

THE RISEN CHRIST

"A brief of a sermon preached by John A. Huff, pastor of the First Baptist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, at the Southern Baptist Convention, St. Louis, Missouri, May 14, 1936.

Text: "And if Christ be not risen, then
But now is Christ risen" (1 Cor. 15:14-20)

There can be no satisfying message for human hearts that does not entertain the idea and cherish the hope of a resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is a guarantee of our resurrection at the consummation of the age when Jesus shall return for his saints is "the corner stone of our Christian faith; the Gibraltar of Christian evidence; the Waterloo of material science; God's final reply to atheism, agnosticism, and infidelity; the blessed hope of our departed dead, and the glorious expectation of all the redeemed."

But "if Christ be not risen, then" God is a constructed myth; the Bible is a riddle. Christ was an imposter; the disciples were perjurers; the ministry of the church is empty; prayer is a mockery; Christian experience is a delusion; your testimony is false; your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins and are, of all people, to be pitied most.

"If Christ be not risen, then" all the doctrines of the old and New Testament are meaningless; Christ's Messiahship, His Sonship, His death for sin, His resurrection, His ascension, and the promises of His personal return collapse and fall. The doctrine of sin, repentance, faith, forgiveness, redemption, baptism, sanctification, holiness, the Lord's Supper, and the Christian's resurrection is foolishness. "If Christ be not risen, then" all those references direct and indirect about Him must be torn from the Bible, and if this is done, all you would have left would be the fragments of a mutilated book.

"If Christ be not risen, then" Christ did not go back to the Father. The Holy Spirit did not come. Pentecost was a mad scene. The church was not spiritually born. We have no commission. Our program is an organized fraud.

Our efforts and expenditures are wasted. And the gates of hell have prevailed.

"If Christ be not risen, then" death has its sting. The fact of death needs no proof. We are surrounded by decay and death. The Bible scarcely opens until we hear the cry of Eve over the death of her son, and this sympathy of sorrow will be heard until Jesus comes and wipes away all tears from our eyes. On every hand we are reminded of the grim monster. The postman with his black-bordered envelope, the buildings draped in black, the flags flying at half mast, the tolling of the church bells, the slow moving procession up the street, and the choked emotions of the bereaved all tell us that death is abroad among us.

"If Christ be not risen, then" death has its sting. Our homes are broken up; the babe is snatched from its mother's arms; habit of a lifetime are snapped; our plans go unfinished; ambitions are never realized; our fondest dreams never come true; memory strikes a minor key for the rhythm of life is broken. Oh, the sting that death ends all: to be sure of nothing but that we must die; to close our senses forever upon all we've cherished; to say goodbye to all near and dear to us; to know that every moment rushes us on toward nothing and that all of our plans shall come to naught and that the hand and heart and brain that projected them shall soon be stilled under the earth to become the "luxury of worms."

"If Christ be not risen, then" hope turns to despair and gloom; the day of life turns to darkness and the darkness become a nightmare of faded desires, blighted faith, blasted hopes, and vanishing expectations. The hope of the soul is gone: that we are the children of God; that our sins are forgiven; that though we die we shall live again; that we have a home in heaven; that our Christian dead are with God; that we shall meet in glory those loved long since but lost awhile--is vain beyond words to describe if Christ be not risen.

"If Christ be not risen, then" we are but natural men, material men. We know no God but nature; no law but conscience; no Saviour apart from our own efforts; no wisdom but that of this world; and no hell or heaven but what we experience in this life.

"If Christ be not risen, then" the grave has sealed its victory. "If Christ be not risen," the dead are perished; there can be no future life; the tomb is a blind alley, death has completed its triumph; the grave has won its victory; tears are unavailing; we are without consolation; the anchor of the soul is gone; memory lies in a heap of ruins; the inspiration on yonder tomb is false, darkness shrouds in mystery our departed dead; night has come that has no morning; and the curtain falls never to rise again. I pause for poverty of words to go on with this description so terrible and disconsolate, but this is the logic, philosophy, theology, and doctrine of all who deny the resurrection of Christ.

I am afraid the man who denies the supernatural I cannot trust the man who does not believe in a future life. What a man believes will not change the facts, but what a man believes will positively determine his character and settle the question of his destiny here and hereafter.

"But Now Is Christ Risen"

The resurrection of Christ establishes the Bible as true; sustains all his claims to Messiahship; proves that He was the Son of God with power; shows that the power of sin, death, and the grave has been broken; answers the question of a future life; and is the pledge and guarantee of our resurrection.

His
Christ based all His claims upon ~~the~~ resurrection:

"Destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it up."

"I lay down my life that I might take it again."

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men
unto me."

"Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations."

"And this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Jesus did not minimize the present with its persecutions, sacrifices, heartaches, tears, death, and the grave which awaited his disciples, but he did point out the fact of the resurrection and the glory that would be revealed in spectacular pictures that almost overshadowed the present. To illustrate, He speaks of:

"The Son of Man coming in His glory;"

"Coming in the glory of His Father;"

"Sitting on the throne of His glory;"

"All that are in the grave shall hear his voice and come forth;"

"The Son of Man shall descend from heaven with a shout;"

"The trumpet of God shall sound; the dead in Christ shall be raised;"

"We that are alive shall be changed;"

"Before Him shall be gathered the nations;"

The prophets and New Testament writers also join in presenting this idea of the future glory and the victorious triumph of the redeemed.

Christ, by dying, has slain death, and to the believer "the passage of death is only a breath" and we are changed from the terrestrial to the celestial; from the corruptible to the incorruptible; from the earthy to the heavenly; from the natural to the spiritual; and from the mortal to the immortal.

~~The hope of the~~

The hope of a resurrection is compatible with the deepest yearnings of the souls of men. Poets, artists, philosophers, and theologians have called upon every faculty of reason, logic, and the imagination that they might give to us some satisfying picture of the future life. Theodore Parker says: "The intuition for immortality is written in the very heart of man and by a hand that writes no falsehood." Victor Hugo says: "The tomb is not a blind alley; it is thoroughfare. It closes with the twilight to open with the dawn." Goethe declares: "You ask me what are the grounds for this belief in immortality? I answer: 'The greatest is that we cannot do without it'." Mr. Addison wrote Plato:

"It must be so! Plato, thou reasonest well,
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire
This longing after Immortality?
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself and startles at destruction?
'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis Heaven itself that points out an Hereafter,
And intimates Eternity to man."

Both the Old and New Testament saints believed in and looked forward to the resurrection. That's why Abraham says: "We are pilgrims in the earth." "We look for a city whose maker and builder is God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. David declares: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption." That's why Job cries: "I know that my redeemer liveth and at last He will stand upon the earth; And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God; Whom I, even I, shall see, on my side, and mine eye shall behold, and not as a stranger." This is the universal hope of us all. That's why David sang that memorable twentythird Psalm which closes with these words: "Surely goodness and ~~mercy~~ shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." And that's why Jesus said: "Let not your heart be troubled;

I go to prepare a place for you. And I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And that's why Paul wrote: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." And that's why the poet who had lost his wife went to his study and wrote these simple lines:

"The lights are all out in the mansion of clay
The curtains are drawn, for the dweller's away;
She silently slipped over the threshold of night
To make her abode in the City of Light."

That's why Robert Lowry sang:

"Death cannot keep his prey
Jesus my Saviour!
He tore the bars away
Jesus my Lord!
Up from the grave He arose."

And that's why Tennyson wrote:

"Twilight and evening bell
And after that the dark
But may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark."

"For though from out the bourn of time and place
The floods may bear me far
I hope to see my pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."

The Bible plainly declares that there shall be a resurrection of the just and of the unjust. Daniels says: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Jesus declares: "The hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." The same voice that calls the just from their graves shall call the unjust."

In the light of this truth, I would call upon Southern Baptists afresh

in the words of the apostle: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables." And may we come to such an experience when we can say with Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."