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# A Journey of Faith

# contents

Vol. 52 / No. 04  
 AIM Annual Subscription for  
 India, Nepal & Bhutan Rs. 200/-  
 (Other countries \$ 20)

A monthly publication of EFI Publication Trust

<b>Editorial</b> Rev. Vijayesh Lal .....04	<b>The Power Of Resurrection</b> Dr. Babu John Vettamala .....25
<b>Escaping The Immorality Now Cult By Embracing The Full Messge Of The Ressurrection Chapter</b> Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyeraj .....08	<b>Power Of The Crucified</b> Part 2 - Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy .....29
<b>Finding Sustenance in the Resurrection</b> Dr. Shantanu Dutta ..... 16	<b>The Destruction Of Death</b> Rev. Dr. David Mende .....36
<b>Jesus Lives</b> Mr. Chacko Thomas .....20	<b>A Glimpse Into Earth Day Celebration</b> Dr. Babu John vettamala .....42
	<b>Prayer</b> .....47

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Centre Spread (Color) :	Rs. 7000/-
Back Cover (Color) :	Rs. 5000/-
Front Inside (Color) :	Rs. 4000/-
Back Inside Page (Color):	Rs. 4000/-
Ordinary Page (B&W) :	Rs. 2000/-
Half Page (B&W) :	Rs. 1200/-
One third Page (B&W) :	Rs. 900/-
Quarter Page (B&W) :	Rs. 500/-

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## Online payment details

Name : EFI Publication Trust | Bank : State Bank of India | Account No. 54015789597 | IFSC CODE: SBIN0040415  
 Branch : Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019

For subscription query call us: 011-26431133; Tele/Fax: 011-26285350, E-mail: aimatefi@gmail.com, website: www.efionline.org

THE TREASURER, EFI PUBLICATION TRUST, 805/92, Deepali, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019.  
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# Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.*

– 1 Corinthians 15:3-6

*"The resurrection completes the inauguration of God's kingdom. . . . It is the decisive event demonstrating that God's kingdom really has been launched on earth as it is in heaven." - Professor N. T. Wright*

One of the most amazing claims

that Christians make is that Jesus Christ came back to life after he died. This can be hard for some people to believe and so they dismiss it outrightly. Others wonder why Christians get so excited about something that happened so far back in history if it happened at all. They think it's probably not important or that it doesn't matter anymore. However, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is still relevant and important in our world today. It is a real and powerful message that speaks to us in our present, especially in our tumultuous times.

Historical evidence indicates that Jesus' followers, including Mary Magdalene, James, Peter, and even an enemy, Paul, were convinced that the crucified

Jesus had risen from the dead and appeared to them alive. In the ABC documentary, 'The search for Jesus,' New Testament scholar Paula Fredriksen, herself not a Christian, affirmed the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, stating that the best available evidence confirms that his earliest followers believed he had risen. "I know in their own terms what they saw was the raised Jesus," she said.

The earliest source, found in 1 Corinthians 15, suggests that Jesus appeared to multiple individuals and groups, within five years of his death. Eyewitness testimonies of Jesus' resurrection were available in the decades following his resurrection and had a transformative effect on the lives of those who witnessed it, to the point of being willing to suffer and die for their belief.

We see that in the early apostolic preaching of the Gospel, the main focus was on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The apostles believed these events to

be verifiable and historically significant. Christ's death was seen as a sacrifice for our sins, while his resurrection proved that the sacrifice had been accepted and that he had not died in vain. The witnesses to these events were also important, including the Old Testament prophets and the apostles' own eyewitness experience, which they used to preach the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. C S Lewis says, "The Resurrection is the central theme in every Christian sermon reported in the Acts. The Resurrection, and its consequences, were the 'gospel' or good news which the Christians brought.."

But how does this good news of the resurrection and its power matter to us today?

Firstly, it brings hope to those who believe in it. One of the most significant aspects of the power of resurrection is its ability to provide hope in the face of death. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:55, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O

death, is your sting?" The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the event that demonstrates God's victory over death and secures our hope for eternal life. The resurrection is the guarantee that death is not the end. This fact provides comfort and assurance to all who face the reality of death and offers the hope of eternal life in the presence of God.

This hope is particularly important in times of difficulty and suffering when we need reassurance that there is a brighter future ahead and has implications not only for our afterlife but also for our present life. We can face the challenges and hardships with confidence and live a life of purpose and meaning, knowing that our ultimate destiny is secure in Christ.

Secondly, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ gives us the assurance of God's forgiveness, which is one of His greatest gifts. We all have things in our past that we are ashamed of, and our conscience can torment us. But the good news is that there is

forgiveness with God, and Jesus taught that his death was the means by which we could be forgiven. (Matthew 26:28). But how do we know if his claims were true? The answer is in his resurrection. Without his resurrection, we would never know if his death was effective in securing forgiveness. But because he was raised from the dead, we can have faith that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice and offers forgiveness to us today. The resurrection validates Jesus' death and assures us of God's forgiveness. As the Australian Professor of New Testament Dr. J. A. Schep said, "The resurrection is God's "Amen" to Jesus' loud cry: 'It is finished,' and therefore the guarantee that by Jesus' death the believer has indeed been reconciled to God and made righteous."

Thirdly, the resurrection of Jesus also demonstrates to us God's power, not just in the past but in the present, to transform human nature and change human beings. This means that selfish people can become unselfish, immoral people can have self-

control, and cruel people can become kind. The resurrection also shows us that God can make us spiritually alive and aware, even if we were previously dead to spiritual reality. Becoming a Christian is not just about making superficial changes to our lives, but a radical transformation of our entire being. It means being raised from spiritual death and beginning a new life in the power of the resurrection. We can have confidence in this transformation because God's power that raised Jesus from physical death is available to us as well.

And finally, the resurrection of Jesus Christ assures us of the victory of God, his imminent return, and our future with him. Different religions and ideologies have different views about the future. Some offer no hope and believe that everything will ultimately be destroyed. Others believe in an endless cycle of reincarnation with no escape except extinction. However, Christians believe that Jesus Christ will come back at the end of history in power and glory. He will raise the dead, regenerate

the universe, and make everything new.

The resurrection demonstrated Christ's power over death and gives us the assurance that we too will be raised from the dead when he returns. His resurrection demonstrated his power to bring new life out of death, and this same power will be manifested in the renewal of the earth and the restoration of all things when he returns. Resurrection is proof of Christ's authority and power, and he will use this authority to judge the living and the dead when he returns.

So then, this is the Christian confidence - that creation will be liberated, and we will be new people with new bodies in a new world. The evidence for this is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the beginning of God's new creation. His resurrection is a guarantee that the rest of creation will also be transfigured one day.

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**



# ESCAPING THE IMMORTALITY NOW CULT BY EMBRACING THE FULL MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION CHAPTER (I COR. 15)!

*Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj counters the Claims of Cult Pastors who teach Immortality on Earth by a quoting a verse in I Corinthians 15 which calls Death 'the last enemy' via a practical run-through of the famous Resurrection-focusing chapter!*

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death”, so writes Apostle Paul (I Cor. 15:26). Using this verse as a proof-text, 'Immortality on Earth' cult preachers and pastors say that believers in Christ need not have to experience earthly deaths ever and those who expect a normal death are befriending what the Word of God clearly calls 'enemy'! What is the full story concerning this?

One needs to read the full chapter – I Corinthians 15 - to understand that Paul did not ever want his reference to death as "the last enemy" to be taken to mean that there will be no death for the believer. One needs to only revisit the full chapter – I Corinthians 15 – to gather that

one is not befriending what God calls 'enemy' by assuming believers will die natural deaths, if the coming of the Lord tarries!

Let me show you how: Till verse 7 of this chapter, Paul talks about the key elements of the Gospel. One such element is the resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:4). From verses 5 through 8, Paul talks about the people the Alive Again Anointed One, Jesus, appeared to. In verses 9 and 11, Paul issues a personal note about how hard he worked enabled by the grace of God to preach the Gospel which has to have the mention of the resurrection of Jesus! From verses 12 through 14, Paul is upset that there are some who



claimed that there is no resurrection of the dead while mentioning why it is important to believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

From verse 15, Paul starts to talk about dead believers. J. B. Philipps renders verse 15 in a way we can easily grasp: 'For if the dead do not rise neither did Christ rise'. But the fact of the matter is this: Christ rose from the dead, and one day, dead believers will rise again. This is rehammered in verse 16. In verse 17, he writes that "we are still in our sins" if we do not believe in the resurrection. I am reminded of Paul's words in Romans 6:3-4 where he says that a believer needs to rehearse his identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in order to overcome sin in his life. A believer needs to say, "My old body of sin is buried along with Jesus who died for me on the cross. Now, I am spiritually resurrected as a new person just as Jesus literally rose again from the dead. I will not return to the same old sinful habits my old body and self once enjoyed, before I died with Christ and rose again with Christ!" A person cannot live in victory over sin

without spiritually identifying himself with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus!

In verse 18, Paul talks about "those who have fallen asleep in Christ" (ESV). He was talking about dead believers here! This is the FIRST TIME PAUL TALKS ABOUT BELIEVERS DYING in I Corinthians 15. We understand from Paul's words here that it was very common for believers to die in the Early Church! Paul assumes believers will die in case the second coming of Jesus is delayed! Paul did not believe in immortality on earth for believers! Paul's point was this: if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then believers who died also will not rise from the dead and will not be ever seen again! But Jesus did rise from the dead and believers who died will rise again one day!

It is at this time, Paul makes this famous statement: "If it's only for this present life that we have put our hope in the Messiah, we are the most pitiable members of the human race" (I Cor. 15:19 in the New Testament for Everyone Version).

But the good news is this: Christ has indeed risen from the dead!

Paul calls Christ rising from the dead as the part of the "firstfruits" (verse 20). Believers who are dead rising from the dead will then be the "later fruits"! (This can be understood when we read verse 20). This is the SECOND TIME PAUL TALKS ABOUT BELIEVERS DYING IN I CORINTHIANS 15.

Paul goes on to talk about the contrasting effects that Adam and Christ have on us in the next few verses – verse 21 and 22. In Adam we all die and in Christ we all will rise again from the dead. Paul assumes believers will die (have a spiritual and natural death, if the coming of the Lord tarries). This is the THIRD TIME PAUL TALKS ABOUT BELIEVERS DYING IN I CORINTHIANS 15.

In verse 23, Paul clearly teaches this: Only after the Second Coming of Jesus will believers who are dead be resurrected from the dead; their resurrection will be the later fruit, while the historic resurrection of Jesus is the 'first fruit'. In John 5:29 and I Thessalonians 4:16-17, the Bible teaches that when Jesus returns, dead believers will also be resurrected. In John 5:29, dead

believers are called, "those who have done good" and in I Thessalonians 4:16-17, they are called, the "dead in Christ". Prophet Daniel predicts a day of resurrection of the dead in Daniel 12:2. Instead of saying that believers will not die, the Bible says that even though they may eventually die, one day they will be resurrected. Paul clearly makes this event after the return of Jesus in two places – one here in I Corinthians 15:23 and two in I Thessalonians 4:16-17.

After Jesus returns, He will start to rule the earth in a way He has not already done – Paul talks about this in I Corinthians 15:24,25. It will be at this juncture that all of Jesus' enemies will be put under the feet of His Father, Paul writes here. Revelation 20:9-10 talks about the defeat of the Devil and his forces and their consignment to eternal hell, an event that takes place after the return of Jesus (mentioned in Revelation 19:11 and the reign of Jesus mentioned in Revelation 20:1-8). But one enemy will remain, the last enemy, which is death. Paul talks about this enemy in I Corinthians 15:26. In the New Heaven and New Earth which Jesus will inaugurate after

the Second Coming, death will be finally defeated and there will be no more death (Rev. 21:4). People in hell won't die – they will be tormented forever (Rev. 20:10). People in heaven won't die – they will praise God forever! In this way, death the final enemy will be defeated!

In I Corinthians 15:29 Paul talks about the unbiblical practice of baptising dead people which some followed. They believed in the biblical doctrine of resurrection of the dead. That is why in desperation, they baptised the dead hoping that through this ritual the dead person will be saved and when resurrected will come to heaven instead of going to hell. Their practice of baptism for the dead is wrong because there is no chance for salvation after death (Heb. 9:27). But, their belief in the resurrection of the dead is right. This was Paul's point in I Corinthians 15:29.

Next in I Corinthians 15:30-32, Paul says he was ready to take extreme risks while doing the ministry – he stared death in the face – because he knew that even if he got killed in the process, he would rise again. The 'beasts at Ephesus' whom Paul

fought (verse 32) could be a metaphor for false teachers in Ephesus as Paul had the habit of comparing false teachers to animals (he called the false teachers operating in Philippi as dogs in Phil. 3:2). Here, for the **FOURTH TIME PAUL IMPLIES BELIEVERS CAN DIE**. In I Corinthians 15:32b Paul says, if there was no resurrection of the dead, he would only be busy in two activities: over-eating and drinking alcohol! The implication is this: there is resurrection of the dead so Paul would rather be busy in risky ministry.

In I Corinthians 15:33-34, Paul warns the believers of the church in Corinth about intimate association with folks who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Why? What they believed impacted their behaviour. They often got drunk because they believed once they died, they simply stopped existing. There was no resurrection of the dead for them and a life in eternal hell thereafter for them. So, they lived a life of indulgence.

In I Corinthians 15:35-41, Paul answers the specific question of the gang that did not believe in the resurrection from the dead:

"How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" In verse 36, for the FIFTH TIME in I Corinthians 15 PAUL ASSUMES THAT BELIEVERS WOULD DIE (UNLESS THE RETURN OF JESUS PRECEDES).

Paul, next, talks about immortality only after talking about DEATH THAT WILL COME TO BELIEVERS FIVE TIMES! In verses 42-43, Paul writes that dead believers will one day be resurrected and be given an imperishable body. Till that time, the believer's body is prone to growing "dishonour" and "weakness" (Paul's word pictures for fading beauty and failing health); the believer will eventually die and be buried, a process Paul calls "sowing" (verse 43). Paul talks about this process elsewhere as well: "...our outer nature is wasting away..." (2 Cor. 4:16). He calls our bodies as "tents" that would collapse (die) one day only to be re-erected in heaven (2 Cor. 5:1).

The Immortality on Earth false teachers ignore the fact that Paul has already talked about the possible death of believers five times in I Corinthians 15 and go

on to latch onto the latter half of I Corinthians 15 to teach that believers in Christ will not have to die on this earth at all. It is a clear case of taking a text out of context. It is a clear case of twisting Scripture to teach hell-populating false teaching. I say hell-populating false teaching because, as Paul warned in I Corinthians 15:32-34, wrong beliefs about what the Bible says about death and resurrection from the dead will lead to sinful behaviour; and if this indulgent behaviour persists without repentance, it will take the person who believes these lies to hell.

In I Corinthians 15:50-54, Paul talks about the only possibility of believers becoming immortal even when they are on earth. This will happen if they are around when the trumpet sounds, and the dead will be raised. The only time this will happen is during the Second Coming of Jesus as Paul clearly spells out in 1 Thess. 4:16-17, something that Paul already referred to in I Corinthians 15:23. Sadly, the Immortality on Earth cult pastors say that the trumpet call referred in I Corinthians 15:52 does not talk about the Second Coming of Jesus. This refers to the preaching of a new

generation in the church, a preaching that teaches we can be immortal now, even before the Second Coming – they say quoting an irrelevant Old Testament verse. They are wrong here. Why do I say that? Here is why: According to I Corinthians 15:52, the dead will rise when the trumpet sounds! Have all dead people been resurrected after they heard these cultists preach, "You can be immortal here and now"? Absolutely not! As I mentioned, these dead people will only be resurrected when Jesus returns (see I Thess. 4:16-17). Revelation 20:13 says on the final day of the Great White Throne Judgment every dead person until that point in history will be resurrected and judged. Even if they were drowned in the ocean to their death (remember Malaysian Airlines MH 370, remember Osama Bin Laden's burial?), their bodies will be reunited with their spirits and they would be judged. Post that judgement is the consignment of people whose names are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life into hell, called the lake of fire here (Rev. 20:15) – a place already occupied by the False Prophet, the Antichrist (Beast) (Rev. 19:20) and Satan (Rev.

20:10). This event follows the "noisy" (surely the sound of the trumpets adds to all this noise, I believe) public return of Jesus (see Rev. 19:6).

You have a choice: to believe in the lies of the cultic pastors who teach that "unless a generation rises up which believes that we will be immortal and won't die a physical death, JESUS WILL NEVER RETURN!" Or you can believe in the plain teaching of God's Word that Jesus will return and only post that, will a life of immortality be ushered in.

Let's wrap up this survey of I Corinthians 15 against the backdrop of the immortality on earth cult by turning our attention to the last few verses of this chapter. Paul writes that post the sounding of the trumpet, which in turn means the Second Coming of Jesus, there will be a time when "death is swallowed" (eradicated) and won't be able to "win" over anyone anymore (physical death will not be the experience of anyone) (verses 54,55). Yes, there is no death in heaven. There is no death in hell as well! This way death is "swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:54).

You need to read I Corinthians 15:56 in different versions to understand it: "It was sin that made death so frightening and law-code guilt that gave sin its leverage, its destructive power..." (MSG); "Sin came into this world, and death's sting followed. Then sin took aim at the law and gained power over those who follow the law" (Voice). "Death gets its power to hurt from sin, and sin gets its power from the Law" (GNT).

If Adam had not sinned, death would not have been part of human existence. After introducing Jesus as the Second Adam, Paul writes that we have borne the image of Adam (I Cor. 15:44-49). Yes, as Adam died following sin, we will also surely die one day (should the coming of the Lord tarry), because just as Adam chose to sin, we too choose to sin. In this sense, "the sting of death" is caused by sin as Paul writes in I Corinthians 15:56. Another trigger for sin is our effort to be saved by following the law without the enablement from the Lord and the Spirit. This can be frustrating. In this scenario, the Law will only seem as the enabler for sin! That is why Paul uses the phrase, "the power of sin is the

law" (I Cor. 15:56). In Romans 5:20 and Romans 7:7-11, Paul presents the law of God as a sin-enabler for the person who wants to follow the Law without a relationship with Jesus Christ. He makes the same point here, without giving adequate space for explanation because he is confident that the believers of Corinth will pick this up. So, the message of I Corinthians 15:56a is this: death would not have even come in the first place, had we not sinned like Adam. The message of I Corinthians 15:56b is this: the law which defines what is sin and what is not sin, and the law, which at times, lures some desperate people trying to get saved by following it, to sin, would not have been even given, but for our choice to sin! I Corinthians 15:56 describes two aspects of a torrid life devoid of a relationship with Christ: (1) It is a life that heads to a hopeless grave and to hell beyond; (2) It is a life of trying to obey the law with a self-righteous spirit but instead finding yourself going deeper into the hole of lawlessness and inequity.

I Corinthians 15 does not end on a despondent note. Verse 57 begins with the word, "but" (ESV), and the message is this:

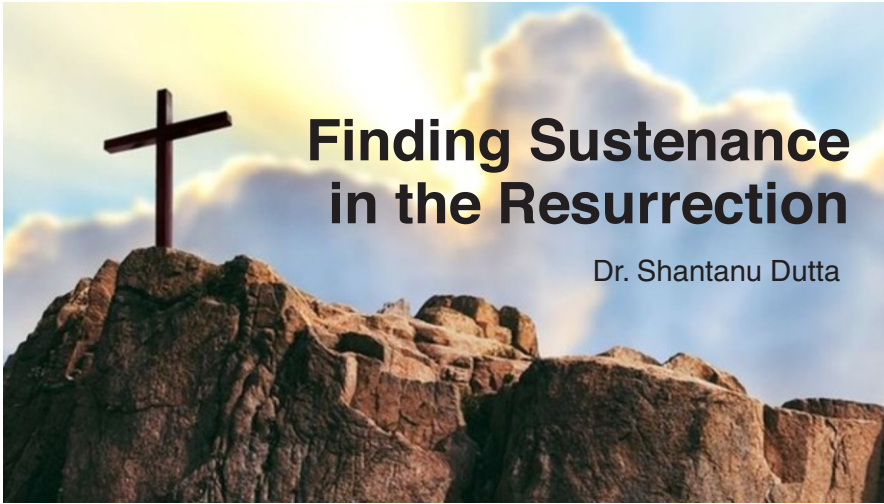
through a living, daily relationship with Jesus we have victory over sin; by a life of abiding in Christ, we are given power to obey the Law on a consistent basis! I Corinthians 15 ends with a call to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain" (verse 58). In the same chapter, he talks about how he did the "work of the Lord" by putting his life at risk (I Cor. 15:30-31), fighting with beast-like false teachers (I Cor. 15:32). We too must follow suit! In fact, this article is my way of fighting false teachers!



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*Gehenna Mission, the G4 Mission. This is a para-church ministry to present-day people functioning from Chennai. God has graciously opened doors for him to preach in over 20 Indian states and in a few other nations, by invitation, with the organisers paying for the travel, right from the first time Duke preached, as a school boy of 16, in the year 1991. He has authored three books: 1. Straight Talk (Sex, Love, Marriage, Porn, Phone Addiction, married-sex, etc., – what the Bible says), 2. Daniel in Dell (practical study of the book of Daniel for modern working professionals), 3. Goodnews for the Google Generation (the Gospel presented the way Jesus did in Luke 13 and the way Paul did in Acts 17). Reach him via [emailduke@gmail.com](mailto:emailduke@gmail.com) or WhatsApp, +91-8886040605, in case you want to buy these or have a question. Duke is married to Evangelin, an Odisha Missionary's daughter who has a post-graduate diploma from SAIACS in Biblical Leadership, and this couple are blessed with two children – Dale, 19, a St. Stephens Delhi student, and Datasha, 15, a Class X student.*





# Finding Sustenance in the Resurrection

Dr. Shantanu Dutta

What happens when we die? This is one of the big questions that all humans ask – across cultures and throughout history. Google is useful for telling us where the closest grocery store is or what year the second world war ended but Google won't give us much help with this one.

There are plenty of theories out there, however. All religions have some belief in the idea of survival after death. This is also true of popular culture. That's why when they made a movie about the Titanic, Celine Dion sings of how "My heart will go on." Some idea of the survival of the soul is common to humanity. Some religious traditions believe in

reincarnation, some philosophies believe that our lives are merely a simulation (like a really complex video game or the movie "the Matrix"), some believe that there is no such thing as an after life. Or in one of the latest TV shows about life after death called "The Good Place", life after death is presented as a custom-made heaven full of ice cream and whatever other delights our mind can think up, along with our true soulmate. I've encountered all kinds of theories when talking with people.

Sometimes when we hear these images, we may be tempted to read them through a soul/body dualism. This is the idea that the

true self is the soul, and the body is merely a shell, a temporary house for the real self and is of little significance. This is a commonly held Hindu idiom and shadows are found among Christians too. The gnostics for instance thought this way. This is a common idea, but not particularly biblical.

When the Bible speaks of resurrection it talks about receiving a resurrection body. The physical is affirmed, not degraded by a biblical theology of the resurrection. As people, our bodies matter. We only know life in these bodies, we experience life as embodied. What we see is not an escape from the body but a transformation. The Bible teaches that the bodies we have will be resurrected, not that God will scrap the old and start from scratch.

Mention of the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus brings to mind figures such as Peter, John, the remaining members of the Eleven, Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, Salome, Peter and his companion. Paul of course encounters Jesus much

later. In the forty days after the resurrection during which Jesus presented himself to his disciples with many infallible proofs, Paul was admittedly absent.

Nevertheless, Paul insists that he is a witness to the resurrection on a par with these other witnesses. The account of Jesus's post-resurrection appearance to Paul is given in detail three times in the Book of Acts and is repeatedly alluded to by Paul himself in his letters. Paul says emphatically, "We know Jesus is alive because we have seen him." Peter saw him alive. He ate breakfast with him and had discussions with him. The 12 disciples saw him alive. They were in the Upper Room when suddenly Jesus appeared and said, "See the nail prints in my hands." He appeared to 500 people at once and to the apostle James, who was beheaded for the belief that he was alive. Paul said, "Last of all, he appeared to me too." So, the resurrection verifies that there is life after death. Paul seems perplexed as to why people even asked questions about the resurrection. "If it is preached that

Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?"

Paul's theology affirms both a continuity and discontinuity when it comes to our resurrection bodies. The "it" he refers to is the same body going through transformation. This makes sense in light of Jesus' own resurrection body. There is continuity – he appears to his disciples and they can touch him, and they also eat a meal with him. Very bodily, normal things that people do. However, there is also discontinuity. This Jesus appears to them through a locked door, he is unrecognisable to certain people post-resurrection.

For those of us who have lost loved ones, it is comforting to know that our bodies are going to be identifiable bodies. Even though Jesus' body was changed somewhat, he was recognised by the disciples.

The Bible teaches us that once we are raised from the dead, we will retain our personalities and have fellowship with one another.

The Bible says we're going to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If we're going to know people from another age and epoch, with whom in a sense we have nothing in common then we're going to be able to identify each other. To me, that's one of the warmest tugs of heaven—to be able to be with people we've loved on earth, to be reunited with no threat of disunity or separation again. The resurrection of the body is a Crown Jewel of the Christian faith. It is a truth to be treasured and put on display for all to see.

The risen Christ brings us sustenance for life. Jesus Christ, after he was risen, helped the disciples in a number of ways after the tragic event of the cross. Thomas doubted. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus gave in to depression. Peter and some other disciples thought the cause of Christ was lost, so they returned to fishing. Jesus ministered to their needs during the forty days after the resurrection, renewing, strengthening, and sustaining them. The risen Christ sustains

us during life's trials. Those who respond to the Lord in faith find comforting presence as they pass through times of conflict and suffering. Let us rely on the resurrection for its difference is obvious. The difference of the resurrection is that the resurrection assures us of a living Christ. The resurrection brings us immortality. The resurrection assigns us a task. The resurrection brings us sustenance in the trials of life.



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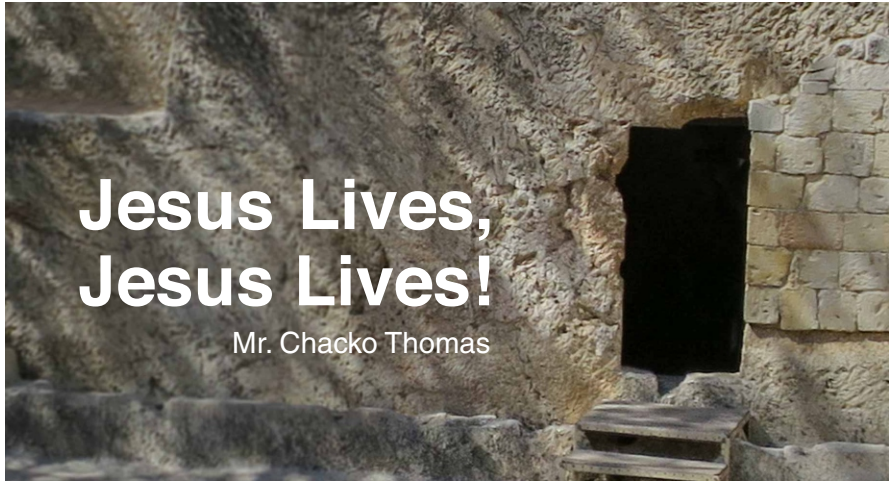
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# Jesus Lives, Jesus Lives!

Mr. Chacko Thomas

“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.” The Risen Lord (Revelation 1:17b-18. NIV.)

## **The legacy of Jesus:**

Once again, we join in with more than two billion professing Christians from across the world for the annual Easter celebrations. After Good Friday, comes Resurrection Sunday.

The great Christian thinker C. S. Lewis, in his book "Miracles", wrote about Jesus' resurrection: "He has forced open a door that had been locked since the death of the first man. He has met,

fought and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation. A new chapter in Cosmic history has opened." Wow! Praise the Lord.

The legacy of Jesus who walked on this planet 2000 years ago is that, "there are over two billion professing Christians in the world and the number is growing by thousands every day. In spite of its weakness, the Christian Church has been an immense influence for good throughout the world. ... One historical event has been the dynamic motive driving centuries of this loving, selfless service – the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

writes John Blanchard, in *Man Alive*, a chapter in his book *Why Jesus?* I have often wondered: Where would India, Africa, China or the West be today, if it was not for Jesus Risen from the dead?

### **Resurrection, what is it all about?**

Unlike resuscitation or re-incarnation, writes Rev. David Pawson, "in Resurrection, you come back as yourself with a new body that will not grow old or die – an immortal body; the kind of body that God wanted you to have in the beginning ... you live in your new body for ever."

Rev. Pawson, in his late eighties, went on to say: "I am looking forward to getting my new body because I have a theory, and it is shared by many Christians through the ages, namely that one day my body (like His body) will be thirty-three. I can't wait to be thirty-three again! That was when I was my best – physically, mentally, emotionally... Jesus hasn't got any older, and we shall have a glorious body like His that does not get older. Think of it – never celebrate a birthday again! Don't worry, you will be happy

about that!" (Rev. David Pawson in *Seven Wonders of His Story*. Check out [www.davidpawson.org](http://www.davidpawson.org)).

### **Lazarus and Jesus brought back to life:**

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, not many weeks before He himself went to the cross. At the command of Jesus, Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, came back to life, but all wrapped up. He needed to be loosened, set free because he was being brought back into his old body, not resurrected in his new body. So Jesus said, "Unwrap him and let him go", which they had to do.

"They never had to do that with Jesus because he did not come back into the old body. The old body actually disappeared, simply ceased to be, and the result was that the bandages simply collapsed flat and the head bandage was simply left rolled 'up by itself. When John the Apostle saw that, the Bible says, 'He believed'. We don't know quite what he believed, but he said he believed that no man had taken that body. You could not get a body out of those clothes and



keep them wrapped up. John believed that something supernatural had happened in the tomb." (David Pawson.)

### **Jesus Raised from the dead on the Third Day:**

Why is it that the prediction that Jesus would "rise from the dead on the third day" is repeated eleven times in the Gospels? (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, 26:61, 63; Mark 8:31, 10:34; Luke 9:22, 18:33, 24:6,7; John 2:19) Was it for the consolation of the disciples? Or was it so that we can know for sure that He is all that He claimed to be, because precisely on the third day Jesus rose again from the dead? Imagine that it did not happen. Christianity would be dead in the water. Amazing, not only did Jesus rise from the dead, but He did it on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:4, quoted below).

The Apostle Paul, who brought Christianity to Europe in AD 50, (two years before St Thomas brought the same Good News to us in India), wrote to the Church in Corinth in Greece, saying:

"For I delivered to you as of first

importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also." (1 Corinthians 15:3-8 NASB.)

Space will not allow me to unpack these significant verses but they are worth pondering over.

### **The Wonder of His Resurrection:**

On that Resurrection morning, before the disciples met the risen Lord, they were shown the empty tomb and the grave clothes that were wrapped around His body for burial. His body was absent but the grave clothes proved that no one had tampered with the dead body. The huge stone was rolled away, so that they could look in and even go in and



examine the tomb closely. This was followed by eleven recorded appearances (and disappearances) of the Risen Lord, appearing to varying numbers of believers over a period of 40 days in varying places. Space will not allow me to write about each appearances. But I shall give the relevant references for those who would want to look them up: Mark 16:9; Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:15; 24:34; 24:36; John 20:26; 21:1; 1 Corinthians 15:6; 7; Matthew 28:17; Luke 24:50-51. "They lasted only 40 days and they led, not into disintegration, but to profound joy and wholeness," observes Rev. Michael Green.

### **Transformed by the Risen Lord:**

On Good Friday, we find these disciples enveloped in gloom, despair, fear and in hiding. Easter Day changed them dramatically. The changed lives of the disciples stares us in the face throughout the New Testament. They turned the world upside down, or rather right side up. Comments Rev. Green on the people named in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, quoted above: "Peter was

transformed from a coward into a man or a rock and a martyr. The twelve were changed from a frightened rabble into a fearless church. Paul was changed from a rabid persecutor to a fearless apostle. James was changed from a sceptic to a Christian leader. Indeed, you could say that the church began on Easter Day. It cannot be traced back any earlier than that. The Church was launched by the resurrection".

Allow me to close with an old Hymn that expresses the triumph of the Risen Lord.

Low in the grave He lay,  
Jesus my Saviour,  
Waiting the coming day,  
Jesus my Lord!

### **Chorus**

Up from the grave He arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er His  
foes,  
He arose a Victor from the dark  
domain,  
And He lives forever,  
With His saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose!  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Vainly they watch His bed,

Jesus my Saviour;  
Vainly they seal the dead,  
Jesus my Lord!

Death cannot keep its Prey,  
Jesus my Saviour;  
He tore the bars away,  
Jesus my Lord!  
(Robert Lowry, 1874)

**Jesus Said, "Because I live,  
you shall also live!" John  
14:19**

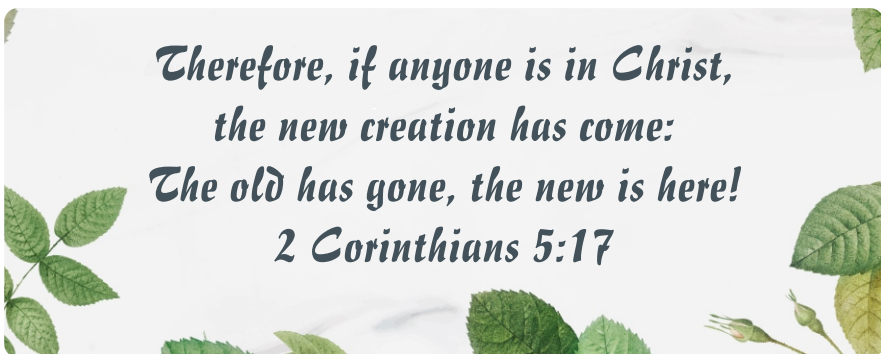
Exactly twenty years ago, my wife and I faced the unthinkable. Our son passed away due to cancer. But God met with us. It was time to practice what we have been preaching. We knew, because of what the Lord has done for us, we will see him again before the Throne. So, with tears in our eyes and joy in our hearts we said goodbye to our 17 years' old son. Written on his tombstone are the

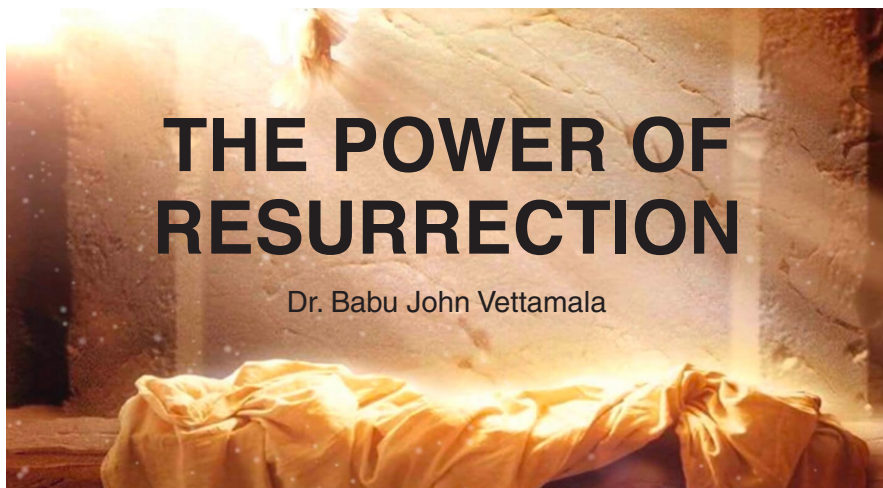
words of the Lord Jesus  
"Because I live, you shall also  
live." We look forward to the great  
reunion day.  
Jesus Lives!



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# THE POWER OF RESURRECTION

Dr. Babu John Vettamala

History has marked the face of earth with many cenotaph. Chivalries and sacrifices clubbed with myths, religious legends, and battles of the past and present provide the saga behind every one of them. There is not a nation or a religion free from such cenotaphs.

The Zamzam of Mecca, the pyramids of Egypt, the Ayodhya of India, the Eiffel tower of Paris, the London Bridge etc. are the pride and glory of Nations and Faiths.

Does Christianity owe its faith or credibility to any such icons? Jesus Christ, the foundation stone of the church has not

taught His disciples to highlight any icon to establish the credibility of the church. His life and His teachings are more than enough to do this work.

However, there is an icon of celebration dormant and dominant in the heart of every Christian, and it is none other than the open tomb in the heart of Jerusalem frequented by irresistible Niagara of visitors over the last two millennia.

The open tomb of Jesus declares to the world that "He is risen"; not there anymore.

This truth has been emphatically reiterated by His disciples and

His followers ever since. It specifies that the tomb was broke open and Jesus brought back to life. In the simplest possible terminology, the New Testament presents it as The Power of Resurrection.

It obviously shows that Jesus was not coming out of the tomb with the help of any power that He was wielding even after His death and burial. But Powers from external sources did this work. What then is that Power?

In Biblical understanding, it connotes two things – (a) The power that resurrected Jesus from the dead, and (b) The power of the resurrected Jesus now operating in His saints. These two terminologies are absolutely unassuming, though they lack some clarity in their articulation. There still remains a question – what was that external power that resurrected Jesus?

The early church and the disciples of Jesus spoke about it as the Power of God. And because this message was preached in the irresistible Power

of the anointing of the Holy Spirit it was received by the listeners in large numbers.

Thus, went on the first few decades of the saga of Christianity when it became necessary that the mechanism that resurrected Jesus could still be explained in its profundity.

This urge was addressed by Paul in his epistle to Ephesians Ch-1.V:19.

The English translation of this passage gives us an array of word bubbles which actually does not tell us anything about the mechanism of resurrection. In his meticulous Greek, Paul uses only one word which no other language has a corresponding one word to translate into and hence, the chimera.

Paul's word is 'hyperballon'. This is a Greek word which in it's meaning level has four different factors. It could be otherwise identified as a combination of four different powers judiciously combined into one mechanism to work out the impossible.

The body of His Son Jesus was lying dead in a tomb closed and secured by a battalion of armed Roman guards, God the Heavenly Father held an emergency council in Heaven. He called in four powers to work out the operation resurrection.

The first of this is God's "Dunamis" which is the amalgamation of all God's capacities into a single unit. That means, all the Power of God was in full operation in the resurrection task.

Suppose that power befalls on earth as such, this planet cannot withstand it for a second. Therefore, God called in, yet another mechanism called "Energia".

The word "energia" is a particular mechanism that reduces energy to the level that is useful to the need and affordability of a particular situation.

But then, there is a problem. The demonic powers celebrating the death of Jesus would fight back with all its ferocity to prevent a

possible resurrection. To nullify the vigour of devil God brought in yet another mechanism called "Kratos", which means power in resistance and control. With one hand, it could control the process of resurrection and with the other, resist the preventing attempts of the devil.

And fourthly, Jesus body was still dead. His bones, marrows, muscles, and nerves were yet to be rejuvenated. God has a special mechanism that works on human body causing life and health to it. That is called "Ischys".

Hyperballon, otherwise called the power of resurrection is a combination of these four powers.

God called two mighty angels and entrusted them with the mission of operation resurrection. Now, let us see how it works.

The dunamis caused an earthquake in the landscape that shook the very foundation of the sepulchre, and in the fear of which the guarding armed force fled away. "Ischys" started giving

life and healing into the dead tissues of the Jesus' body. "Energia" streamlined the power of God into different areas to work out an unhampered resurrection. And all this time, "kratos" prevented demonic forces with one hand and held the rejuvenating Jesus in full control with another hand.

Together, they lifted Jesus as high as to the right-hand side of God the Father in Heaven.

The work did not finish there.

The Heavenly Father sent the same power back to this earth with yet another mission. And that mission is to operate its mechanism in the saints of Jesus so that one day they must also be

resurrected and taken to Heaven.



**Dr. Babu John Vettamala,** *specialised in Biblical Psychology, Management, Law, English literature, Western history and philosophy is presently teaching the Bible and ancient Hebrew. He did M.A, Ph.d, English language and literature. He retired from prolonged professional life- Pastor, Teacher, Speaker, Columnist, and author. He Lives in the U.K with family for the last 25 years.*

*We know that Christ,  
being raised from the dead,  
will never die again; death no  
longer has dominion over him.*

*Romans 6:9*





# POWER OF THE CRUCIFIED

(Part 2)

Rev. Kuruvillea Chandy

As Jesus hung on the cross that day so long ago, He was impaled there helplessly. When He was thirsty, He couldn't help Himself and had to ask for a drink (Jn. 19:28-29).

Though all pictures of the crucified Lord show Him wearing a strip of cloth around His groin, He wasn't, because His garments were all taken away from Him (Lk. 23:34) After all, what need does a criminal being put to death have for any clothes? He was stripped not just of clothes, but of human dignity. High on the cross He was exposed to the gaze of every gawker, and they all mocked Him: "Look at you now after all your claims to be the Christ, the

Chosen One of God! Show your power. Come down from the cross" (v.35, paraphrased). He could have got down from the cross. Earlier He had said that if He wanted He could summon a whole army of angels (Matt. 26:53). And a few years earlier the Tempter had asked Him to throw Himself down from the Temple's pinnacle in public view to prove that God would save Him as the Son of God, and He had refused to check out God (Lk. 4:9-12).

What power did Jesus have on cross? He had the power to resist the final temptation to save Himself from total humiliation and the ridicule of mere mortals. In Greek mythology when gods



coming to earth in disguise were tormented and mocked, they would suddenly reveal themselves in all their glory and wreak their vengeance on their tormenters. Not so, with Jesus. He had all power – even the power to be powerless. That is the power of the Crucified Saviour and Lord, and the same power is ours because we were crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:20).

It wasn't just the body of Jesus that was crucified. It was His self, His ego, that was crucified. All His inward desire to prove Himself and the human desire to lash out at His mocking enemies was crucified on the cross. And that is what we are called to. When Jesus said that His disciples would have to take up their cross to follow Him, He first said that they had to deny their selves. That is where it all starts. Only if the self is denied its rights and desires, will the cross be embraced. Rather, the cross displaces the self.

The outcome of discovering that one is crucified with Christ is that one refuses to respond to the

stimulations of the flesh (5:24) and of the world (6: 14). One decides to not be aroused by inward tendencies or outward attractions.

## **Crucifying the Flesh**

There is hostility between Spirit and flesh (Rom. 8:5-8; Gal. 5:16-17). The term 'flesh' is associated with carnality and lusts (Rom. 13:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:11). But in Galatians 5:19-21, it is not the carnality or sins of the flesh that is contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit in 5:22-23. The contrast is not just between flesh and Spirit, but also between works and fruit. The carnality of the flesh is obviously contrary to the Spirit. It is not as easily seen that, when the flesh works at being spiritual, it is still working against the Spirit. The good deeds of the flesh are still the deeds of the flesh (Jn. 6:6). We are saved by grace through faith. Salvation is not the product of our own efforts, but God's gift. If we feel satisfied with our human efforts, we would be proud (Eph. 2:8-9). Paul's list of the deeds of the flesh includes not only what human society categorises as gross sins, but

also those that are regarded as minor flaws or weaknesses. While he makes no distinctions at all and he mixes them all up, he lists the full range of sins from the ones that society condemns to the ones that are excused and yet leaves the list open-ended so that all the efforts of the flesh may be included.

In Galatia, the problem was not one of utter lawlessness. They were decent people trying to live good Christian lives by doing the works of the Law (3:3). Paul was saying that the works of the Law were nothing more than the works of the flesh. The works of the Law are contrary to grace (3:2-3; 5:4; Eph. 2:8,9). It is the pride of the flesh that is at the root of the works of the Law (Phil. 3:3-6). The Spirit is not only opposed to the flesh (Eph. 5:16-17), but is also opposed to keeping people under Law (Gal. 5:18). All of these show that Paul argued against both the good works of the flesh (the observance of the Law) and the bad works (Gal. 3:10-11; Rom. 3:20).

The flesh that needs crucifixion is identified as the extreme egotism

that destroys others to feed itself (Gal. 5:15-16, 25-26). When we, who are in the flesh meet others in their flesh, the natural tendency is to protect one's self and outmanoeuvre others in every encounter. The Old Testament Law served to contain these tendencies for its main concern is the protection of the rights of people in community, especially of those who were weaker. But the new liberty in Christ was not to be viewed as a throwing off of all restraints and an opportunity for indulging the flesh in its natural egotistic tendencies. Rather, since love is the redemptive feature of those who have given up slavishness to the Law for the heart of a child of God (4:6-7), that love should express itself in service (5:6, 13). Paul talks of not allowing the flesh to indulge in egotism by "walking in the Spirit" (5:13-16). When we live by the Spirit, we will not allow the flesh its egotisms. Thus, Paul is describing walking in the Spirit in terms of loving people, especially the brethren of the household of faith (5:26; 6:10). In a similar, way John described walking in the light as just walking in love (1 Jn. 1:5; 2:11).

## **Fruit of the Spirit**

It is no wonder then that the "fruit of the Spirit is love..." (Gal. 5:22-23). There are not many fruits. There is just one fruit consisting of the ingredients of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and the like. A careful look at the other ingredients would show them indeed to be no more than aspects of love. It is all about a basic attitude or spirit that we manifest in relationships.

While love of all we come in contact with is envisaged in the commandment to love neighbours, we must note that we do have a special relationship with those of the "household of faith" (6:10).

This is a matter of facing up to reality. We are mere humans and have human capacities only. We are incapable of loving the world. Only God can do that. Too often, this is the failure of those who set out with world concerns for world poverty, world hunger and the like. The problems are so large that it defeats human ability and,

so often, world concern simply becomes jargon and slogans that create offices of privilege for those engaged in meeting the needs of masses of people. The commandment itself indicates our inability to love faceless masses. We are called only to love neighbours who have faces. They are identifiable. We live in touch with them. Their needs touch us. Since this is our human condition and we can benefit only as many as our resources permit, a special love of the brethren is but logical. But such caring love will transform entire societies as was discovered in the Early Church for their one winsome characteristic that their world took note of was expressed in these words, "See how they love one another," and here and there, many rushed to enter the caring society of the people called Christians.

## **The World Crucified**

The final aspect of the crucified life is that of the world being regarded as crucified as far as the Christian is concerned (6:14).

The word "world" is used in three

different ways in the Bible. There is the physical world of continents and islands, mountains and valleys, seas, lakes and rivers. The word can also refer to the population of the earth as when the Bible says "God so loved the world" (Jn. 3:16). But the Bible also refers to the world as a diabolic system organised against God's reign. The concept of "worldliness" is derived from this understanding of the hidden world of dark and evil spiritual forces.

It is against this world that apostles warn Christians to not love world (1 Jn. 2:15,16). James puts it more starkly and describes worldliness as nothing less than spiritual adultery (Jas. 4:4).

Worldliness is taboo in the world of believers. But, because it is an abstract concept, there is a lot of confusion about what it involves and permits the prevalence of judgmental attitudes among Christians.

Worldliness is primarily not a matter of taboos (or customs). Lists of do's and don'ts, as noted earlier, are quite arbitrary. What

one group considers acceptable behaviour may in the view of another be worldly. For instance, most Christians would be considered worldly by the Old Order Amish in America, whose homes are not electrified and who will not own motorised transportation because, in their opinion, such things are worldly. Such lists of worldliness are made up of non-essentials, things that are not integral to Christian faith.

Worldliness is the spirit of conformity that makes people captive to a system that is opposed to God's rule. The slogan of worldliness is "everybody does it." It is more a mental attitude than customs and taboos. For instance, the acquisitiveness and materialism characteristic of those in the world, are more the signs of worldliness than smoking or seeing movies.

Viewed thus, worldliness can also exist when we are slaves to religious habits, customs and taboos for the sake of being socially acceptable in our world of Christians. The Judaisers must

have viewed Gentile Christians as worldly because of their failure to conform to Jewish practices. They even had a list of do's and don'ts that attempted to turn the Christian faith into an ascetic one (Col. 2:21). Paul warned the Colossian church against having a piety that was regulated by humans (2:8, 16-18, 20-23). J.B. Phillips captured the essence of what Paul wrote when he translated Romans 12:2 thus: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mould." Paul discovered that the world can sometimes be apparently Christian, and when we conform to it, we have lost connection with the Head (Col.2:19).

The only way to deal with the world is to crucify it and be crucified to it. Crucifixion involves death. The Christian is to die to the world and the world to him. The stimulants of the world do not move him to conformity, nor is the world stimulated by the Christian. When Paul considered all the badges of importance of his day and society, when one has to choose between Christ and the honours of human society he crudely described them as

comparable to refuse (Phil. 3:8).

Conformity for the sake of acceptance or esteem, valuing status and its symbols are the basic ingredients of worldliness. Pride is so very much a part of worldliness. John wrote of the "pride of life" (1 Jn. 2:16, KJV). C.H. Dodd described this as the tendency to be captivated by the outward show of things without really enquiring into their real value. Our lives are filled with status symbols. But our possessions are not the only badges of pride. Even religiosity or piety can be sported for the sake of human esteem (Matt. 6:1-18). Judaistic practices that prevailed in the Early Church were such a symbol of piety. Pride of life is what the Pharisees had. But Jesus tore away their sophisticated veneer when He declared, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts for what is highly esteemed among men is abomination in God's sight" (Lk. 16:14, 15). The word "abomination" has connection with idolatry and that is what human pride is: an affront to God (Gen.3:5-6).

Crucifixion is the only remedy for status symbols, badges of spirituality and whatever else that provides an occasion for human pride. For in crucifixion, we devalue them. Our identification with the crucified Saviour points to what we believe to be worth dying for. The glory of the cross surpasses all the glories of the world. It is the Lamb who was slain who is worthy to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and praise (Rev. 5:12). It does not make sense according to the world's calculations, but there it is. There is glory in the Cross.

The Galatian letter is very clear that there are not many gospels, but only one. The one true Gospel does not say, "Jesus+." The Gospel is about Jesus crucified

and risen and when that Gospel touches our lives, as Christ is formed in our lives (4:19), we bear the marks of Jesus (6:17) for we have been crucified with Christ (2:20) and have crucified the flesh with its attempts to add to grace (5:24) and the world with its tendency to compromise the Gospel (6:14), for the glory is all in the Cross.



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*But Christ has indeed been raised  
from the dead, the first fruits of  
those who have fallen asleep.  
1 Corinthians 15:20*



# The Destruction of Death

Rev. Dr. David Mende

## Introduction

For more than two years, the world has been battling COVID-19. All this while, the universal Church has been praying that we would get over this. Although a few people are still getting infected and dying due to COVID, as WHO suggested, the pandemic is at an end-stage. Praise God! For several years, some researchers have been trying to find a cure for cancer. Wouldn't it be great if there's a cure for cancer? Also, it would be wonderful if there's a way to prevent heart disease, isn't it? Now, what if there's a permanent cure for death? Wouldn't that be awesome? Well, if you are a disciple of Christ, that's exactly what the Lord promises us. We find this

promise in 1 Corinthians 15:26. There, apostle Paul writes, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." Based on this text, I've entitled this article "**The Destruction of Death.**" Even as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord this month, we must also celebrate the hope of our resurrection. In this article, let me share with you three truths that can stir you to praise God for what Christ accomplished for us through his death and resurrection.

### **1. Death is a terrible enemy.**

From the beginning, humans dreaded death. It's a bitter enemy.

#### **a. Death entered into this world due to sin.**



When God created this earth, there was no death. Death came as a result of man's sin (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12). Some think that death is our worst enemy. But the Bible doesn't say that. It says that death is the last enemy. Death is not our worst enemy, but sin is. That's because it was sin that brought death into this world. And sin eventually leads to eternal death. Still, death is a terrible enemy.

Death is inevitable. It doesn't leave anyone. All humans have to die one day. Listen to what the psalmist says. He writes, "What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?" (Ps. 89:48). We may extend our life, but we can't escape death. Until sin is totally destroyed, death will not be totally destroyed.

### **b. The fear of death torments humans.**

The inscriptions on the Greek and Roman tombs reveal that people dreaded death. They didn't have any hope beyond death. That's why Paul says to the Thessalonians not to grieve like those who "have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). Commenting on this verse, William Barclay writes, "In

face of death the pagan world stood in despair. They met it with grim resignation and bleak hopelessness. Aeschylus wrote, 'Once a man dies there is no resurrection.' Theocritus wrote, 'There is hope for those who are alive, but those who have died are without hope.' Catullus wrote, 'When once our brief light sets, there is one perpetual night through which we must sleep.' On their tombstones grim epitaphs were carved." Job 18:14 calls death "the king of terrors." The fear of death torments humans.

### **c. The unsaved face even the second death.**

Those who are unsaved face two deaths. Revelation 21:8 says, "But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." Also, in Revelation 20:14, John writes, "Then Death and Hades [the place of the dead; equivalent to OT Sheol] were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." The second death is eternal and the unsaved experience conscious torment in the lake of fire (cf. Mk

9:47-48). All those who reject Christ will face this second death.

Death is a terrible enemy.

2. Christ will destroy death.

The good news that Easter brings is that Jesus already defeated death. And very soon it will be destroyed. The destruction of death is in the future (1 Cor. 15:26) as death is the last enemy to be destroyed.

**a. Through His death and resurrection, Christ defeated death.**

When Jesus rose from the dead, many saints who were dead came back to life (Mt. 27:52-53). This was a foretaste of the future resurrection. Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection. He is the first fruits of the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, apostle Paul writes, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Since Jesus died and rose again, we too will die and rise again. Jesus defeated death by dying on

the cross for our sins and rising again from the dead. Now he even gives us victory over death!

Further, in 1 Corinthians 15:56-57, Paul writes, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus gives us victory over sin and death. In Revelation 1:17-18, apostle John sees a vision of the glorified Christ. He writes, "When I saw him [Christ], I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.'" I have my house keys, which shows that I have authority over my house. Christ has authority over death because he has the keys of Death and Hades (cf. Mt. 16:19). Death could not hold Christ. Rather, he holds the keys of Death and Hades. Death doesn't have power over us anymore. Christ defeated death and he will soon destroy death.

**b. Through His death and resurrection, Christ took away the fear of death.**

As I mentioned earlier, the fear of

death torments many humans. In Hebrews 2:14-15, the author says, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." Christ takes away the fear of death. In fact, if we are saved, we can boldly face death because it is gain to us. As apostle Paul puts it in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." In 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, Paul writes, "So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." Since Christ took away the fear of death, "we are always of good courage."

### **c. Through His death and resurrection, Christ gives us eternal life.**

In 2 Timothy 1:10, Paul writes to young Timothy, "and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ

Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Through his coming, Jesus "abolished death" and granted us life and immortality through the gospel. In John 11:25-26, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." Though Christians die, we will live. In fact, whoever believes in Christ will never die. Since we possess eternal life at the very moment we are saved, we will never die. Meaning, we may die physically, but we will never lose our eternal life. Charles Spurgeon writes, "Death comes to the ungodly man as a penal infliction, but to the righteous as a summons to his Father's palace: to the sinner it is an execution, to the saint an undressing. Death to the wicked is the King of terrors: death to the saint is the end of terrors, the commencement of glory."

One day, death will be completely destroyed. As John heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain

anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4). Christ has defeated death and very soon, he will destroy it completely!

### **3. Since death is defeated, we must live with faith, hope, and love.**

If Christ didn't defeat death, we can live however we want to. For example, in Luke 12:19, we see the rich man saying to himself, “relax, eat, drink, be merry.” That's the attitude of many unsaved people. William Barclay writes, “Herodotus, the Greek historian, tells of a custom of the Egyptians. “In social meetings among the rich, when the banquet is ended, a servant carries round to the several guests a coffin, in which there is a wooden image of a corpse, carved and painted to resemble nature as nearly as possible, about a cubit or two cubits in length. As he shows it to each guest in turn, the servant says, 'Gaze here, and drink and be merry, for when you die, such will you be.’” If Christ didn't resurrect, probably some of us would have lived with that attitude.

But Christ rose from the dead and defeated death. Since Christ

defeated death, how must we live? We must live with faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13). Paul mentions together these three qualities even in Romans 5:1–5, Galatians 5:5-6, Ephesians 4:2-5, Colossians 1:4-5, and 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 5:8. Even in heaven, we need faith, hope, and love. Even when we are with the Lord, we will depend on the Lord (faith). Even when we are with the Lord, we will continue to put our hope in the Lord as we live with him throughout eternity. Even when we are with the Lord, we will love him and love one another throughout eternity.

Since Christ defeated death, we must live by faith. The righteous live by faith (Hab. 2:4) even during tough times. As we saw earlier, we must live by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). And our faith must be demonstrated through our holy lives and good deeds (Jas 2:26). Likewise, since Christ defeated death, we must live with hope. As we live in this world, we wait for the “blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:13). We must not be hopeless like the unsaved. Some of you may have an uncertain

future. You may be wondering, “What about my job? What about my business? What about my future? What about my ministry?” Well, Christ will take care of you and your family. No one else offers hope the way Christ does! Because of Christ’s resurrection, Christians must be the most hope-filled people in the whole world!

Also, since Christ defeated death, we must love God and love others. We must love the Lord for demonstrating his amazing love for us on the cross. Since Christ loved us to the extent of dying on the cross for our sins, we must love one another (1 Jn 4:10-11). We must pour out our lives into others by demonstrating our love in practical ways.

### **Conclusion**

The big idea of this article is: Since Jesus defeated death, we must live with faith, hope, and love.

Death is defeated! And one day, it will be totally destroyed. Let’s rejoice! When we face a crisis, persecution, or suffering, let’s have strong faith in the Lord, let’s put our hope in the Lord, and let’s

love God and others in practical ways.



### **Rev. Dr. David Mende**

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*He is married to Sis. Susan Mende, who is also actively serving the Lord. They are blessed with a daughter, Karis Ruth. Dr. Mende can be reached at +91 9848004094 and davemende@gmail.com.*

# A Glimpse Into Earth Day Celebration The Biblical Overview

Dr. Babu John Vettamala



Festivals and celebrations are the hallmarks of civilised as well as barbarous society from time immemorial. While many of the celebrations are too prehistoric to be traced off any rationale behind their origin and many others inextricably entangled with religious superstitions, the modern man with his supposedly advanced scientific knowledge has moulded and added a few more celebrations to the clan of festivity.

While the rationale of ancient celebrations has been nullified by atheistic world view, the modern celebrations have the mantle of science and rationalistic thinking to legitimise them. One such

recently developed celebration is the earth day celebration observed on the 22nd of April for the last few years.

The apostle of the celebration ascribes its origin to recent scientific discoveries while its origin could be traced back to the 8th century BC when the people of Israel had a tragic aberration from their monotheistic world view. When the nation of Israel ship-wrecked its faith in the real God and deviated to a new world view based on pernicious ideas, they arrived at many new cultural calamities and one of them is the emerging of the earth celebration.

When we trace the historical setting of the world in the 8th century BC, we can see that that was the time when two inimical empires fought with each other for global supremacy. The one was the Greek empire and the other certainly, the Roman empire.

The nation Israel, geographically placed in between these two, was facing some internal political issue which culminated in the division of the whole land into two countries, a northern kingdom with ten states which had Samaria as its capital, and the southern kingdom named Judah with Jerusalem as its capital.

Since the nation Israel had a highly monotheistic belief which was the very nadir of their existence, the accessibility to the temple of Jerusalem was inevitable for the religio-political-cultural and social existence of every Israelite.

However, the nation having been divided into and only the south had all the icons of their religious life, centred in and around

Jerusalem, the northerners were tempted to opt for some alternatives.

In order to dissuade their people from going to Jerusalem for attending religious services in the temple there, the Kings of the north unearthed pagan deities – a male and a female god. The male god was shrined in a place called Bethel and the female goddess named Astaroth was shrined in the city of Samaria, the very capital of the northern kingdom.

To add to their boon, King Jeroboam-II emerged with many internal and external policies that catapulted their economic prosperity.

Subsequently imports, exports, and commerce developed. Merchants, Banks, and money lending gave new impetus to it.

The nation's GDP went up along with their standard of living and they became a consumer society. Abundance of luxury goods, the search for a second home and the urge for being covetous



became the law of the days.

Subsequently, a new aristocracy developed, and they embarked on a prosperous business called real estate which accelerated their quest for affluence. The middle class disappeared from the nation. There remained only the high class and the low class. Financial scandals, bribery, and corruption swept over across the land which invariably led the nation to sexual laxity and alcoholism.

With all these, a new age faith mixed up with paganism. Religion had its focus not on God the creator but on nature the creation. So, they started worshipping mother nature not Father God.

Sexuality became a way of worshipping in the temple. There were male and female prostitutes and the worshippers indulged themselves with these prostitutes in all sexual perversions believing that these new Gods would bless them with more fertility. They lost the sight of Father God and looked on mother goddess.

In their inverted sensibility and perverted pursuits for reality, the people of Israel thought that the future of mother nature or mother earth was in their hand. Here developed what later on came to be articulated as environmentalism, green theory etc. The people did not realise that the earth's future and their own future are in the hands of God the Father.

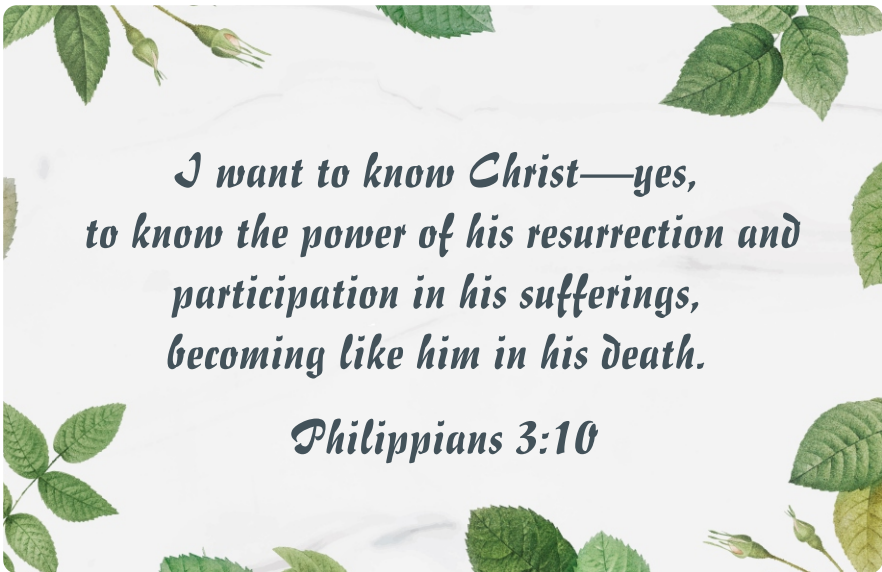
This aberration from true religious faith that occurred in the 8th century BC, Israel has now resurfaced itself on the intellectual scenario of our days and it catches our attention for a commitment to environmental issues. Today, our children are more aware of the supposed danger of mother earth than the inscribed and the inspired Word of God that would invariably lead them to the ultimate salvation of both man and nature.

Does it mean that the Christian should be unaware of and uncommitted to the safety and protection of the environment in which we live? No, not at all. The Old Testament is full of

instructions and warning given to the people of Israel pertaining to treating the land and its flora and fauna. So that the nature could provide man a healthy habitat all the time. However, his primary commitment is to obey God the Father and caring for the earth is only a part of His commandments. The tragedy of earth day celebration is that it relegates man's primary commitment to God the creator of the earth and shifts focus on earth the creation. That is the mistake.



**Dr. Babu John Vettamala,** specialised in Biblical Psychology, Management, Law, English literature, Western history and philosophy is presently teaching the Bible and ancient Hebrew. He did M.A, Ph.d, English language and literature. He retired from prolonged professional life-Pastor, Teacher, Speaker, Columnist, and author. He Lives in the U.K with family for the last 25 years.





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Intercessory  
*Prayer*  
Points



April 2023

**1 SATURDAY** Thank God for the new month. Thank Him for his goodness and everlasting love.

**2 SUNDAY** Pray for fresh desire to know the Lord in His fullness.

**3 MONDAY** Pray for school children as they start a new session today. Thank God for the opportunity to learn new things.

**4 TUESDAY** Pray for safety and protection for the Churches as we enter the Holy Week. Pray that every believer would be able to worship without fear and disturbance.

**5 WEDNESDAY** Pray for all EFIM members (Churches, organizations, and individuals) that they may demonstrate integrity and transparency in all their dealings. Pray also that they may act as role models for others to follow.

**6 THURSDAY** Pray for your

pastor as he prepares for the Good Friday service. Pray that he would be renewed and transformed as he meditates on Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. Pray also that the name of Jesus would be lifted high and be praised.

**7 FRIDAY** Good Friday. As we commemorate Christ's atoning sacrifice for humanity's sin, pray that many would receive Him as their Saviour and establish a deep personal relationship with Him. Pray also that many would recommit their lives to Jesus Christ today.

**8 SATURDAY** As we enthusiastically wait for Christ's resurrection, pray that God the Father would grow our faith and love for God the Son who died on the cross for our sins.

**9 SUNDAY** Hallelujah! He Arose! As we celebrate Christ's resurrection, pray that the

Church would be strengthened, and Christ's kingdom would be extended. Pray that you will be filled with joy and hope because Christ overcame death and rose again.

**10 MONDAY** Pray that the Risen Christ would meet you at the place of your need and encourage you to obey His Great Commission.

**11 TUESDAY** Pray for D6 Family Conference organized by Asia Evangelical Alliance to be held from 19-20 May via Zoom. Pray that many in India would respond and sign up for this conference.

**12 WEDNESDAY** Pray for the churches in India. Pray for continued strength. Pray also for unity within the church. Pray that God's Word would be taught and obeyed by the help of the Holy Spirit.

**13 THURSDAY** Pray that child labour would be eradicated, and every child would enjoy their childhood. Pray for God's protection over them. Pray also for EFI Children at Risk to be used in ways that would change the lives of many children.

**14 FRIDAY** Pray for Punjab Mobile Bible Training that will take

place during the month. Pray for both the trainers and the participants that they would be trained and equipped for the good works that God called them for.

**15 SATURDAY** Continue to pray for those whom you know are not yet in the Lord. Pray that God would draw them to Christ. Pray that the Holy Spirit would make them desire eternal life and accept Christ finished work on the cross.

**16 SUNDAY** Pray that Christ's death and resurrection may bring new encouragement, strength and motivation to live a godly Christian life.

**17 MONDAY** Pray for the ministry of EFI. Pray that the Lord would mightily use EFI to support and strengthen the churches and individuals.

**18 TUESDAY** Pray for the persecuted believers that they would find comfort and strength in Christ, the head of the Church. Pray that their sufferings will not be in vain.

**19 WEDNESDAY** Let us pray today for those in the remote places that they would be provided with basic medical

facilities. Pray for the state leaders to be mindful of their plights and work towards this goal actively.

**20 THURSDAY** Pray for the people who are struggling with drug abuse. Pray that they would turn to God who is mighty in power and experience relief and release.

**21 FRIDAY** Pray for the people in your workplace. Pray that you would show Christ's love to them and be a good influence to them. Pray that there would be safe environment and health care at all workplace.

**22 SATURDAY** Pray that we would have the wisdom to care for the earth and till it. Pray that we would steward and care for the good of future generations and all God's creatures.

**23 SUNDAY** Pray for lively worship that is focused on our Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that worshippers would return home longing for more as they experienced the nearness of God in the worship service.

**24 MONDAY** Continue to pray for children in your neighbourhood. Pray for their enthusiasm, God's provision and protection on them throughout the year.

**25 TUESDAY** Pray that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would penetrate deeply and spread widely as believers witness Christ to the world.

**26 WEDNESDAY** Pray for our nation that we may be submissive to God and be a blessing to the nations around us. Pray for the leaders of our country that they would uphold integrity and honesty as they serve the people.

**27 THURSDAY** Pray that the Risen Lord Jesus would become more and more real to you as you submit to His sovereignty. Pray for one another that you will have right relationship with God.

**28 FRIDAY** Pray that we may not be weary of doing good. Pray for fresh desire and the ability to serve God with excellence.

**29 SATURDAY** Pray for healing and courage to share the Gospel boldly. Pray for freedom to choose, practice and share our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**30 SUNDAY** Pray for your pastor's sermon to be lively, convincing and convicting. Pray that your worship service would lift our Lord Jesus Christ high above all. Thank God for being with us throughout the month.

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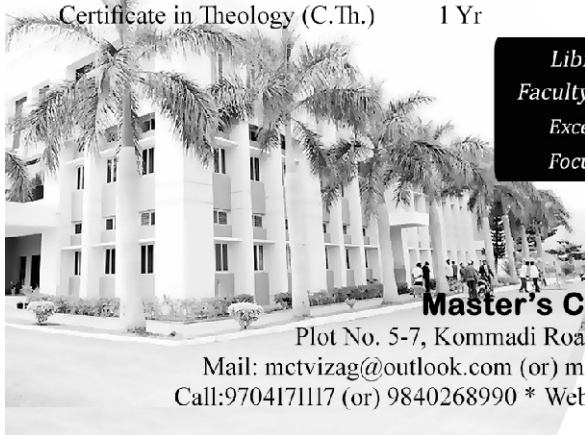
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Published date on 25 March 2023  
Posting date 26/27 March 2023

RNI. Regd. No. 19728/70 / Postal  
Registration No. DL(S)-01/3241/2018-20  
Licensed to post without prepayment at  
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happy  
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*We know that Christ,  
being raised from the dead,  
will never die again; death no longer has  
dominion over him.*

*Romans 6:9*

Printed & Published by Mr. Vijayesh Lal, on behalf of EFI Publication Trust,  
805/92 Deepali Building, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110 019.  
Printed at Royal Press, B-82, Okhla Phase -1, New Delhi - 110 020.  
Editor Mr. Vijayesh Lal