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CHRIST THE FIRST TO RISE FROM THE DEAD.

– MARK 5:22-24,35-43. – APRIL 15. –

"He is risen, as he said." – Matt. 28:6.

THE selection of the narrative of the awakening of the daughter of Jairus as an Easter lesson was no doubt under the common but mistaken supposition that the miracle performed upon this child was similar to the miracle of our Lord's resurrection, which Easter Sunday generally celebrates. We will examine the lesson on its own merits, and then see that the Scriptures distinctly and pointedly distinguish between the two miracles – and that the miracle performed upon Jairus' daughter is nowhere designated a resurrection, nor was it such in fact.

Jairus was evidently a man of considerable influence in his community, for to be a ruler of the synagogue meant, in the custom of that time, that he was also a member of the local Sanhedrin, the court which tried certain classes of offenders, preserved general order, convened the assembly, etc. The rulers of the synagogue had its affairs in charge also, and invited its readers and speakers, managed the schools in connection with it, etc. As a man of high station in the city, he no doubt was acquainted with the nobleman of the same city (Capernaum), whose son Jesus had healed, as recorded in John 4:46-53. His knowledge of that case no doubt helped to increase his own faith in the Lord's power so remarkably manifested in the circumstances of this lesson.

It was while Jesus was at the house of Matthew (Levi, the publican – see lesson of March 18), enjoying the banquet which Matthew had intended should bring his publican friends in contact with the Master, and probably toward the conclusion of the banquet, that Jairus arrived on the scene to beseech our Lord for the recovery of his daughter. In the account as given by Matthew (9:18) the ruler is represented as saying that [R2617 : page 120] his daughter was already dead, while

in the account before us the implication is that altho she was in an extreme condition life still remained. The probability is that at the time Jairus left his child she was in an extremely critical condition, and that he surmised that by the time he was talking with the Lord she was quite probably dead – (and such was the case and the servants already enroute to notify Jairus). Quite possibly Jairus mentioned the matter from this standpoint: She was at the point of death when I left her; she is no doubt dead now, but come and lay thy hands on her that she may be healed and live. It was a wonderful exhibition of faith, and one which our Lord evidently fully appreciated, for he did not hesitate to go with him.

It was during this journey from the home of Matthew to the home of Jairus, a great throng of people accompanying him, that the poor woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, and had spent all that she had and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, conceived the thought that if she could but touch the hem of Jesus' garment she should be cured – and by the exercise of her faith in this manner was healed. We can imagine the feelings of Jairus in consequence of this delay; while it added to his faith in the power of Jesus, it at the same time tested his faith in respect to the recovery of his child. The test became more severe, because just at this juncture messengers arrived from his wife, saying that the child was dead, and that it would therefore be unnecessary to trouble the great Teacher.

Similar are the Lord's providential dealings with many of his people: he gives us a ground for faith, and then, as we exercise that faith and act in harmony with it, he gives fresh corroboration; meanwhile testing it, by permitting various difficulties, contrary suggestions, doubts, fears, etc. – not only such as would arise in our minds, but such as would be brought to us through others, sometimes those nearest and dearest. Yet our experiences have been that in all such trials of faith the Lord has been ready to speak peace, comfort and full assurance to our hearts, if we would but listen to his words. So it was with Jairus. When the servants arrived, and said, Hope is gone, submit

to the inevitable; Jesus also spoke a word, saying, "Be not afraid; only believe." O, how much there is in faith! How necessary God causes that it shall be during this present age. He desires that His people shall "walk by faith." "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and the Apostle assures us that "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." Indeed, in many respects faith (not credulity) is the prime essential of an "overcomer." No one can be an overcomer without it; with it anyone can be an "overcomer," God's grace in Christ making full provision for all such. Divine promises and blessing are to the faith-full only – both as respects the present and the eternal life.

Jesus when he had come to Jairus' house, permitted only Peter, James and John to accompany him as witnesses of the power of God. The favor manifested toward these three apostles on so many occasions is not to be esteemed as simply a selfish partiality, but rather as an indication that these three who were specially zealous amongst the apostles were further advanced in spiritual things, and best able to appreciate the privileges granted them. Their selection was but another manifestation of what our Lord called attention to in one of his parables as being the divine principle of government, viz., that "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly" – to him that hath used, and profited by divine favor most faithfully, shall proportionately more and larger favors be granted; because he more than others has by his faithfulness become capable of enjoying and appreciating and profiting by additional favors. The Lord evidently loves fervency (warmth) of spirit or disposition. No doubt he appreciates some who are naturally cold and phlegmatic, but just as evidently he appreciates still more those who have a keener interest, a warmer love, and more intense manifestations. Noting our Lord's appreciation of zeal should lead all who are His followers to-day to strive after greater fervency of spirit, greater zeal and energy in running the race set before us in the Gospel – greater interest in the Master's cause in all its branches.

The journey both ways had consumed considerable time, and the preparations for the burial were far advanced at the time of our Lord's

arrival, for it was the Jewish custom to have a speedy burial after death. The hired mourners (whom Matthew designates "minstrels") were already there, and the usual unseemly tumult of the time was in progress. Our Lord rebuked the mourners and spoke of the maid as sleeping, just as he similarly said of Lazarus, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; I go that I may awake him." This aroused the laugh of scorn, his hearers not appreciating what he meant, even as the disciples did not appreciate the word "sleep," when used in connection with Lazarus, until our Lord said plainly, "Lazarus is dead."

The use of the word "sleep" for death is very frequent in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the patriarchs are said to "sleep with their fathers," and this was said alike of both good and bad, kings and prophets and common people. In the New Testament the Apostle speaks of those that "sleep in Jesus," for whom we are to sorrow not as others who have no hope, because we believe in the resurrection of the dead. In the case of Stephen it is said that he "fell asleep," and the Apostle in speaking of the closing of the Gospel age declared that some of the Church would not thus sleep, saying, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." (1 Kings 2:10; Acts 7:60; 1 Thes. 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:51). Dr. Lightfoot calls attention to the fact that the Jewish theological writings, the Talmud, contain the expression "when he slept," hundreds of times, as signifying the time of death; and our word cemetery means "sleeping place." Dr. Trench, the noted scholar, says of this word sleep, "Thereby the reality of death is not denied, but only the fact implicitly assumed that death will be followed by a resurrection, as sleep is (followed) by an awakening."

Death would not have been even figuratively called sleep, except for the provision for a resurrection, nor would it have been appropriate had no awakening of the dead been intended. And altho this awakening could not take place without a redemption, and altho the redemption price securing the awakening was not paid until Calvary, nevertheless all of God's people **[R2617 : page 121]** who had faith in his promise

made to Abraham ("In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed") realized that what God had promised he would surely fulfil, and that since millions of the families of the earth had gone down into death prior to the promise, and before the coming of the Seed of Abraham, therefore the fulfillment of that promise signified a general awakening from the sleep of death for all mankind – in order that all might have the opportunity of being blessed by the glorious Seed of Abraham.

It was from this standpoint that our Lord spoke and acted; he was already, since his baptism at Jordan, in process of paying the ransom – his entire life was consecrated and had been accepted of the Father, altho the sacrifice had not yet been finished, and was not completed until on Calvary he cried in his dying moment, "It is finished." As a result of the finishing of the ransom there, our Lord declared that in due time the prison-house of death would be opened and that all the sleeping prisoners would come forth; he declared, "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and come forth;" they that have done well (those now on trial, and approved by the Lord as overcomers) unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill (those who have not escaped **[R2618 : page 121]** the condemnation, nor been approved of God) unto a resurrection by judgment-trial. – John 5:28,29.

That judgment trial will be their blessed opportunity of coming to a knowledge of the truth respecting the divine character and plan, and if they will of coming into harmony with it, and by the development of character during the Millennium reaching full perfection of restitution at its close. Meantime, they sleep – "sleep in Jesus," in the sense that a hope of awakening in the resurrection morning centers in Jesus by divine arrangement, through the atonement sacrifice which by the grace of God, he gave a ransom for all. – 1 Tim. 2:6.

Thus we see that the future life held out before us in the Scriptures is a resurrection hope. In harmony with this the Apostle declared, "Of

the hope and resurrection of the dead am I called in question." (Acts 23:6), and again it is declared that his constant theme in preaching was "Jesus and the resurrection." (Acts 17:18.) There is no hope of a future life without a resurrection, and there is no hope of a resurrection except in Jesus – that he died for our sins, and thus paid the death penalty which was against us, and thus permitted the wages of sin, death, to become merely a temporary "sleep," from which he will awaken mankind, that they may be blessed under all the great and wonderful privileges of His Kingdom during the Millennial age, otherwise in Scripture called the day of judgment, or trial for the world, as this present Gospel age is the day of trial for the Church.

When ready, in the presence of his three chosen disciples and the father and mother of the maiden, Jesus took her by the hand, saying, "Talitha cumi." These words are in the Aramaic language spoken by the common people of that time. "Talitha, in the ordinary dialect of the people, is a word of endearment to a young maiden, so that the words are equivalent to 'Rise, my child.'"

– Alford.

AWAKENING OF THE DEAD NOT RESURRECTION.

The maid awakened to life and consciousness. She did not come back from heaven or from hell, but merely awakened out of the sleep of death, and renewed the experiences of life as before. Such an awakening from sleep – such a restoration of the life forces that had been temporarily suspended, is of the nature of a resurrection, but is not a resurrection. We are to remember that the maiden was not *alive* before – that perfect life has not been enjoyed by any member of Adam's race since father Adam's fall into disobedience and under the divine sentence of death. As the Apostle declares, "In Adam all die," and again, "Death passed upon all," and this maiden was no exception to the rule. Our Lord, in speaking on the subject, implied that none have life in any sense of the word, except those who accept him,

and they only in a reckoned sense by faith. His words were, "Let the dead bury their dead." "He that hath the Son hath life." As the maiden was therefore legally dead, without perfect life, and without the right to it, before she fell asleep, so likewise, when she awakened, in answer to our Lord's command, she awakened merely to that death condition in which she previously was.

To have resurrected her would have meant to have lifted her completely out of death in every sense of the word, out of mental, moral and physical degradation, up to the grand heights of perfection of mind and body, as represented in the person of father Adam, and our Lord did nothing of this kind. He merely awakened her, leaving her upon the same plane of death on which she had been born, and had thus far lived for twelve years. The maiden will still have her opportunity of sharing in the general "resurrection by judgments" or restitution during the Millennial age – unless at some subsequent time she accepted the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, and became one of his followers, a member of the Church of this Gospel age; in which event she would, if faithful, be accounted worthy of a part in the chief or first resurrection to glory, honor and immortality. But the point we here make is merely that this lesson does not treat of her resurrection, but of her awakening.

In harmony with this is the plain statement of the Scriptures that our Lord Jesus himself, in his resurrection, was "the first fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. 15:20.) Again, the Apostle makes the same point very emphatic in his discourse to Agrippa, saying that all of his preaching was in harmony with the statements of Moses and the prophets: "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead." – Acts 26:23.

These plain statements of Scripture cannot be ignored with impunity by those who desire to be taught of God, and to rid themselves of erroneous theories and speculations respecting the word resurrection. Our Lord's resurrection was indeed the first, and hence the others were not resurrections at all. Our Lord was raised up – clear

up – all the way up – out of death – into the full perfection of life. It was not necessary that he should be raised to the perfection of human nature again, for indeed it was the human nature of Jesus that was sacrificed on our behalf – one **[R2618 : page 122]** sacrifice forever – which could never be taken back or rescinded – otherwise it would have meant the repeal of man's redemption – the undoing of the at-one-ment work.

Rather, we are to remember that when our Lord Jesus made his consecration at baptism he was "begotten of the spirit," a spirit being – and that which was begotten of the spirit was in due time "born of the spirit," a spirit being – and referring to this spirit birth, his resurrection, we read that he was "the first-born from the dead," "the first-born among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18.) These are additional proof texts to the effect that neither Lazarus nor Jairus' daughter, nor the son of the widow of Nain, nor the young man whom the Apostle Paul awakened, nor Dorcas, whom Peter awakened, nor the child of the Shunnamite woman whom Elisha awakened, were "born from the dead" in any sense of the word, either on the fleshly or on the spiritual plane.

Let us, then, in thinking of our dear Redeemer's resurrection, seek more and more to grasp its greatness, and to realize that nothing of the kind ever occurred before, and that as he was the first-born from the dead, so his "brethren," the Church, are to come next in order. Let us remember also that his resurrection to spirit nature is quite a different resurrection from what the world of mankind may ever hope to share – theirs being a restitution resurrection to human conditions, human perfection and life. This higher chief or first resurrection which our Lord experienced, is promised as a special reward to his faithful Church and to no others. It is this that the Apostle calls the resurrection of the dead, which he describes in 1 Cor. 15:42-44. Our great endeavor, therefore, as followers in the footsteps of Jesus, should be the same that was before the mind of the great Apostle, when he said, "That I may know the power of his resurrection (the first resurrection, to spiritual

conditions, glory, honor and immortality), and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the (special, chief) resurrection of the dead." – Phil. 3:9-15.
