

International Sunday School Lesson

APRIL 22, 1973
LESSON TEXT:

John 11:17-44;
1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 51-57.
Last month we entered into a new study: "Affirmations of our Faith." Today, in this context, we study the true meaning of Easter—the Resurrection of Christ. It is fitting, at this time, to re-assess our attitudes towards the Easter story. Rejoice...yes; for the Savior is risen. He has conquered both sin and death, and mankind is the richer for His victory. For, through Him, we are saved.

Let us, therefore, as at the celebration of His birth, seek the true meaning of the religious observance. Commercialized sentiment will find no room in the truly Christian heart!

Paul, himself a convert, was mightily concerned with his own affirmation of faith. For him, Christ's resurrection was deeply entwined with the believer's resurrection. Christ's victory over the grave extended everlasting hope for the same victory to His followers. This is the light for all Christians to follow.

Christ is the keeper of mankind; when all evil has been conquered He will return His precious burden to the omnipotent God. The Kingdom will be an achieved fact! Man will have achieved immortality, in Christ's name.

Death wears many guises. To some, in suffering, it comes as a friend. To the righteous at heart, who also know the true meaning of humility, it is but an entrance into a new, fuller, more meaningful life. It is only to the sinner, the unsaved, the unbelieving, that it comes in the form of a thief—a fearful stranger, the enemy of time!

Christ overcame the mystery of death, the power that was sin, and He has extended His victory to us. Dare we refuse this gift that is only second to the love that God bore for us?

In the context of the times, Christ's shameful end on the cross at Calvary represented rejection and defeat to His disciples. Beloved companions of Christ, they were, nonetheless, human beings, heir to hope, to doubt, to despair. But in Christ's arising from the tomb, they were given vindication, and an occasion to rejoice. What, in their eyes, at first spelled defeat, became a rallying ground for the Christian movement; is still a rallying ground for Christians the world over!

Christ—the God-like being, the obedient Son...the Man in human guise; He did unquestioningly what His Father bade him. His personal communing with God, the Father, took place in Gethsemane, prior to His ordeal. From this He gathered strength and dignity to face the day of His personal defamation. His travail on the cross did not deter Him from bringing the soul of a thief to the Kingdom. But He never lost His close touch with humanity; this was evidenced by His anguished cry: "My God, my God—why hast thou forsaken me?"

Imperfect we are; given to doubt and bewilderment. But with Christ's example before us—with His total identification with human man—we must closely associate ourselves with His spiritual victory! To do less, as confessed Christians, would be but to betray Him!

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