eternal weight of glory" or a place of the wrath of God's displeasure which is poured out without mixture. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt, Daniel 12:2. Of this passage of Scripture, Butler says: "There will be a glorious reward for the righteous, but there will be also a fearful doom of shame and everlasting contempt for the guilty and incorrigible. This eternal state is reached through the Resurrection."

The wicked will rise again from the dead. The eyes that were full of lust will be full of horror. The ear that listened to deductive, impure language will listen to the terrible moans of lost souls to all eternity. Be not deceived; you sinned in your body, and you will be damned in your body. In this body in which you have defied God's laws, you must suffer for it. Your resurrected body will be like the firebricks—immune to destruction by fire. Your senses will be keenly alive to the torments of damnation—power to suffer, power to agonize, power to die and yet live.

To the righteous the resurrection means consummation, victory. At Stratford-on-Bow, England, in the days of Queen Mary, there was once erected a stake for the burning of two men, one a lame man on crutches, the other a blind man. Just as the fire was lit, the lame man threw his crutch away and shouted, "Courage, Brother, this fire will cure us both." Every believer can say of death, "This ordeal will cure all our ills and infirmities." The ancient Seer Daniel said: "They that be wise (or holy) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." There is a glory that cannot now be described reserved in heaven for the saints.

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