

resources, which out of "five barley loaves and two small fishes" could feed five thousand men; the human weakness that often needed rest and refreshment, in mysterious union with the Divine power that could hush the storm on Galilee, or heal the sick by the way-side, or call forth the dead from their graves; the bitter enmity and baseless slanders of the Pharisees, met by an unruffled calmness that could proceed only from an inward consciousness of power; and at last the mysterious agony in Gethsemane; the mock trial; the anguish of the cross; the dying cry; the heavens draped in mourning; the quaking earth and the rending veil;—we look at all these things and the query springs instinctively to the lip,—“What does it all mean? Can any one solve the enigma of this mysterious life, and still more mysterious death?” There is no answer: the whole question is shrouded in darkness as profound as that of the sepulchre wherein the body of Jesus sleeps. In that grave they have buried the enigma; *out of that grave must come the solution.* We follow the Saviour, step by step, until he is laid in the tomb of Joseph, and there, like the traveller who has reached the ocean, our progress is stayed, nor can our straining eyes pierce through the mists, and reach the other side. Here is a point where reason is utterly baffled, and even faith herself sinks down to earth, and wearily folds her drooping pinions.

The RESURRECTION solves the mystery. It makes plain the purpose for which Christ both lived and died. It unfolds the mighty MEANING of that wondrous life and death. The moment the stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulchre,—the moment “the rising God forsakes the tomb,”—light beams upon all that was mysterious and perplexing; and promises, and prophecies, and miracles, and sufferings become radiant with a heavenly meaning.

Viewed simply as the solution of his life’s mystery, the resurrection of Jesus has always excited a profound interest in Christian minds; but there is another aspect of the question of still deeper import. It must not be forgotten that the resurrection, as a fact, stands intimately associated with our present confidence, and with our dearest and brightest hopes. If Christ be not risen, our faith in him is a delusion, and our hope a dream.* If that rock-tomb in Joseph’s garden still holds his dust, then those who have fallen asleep in gospel hope have perished.† If the stone be not rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, then there is no throne of grace to which penitent sinners may come, nor any “holiest” into which, “by the blood of Jesus,” believers can enter. If the portals of the grave have not been *triumphantly* passed by the world’s Redeemer, then are our hopes of a blissful immortality as delusive as the dreams that haunt our slumbers. Neither for this world nor for the next have we any hope if so be that Christ is not risen.‡

But if, on the other hand, the resurrection of Jesus be an accomplished fact, then our hope and confidence are not misplaced. His death is the grand sacrifice for the world’s sin: his resurrection is the incontestible proof that the sacrifice has been accepted. He “was delivered for our offences,” but he “was raised again for our justification.” By his death he satisfied offended

*1 Cor. 15:17.

†1 Cor. 15:18.

‡1 Cor. 15:19.