

## *Part Seventeen*

---

# RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

## 88

### THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Proclaim the good news! Tell the facts! Carry the message to all the world! Jesus has risen from the dead! This was the apostles' assignment; and to it they applied themselves as men possessed of a magnificent obsession. They knew by tremendous and triumphant experience the reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Of all the facts that support our faith, this is the most meaningful and the most certain.

Under the teaching of Jesus during His resurrection appearances, the apostles began to see the significance of these facts in the plan of God for all men. They began to feel the transforming power of this great manifestation of God's might and mercy. They felt the obligation to carry out Jesus' urgently repeated command to tell everybody these facts by which men are brought to salvation and new life and without which men have neither hope nor light in a world of darkness and death.

Far too much, we take it for granted that men do know these facts when in reality they do not. Many, many people have heard something about the resurrection of Jesus. But they think of it as a religious doctrine which some men believe. They do not actually know it as a fact. We must proclaim the resurrection of Jesus not as part of a philosophical ideal, nor as our opinion or a corollary of hopeful dreams for the future, but as a certainty of what God has done in the past. Jesus has commanded us to make it known "to the whole creation." For by this knowledge men are saved through believing and obeying the risen Lord.

#### *The Centrality of Christ and His Resurrection*

Christianity is Christ! It is confidence in Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God, having all authority and absolute trustworthiness. Christianity becomes a matter of doctrines and practices simply because Jesus taught and commanded. Its doctrines are His teachings; and its practices are obedience to His commands.

Our Christian faith is faith in Christ and the divine revelation of

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

which He is the source and center. It certainly is not a philosophy or a system of reasonings about realms beyond our experience. It is following Him wherever He leads and trusting Him for all our needs. The whole validity of Christianity and of the Bible depends upon who Jesus is—upon His personal merit and power.

Because He put His stamp of approval upon the Old Testament, and said that it could not be broken (John 10:35) and that none of it shall pass away until all be fulfilled (Matt. 5:18; Luke 24:44), therefore we believe that the Old Testament scriptures are inspired, authoritative and divinely dependable. Because Jesus promised to give to the apostles the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth as well as to remember all that He taught them (John 14:26; 16:12-14), we believe that the New Testament scriptures are inspired of God and possessed of divine accuracy and authority.

The evidence that Jesus is the Son of God is shown:

1. In many Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Isa. 9:6; Micah 5:2-4; Ps. 110:1; 45:6, 7, etc.);
2. In His supernatural birth;
3. In the direct testimony of angels (Luke 1:30-35);
4. In the witness of John the Baptist (John 1:33, 34);
5. In the confession of demons (Mark 5:6, 7);
6. In the testimony of the voice of God at His baptism and on the Mount (Matt. 3:16, 17 and 17:5);
7. In Jesus' sinless life, in which all His deeds and motives were of God;
8. In His superhuman wisdom and insight into the nature and needs of men;
9. In His miraculous works, showing both the power and the merciful character of God;
10. In His persistent and positive claims to be one with God (See Matt. 11:27; 28:18; Mark 2:10; Luke 22:69-71; John 8:58; 10:30; 14:6-11; etc.).

*But the death and resurrection of Jesus are the facts that reveal most clearly and conclusively His person and character, as well as His purpose and His ministry to us.*

In the New Testament the resurrection is made the chief evidence upon which faith in Christ is to be based. It is the fitting climax of every account of His life. The key-note of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost was: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:24-32). "With great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33). It

## RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

was the major item of testimony in all their preaching (See Acts 3:15; 4:2; 5:31, 32; 10:40, 41; 13:30-37; 17:31, 32; 26:8, 23; Rom. 1:4; I Cor. 15:1-18). It is continually emphasized in the epistles as the basis of our faith and hope, and as a motive to holy living (See Rom. 6:4-11; 8:34; I Cor. 15:58; Eph. 1:19-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 2:12; 3:1-4; I Thess. 4:14; I Pet. 1:3-7; Heb. 13:20, 21).

Jesus Himself often predicted His own resurrection and considered it the greatest sign of His authority and truthfulness (See Matt. 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19; John 2:19-21; 10:17, 18). His enemies noticed His predictions of His resurrection and even the time that He set for it (See Matt. 27:63). In their blindness they tried to stop the power of God with military might and the authority of a Roman seal. They only provided circumstances that contributed to the proof of the resurrection.

The guard they placed to watch the tomb stands guard today against false objections and foolish doubts that would try to explain away the empty tomb.

Many people who are misled by scientific talk of unvarying uniformity in nature and who therefore doubt miracles, speak in glowing praise of Jesus' teachings. But they overlook the fact that Jesus' teaching was much more than a set of rules for conduct. He taught much about the life to come and insisted that faith in Him is the only way to life. He taught men to put their trust in Him because of His works which demonstrated that the power of God was with Him. He emphasized the importance of the resurrection as the sign of His authority and dependability. There is no honest or intelligent way to separate something called "Jesus' Teachings" from His words recorded in the New Testament which emphasize repeatedly the supreme importance of every man's definite commitment of self to Him, by faith and obedience to His authority (See Matt. 7:21-27; 10:32-38; 11:27; 12:30-42; 16:14-28; 21:37-45; 22:41-46; 26:63, 64; 28:18-20; John 3:36—as properly translated in most versions: "He who doth not obey"—; John 5:22-29; 6:29, 53-57; 8:24; 10:24-30; 12:46-48).

Confession of Christ and belief in the resurrection go together to obtain salvation: "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and thou shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Denying the resurrection of Christ is the same as denying His authority and power to save; "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is in vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:17).

*Direct Evidence For The Resurrection*

The resurrection of Jesus is not a matter of hope for what will happen, or a faith in what should happen, but knowledge of what did happen. It is not a compelling feeling, or reasonable philosophy, but it is a fact. If the events of the past, recorded as history can be known, then we know that Jesus arose from the dead. The fact of the resurrection is made known to us with certainty in exactly the same manner and by the same means in which we know of the American Declaration of Independence—by documentary testimony, standing results and necessary association with other facts independently established.

The chief proof of the resurrection is testimony. The testimony for Jesus' resurrection is the kind that all experience proves to be reliable—the kind that is acceptable to establish the truth in any court or in any matter of history.

The witnesses are *sufficient in number*—eleven apostles, five or six women (at least), some other disciples, James, Paul, and more than five hundred at one time. These saw Jesus alive after His death again and again, singly and in groups, indoors and outdoors, by day and by night. All were brought to one conviction. Their united, active witnessing and their convincing testimony produced thousands of believers within a few days in the very city where it happened, less than two months after Jesus was in the tomb. The testimony of some of them and the experience of all of them is recorded by at least six writers in different accounts that show all the variations of independent testimonies and all the harmony of truth.

The witnesses were *competent*—men of intelligence (read their classic writings) of mental balance before and after; well-prepared by long and intimate acquaintance with Jesus; of a mental attitude requiring proof; having personal interest in knowing the certainty of these things. They, at least the leading ones, repeatedly saw the risen Christ and listened to extensive teaching from Him, walked and talked with Him, touched Him, and saw Him eat in their presence, discussed His death and resurrection and plans for the future.

“To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

They even saw Him ascend into heaven. There was no mistaking His identity. They told of much detailed experience with Him. The circumstantial details of their accounts show that they were not trying

## RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

to tell of an inner conviction but of real physical experiences. This destroys the supposition that they could have been honestly mistaken. If Jesus did not actually arise and appear as they said, then they knew their testimony was false.

But they were *honest men*. They had been trained in righteousness, in both reverent fear and loving devotion toward the God of truth. Their lives show no tendency to dishonesty. Their teachings and their examples have had the greatest power in the world to make other men honest. They had nothing to gain by spreading a false report; but rather suffered much affliction and even death for their witnessing. Some men might die for what they believed and be mistaken. No such group of men will devote years of life and accept death for what they know to be false. But these apostles lived and died for what they knew to be true; if it had been false they most surely would have known that it was.

But there was other testimony, of unusual quality and force, to support the testimony of the eye-witnesses. The prophecies of the Old Testament testify of the coming of this unique event in the life of the promised Messiah (Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:10-12). As we have noted above, Jesus Himself predicted it, and it cannot be destroyed without destroying his integrity.

That Jesus was dead and buried, and that the tomb was empty the third day, are facts that His enemies established. His enemies through the last twenty centuries have tried either to deny His death or to explain the absence of the body. Their attempts have tested the accounts at every point and demonstrate both the facts and impossibility of explaining them by anything except the actual resurrection.

The disciples' unshakable conviction, the great change wrought in them; the faith of multitudes of Jews and "a great company of priests" (Acts 6:8), the transformation and ministry of Saul of Tarsus are all effects that must have an adequate cause, but for which no other cause can be found than the fact of Jesus' resurrection. No one has been able to deny that the apostles and the *early church honestly and firmly believed that Jesus* arose bodily from the grave. And no one has ever given a satisfactory explanation of how this firm and persistent belief could have arisen without the reality of the resurrection. Surely no one can deny that the church came into existence and Christianity became a force in the world, beginning with and growing because of the firm conviction and the convincing testimony of the resurrection.

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The resurrection is confirmed by the *Holy Spirit*, who came upon the apostles as Jesus had promised (Luke 24:49; John 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:5, 8), and who bore witness with them concerning the resurrection (Acts 2:33; 5:32).

The testimony is confirmed by *perpetual observances* which are based upon the fact of the resurrection. The form of baptism pictures both Christ's burial and resurrection, and their significance in our lives. The practice of worship on the first day of the week instead of the seventh, and that in a church which was at first Jewish, explicitly and pointedly commemorates both the resurrection of Jesus and its importance in their sight.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a fact made known to us by such an array of testimony and effects that it is more than what is usually called faith. Conviction based on testimony of facts frequently reaches the point at which it is called knowledge; for we speak of knowing many things that happened in the past which are made known to us through testimony and effects. The resurrection of Jesus is a matter of knowledge as much as any other fact in history is a matter of knowledge. At least, it is surely clear that to the eleven apostles the resurrection was not merely a belief, but knowledge of the greatest possible certainty. To us it is not only a part of the doctrine of Christ, but a proof of the authority of all His doctrine—not so much a belief, but a firm basis for faith in Him and hope of that which He has promised.

### *Consider Who It Was That Arose!*

The resurrection of Jesus was not merely an unexplained appearance of some unknown or ordinary man from the grave. His resurrection was in perfect harmony with His manner of life, His unique birth, His unparalleled works, His distinctive death, and with the prophecies that prepared the way for Him. The resurrection of Jesus is made both more readily believable and much more meaningful when we consider the following facts:

1. He fulfilled the promises and predictions of the prophets; His resurrection is a victory for revealed truth.

2. He is the One who lived in perfect righteousness; He arose as victor over great powers of wickedness.

3. He was the One who had raised others and promised to raise all men; His resurrection gives assurance that He still gives life to whom He will.

## RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

4. He is the One who predicted His own resurrection and claimed to speak the truth; it is proof that His words are infallibly true and all His claims are valid.

5. His death was declared to be an offering for our sins (Matt. 20:28; 26:28). His resurrection is our victory over sin and death if we join our lives with His. His rising proves that His death was adequate and acceptable for our redemption.

6. He is the One who said that all judgment was given unto Him and who read men's hearts with unerring accuracy. His resurrection is positive proof that we all shall stand before Him to be confessed by Him or to be condemned by Him.

We might be interested in what Lazarus would tell of his experience in four days of death and in living again, but we could not have much assurance that Lazarus could deliver the rest of us from death and all its terror. We should indeed be students of everything Jesus has to say; for He is the author of a divine covenant by which we all may have eternal life, and He is the judge to whom we all must give account.

We can be sure that Jesus is the Lord of life and death. Let us serve Him with glad assurance that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Let every man acknowledge Him as Lord—*admit* who He is, *submit* to His commands and the control of His Spirit, and joyfully *commit* to His keeping all that we are or hope to be.

We must either acknowledge and serve Him as our Lord here on earth, or confess Him as Lord hereafter to our everlasting shame and condemnation (Phil. 2:9-11).

### For Further Study:

Anderson, J. N. D. "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *Christianity Today* (March 29, 1968), Pp. 628-633. Excellent essay. Presents evidence and answers recent attacks. Anderson, a British lawyer, summarized the evidence for the resurrection in a popular form in a booklet *The Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, (InterVarsity, 1966).

McDowell, Josh. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. San Bernadino, Calif.: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1972. Pp. 185-273. Valuable collection of quotations and information on the resurrection. Well outlined and organized to make it usable.

Smith, Wilbur M. *Therefore Stand*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

House, 1945. Pp. 359-437. Good chapter stating the case for the resurrection.

Sparrow-Simpson, W. J. *The Resurrection and the Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1968 reprint of 1911 edition. Excellent work. Good on doctrinal meaning of the resurrection. His work is summarized in an article on "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ" in the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ed. by James Hastings.

Stott, John R. W. *Basic Christianity*, rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971. Pp. 45-60. Good refutation of the critical objections to the resurrection.

Tenney, Merrill C. *The Reality of the Resurrection*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1963. One of the best works on the fact and meaning of the resurrection.



## THRILLING SCENES OF THE RESURRECTION DAY

"Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" When someone sings it sincerely, your skin tingles. "Were you there when He rose up from the dead?"

We wish we could have been there to see the disciples' sorrow turn to joy, and to feel the surge of their assurance as their ebbing faith came back in full flood and rose to new heights—an irresistible force, a conviction that could not be suppressed.

Still it really isn't necessary to have been there for us to share in the certainty and the life-giving power of the fact of Jesus' resurrection. The thrilling scenes of the resurrection day can be seen in order by blending the records of Christ's resurrection.

I have visited the skull-shaped hill north of Jerusalem which may have been that "place of a skull" "called Golgotha." I took pictures of it and of the empty tomb nearby which many think is most likely to have contained briefly the body of Jesus. But if I could have been there with my camera when the angels said, "He is not here: for He is risen," or when Jesus said, "Mary," I could have photographed only a part of the events that are pictured so vividly in words for us in the various accounts of the New Testament. Each of the disciples of Jesus had only part of the thrilling experiences which are combined for us in the testimonies of the four Gospels, and Acts, and First Corinthians.

We can view the pictures which all of them left for us. And we can arrange the incidents in order as they happened in rapid succession on that eventful morning. When we do, we see the complete unity and agreement of all the different accounts of the various witnesses.

*The Events of the Resurrection Morning in Order*

1. Very early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and some other women, set out for the tomb of Jesus (probably from Bethany, at least half an hour's walk away). They were bringing spices to anoint His body. (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1).

2. Meanwhile, at the tomb, there was a great earthquake, as an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled away the stone. In fear the soldiers fell to the ground like dead men, and then fled

## THRILLING SCENES OF THE RESURRECTION DAY

to report to the chief priests (Matt. 28:2-4; 11-15).

3. The sun was just rising as the women drew near the tomb (Mark 16:2). They questioned among themselves, "Who shall roll away the stone?" for the stone was very great (Mark 16:3). But, looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back (Mark 16:3, 4; Luke 24:2; John 20:1).

4. Mary Magdalene immediately ran back to tell Peter and John (John 20:2).

5. But the other women came to the tomb and heard the angel say, "Fear not . . . He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:5, 6).

6. Upon entering the tomb they saw two angels who said, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? Remember how He told you in Galilee, that the Son of man must be crucified and on the third day rise. Go quickly and tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you into Galilee. There you shall see Him, as He told you" (See Matt. 26:32). They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word (Matt. 28:5-8; Mark 16:5-8; Luke 24:3-8).

7. Peter and John, hearing the alarming news from Mary, ran to the tomb. John arrived first, and paused to look into the vacant tomb. Peter came following John, rushed past him and went in. Then John also entered. They observed how the grave clothes were lying; the napkin which had been around His head was rolled up in a place by itself, apart from the linen cloths in which so many spices had been wrapped. John saw these things and believed. Up to now they had not understood the scripture that He must rise from the dead. Thoughtfully each went to his lodging place in Jerusalem (Luke 24:12; John 20:3-10).

At John's home there must have been someone overjoyed to hear his story (see John 19:27)!

8. Mary Magdalene, who had followed Peter and John back to the tomb, arrived after they left and remained near the tomb weeping. As she wept she stopped and looked into the tomb. She beheld two angels sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They asked her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said, "Because they have taken my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him" (John 20:11-13).

9. Turning around she saw Jesus, but knew not that it was He. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir,

if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said, "Master." Jesus said, "Do not cling to me" (RSV).<sup>1</sup> "But go, and tell my brethren that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:14-17; Mark 16:9).

10. Leaving Mary, Jesus then appeared to the other women who were still on their way to tell His disciples what the angels had said. Jesus greeted them with the usual greeting, which means literally, "Rejoice"; but the meaning was seldom as fitting as at this moment! They came and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him. Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. Go tell my brethren to go into Galilee, and there they will see me" (Matt. 28:9, 10).

11. These women, as well as Mary Magdalene, told what had happened to them, to the eleven and to all the rest, as they mourned and wept; but they would not believe it (Mark 16:10, 11; Luke 24:9-11; John 20:18).

12. At some time that day Jesus appeared also to Peter (Luke 24:34; I Cor. 15:5).

#### *Appearances Later in the Day*

In the afternoon He appeared to two disciples as they walked to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem; but they did not know Him. He talked with them and told them of the prophecies of Christ's suffering and death. When they arrived at the village, they invited Him to supper with them. At the meal He took bread and blessed it, and broke it and gave to them. Then they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight (Luke 24:13-32).

That very hour they returned to Jerusalem. They found the apostles (except Thomas) and others gathered with them, and told them all that had happened. Some of them also told the two, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon" (Mark 16:13; Luke 24:33-35).

As they spoke these things Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you." They were afraid, supposing that they beheld a spirit. He asked, "Why are you troubled? See my

---

<sup>1</sup> The verb translated "touch" in the common versions means basically "to fasten." The middle voice, present imperative, used here can mean "Do not keep on touching me" or "Do not keep on fastening yourself to me." The fact that the other women took hold of Jesus' feet in the next few minutes (Matt. 28:9) and that Jesus invited the apostles that evening to "Handle me and see" (Luke 24:39) show which translation should be adopted.

## THRILLING SCENES OF THE RESURRECTION DAY

hands and feet; touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you can see that I have." He rebuked some of them for their hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him, He showed them His hands and His side. They still wondered, and disbelieved for joy. He said, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of fish, and He ate it before them. They all were glad they saw the Lord (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19, 20).

Jesus said again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so send I you." Then He breathed on them, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Thus He reminded them of the promises He had made before His death concerning the Holy Spirit they were to receive to teach them all things and to bring all His teachings to their remembrance. Then He added, "whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:21-23).

### *Appearances After the Resurrection Day*

A week later He appeared to the apostles again with Thomas present, and all were convinced (John 20:24-29). They went to Galilee and Jesus kept His appointment there with them (Matt. 28:7, 10). He met with seven disciples by the sea (John 21). They had not forsaken Him to return to fishing, but were there at His command. On a mountain in Galilee He met all the eleven (Matt. 28:16-20) either before or after the breakfast by the sea; and it is possible at this time that He appeared to "about five hundred brethren at once" (I Cor. 15:7). At Jerusalem again He appeared to all the eleven and they saw Him taken up into heaven (Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:4-12).

Over this period of forty days He appeared to the disciples repeatedly, showing Himself alive by many convincing proofs, and speaking to them of the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). In these appearances He spoke to them the great commission to tell these things to all the world to bring repentance and remission of sins to all people (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). He told them more about the power of the Holy Spirit which they were to receive in Jerusalem a few days after His ascension (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5, 8).

### *Importance of Various Accounts*

The gospel accounts of the resurrection of Jesus are so independent of each other, and so different in the details each chose to tell, that

## RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

they are sometimes thought to be in conflict or to show some confusion about what really happened. But if we accept the fact that each writer did not tell all he knew, and if we see that when one account leaves out a name, or some other detail, the omission does not contradict another account which includes that item, we can fit them all together into a continuous and harmonious narrative.

For example: Matthew names two of the women—"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary." Mark names the same two and adds Salome. Luke names the two Marys and adds Joanna "and the other women with them." John names only Mary Magdalene, but quotes her as saying, "We" (20:3). There are omissions, but no contradictions.

Some translations have in Matthew 28:1, "Late on the Sabbath" or "In the end of the Sabbath." The Greek preposition *opse* means "after" as well as "late." Properly translated it agrees perfectly with Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; and John 20:1. If the women had gone to the tomb at sunset Saturday, would they not have seen the military guard there? But from Mark 16:3 it appears that they did not know about the guard or the sealing of the tomb. Surely there is no real conflict between going "to see the sepulchre" and going to anoint the body (Matt. 28:1 with Mark 16:1).

When John 20:1 says they went to the tomb "when it was yet dark" and Mark 16:2 says "at the rising of the sun," John may well be speaking of the start of their journey, and Mark of their arrival. Mark begins that same sentence with "very early in the morning." They may have bought some of their spices during that journey (see Mark 16:1), or may have gone to meet some of their group. To walk from Bethany to Calvary takes more than half an hour.

Such differences in the accounts really strengthen the evidence. The independent testimony of several good witnesses is surer than just one account given alike by all. The witnesses do not need to tell the same story, but they must support the main fact with details that do not discredit them.

The resurrection of Jesus is the most important fact in history. At least it is the most important fact for us all to know for sure. We can be sure of it because of the factual and convincing testimony of the New Testament witnesses who lived and died for their testimony in unshakable conviction.

We can be as sure as if we had been there—with cameras.

THRILLING SCENES OF THE RESURRECTION DAY

For Further Study:

McGarvey, J. W. *Evidences of Christianity*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate, reprint of 1891 ed. Part III, Pp. 132-162. Good on reconciling alleged contradictions in the gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection. See books listed on pages 514, 515.

## THE RISEN LORD AND HIS DISCIPLES

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). As Isaiah says, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" We receive the testimony of one (or more) who is trustworthy, and we accept it with such confidence that it gives us assurance of things hoped for, and conviction of things not seen (cf. Heb. 11:1). This conviction based on testimony of facts frequently reaches the point at which it is called knowledge; for we speak of knowing many things that happened in the past which are made known to us through testimony and effect—events outside of our personal experience of which we experience only the testimony and the fruits, but we "know" them, else there is no knowledge of history.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a fact made known to us by such an array of testimony and effects that it is more than a matter of faith. It is a matter of knowledge as much as any other fact in history is a matter of knowledge. At least, it is surely clear that to the eleven apostles the resurrection was not merely a belief, but knowledge of the greatest possible certainty. To us it is not so much a part of the doctrine of Christ, but a proof of the authority of His doctrine; not so much a belief; but a basis for faith and hope.

When Christ says that His death was for the remission of our sins, all we can do is believe it, taking His word for it (Matt. 20:28; 26:28; cf. Gal. 1:4; Rom. 4:25; I Pet. 2:24; John 1:29; Isa. 53); but we know that He died. When He says that He is coming into the world a second time to receive His own in glory and to judge the living and the dead, we simply believe because He said it personally and through His appointed and inspired spokesmen (Matt. 16:27; John 14:3; 5:26-29; I Thess. 4:13-17; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; etc.). But of the facts of His first coming—i.e., that Jesus once lived in Palestine—we have more knowledge.

If we are willing to say that we know George Washington lived and led American armies, we may say that we know Jesus arose from the dead. If we may say we know that Abraham Lincoln lived and was president, let us say boldly that we know Jesus arose, flesh and bones. As for myself, I have much more real evidence of Jesus' resurrection than I have ever had concerning the existence of my

grandfather Wilson.

To the apostles Jesus showed Himself by many proofs, appearing unto them by space of forty days, and speaking things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). In the New Testament we have the recorded testimony of more than a sufficient number of witnesses, competent persons who were eyewitnesses again and again—under various circumstances eating with Him, walking with Him, discussing His death, His resurrection, His teachings, and plans for the future (Luke 24:15-49; Mark 16:14-18; Acts 1:3-8; John 20:19-29; 21:4-18). There could be no mistaking His identity. There could be no doubt of the purpose and fitness of His return from the grave. They were even permitted to see His departure from the earth, ascending into heaven. The resurrection had long since been prophesied (Ps. 16:10; 17:15; Isa. 53:10-12), and He Himself had predicted it (Matt. 16:21; 17:9, 22, 23; 20:17-19; 12:39, 40; Mark 9:9, 31; John 2:19; 10:17-18). It was confirmed by the Holy Spirit, who came upon the apostles as Jesus had promised (John 14:16, 17; Luke 24:49), and who bore witness with them concerning the resurrection (Acts 2:33; 5:32).

To us, the fact of Jesus' resurrection is further confirmed by the indisputable fact that the church exists founded upon faith in the resurrection and unexplainable without the reality of that event.

#### *The Meaning of the Resurrection*

The resurrection is a fact, not only of great certainty, but of even greater meaning and power. It means Jesus is indeed the Savior from sin—that His death on our account was accepted by God. It supports His claims in full and proclaims Him the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). It is the heart of the gospel, and always has been (I Cor. 15:1-4). If the account of the resurrection were false, then all of Christ's claims are false; then the prophecies of Him were and are false, and Christian faith is a vain delusion. What kind of crazy world would it be that produced the greatest influence for truthfulness and righteousness out of deep deceit, fraud, and falsehood?

The resurrection means that Jesus lives to fulfill His promises, to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25), to come again for His own, to bring all men to judgment—the resurrection means judgment! (John 5:28, 29; Acts 17:31). It means His likeness is our goal, and death is no hindrance to it.

It means that we have a greater goal than earth's best offers, that man has a greater concern than physical self-preservation, that there is a greater calamity than death.



## RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

We list without discussion some of the things which the resurrection assures:

1. He lives, hence we shall live (John 14:19).
2. The body was raised; our mortal bodies shall put on immortality (I Cor. 15:53; Rom. 8:11).
3. He was unique, divine in character (Rom. 1:4).
4. He has all authority (Matt. 28:18).
5. His righteousness correctly represents God (Acts 2:24, 33; 3:14, 15; 22:14).
6. His death is effective for our redemption (Acts 13:37-39).
7. He is Lord over death forever (Rev. 1:18; I Cor. 15:25, 26).
8. All shall be raised and judged (John 5:28, 29; I Cor. 15:22).
9. Christ will be the judge and the basis of judgment (Acts 10:40-43; 17:30, 31).
10. The terms of pardon proclaimed by His apostles are valid (John 20:23).
11. The apostles speak with all Christ's authority throughout the New Testament (John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:13-15; Acts 1:5, 8).

### *The Appearances to the Apostles, and Their Effects*

The apostles had feared that Jesus' enemies would try to kill Him (John 11:8, 16), and they had wanted to avoid Jerusalem, but they seemed never to think of His conquering death itself. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was seized, they all turned and fled. Peter and John recovered enough to follow afar off, to enter into the court of the high priest, but there Peter denied His Lord boldly three times. It seems that only John dared to be near the cross. He and the women had such love that it overcame their fear and enabled them to bear the pain and sorrow of that dreadful scene. After the death of Christ the fears of the eleven seem to have become perhaps even a little worse, for they stayed in the house with the doors shut "for fear of the Jews."

The women, who were at the cross and first at the tomb on the first day of the week, were rewarded with the first appearances of the risen Lord. They (as Jesus commanded—Matt. 28:10; John 20:17) brought the good news to the disciples, "as they mourned and wept," but they believed not. Peter saw the empty tomb, but still did not understand; then Jesus appeared to him (John 20:2-10; I Cor. 15:5). Next, Jesus walked with the two disciples (not of the twelve) as they went to Emmaus. When He had taught them the

## THE RISEN LORD AND HIS DISCIPLES

Scriptures concerning His suffering and death, and made Himself known to them, they hastened back to Jerusalem to tell the apostles. While they were speaking with them—Jesus came into their midst. It was the evening of the same day on which Jesus arose, and this was His first appearance to the group of the apostles. He upbraided them for their unbelief (Mark 16:12-14). They still disbelieved the testimony of the others who had seen Him, and they were terrified when they saw Him, supposing Him to be a ghost. He proved to them that He had flesh and bones.

Thomas was not present, and when told of it he still doubted. Because of this he is called "the doubter," but he doubted hardly any more than they all had. One week later Jesus came to them again when Thomas was present, and Thomas acclaimed Him, "My Lord and my God!"

The apostles went to Galilee at Jesus' command (see Matt. 28:10). While they waited there, seven of them fished for food (John 21:2, 3, 12). Peter is accused of forsaking all faith in Christ and giving up His service because of his suggestion that he go fishing. This idea is indeed grotesque in view of these facts: (1) that he had lately seen the risen Lord at least three times, (2) that he had been told by Him to come to Galilee, (3) that men may work for food while believing on the Lord, (4) that he was first to desert the boat and nets when Christ appeared on the shore, (5) that he professed his love for Jesus that very hour.

At least two more times and possibly many others Jesus appeared to the apostles, speaking to them things concerning the kingdom (Acts 1:3) and giving them the commission of their world-wide work for Him (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21-23). From this time on they realized the power and presence of the Lord. They showed no more fear of men, but boldly in the face of vigorous threats they proclaimed the resurrection. They knew the certainty of the fact, and they understood its great importance and power to give anyone a victorious faith in Jesus. In all their preaching the apostles emphasized the resurrection as a central fact and the chief evidence of their gospel message.

For Further Study:

See books listed on pages 514, 515.

## FELLOWSHIP WITH THE RISEN LORD (Luke 24:13-35)

On the first day of the week after Jesus' crucifixion, in the afternoon of the very day on which He arose, two of His disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. One of them is not named at all, and the other is called Cleopas (Luke 24:13-35). This name is not to be confused with Clopas (or Cleophas, in King James Version) in John 19:25. Nothing else is recorded of these men aside from this incident, but it reveals several things about them (cf. Mark 16:12, 13).

Evidently they were not of the twelve apostles (v. 33). They were well acquainted with Jesus and His works, and hoped that He would "redeem Israel." They knew that the women who had gone to the tomb that morning had reported finding it empty and seeing an angel who told them Jesus had risen. They knew also of the visit of Peter and John to the tomb. They were vitally interested and were talking earnestly about these things. Certainly they were close friends and companions of the apostles and the women who believed; for they called them "Of our company" and "them that were with us," and after their own experience with the risen Lord they went immediately to the apostles, and Jesus appeared to them all while they were together.

Jesus had seventy disciples whom He had sent out two by two with miraculous powers (Luke 10:1-20) whose names we do not know; and there were about a hundred and twenty in close fellowship of faith a few weeks later in Jerusalem. These two men may well have been of those groups. The fact that Jesus made this appearance to them marks them as valuable witnesses, men destined to responsible leadership in the church, or as particular friends of Jesus.

*They Knew Him Not*

They did not recognize Jesus, not because they were not well enough acquainted with Him, but because He "was manifested in another form" (Mark 16:12) and "their eyes were holden" (Luke 24:16). Evidently, Jesus purposely kept them from recognizing Him by appearing without the marks of crucifixion and other characteristic marks, and by some supernatural influence over them.

The question suggests itself: Why did He not want them to know Him? "That they might see the resurrection of Jesus in the Scriptures

before they saw it in reality," suggests McGarvey.<sup>1</sup> But why that? Jesus wanted to instruct them in the meaning of what they already knew or should have known. They should have believed without seeing, but there is more here than desire to rebuke their unbelief. He could use their questioning and meditative frame of mind to help them to understand the crucifixion, the atonement. The resurrection is merely a marvel of comparatively little meaning without the full force of the crucifixion. As the resurrection gives power and demonstrative certainty to the crucifixion, so the crucifixion gives depth of meaning and definite application to the resurrection. Cleopas and his companion had hoped that Jesus would "redeem Israel," by which they meant the wrong thing (Luke 24:21). To them to "redeem Israel" meant to free the nation from servitude to Rome, and to restore national independence, glory, and prosperity (cf. Acts 1:6). If they had been immediately assured of the resurrection of Jesus they would have had their minds filled again with these false material hopes.

#### *A Lesson From the Scriptures*

Jesus opened to them the scriptures, while they were seeking for light, and showed to them that the suffering and death of the Christ did not lessen the hope of true redemption but assured it—that Jesus was not to be rejected because of His death, but all the more firmly believed on account of it. This divinely conducted Bible study, more than anything else, should have helped them to understand their own words—"he who should redeem Israel."

After leading them to tell what they knew and what they were thinking, the first thing Jesus (still unknown to them) did was to rebuke them for unbelief. He rebuked them not for disbelieving the women who reported the angel's saying, but for disbelieving the prophets; not for disbelieving what the prophets said about the resurrection, but "all that the prophets have spoken." The leading proposition of His instruction was put in the form of a searching rhetorical question: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26). Both the King James and American Standard Versions are weak here in saying: "Ought not" and "Behooved it not." Many other translations give the accurate, simple, and forceful reading: "Was it not necessary?"

---

<sup>1</sup> J. W. McGarvey and W. K. Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, n.d.), Pp. 748.

or "Did not the Christ have to suffer?" Yes, He had to die—the shameful and agonizing death of the cross.

He began from Moses, and in all the prophets He interpreted in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27). What a wonderful exposition of God's Word and God's plan of redemption that must have been! Their hearts burned within them as they heard this stranger who had seemed so ignorant of the crucifixion bring into focus before their attention passage after passage which they had overlooked, but which set forth clearly the fixed purpose that the Christ should suffer "these things" (Luke 24:32). Indeed, He was "delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (cf. Acts 2:23). No wonder their hearts "burned" as they were made to think of the wonderful fact of revelation, the suffering love of God making a sacrifice of His dearest and best for the redemption of His sinful creatures!

The prophets foretold the sufferings and crucifixion of the Christ many times in various ways: (1) by type or symbol (as the Passover lamb and other sacrifices); (2) by many brief or even indirect flashes (as Ps. 35:19; John 15:25; Zech. 11:12, 13; Matt. 26:14-16; 27:5-10; Isa. 50:6; Matt. 26:67; 27:26; Dan. 9:26; Mark 9:12; Zech. 12:10; John 19:37; Ps. 34:20; John 19:36; Zech. 13:1, etc.); (3) by the most direct and extended predictions, including many details with plain meaning (such as the entire twenty-second and sixty-ninth Psalms, and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah). These last-mentioned three chapters yield a truly marvelous list of details of prophecy concerning the Messiah's suffering, death, burial, and resurrection. Do read them through and see what direct and clear predictions are made.

The resurrection is also plainly predicted in Psalms 16:8-11 (cf. Acts 2:25-31). All the predictions of His exaltation and eternal reign call for His triumph over the vicarious death predicted for Him elsewhere. In this way Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 indicate the resurrection. See Daniel 7:13, 14.

This hour's instruction by Jesus on the way to Emmaus sets forth His attitude toward the Old Testament and the duty of His disciples to know it and to heed it. He distinctly approved the Old Testament as a revelation from God, and claimed it as an authoritative witness to Himself. "The scriptures . . . bear witness of me" (John 5:39). "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). See in Luke 24:44-47 the account of a later appearance of the resurrected Lord, at which time He said, "All things must

needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms concerning me." Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms were in those days common terms designating the three great divisions of the Old Testament as the Jews arranged it.

These two disciples who were so sad and puzzled on account of the sufferings and death of Jesus did err, not knowing the Scriptures, and Jesus rebuked them for it. It seems that all of Jesus' disciples made this same mistake in spite of Jesus' plain teaching concerning His coming.

### *The Recognition and Certainty of His Resurrection*

At Emmaus the two disciples urged Jesus to come in and sup with them, for it was toward evening. As He broke bread and blessed it, He made Himself known to them, then vanished. They realized, then, why His exposition of the prophets had been so clear, masterful, and thrilling. They returned immediately to Jerusalem (about seven and one-half miles, or about two hours' steady travel, Luke 24:31-35). They knew where to find the apostles, and rehearsed all that had happened to them and to those "that were with them" (v. 33). The apostles also reported to the two that Jesus had appeared to Peter. Still the hearts of many of them were full of doubt (see Mark 16:13, 14), and when Jesus Himself appeared in their midst while they were talking, they thought He was a spirit (Luke 24:36, 37).

Jesus challenged them to see that He had flesh and bones and was not a spirit. To demonstrate further, He asked for food and ate before them (Luke 24:39-43). Their slowness to believe gives occasion for such proofs and tests as afford us the greatest possible certainty of the fact of the resurrection. They certainly were not deceived through any overwhelming desire to see Him alive again, but were most unready to accept even the best testimony and the first sight of Him.

The combined experience of several groups of disciples in repeated meetings with the risen Lord, by day and by night, indoors and out, alone and in groups, hearing Him at length as well as seeing Him, touching Him and watching Him eat fish, soon overwhelmed even their stubborn doubts and fully convinced them for all time. They gave themselves to the proclamation of the resurrection testimony and even gave their lives rather than deny it.

The resurrection is not a matter of faith, strictly speaking, but a matter of fact, one of the best attested facts of all history, which we

## RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

may know as surely as we may know anything out of the past. It is supported both by credible witnesses and by undeniable consequences which can be explained in no other way than by the fact of the resurrection.

For Further Study:

See books listed on pages 514, 515.