



"New Life" Monday. . . and Everyday!

K. Jason French

"The Lord is risen indeed!" *Now what?*

It's one thing to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ in a day that is set aside to focus on such a wonderful thing! But if Christ is *really raised* from the dead (and he was!) shouldn't that make a difference on Monday too? And Tuesday? And the rest of the week as well? Of course it should. But how? What difference does the resurrection of Jesus make for the everyday life of a follower of this risen Lord?

The New Testament especially is filled with numerous ways to answer that question, but here is one text to get the resurrection ball rolling:

If Christ has been raised from the dead, we should not fear death anymore.

Do you think it's possible to NOT be afraid of dying?

Many are afraid because they just don't know what's "on the other side." Or some who think they know, don't want to go there. Still others, in a blissful sort of ignorance or settled belief, are not afraid because they are convinced they are "going to a better place."

But for followers of Jesus Christ, we should neither be blissfully ignorant nor should we be naively trusting in blind faith. There is much evidence in which to ground our faith especially when it comes to matters of eternal life and death.

In John's revelation as he is exiled on the island of Patmos for the sake of the Gospel, he sees the risen Christ in a vision and falls down as though he was dead. But then the most amazingly comforting thing happened to him. This same risen Jesus...

"...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."

Revelation 1:17b-18 (ESV)

The resurrected Christ comforts John in his fear, first by touching him with His risen right hand.

The same right hand that had been nailed to the cross was now resting on his shoulder.

Have you ever been afraid or distraught and had a loved one put their hand on your shoulder or put their arms around you reassuring you that things would be ok?

The power of this touch from Jesus must have been such a comfort to John but Jesus didn't stop there. A comforting touch communicates something very important, but it doesn't communicate what words of truth were designed to do.

The same mouth that had cried out "It is finished!" was now telling him "Fear not!"

Jesus was telling John *not* to fear and he grounds his command in the fact that he is the "first and the last, and the LIVING ONE."

Did John know and believe that Jesus had died? Of course! He was there! He saw him hanging on a cross! He saw him buried! And he saw him risen from the dead! But now seeing Jesus face to face caused him to shutter in fear and basically pass out like a dead man. Can you imagine what a sight this must have been. (See also verses 12-16 for a stuffing description of this "voice" speaking to him)

Jesus as "the living one" says one of the most astonishing things you will ever hear him say: "I died." Yep. That's right. Jesus died knows he died. Who else would know better than the one who experienced death first hand. But he doesn't stop there! He continues, "and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

When you lose your keys, how do you feel?

Perhaps foolish because you have misplaced them...again. Or perhaps you are frustrated because you have somewhere you really need or want to go and you can't find the means that will allow you to carry out

your desire and get you to your desired destination? The purpose of a key is to allow you to get somewhere, behind some gate or door that is locked. A lock is a kind of mechanical authority that is not supposed to allow anyone in without the rights or the means to legitimately overcome the purpose of the lock.

Jesus says that "death" and "hades" had keys. They had been given some kind of authority that would keep people either in or out. The idea of "death" is to pass through a gateway or a door where you don't just walk back through it if you want. For all intents and purposes, it is a one way passage. In the New Testament, "Hades" or "the grave" is a holding place for prisoners who are bound and unable to escape their cells.

But now, Jesus is saying that HE has the keys of Death and Hades/the grave.

When you have the keys, you can go anywhere you want. No lock can keep you out. Jesus died and went to the grave in order to get the keys that were rightfully his in the first place. And now he is able to let anyone out that he wants.

This is why as followers of Christ we should have no fear of death! Death doesn't have the keys anymore! Hell doesn't have the keys anymore!

Jesus Christ has the keys!

If Jesus truly has the keys (and he does!) when we come to face our final moments in this life, we have no need to fear! Christ will not open the door to the grave and tell us to jump into our prison cell to be confined for eternity because of our sins.

Though the wages of sin is death, the free gift of God is eternal LIFE through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23) who now and forevermore holds the keys of Death and Hades.

When we come to draw our final breath, we can be confident that for those who are trusting in our Heavenly Father's perfect provision of a Savior, who has saved us from the wages of sin, who has been raised by the glory of God the Father nevermore to die, we too will live with Him because he has the keys!

Jesus will open the gates of heaven to us and welcome us into glory because we are freed by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ from our sin, from the fear death, and from the prison of hell.

So, how should we live on Monday in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

When the fear of death seeks to creep in, when the present reality of our remaining struggle with sin seeks to discourage and dismay, when we come to take our final breath on this earth, we must remember that Jesus has the keys of Death and Hades.

He is alive forevermore and so with him we all soon will be!

Questions for Application

Am I afraid to die? Why?

Do you think it's possible NOT to be afraid to die?

What can you do today to do battle against the fear of death?

What promises has Jesus given us to fight the good fight of faith and in particular, against the fear of death?

How can I encourage others to grow in their confidence in Jesus Christ holding the keys of Death and Hades?

How can I help those who may be nearing death better prepare for seeing Jesus face to face?

Imagine what it must have been like to have the risen Jesus himself, put his hand on your shoulder and utter these words of encouragement to you?

Is it possible to even look forward to the day when we breathe our last breath knowing that we will be with Jesus?

How can this help us and others do battle against the fear of death?

May God grant us the grace to continue living today in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ who died and is alive for evermore, who has the keys of Death and Hades, so that we need have no fear of death when our time comes!