



# JESUS, THE PATTERN OF TRUE LIFE—3

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*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*  
*Hebrews 12:2*

You are welcome to this week's message of the Signpost. We are still on the theme, Jesus, The Pattern of True Life. We will be looking at the fourth stage of Christ's life here on earth—resurrection. Before we deal with the resurrection of the dead, let us resolve an issue concerning the time Christ spent in the grave. The Lord predicted publicly that He would be in the grave for *“three days and three nights”*. *“For as Jonah was three days and*



*three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”* (Matthew 12:40). Many people

have taken the phrase *“three days and three nights”* to be seventy-two hours, and since Christ did not stay in the grave for exactly that number of hours, they do not believe in Christ's resurrection. Some of these people do so out of ignorance whereas others, under the guise of falsehood, maliciously denigrate Christianity. This problem seems to affect the faith of many believers especially the weak ones. Let us, therefore, take our time to clarify the misunderstanding.

In the first place, Jesus Christ was a Jew according to the flesh, and when He uttered the words written in Matthew 12:40, He was speaking to Jewish people, and so, He spoke after the manner of the Jewish language. The period during which Christ was to lie in the grave is expressed in round numbers, according to the Jewish way of speaking, which was to regard any part of a day, however small, included within a period of days, as a full day. *“Thus, three days and three nights, according to the Jewish method of reckoning, included any part of the first*

day; the whole of the following night; the next day and its night; and any part of the succeeding or third day” (Adam Clarke). Hence, a part of Friday, the whole of Saturday, and a part of Sunday make *“three days and three nights”* in Scriptural and even in our common language. Read yourself 1 Sam 30:12-13, and compare Esther 4:16 and 5:1 because I do not have the space to put them all here.

Now, I have said before that Christ's life is a pattern or an example of the Christian life, which is the true life. The Christian life hinges on the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ. Our faith, hope, and love depend upon this truth. Anyone who does not believe the resurrection is not a Christian but a lost soul. Take heed, therefore, that you do not be deceived as some were in the times of Christ and the Apostles.

### The Resurrection of the Dead

One of the articles of the Christian faith is the resurrection of the dead. We believe that Christ died, was buried and rose again on the third day. It is written, *“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification”* (Romans 4:25, NIV). Therefore, if you do not believe that Christ rose again, you are not justified. For *“...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved”* (Romans 10:9).

Christ is the *“firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”* (1 Corinthians 15:20). The word, *“firstfruit”* means the “beginning” or “commencement” of harvest. In other words, the first of something. Christ's resurrection then is the beginning or the first of the resurrection of the dead; and “as sure as the first fruits are the proof that there is a harvest, so surely the resurrection of Christ is a proof of ours” (Adam Clarke). That I may not mislead you (for I do not know whether my reader is a Christian or an unbeliever yet to be saved by the free grace of Christ), know that there are two kinds of resurrection of the dead.

## The Two Types of the Resurrection of the Dead

*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*

The two types of the resurrection of the dead are the resurrection of life and the resurrection of condemnation. The resurrection of life is for those who have done good when they were alive and the resurrection of condemnation is for those who did evil. Beloved reader, you must understand correctly what the Bible is teaching you; for this concerns the fate of your soul in eternity. Therefore, give it the necessary attention so that you may understand it



properly. Do not presume that you will attain the resurrection of life because you have faith; for the devils also believe and tremble (James 2:19). Read also Acts:16:16-19.

### The Resurrection of Life

This refers to eternal life, and according to Christ's own words, it is for those who have done good. Jesus is not teaching salvation by works here because the Scriptures clearly teach that we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8) that works by love (Galatians 5:6). Christ teaches the same thing as Paul and it is true that those who do good will resurrect to life. But our definition of good is different from God's. To us, someone does good he perform works like giving of alms, visiting the sick, praying, fasting and going to church. When we see such works, we say, "He is a good man", "She is a good woman".

However, God does not only look at the outward action but also the heart, the spirit, the principle or motive from which the action proceeds. Accordingly, in the sight of God, no one does good who is not good himself. For you to do good, you must first become inherently good. The Scripture says, "And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering" (Genesis 4:4-5). God first accepted Abel and then his offering; He rejected Cain and then his offering. So your personality must first please God before your worship. What made Abel to be accepted and Cain to be rejected? It

was the presence of faith in the former and the lack of it in the latter that made the difference (See Hebrews 11:4). Faith is what makes men good because through it God creates the heart anew in His own image and likeness. After this change, the man does all his works out of pure love and that is what makes his works good. This is the caliber of people who belongs to the resurrection of life.

Therefore, those who are not born again, strictly speaking, cannot do good in the sight of God although the works they do shine brightly. For they do their works not out of love but for fear of punishment or for the favour and applause of men. Thus, the apostle said, "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing*" (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Therefore, seek to become good yourself so that your works also may be good. All those who do not have the kind of good works described in the Scriptures and explained above belong to the resurrection of condemnation.

### The Example of Christ's Resurrection

*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life.*

The example Christ gives us in His resurrection is walking in newness of life. We saw in last two weeks' edition of the Signpost that our death with Christ meant separation from sin. We are dead to the old life, that is, we have been separated from it; now, we have been made alive to the new life in Christ. This new life in which you ought to walk, beloved, consists in holiness and righteousness. The Scripture says, "And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6:13).

May the Lord help you to live the resurrection life to the glory of His name. May He make you good so that your works may be good also in Jesus' name. Amen!