

The Resurrection

[John Brown](#)

John Brown of Edinburgh was a Scotch Burgher minister, eldest son of Rev. John Brown of Whitburn, Linlithgowshire, and grandson of John Brown of Haddington. He was born on July 12, 1784 and died at Edingburgh October 13, 1848. He studied at Edinburgh and the divinity hall of the Burgher Church at Selkirk; was licensed 1805 and ordained minister of the Burgher Church of Biggar, Lanarkshire, 1806. After serving several more pastorates he became professor of exegetical theology to the United Associate Synod after 1834. He was strongly in favor of the separation of church and state, and in 1845 was tried (and acquitted) before the synod on a charge of holding unsound views concerning the atonement.

He was a fine orator and a voluminous writer; the most prominent of his works are: *Exposition of the Discourses and Sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ* (3 Vols. 1850); *Expository Discourses on Galatians* (1853); and the *Analytical Exposition of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (1857).

This particular article is taken from *The Resurrection of Life*, an exposition of I Cor. xv. (1852).

That which led to Christ's resurrection, — his vicarious death secures the resurrection of life to his people.

Let us first, then, attend to the security which the resurrection of Christ gives for the resurrection of his people, arising out of what led to his resurrection. "But now Christ is risen, and is become the first-fruits of them that slept."

"Now" is here not expressive of time, but of transition. If Christ be not risen, then these consequences would follow; "but now Christ *is* risen:" nothing is, nothing can be, more certain than this; and, in rising, he is "the first-fruits of those who sleep." The language is figurative. The first-fruits are the first ripe grain that is cut down in the field, or the first ripe fruit which is gathered from the tree. It is a part of the harvest, and an intimation that the rest is coming. The general idea intended to be suggested is this, that, as the first-fruits are an earnest of the coming harvest, inasmuch as the operation of the laws of God's physical government, which have ripened a part, will in due season ripen all the grain and the fruit — so the resurrection of Christ — who was the first of our race

who returned to life, never again to submit to death, in which sense he is “the first-begotten from the dead,” — is an earnest of the resurrection of all his people — of all who sleep in him — as the operation of the laws of God’s moral government, which raised him from the dead, shall also, in due time, raise them from the dead. He, the divinely-appointed representative of his people, had assumed their nature, and subjected himself to their liabilities. He undertook to do all that was necessary to save them, in consistency with, in illustration of, the perfections of the Divine character. In the fulfilment of his covenant engagements, in discharge of their liabilities, he had closed a life of perfect obedience, by submitting to death in their room. On the cross he had said, “It is finished!” ‘the debt is paid, the work is done.’ It was on the ground of this perfect obedience and satisfaction that he was raised from the dead by the power of the Father. Had it not been complete, he must have remained among the dead. The resurrection is the voice of the Supreme Judge re-echoing the cry on the cross, “It is finished!” It was that obedience and satisfaction, which form our justification, that secured his resurrection. As he was delivered to death on account of our offences, so he was raised again on account of our justification, on account of that which justifies us — his all-perfect obedience to the death; and the operation of the same grace, righteousness, and faithfulness that, on that ground, produced his resurrection, will — must — in due time produce the resurrection of all who are his—all who are “in him.” The first-fruits of the earth do not so certainly foreshow the ripening of the complete harvest, as the resurrection of Christ does the resurrection of his people. The laws by which grain ripens are liable to be interfered with in a variety of ways; and, in a season where the first-fruits have been gathered fully ripe, owing to unlooked for changes in the atmosphere, the general harvest may yet be “a heap in the day of desperate sorrow.” But the laws of the Divine moral government are subject to no such interferences; and we may conclude, with absolute certainty, that, since Christ is risen, his people *shall* — ay, *must* — rise.

It has been very generally thought by interpreters, that, in employing the term “first-fruits” in reference to Christ, as risen from the dead, the apostle not only uses the word in its general figurative sense, but that he refers to the solemn religious ceremony, under the law, of the presentation of the first-fruits to Jehovah in the temple. They suppose that the apostle had in his eye the following ordinance of the Levitical institution, — When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: “on time morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” All the fruits of the land of Canaan were viewed as of themselves profane — none might eat them till they were consecrated by the presentation of the first-fruits to Jehovah. Before that ceremony, none of the crops could be reaped; after that ceremony, it became a mere matter of convenience when any or all of them should be cut down. It is remarkable that that presentation was to take place on the second day of unleavened bread — the day of our Lord’s resurrection; and there can be no doubt that when he, raised from the dead, as it were presented himself to God, he was accepted, not only himself, but “accepted,” as Bishop Pearson says, “for all his people, that so their dust might be sanctified, their corruption hallowed, and their mortality consecrated to all eternity.” — The resurrection

of Him who was their substitute, indicating that their dead bodies were not polluted things, but would in due time, quickened like his, be admitted into the Divine presence.

Whatever judgment may be formed as to the typical signification of the Jewish rite, we have seen that the words, viewed simply as figurative, strikingly express the sentiment that the resurrection of Christ is the token and earnest, and as it were the commencement, of the resurrection of his people. Had he not risen, they never could have risen. His having risen is assurance that they also shall rise. How it is so, is, to a certain degree, suggested even by the figurative expression, as we have seen; but the apostle farther illustrates the subject in the verses that follow. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

The general idea here is the same as that more fully developed in the concluding section of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It is that Christ, as well as Adam, sustained a public character; that they were equally representative men — the one the representative of the whole of his natural posterity, the other the representative of the whole of his spiritual posterity. "By man" — by a man — the first man, Adam — "came death." This is the apostle's own commentary on these words: "By one man sin" — guilt, liability to punishment — "entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men." Death was not a part of the original order of things, so far as man was concerned. "God made man immortal, and formed him an image of his own eternity." Man brought mortality and death on himself.

"As by man came death, so by man" — a man — the man Christ Jesus — "comes the resurrection of the dead." "The resurrection of the dead," as I have repeatedly stated and endeavoured to prove, here, as well as in some other parts of the apostle's writings, refers exclusively to the resurrection of life — to that resurrection which is deliverance from death, as a part of the curse. What would have happened, had there been no restorative dispensation, and how the resurrection to condemnation stands connected with the resurrection of Christ — for that it is connected with it there can be no reasonable doubt — are questions, however interesting in themselves, that we have nothing to do with here. The bringing death on man, as the effect of the curse, was the work of one man, Adam; the delivery of man from death, as the effect of the curse, the manifestation of the Divine displeasure, is the work of one man, Christ Jesus. The first man, by sinning, brought the curse of death on himself and all his natural posterity. The second man, by becoming a curse in the room of his spiritual seed, and, under the curse, fully obeying the law and enduring its penalty, delivered himself and them from the curse of death, and secured for himself and them a glorious resurrection.

The force of the expression, "*since*" by man, or a man, came death, so by man, or a man, comes the resurrection of the dead, seems to be this — 'There is a divine congruity in the arrangement as to the way in which men are to be delivered from death. It bears an analogy to the way in which men were subjected to death. It was fitting that, as one man, abusing by his sin a gracious Divine appointment, which made him the federal representative of his race, had been permitted by God to introduce universal

death among his posterity, so God should appoint that the deliverance of men from that death, which is the wages of sin, should be through the obedience of one man. It is a Divine appointment; and it bears the stamp of that harmony which marks the works of God.' The idea is more fully brought out in the closing paragraph of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, already referred to. "If by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ:" "As by the offence of one" — or rather by one offence — "judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one" — or rather by one righteousness — "the free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life."

The statement we have been illustrating is plainly meant as a reason for the assertion that Christ, risen from the dead, is the first fruits of them who slept — that his resurrection secures theirs; for in what he did and suffered, leading to his resurrection, he acted as a public character, just as Adam, in what led to death, acted as a public character. Adam's sin, proved by himself becoming mortal, led to the death of all his natural posterity; for God had constituted him their representative. Christ's obedience, the perfection of which is proved by his resurrection, leads to the resurrection of all his spiritual posterity; for God has constituted him their representative.

The 22d verse seems added to bring out more strongly the fact, that all who die — that is, all the natural descendants of Adam — die in consequence of their connection with him, — their death is the execution of the curse of God against his sin; and that all who attain to the resurrection of the dead, the resurrection of life — that is, all the spiritual seed of Christ — become partakers of this privilege entirely in consequence of God's being well pleased with his obedience in their room, and with them as "in him," — connected with him. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The sentiment is, 'All who die, die as connected with Adam: all who attain to the resurrection of the dead, attain to it as connected with Christ.'

Death is the punishment of the first sin of the first man. All the death that ever has been, or ever will be, is to be considered in this light. So the apostle argues in the fifth chapter of the Romans, in support of his assertion, All men die in consequence of their becoming guilty — exposed to punishment — by the first sin of the first man. 'During the Mosaic law,' says he, 'all died. But was not this the execution of the sanction of that law? No; for its sanction was not death, but violent untimely death: and that it was not the cause of death is plain; for, though where there is no law there is no transgression, yet men died before the law, as well as under it, — from Adam to Moses, as well as from Moses to Christ. But might not death be the execution of the sanction of natural law? No, not that either; for it took place in the case of infants and idiots, who were not capable of violating natural law. Their death was the execution of the Divine sentence — the expression of the Divine displeasure — against the first sin of the first man; and what it was in them, it is in all.' Men die just because they are the descendants of the man who broke the covenant, of which death was the penalty. All who die, — and all die, "it is appointed to men to die," — all who die, die as in Adam,—intimately related to Adam by a divine constitution. Next to the sufferings of Christ, and the pains of

everlasting punishment, this is the most tremendous manifestation ever made of the evil of sin.

As this is the truth with regard to death, so there is an analogous truth with regard to deliverance from death as the effect of the curse — the resurrection of life. All who are thus made alive, are made alive as connected with Christ. Indeed, all saving blessings are enjoyed by men only as connected with Christ. They deserve punishment, — they never can deserve anything else. It is “in him” that they are “blessed with heavenly and spiritual blessings.” “Chosen *in* him before the foundation of the world,” “*in* him they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,” — “they are made accepted *in* him,” and “*in* him they obtain an inheritance.” The apostle’s deep personal conviction of the importance of being “*in Christ*,” in order to the attainment of a glorious resurrection, is very strikingly expressed in the following passage in his Epistle to the Philippians — “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead:” — no attaining of that, in his estimation, but by being found “in Christ.” And surely, as the death of all his natural posterity is a wonderful manifestation of the displeasure of God against the first sin of the first man, so the bestowing all the ineffable, inconceivable glories of the resurrection of life on all the spiritual seed of Christ — “a multitude which no man can number, out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation” of the sons of men — is a wonderful proof how well pleased the Father is “for HIS righteousness’ sake,” when, on account of it, He raises to a state of happiness, so high and secure, such multitudes, whose righteous desert was “everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power.” The whole of this argumentative statement, as has been well remarked, proceeds on the great fundamental principle of Christianity, “that in the economy of grace, Christ and his people are so one, that what is asserted of the one is thereby virtually asserted of the other, and can have force only with those who understand and believe this.”

The words that follow, “But every man in his own order: Christ, the first-fruits, then they who are Christ’s at his coming: then cometh the end,” seem introduced to meet the thought — ‘But how is this? We see that in Adam all die. He died, and all in him; every one of his natural posterity die; but though Christ be risen, we do not see any of those in him, far less all of them, rise. They die as being in Adam; but they do not rise as being in Christ. He rose the third day after his death; but years and ages pass over the graves of those who are “in him,” and there is no resurrection.’ ‘It is even so,’ as if the apostle said; ‘but the statement is not the less true. All *in him* shall certainly arise, as all *in Adam* die; “but every man in his own order.”’

The reference of “every man” is somewhat doubtful. Some have restricted it to those who are Christ’s. ‘Every one of those who are Christ’s shall be made alive in his own order.’ But this does not seem to be the reference, for all the dead in Christ are to rise at

once — not successively — not each in his own order. They have a common order of resurrection. Others have, with much more probability, considered it as referring both to Christ and those who are Christ's — each in his own order; Christ immediately, on the third day after death, as the first-fruits; and they, as the full harvest, at his coming. That would undoubtedly be the true interpretation, if the 23d verse immediately followed the 20th. I cannot help, however, thinking that "every one," or "each of them," refers to the "all" who die in Adam, and the "all" who in Christ are made alive. These are the two bands. There is a band on which death passes — the first man, and all his natural descendants; and there is a band to which life is restored — the second man — the Lord from heaven — and all his spiritual descendants. The Apostle does not specify what takes place with respect to the first band — Adam, and his descendants. That was not the subject under consideration. We know, however, what the fact is: Adam became mortal on committing his first sin; and, when the appointed period of his continuance on earth came, submitted to the sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return:" and all his descendants have, one after another, descended after him to the grave. But it is otherwise with the second Adam and his descendants. He, having finished the work which procures both his and their restoration to a glorious life, after lying long enough in the grave to give satisfactory evidence that he had really died, rose again from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures. He has risen as the first-fruits. It is otherwise with his spiritual descendants, who receive here a very significant designation, "They who are Christ's." These are plainly the same who, in the preceding verse, are said to be "in him." They are his — given to him in the eternal covenant — redeemed by his blood — brought to him by the Father, in their effectual calling, — and under the influence of his Spirit, voluntarily surrendering themselves to him to be his only, wholly, and for ever. "They who are Christ's" die like him, but they do not, like him, rise on the third day, as some dreaming mystics have supposed. They do not rise one by one, as all in Adam die. Christ, the first-fruits, has been made alive, and they shall all, who are in him, be made alive at his coming — not till then. The coming here is the second coming of the Lord, "without sin" — not as a sin-offering — "for" the complete "salvation" of his people. Then all in him who "are in their graves shall hear his voice, and they that hear shall live, and shall come forth to the resurrection of life."

Here a question naturally occurs, 'But why is this the order of the second Adam and his seed? Why is death not now abolished? Why do redeemed men die, or, if they must die, why do their bodies continue, it may be for many ages, in the grave? Why is the prey allowed to fall into the hands of the mighty? Why are the ransomed captives not immediately delivered?' It may be doubtful how far it is wise either to propose or to answer such questions. It might be enough to say, "It is not for us to know or to determine the times and the seasons." His time obviously is not yet come; our time is always ready. With him "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." It might be enough to say, These questions take their place along with a number of other questions, which men more curious than wise have proposed. 'Why did God not form man with an absolute security of continuing holy? Why were the destinies of the race so deeply involved in the conduct of their original parents? Why were sinning angels consigned to hopeless destruction, while a Saviour was provided for man? Why, when the merits and the power of that Saviour are equally infinite, are not all men

saved? Why was the Saviour of the world not brought into it till four thousand years after men needed his interference? Why was revelation confined to one nation before his coming? and why has it not been extended to all nations since his coming?' I scarcely think angels meddle with such questions; but "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." It can do no harm, however, to remark, that the delay of the general resurrection of those who are Christ's, till the close of the present system of things, is owing to no deficiency in merit, or power, or grace, in the great Deliverer. Neither are we, I apprehend, going beyond our measure when we advert to some of the advantages which seem to be connected with the arrangement —the "order" — which infinite wisdom has preferred; though in this, as, indeed, in everything, "his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways." While it is utterly impossible for us to see to what an extent another arrangement would have affected the established order of things, we cannot avoid seeing that its effects would be numerous and important, changing entirely the character of the present state, and unfitting it for many of the purposes it is intended to serve, and actually does serve. The denunciation of death, as the punishment of the first sin of the first man, is exceedingly precise; and its execution, in the case of every individual, even of those who are Christ's, is a striking confutation of the first lie, and a striking vindication of the truth, of God.

It is also, as we have already remarked, a most impressive lesson respecting the evil of sin — race after race descending into the grave, to mark God's displeasure at a single violation of his law, and that, in the estimation of many, no very flagrant transgression. The great Judge of all appears full of awful majesty, when we see *death*, his messenger, riding forth conquering and to conquer. How important to secure his favour — to escape his displeasure! Death, too, in various ways, whether their own death or that of others, proves the means of exercising and strengthening the holy principles of those who are Christ's — their faith, their hope, their humility, their resignation, their patience; the Saviour thus wresting out of the devil's hands the weapons of his own forging, and turning them into instruments of holiness and happiness, instead of sin and misery.

Besides, it is obvious to remark, that the simultaneous resurrection of all the dead in Christ — the abolition of death at once and for ever — will place in a peculiarly glorious light the power and grace of the Conqueror, and the magnitude and completeness of the victory. Had all the dead saints at the resurrection of Christ — a goodly company, but still comparatively a little flock — been set free from the bands of death, and taken with him to heaven; and had, since that time, every individual saint been freed from the necessity of dying, and been quietly clothed upon instead of being unclothed, the scene had been incomparably less striking than that which will be exhibited on the last eventful day of the world's history, when the merit of the Redeemer, and his power founded on his merit, will bring the whole human race out of their graves, and before his tribunal, and enable him to confer on them all an endless existence, — on his own redeemed ones an endless existence of perfect holy happiness. Oh, what a day of triumph to the Redeemer and to the redeemed! How glorious will the King of Israel, the Captain of our salvation, be that day at the head of his ransomed, re-animated legions! Yes, radiant as they will be in holy light and loveliness, their glory will be as nothing, by reason of the

glory that excelleth, — a glory, compared with which the splendour of a thousand suns is as darkness. Yet will he not only be glorious in himself, but glorified in his risen saints, with bodies “fashioned like unto his glorious body,” and “admired” — by all the angelic millions — “in them who have believed.” And how loud, and lofty, and sweet, and long-drawn out, will be the shout of triumph over the fell tyrant — the last enemy, — and the hymn of thanksgiving to the Conqueror who has destroyed him — the Prince of life, the King immortal, — which shall rise from the countless multitude of ransomed captives, — “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to him who hath given us the victory.” “salvation to our God who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.” Hallelujah! And again, and again, and again, they shall cry — hallelujah!

“Then cometh the end.” The harvest is over, the earth is reaped, all that is excellent is ready to ascend into heaven; and the earth and all that is in it must now be burnt up. These words, “Then cometh the end” — or, leaving out the supplement, “then the end,” — have commonly been connected with what follows, and considered as equivalent to, “then cometh the end of the world,” which the words, taken by themselves, may mean; but we think it much more natural to connect them with what goes before— “Christ the first-fruits — then they who are Christ’s at his coming — then the end,” *i. e.*, ‘Either then the conclusion, or then the completion of the great harvest;’ a new sentence commencing with, “When he shall have delivered up the kingdom,” and ending with, “the last enemy — death — shall be destroyed.”

I conclude the illustration of this part of the subject with a reflection, which I think must have arisen already in the mind of every attentive reader. May it be written there as with a pen of iron — as with lead in the rock for ever. Oh, the transcendent importance of being “in Christ!” That makes all the difference between guilt and justification — depravity and holiness — danger and safety — a glorious hope, and a fearful looking for of judgment — the resurrection to life, and the resurrection to damnation—heaven and hell — eternal happiness and eternal misery. Gain that, and you gain everything; miss that, and all is lost. Apart from him there is no true happiness; *in* him there is “salvation with eternal glory.”

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