

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:1-4).

The expression "by the resurrection from the dead" has been variously explained. Some say that "by" means "after," making it read: "After the resurrection from the dead." This is not the natural meaning of the word "by." It was not the object of Paul to give the TIME when he was the Son of God. He aims at giving the AGENCY by which he was declared to be the Son of God.

Christ was confessed and admitted to be the Son of God before the resurrection, therefore, it was not after the resurrection that he was called the Son of God. The devils said he was the Son of God (Matt. 8:29); Peter confessed this same fact (Matt. 16:16); Christ himself said he was the Son of God (John 10:36); and God confessed Christ as His Son (Matt. 3:16,17).

It is contended that Christ was raised from the dead only as the Son of God and not as a man, therefore, the act of raising the dead as the Son of God proved him to be such. This strains the meaning of Paul here. This could not refer to the general resurrection of the dead for it is yet future and could not be used to prove that Christ was then the Son of God. Paul proves that Christ is now the Son of God by the resurrection.

But, it may be argued that Christ's resurrection guarantees our own. That is true, but Paul is pointing to the proof that Christ is the Son of God, and some evidence must be given for the present proof.

The expression "from the dead" would signify that the proof is in Christ's own resurrection, rather than the general resurrection of the dead. But we ask, how would the resurrection of Christ declare him to be the Son of God?

1. Christ's claim made his resurrection proof of his Sonship. He came as the Messiah. He taught that he was the Son of God (John 10:36). He claimed to be equal with God (John 5:18). He claimed power over the law of Moses (Mark 2:28).

When God raised him from the dead it was eternal proof that his claims were true. God would never have raised an impostor.

2. The nature of his resurrection was different from all others who had been raised before him. The prophets had foretold it (Ps. 16:10,11). Christ himself foretold it (Matt. 16:21). It was a complete victory over death. (Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:18). It was a guarantee of the general resurrection of all the dead (I Cor. 15:22).

3. Christ gave his resurrection as the final sign of his Sonship. The sign of Jonah in the great fish was his reference (Matt. 12:38-40). This referred to his own resurrection in three days, not to the general resurrection.

4. Christ was put to death as a blasphemer; he said he was the Son of God and the Jews accused him of blaspheming. God would not have raised him had his claim to be the Son of God been false.

What is there in the resurrection to prove the relationship of Christ to God? Nothing in and of the resurrection itself. The resurrection of Lazarus did not prove the nature of the person, nor does it prove the nature of anyone raised. At the last day both the good and the evil will be raised (John 5:28,29). The resurrection of Christ simply proved that his claims to be the Son of God were true, and God gave us that assurance (Acts 17:31).

The resurrection of Christ is also associated with his ascension and exaltation at the right hand of God. Peter proved that Christ was raised from the dead (Acts 2:22, 33) and then concluded that he was made both Lord and Christ at the right hand of God (Acts 2:36).

By the resurrection of Christ from the dead, as the Son of God, we are assured of our own resurrection and eternal life, provided we remain faithful unto death (I Cor. 15:12-22; John 11:25,26; I Pet. 1:3; Rev. 2:10).

Paul made the resurrection of Christ the very foundation of our hope. "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (I Cor. 15:13, 14). "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. . . If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:16, 17, 19). We have the assurance of God that Christ is His Son and that we will be raised by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.