

A Resurrected Savior

Key Verses: *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”*
—*I Corinthians 15:19,20*

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 15:1-8,12-23

THE APOSTLE PAUL declared to Christian believers that God’s plan of salvation for the human family is predicated upon Jesus’ death and resurrection. The understanding and acceptance of these two elements are essential for all sinners who ultimately will receive a future life, either in the heavenly domain or here on earth during God’s kingdom.—*I Cor. 15:1,2*

“I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.”—*vss. 3-6*

“Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” (vs. 8) These words remind us that Paul was not a disciple of Christ during our Lord’s earthly ministry. In fact, while known as Saul of Tarsus, he was a bitter enemy of those who followed Jesus. Nevertheless, even as he persecuted these believers,

Paul received a heavenly vision of the risen Christ and thenceforth became an ardent servant of God. (Acts 9:1-17) Since it was necessary for all the apostles to be eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection, Paul was able to give a personal testimony that he also had seen the risen Lord, although in a miraculous manner as he caught a momentary glimpse of Christ's glorious personage.

Paul's message to the brethren in Corinth was forceful and logical. It stressed the importance of believing in the reality of Jesus' resurrection, because without an appreciation of this doctrine, there would be no basis for any future hope of life. Our Key Verse further emphasizes the futility of our living just for the present limited span of existence which ultimately will result in death, as mankind's experience has shown. Instead, we are encouraged to seek the exalted prospect of being a part of the class known as "firstfruits" who will be united with Christ to help assist mankind back to perfection.

The Heavenly Father designed a plan of redemption before the foundation of the world for the restoration of the human family from the curse of sin and death. His only begotten Son came to earth as the man Jesus to provide the ransom price necessary to accomplish this. Through his faithfulness, he became the first of the "firstfruits" class that has slept in death and is now exalted to power and divine glory. Faithful followers of the Master during this Gospel Age will assist in the work of reconciling mankind to God as they are brought back from the grave in the coming kingdom of righteousness.—I Cor. 15:15-23

Surely, all will praise and honor the Creator of the universe forever and ever for his character attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power. All, too, will praise his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, who conquered sin and death. We can indeed affirm, "He is risen!"—Matt. 28:6 ■