

The Hymns We Sing  
Sermons on the Great Hymns  
Christ The Lord is Risen Today

*With Study Questions*

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# Christ The Lord is Risen Today

*Luke 24:1-12*

This hymn was written by Charles Wesley in 1739. The doctrine in this hymn is obvious, the fact of the resurrection of Christ. But there is more, because of Jesus' death and resurrection we have the promise that death has lost its power on us as well. The grave will not be our final resting place, we too shall rise.

*Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
Sons of men and angels say: Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!*

## **The Human Dilemma**

As we learned in Genesis, God gave Adam one command: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16, 17). Adam ate and people have been dying ever since. Every verse of this song ends with an exuberant "Praise the Lord." A proper understanding of the human dilemma (death—both physically and spiritually) is necessary for us to properly extol God for having rescued us.

## **Save and Punish—Mercy and Justice**

But it did not please God to leave men in their sins so he made a promise—a covenant—that He would save His people from sin and death. It would not be proper, however, for God to ignore sin or acquit the guilty (Exodus 23:7). It would be a violation of His character. We all recognize how shameful it is when courts allow the guilty to go free; this would not be the case with God.

## **Impotent Man**

God's covenant involved the payment for sin. But since men are incapable of overcoming their own sin or conquering the death that awaits them, they are simply incapable of paying for their own sin. The requirement is too high when one considers the nature of who must pay.

## **A Satisfactory Sacrifice**

God, therefore, sent His Son. As the author of Hebrews writes,

**Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. <sup>6</sup>In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. <sup>7</sup>Then I said, 'Behold, I have come – in the volume of the book it is written of Me – to do Your will, O God.' (Hebrews 10:5-7).**

God the Father prepared a body for God the Son to do the will of the Father and be the satisfactory sacrifice. God would then maintain His own just character and, at the same time, provide salvation for fallen man. Jesus, representing mankind, would live a life of sinless perfection, and then bear the sin of his people, and the wrath and punishment of God on behalf of His people. This, of course, involved death.

### **The Incomprehensible Cross**

In our evening class we recently marveled at the notion of Christ, the man, bearing the sin, wrath, condemnation, and punishment of all who would ever be saved. The hell that I deserved He took; and that not just for me but for all His sheep from the beginning until the end of time. It was an unfathomable and incomprehensible punishment that our Savior bore as a man in a body. It is no wonder that the cross is thought to be the central event in eternity; an event for which Christ will be glorified forever and ever.

*Sons of men and angels say: Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!*

### **Song of Triumph**

It is no wonder that this event irresistibly beckons the voices of men and angels, heaven and earth, and all of creation to raise their voices in a song of triumph (Revelation 5:13).

*Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won; Alleluia!  
Death in vain forbids Him rise; Alleluia!  
Christ has opened paradise. Alleluia!*

## **Living or Dead Savior?**

But how could we know that the work of Christ on the cross was satisfactory? How do we know that it achieved its desired end? Do we worship, this morning, a dead Savior? Is Christ to be compared to the wonderful, brave soldier who throws himself on a live grenade to save others? He is remembered with great gratitude and with wonderful esteem, but he is no more and lives only in our memories.

## **The Second Death**

But the sacrifice of Christ was not like a man who throws himself on a grenade, thus saving the intended victims from the first death, yet having no power over the second death. It was also the second death for which Christ died – a much worse death. It is an eternal death. It is, therefore, not until we face the tribunal of God that we will fully appreciate from what we have been saved.

When Jesus died for us it wasn't that He merely died for our physical bodies and physical death – though that is included. It was also for a death that we will all face beyond this death. Unlike our beloved friend who sacrificed himself on the grenade, granting us immediate knowledge of our deliverance, Christ went beyond the grave and rose again thus revealing His power over both the first and second death.

## **The Consequences of the Resurrection**

The consequences of the resurrection of Christ were well known by His detractors. He was a threat to the religion of the Jews and the authority of Rome, hence the request by the chief priests that the tomb be guarded (Matthew 27:64). The Jews had behind them the most powerful nation on earth to make sure the Christian faith ended. If anyone could have produced the dead body of Christ, they would have succeeded.

## **Silly Alternatives**

Even our evidentialist friends can make foolishness out of the attempts to explain away the resurrection of Christ. The idea that Jesus somehow tricked the Roman centurions (trained in killing) into thinking He were dead, roll away a two ton boulder, overpower eight Roman guards (equivalent to today's SWAT teams) then convince over 500 people that He had been raised from the dead (a conviction that cost many of them their lives), is all but absurd.

## **The Basis of Belief**

But the resurrection of Christ is believed, not even on account of the overwhelming evidence of its truth and absurdity of the alternatives, it is believed based upon the testimony of the Scriptures and by the witness of the Holy Spirit of God with our spirits.

## **The Battle is the Lord's**

It is critical also to point out that the battle is won by the Lord, not by us. Death in vain forbids Christ to rise. He can therefore, say to us as He said to the thief at His side, "...you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

*Lives again our glorious King; Alleluia!  
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!  
Dying once, He all doth save: Alleluia!  
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!*

## **How It Applies to Me**

But Jesus gave this sinner a personal audience. What does the resurrection of Christ mean to us? Have we been left on our own now to somehow work out and appropriate this historic event? Have we left on our own to apply this redemption? Clearly not, for our own blindness would prevail (2 Corinthians 4:4).

## **Spirit, Priest, Intercessor**

Jesus assures us that His work is effective by being our living Savior. He sends His Spirit to open our eyes to what He has done for us. He intercedes before the Father on our behalf. Like a priest who would bring the blood of the altar before the mercy seat of the ark in the Holy of Holies, Jesus, our High Priest, brings His own blood before the true Holy of Holies in heaven. His intercession includes His appearance as a satisfactory sacrifice, His defense of us against the accusations of Satan, His prayer for our growth and maturity and faithfulness, and He renders our prayers and service acceptable to the Father. His death is sufficient – dying once, He all doth save.

## **Defeated Death**

Jesus has removed the sting of death. Death has no victory over those He came to save and one day death will be no more (1 Corinthians 15:26). One

might ask why He doesn't just do away with death right now. It is the knowledge of our own deaths that God uses to draw us to the cross.

*Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
Following our exalted head; Alleluia!  
Made like Him, like Him we rise; Alleluia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies. Alleluia!*

### **The Firstfruits**

The hymn climaxes by exalting in the accomplishment of the resurrection of Christ as it relates to the resurrection of His bride. You see, Paul informs us in 1 Corinthians 15:20 that Jesus is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (died). His bride will follow her exalted head.

**Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Philippians 3:21)?**

Is this shocking? Jesus said,

**“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” John 5:28,29).**

### **A Reckoning**

There will be a general resurrection of those who are in Christ and those who are not. Do we not all recognize that there will be a reckoning? And how will you fare? Would you dare stand before God in your own guilt and nakedness and seek to plead your case? If you have an inkling of your own guilt now, how much more acute will that be when your very soul is laid bare before Him who searches thoughts and hearts?

### **Worthy of Praise**

It is no wonder that all heaven and earth praise the name of Christ for His glorious triumph. If ours is the cross, the grave will have no power over us and we will ascend to our peace in the heavens as well. Let us now turn to that event which Christ ordained to feed His sheep in comfort and assurance.

## Questions for Study

1. What is the human dilemma (page 2)?
2. How would it be a violation of God's character for Him to ignore sin (page 2)?
3. Why is man incapable of paying for his own sin (page 2)?
4. Who is capable of paying for man's sin (pages 2, 3)?
5. How does Christ both maintain God's character in justice and will to save (page 3)?
6. In what respect is the cross unfathomable (page 3)?
7. How is Christ's sacrifice different than a hero who gives up his life to save others (page 4)?
8. What are the first and second deaths (page 4)?
9. Why was there a request to guard the tomb of Christ (page 4)?
10. What are some alternatives to the resurrection of Christ (page 4)?
11. What is the basis of our faith in the resurrection (pages, 4, 5)?
12. Is the battle our battle or the Lord's battle (page 5)?
13. How does what Jesus did apply to me (page 5)?
14. Discuss some aspects of Christ being a living Savior (page 5)?
15. How is the sting of death removed (page 5)?
16. What kind of resurrection will those who follow Christ have (page 6)?
17. What is the general resurrection (page 6)?