

However, we note that within a short period of time these same disciples are leading a movement which was destined to have a glorious and wonderful history. The ~~xxxx~~ little band of men who followed Jesus during the days of His earthly ministry became the leaders in the early Christian Church which was born fifty days after His resurrection. They were no longer sad and discouraged, but full of joy and hope. A note of rejoicing and ~~xxxx~~ a spirit of exaltation had possessed the disciples who formerly were so dejected. What produced this change in the lives of the disciples? What transformed their sorrow into joy? It was the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. The message that the Lord had risen brought cheer and encouragement to their hearts. The Christian Church had its beginning with the full conviction that Jesus was raised from the dead. The resurrection faith was fundamental in establishing ~~the~~ Christianity in the apostolic age. Without the firm belief in the resurrection of Christ the history of the Church ^{would have} had been impossible. If Christ had not risen from the grave, we would not have had Christianity as a ^{wide-spread} religion in the first century of our era.

The wonderful growth and rapid spread of the Christian Church is also to be observed. We must consider the grand sweep of Christianity and its triumphs. The disciples of Jesus were fully convinced that the tremendous fact of His resurrection was the secret of their triumph. The victory of Christians and the Christian Church rests upon the mighty event that God raised Jesus. They were willing to ~~die~~ ^{die} for their faith in the midst of persecution and tribulation of the world. In spite of their being persecuted and tried on every ~~hand~~, the early apostles hazarded their lives for the cause of Christ. Within a period of three hundred years from the time of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman empire. During the first three ~~centuries~~ centuries of our era we