

The Wednesday Word, April 15, 2015: What If? Part 1

My Aunt Eileen died just a few days ago. She was my Father's younger sister and she will be greatly missed by friends and family.

Death is a sorrowful time for those left behind. However, in spite of the sorrow, for the believer, death and the grave have lost their sting and victory. This is because of the certainty of the Resurrection. What if, however, Jesus has not risen from the grave?

I've recently read some Christian writers who explain that, even if they discovered Jesus did not rise from the dead, they would continue to follow Him. After all, they reason, as they look around at the field of religious Gurus from human history, Jesus is by far the superior one.

Personally, I think that kind of thinking is daft! Indeed, in 1 Corinthians 15:12-21, Paul lets us know just how silly this mentality is. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives us several awful things that would be true if Christ had not risen from the grave.

The first of these is that, if Christ is not risen, preaching would be an exercise in futility (verse 14). I know there are some who would readily endorse that sentiment at the best of times. However, notwithstanding their views on preaching, if there is no Resurrection, the minister is wasting his time being in the pulpit. If Christ is still in the grave there is no good news. No Gospel. The preacher is just a wind-bag!

Also, according to verse 14, if there is no resurrection, our faith is vain. At the end of the day, why would we put faith in a dead Messiah? Faith, as you remember, is only as good as its object. Faith itself saves no one. It is Jesus who saves and a dead Jesus is useless in this matter of salvation. The ghastly truth is that, if Jesus is still in the grave, He can bring no one to heaven. A dead man can do nothing for us!

Now here's another thing. If Jesus has not risen from the grave, then the disciples were awful liars (v15-16). These men went everywhere telling people they had seen the risen Christ. They had touched and handled Him, they claimed (1John 1:1). But, if Christ was not raised from the dead then they were perjurers. Remember this, if Christ was not risen from the dead, the apostles weren't just mistaken, they were malicious. They were part of a gargantuan conspiracy to deceive mankind!

So then, were the Apostles liars? If they were, why did they lie? 'Oh' says someone, 'just like any of these modern preachers, they lied for gain.' But what gain did they have? It certainly was not financial. And, furthermore, consider how they died. They all (except for John) died as martyrs. They were tortured and brutally executed. There's no worldly gain in that.

By the way, liars and martyrs are not cut from the same cloth. Only deranged lunatics would embrace martyrdom to further a deliberate lie.

But, if Christ is still in the grave, then indeed, the Apostles were liars, hypocrites and deceivers. That would follow then that we cannot read the New Testament since it was written by these same frauds. If Christ is not risen, we, therefore, have no New Testament!

But it gets worse than that; if Christ is yet in the grave, then we have no hope of forgiveness (verse 17). God cannot overlook sin, He must punish it! God is Holy and His holiness demands the death of the sinner. Either our sin has been punished on Christ at the cross or we will be punished for it in Hell. But, if Christ has not been raised from the grave it means that the Father has not accepted the sacrifice of Calvary. That means we are lost. It matters not how sincere and earnest we are. We are yet in our sins. We will perish!

But, here's the good news. Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised again for (because of) our Justification (Romans 4:25). He is alive. His blood has secured us, His sacrifice has been accepted and He is alive forevermore.

And that's the Gospel Truth!