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**"HE THAT LIVETH AND WAS DEAD."**

– LUKE 24:1-12. – APRIL 7. –

**"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." – 1 Cor. 15:20.**

ON NO Christian doctrine does there seem to be a greater confusion in all denominations than on the subject of this lesson – the resurrection of the dead – the resurrection of our Lord. Nevertheless, as with one voice, all Christendom unites in declaring that our Lord's resurrection was an indispensable necessity to our salvation, in this agreeing perfectly with the plain statement of the Apostle, "If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain;...ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Cor. 15:13-18.) How strange that a subject of so vast importance as this should be so obscure! How strange that, recognizing its importance, thinking minds should treat it so lightly, and be willing to accept theories respecting it, the absurdity of which are manifest to all upon the mere statement of them!

For instance, it is the generally accepted theory that only the body dies – that the soul, the real, intelligent person or being, does not die, but merely is liberated to a higher condition of life the moment the body dies. Now, if we apply this theory to our Lord's death and resurrection how absurd it appears, and how absurd all the various theories would be that are built upon it: **(1)** If merely our Lord's body died, and if our Lord himself were released thereby and became instantly more alive than ever before, wherein would be the consistency of the claim that without his resurrection he had perished, and all hopes built upon him and his work had perished? It would be unreasonable to make such statements if the premises assumed were correct. **(2)** It is the

claim of the majority of Christian people that our Lord Jesus *was* the Heavenly Father, Jehovah, and that he merely assumed to be, and took the title of the Son, when in reality he was as much the Father as he was the Son – that he was really both.

Those who hold this view are forced thereby to suppose that the Lord himself never died, else the universe would have been without a Master for a time; and to be consistent this same error must needs claim that the whole work of Christ Jesus was a farce, a pretence, that Jesus really was the Heavenly Father all the time, and wore a body of flesh just as we do a suit of clothes; that he caused this body of flesh to pretend to pray to himself, and pretend to agonize with strong cryings and tears to the Father, really himself; that he let the body of flesh go on to the cross and pretend its groans and its crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" that he let the body be buried, and pretended for the time to be unconscious, while really he was experiencing none of these things that appeared, but was as omniscient and omnipotent as ever; that by and by he revived the body and took up the flesh and bones, etc., into heaven as an everlasting evidence of the deception he had performed upon mankind; taking a body of flesh into spiritual conditions, where it would be totally out of place and inappropriate to the environment.

All this theorizing, so common amongst Christian people, is absurd in the extreme, totally contrary to the teachings of our Lord's Word, as well as repugnant to reason and common sense. This entire illogical theory is built upon and made necessary by two fundamental errors; first, a failure to see the sense in which the Father and the Son are one – that they are not one in person, but in harmony, in spirit, in will, as the glorified Church also must eventually be *One* with the Father and with the Son, as our Lord's own lips declared, "That they all might be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." Secondly,

the theory that the dead are not dead, but more alive than ever before. Can any one dispute that if the dead are not dead there are no dead ones, and to speak of a resurrection of dead ones would be an absurdity?

But when we take the Scriptural account the whole subject becomes clear and plain. Jesus was the honored Son of God – "the only begotten of the Father" – "the beginning of the creation of God." To him had been given, while he was in glory with the Father, the privilege of becoming man's Redeemer, and he had accepted the service gladly: "for the joy that was set before him," he left the condition of glory, was made flesh, endured the cross, despising the shame, and ultimately received the exaltation to the divine nature, and joint-heirship through his resurrection. The taking of human nature was necessary, because it was a man that had sinned, and as by a man came death, by a man also must the resurrection of the dead be secured. (1 Cor. 15:21.) Only the sacrifice of a perfect life could redeem the original sinner, Adam, and his children, who shared his penalty. This was the necessity for our Lord's earthly existence and for his death, as the Apostle explains. – Heb. 2:14.

**"HE Poured OUT HIS SOUL UNTO DEATH."**

– ISAIAH 53:12. –

Those who claim that our Lord himself did not die, but that merely his flesh died, are totally unable to answer or harmonize the Scriptural declarations on this subject, which are most pointedly to the effect **[R2794 : page 122]** that "he poured out his *soul* unto death;" "he made his *soul* an offering for sin." It was Adam's soul (being, existence) that came under the sentence of death through disobedience. It was not merely a sin of his body, but, as the Scriptures declare, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." It was Adam's soul that needed to be redeemed, and not merely his body, because if the soul were redeemed God could give it a

new body as it pleased him. God's proposition is not to give back, atom for atom, the same bodies that moulder into dust. On the contrary, it matters little what becomes of these mortal bodies, for it was not these that were redeemed, nor these that are to be restored. It was the soul that needed redemption; it was the soul that was redeemed; it was the soul of our Lord Jesus that was given as a ransom price for the soul of Adam; and the result is that the souls of Adam and his posterity are all guaranteed a resurrection.

This central thought of the resurrection is wholly overlooked by Christian people in general, who leave the *soul* out of the question, – out of redemption and out of the resurrection, whereas it is the all-important. It is because the Apostle Paul recognized this matter so clearly that he stated himself so positively on this subject in his great chapter on the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15. He recognized that it was Christ's soul that died – that his very existence had ceased in death; that not merely his body, but himself, was absolutely dead three days, and this is our Lord's own statement, "I am he that liveth and was dead." He does not say, I am he who lived always and who never died, but whose body died for the brief space of a few hours. It was because Christ's soul (being) was dead that the Apostle could declare that unless his soul, being, were made alive again by a resurrection there could be no hope in him as a Savior and a Life-giver – there could be no hope of his ever exalting his Church to joint-heirship with him in his Kingdom nor of his and their blessing all the families of the earth during a Millennial reign of righteousness – if he were dead, extinct, if he had not risen from the dead. **[R2795 : page 122]**

The Apostle Peter also marks this point well, that it was the soul of Christ that was dead – that went to *hades*, the grave, the state or condition of death. Note how the Apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, quoted from the inspired prophet David, the

words, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Heb. *sheol*, Gr., *hades*, English, the state or condition of death]." Peter informs us that the prophet spoke not of his own soul, but of Christ's soul, that it was not left in hades – that, on the contrary, it was raised up from the dead on the third day. (Acts 2:27,30-33.) Whoever sees that it was our Lord's soul that went into the state of death can see abundant evidence for all the stress which the apostles in their writings lay upon the fact of his resurrection. If Christ be risen it is an evidence of divine favor, and divine favor is an evidence of his perfection – that he did the work of sacrifice which he undertook, and in a manner acceptable to the Father; and these things being true, it follows that his exaltation to the Father's right hand of power means that we have in this a full assurance of faith that all the exceeding great and precious promises of God to the world and to the Church, centered in him, shall have a fulfilment in due time.

As an illustration of the confusion which generally prevails on this subject by reason of false premises above criticised, note the following statement by a leading commentator, discussing this subject, and published widely in comments on this lesson. He says: "The resurrection of Jesus is the crowning proof that he is the Son of God. ***If he could not conquer death and come back from heaven he could not prove that at first he came from heaven!***" Such is the ridiculous position into which ordinarily intelligent men are led through building upon false theories.

The Scriptures nowhere intimate that our Lord Jesus did or could raise himself from the dead. If it were merely his body that had died, and if he were more alive than ever, of course he could just as easily quicken his own body that had died as he could quicken the body of Lazarus, and it be no more of a miracle, and no more of a proof. But if, as the Scriptures declare, it was ***his soul that died*** then he was wholly dead, and could have no power whatever to resuscitate himself. To this the Scriptures agree,

declaring in so many words that "God the Father raised him from the dead." (Gal. 1:1.) Nor is this an exceptional statement of the matter. It is the united testimony of the Scriptures, in proof of which note the following: Acts 2:24,32; 3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30,34; 17:31; Rom. 4:24; 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:21.

Our Lord's figurative statement, "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up," is not to be understood as in conflict with the above literal testimony. "He spake of the temple of his body" – "which temple ye are" – the Church. (John 2:21; 1 Cor. 3:16.) Our Lord was living in the end of the fifth (thousand-year) day, and on the seventh (thousand-year) day "early in the morning," the Church, which is his body, is to be delivered by him from the power of death, and thus be made sharer in "his resurrection" – the first resurrection. – Phil. 3:10; Rev. 20:4,5.

Neither are we to understand our Lord's words, **[R2795 : page 123]** "I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18), as meaning that he could have any power whatever during the interim of death. Rather, we are to understand this in harmony with the many plain statements of the apostles under the inspiration of the holy spirit, to mean that our Lord had authority or commission from the Father to make the declaration that tho he would lay down his life he would *receive it* again – this authority, assurance to this effect, I have received it from my Father. So understood, the whole matter is clear. So understood, the doctrine of the resurrection becomes next in importance to the doctrine of the ransom, and really a part and parcel of it; for as we have already seen, for our Lord to have died and not to have risen from the dead would have meant no hope for those whom he had promised to deliver, and whom the Father had promised he should have authority to deliver from the power of death by a resurrection through judgments. – John 5:28-30.

**"IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT HE SHOULD BE  
HOLDEN OF DEATH." – ACTS 2:24.**

It was not possible, because he had kept the divine law perfectly, and thus, according to divine arrangement and promise, he had accomplished two things: (1) The giving of the ransom price for the human family; (2) the attestation of his own fidelity and his worthiness of high exaltation to the divine nature and glory – "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." (John 5:23.) The same justice which had operated for four thousand years against Adam and his race because of transgression was now operative on behalf of Jesus for his deliverance from death, into which he had voluntarily gone as man's redemption price. When we come to see matters from the divine standpoint and arrangement we can well rejoice that the Father's character is unchangeable, and our Lord's resurrection becomes an evidence, or, as the Apostle says, an "assurance," of the carrying out of every feature of the divine plan, all of which centered in him and was made dependent upon his faithfulness even unto death, even the death of the cross. (Acts 17:31.) Now we know that he is the antitypical Seed of Abraham, approved of God, through whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Now we know that the Church of this Gospel age is called to be the Bride, the Lamb's wife, just as Rebecca was called to be the wife of the typical Isaac, and to be his joint-heir in the Kingdom and joint-participator with him in the carrying out of the promises and oath of God made to Abraham. "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" – that in this seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. – Gal. 3:29.

Coming to the narrative of our Lord's resurrection from the standpoint above set forth, realizing that all of our hopes of life eternal are dependent upon it, we come to it with much more and much deeper interest than we could approach it from any other standpoint or theory. And we are to remember that the disciples

and followers of Jesus were Jews, and that the heathen philosophies had not yet made great inroads upon the people, to mislead them into thinking that the dead were not dead. As a people they believed the dead were dead, and placed their hopes in a resurrection. Thus it was when Jesus comforted Martha and Mary respecting their brother; he said not to them, Your brother is alive, but, "Thy brother shall rise again," clearly implying that he was not alive then in any sense of the word. Their answer was in accord with this: "I know that he shall rise again at the last day" – in the end of this age, in the great Millennial age of resurrection, lasting a thousand years. But Jesus, being the one who possesses the resurrection power, even then suspended temporarily the power of death, restoring Lazarus again, and thus illustrating the resurrection power which will be used in much fuller measure and degree, and generally, when the due time shall come, and "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth."

Similar were the views on this subject held by the apostles and others. They believed that whether or not Jesus was the Messiah, as they previously supposed, but as had seemed to be disproved by his ignominious death at the hands of his enemies, nevertheless he was a holy man, and they trusted that in due time under the divine arrangement, according to the promise to Abraham, he, as well as all the dead, would rise again. Great must have been their surprise when they learned through the angel messengers who sat at the tomb that the Lord was risen, was no longer dead.

The women, whose office it was to complete the work of embalming the body of Jesus, went very early in the morning of the first day of the week, "while it was yet dark," to perform their loving service. Our Lord was crucified on Friday, the sixth day of the week, and buried probably about four o'clock. This left no opportunity to complete the embalming arrangements, because, as Jews under the Law, they were obliged to keep the seventh day



(Saturday) as a rest day, and in it do no work of any kind; but the seventh day closed at sundown, and we may presume that immediately the preparation of spices began, and that all arrangements were completed, and that they were on their way to the sepulchre [R2795 : page 124] as early as possible. We may assume that it was not the custom to embalm all the dead. Evidently Lazarus had not been so embalmed in death. (John 11:30.) And since the embalming process was only partly perfected on the evening of the burial, the women were in haste, as soon as the Sabbath was over, to complete their service, not realizing how unnecessary were their labors – not thinking for a moment of the Lord's resurrection. No doubt it was in order to better inculcate this lesson, and to prepare them for seeing Jesus, that the angels appeared and drew their attention to the fact that Jesus had foretold his crucifixion, and also his resurrection on the third day.

Infidelity has objected that the accounts of our Lord's resurrection given by the four Evangelists are not exactly alike; but we answer that this is another evidence that there was no collusion amongst the apostles in respect to their statements of the Lord's words and doings, and these subsequent scenes. Their testimony, therefore, should be considered really stronger than if they had word for word declared the [R2796 : page 124] same thing. The fact is that each tells the story from his own standpoint, and, like any matter, it may be viewed from different standpoints, and the facts, related in somewhat different language and order, need not be understood to conflict. Rather, we are to understand that all the various things declared took place, and to do our best to find the order in which they occurred.

Nor is it unusual to find differences of opinion respecting many things in the testimonies of unimpeachable witnesses; for instance, there is a dispute to this day as to what hour the battle of Waterloo occurred, altho tens of thousands of men took part in

it. "Two armies beheld the battle of Waterloo, but who can tell when it began? At ten o'clock, said the Duke of Wellington. At half past eleven, said General Alava, who rode beside him. At twelve, according to Napoleon and Druet; and at one, according to General Ney." We do not think of impeaching the credibility of any of these witnesses. Rather, we are to suppose that they all may have been correct in that the battle began in some places sooner than in others. Some would regard the battle as beginning with the first skirmish, and others probably ignore those skirmishes and speak of the time when the armies fully met in the clash of battle. We are to use similar reasonable judgment in considering the testimony of such unimpeachable witnesses as were the apostles – men who not only hazarded their lives, but sacrificed all of their earthly interests in the service of him whom they declare to us arose from the dead on the third day.

We might remark incidentally that the terms, "on the third day," and three days and nights, according to Jewish usage, would properly be applied to portions of three twenty-four-hour periods, and did not imply three full days and three nights. That the apostles so understood their own words is evident, for they made no effort to harmonize the statements, as they surely would have done had there been any conflict between them. Some earnest people, failing to realize this fully, have written books endeavoring to prove that our Lord was crucified on Thursday afternoon, but they seemingly overlook the fact that even then they could not count three full days and three full nights, and that unless they accepted the view that a part of three days is what is meant they would be forced to suppose that our Lord was crucified on Wednesday afternoon, in order to have the three full days, and in that event it would not be true that our Lord arose "on the third day," but on the fourth day. Furthermore, unless it be conceded that our Lord was crucified on Friday, the sixth day, too late to complete the embalming which would be hindered by the seventh day, no excuse could be found for the women coming

early on the first day of the week with the spices to complete the embalming. If our Lord had been crucified on Thursday afternoon there would have been all day Friday in which they could have completed the work of embalming.

Dr. Abbott points out that the Christian observance of Sunday is of itself a strong testimony in support of our Lord's resurrection. He says: "A singular and significant testimony to the truth of the resurrection is afforded by the change in the Sabbath day. It was changed, not by any express command in the New Testament, but by the almost universal consent of the Church, which could not endure to observe as a day of joy and gladness that on which Christ lay in the tomb, nor forbear to mark as a weekly festival that on which he arose."

### **"THE FIRST-FRUITS OF THEM THAT SLEPT."**

Our Golden Text calls attention to the fact that our Lord in his resurrection became the first-fruits of them that slept – the first-born from the dead. After God gave the promise to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, it was the custom of Israelites to speak of their dead as not dead, not extinct, but as asleep – waiting for resuscitation, resurrection. They realized that such a resurrection was unquestionably implied, tho not actually stated, in the promise made to Abraham. For how could all the families of the earth be blessed until the ransom price was paid, a resurrection provided for, that the curse of death might be rolled back from off the race? Again, as our Lord declares, the intention of God to resurrect the dead was shown in his declaration to **[R2796 : page 125]** Moses at the bush, that he was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, etc., for if they were dead, extinct, without hope of a resurrection, God would never speak of them in this manner. (Mark 12:26,27.) Israel in general, therefore, had come to speak of the dead as asleep, waiting for Messiah and the work that he should do, which

would culminate in resurrection; hence the common use of the words sleep and slept in the Old Testament when referring to the deceased. The Apostle informs us that some endured torture for their faithfulness to the Lord, in hope of a ***better resurrection*** – a more favorable condition, when the resurrection time should come. – Heb. 11:35.

Our Lord also used this expression, "sleep," in respect to the dead, declaring that Lazarus slept, and that he went to awaken him out of sleep. (John 11:11.) Practically the whole world of mankind has gone down into this sleep, and it is called a sleep, instead of being called death, extinction, because in the divine plan, through the redemption, a provision has been made that "all that are in their graves shall come forth" at the word of their Redeemer, in the morning of the Millennial age. The "little flock" of "overcomers" who pass their judgment or trial now satisfactorily, come forth to life and joint-heirship in the Kingdom; the great mass of mankind, blinded by the Adversary, to a greater or less extent, will come forth, subsequently, to enlightenment, – when Satan shall be bound, to deceive them no more, – that they may have an opportunity of coming into harmony with God and forming characters in accord with the laws of his Kingdom, and so doing that they may have life everlasting.

Our Lord was the first-fruits of them that slept – none preceded him; hence the awakening of Lazarus and of the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain were not full and complete resurrections. Had they been such our Lord's resurrection would not have been the first – he would not have been "the First-born from the dead." His being born from the dead signifies that he was lifted fully and ***completely out of death conditions*** to the perfection of life, which was not the case with the others – they were merely awakened and left in the dead state with the remainder of the human family. The Church of Christ,

his body, is to share with him in "*his* resurrection," "the *first* resurrection," a complete and instantaneous lifting out of the state of death into the perfection and completeness of glory, honor and immortality, which God has provided for them who follow in the footsteps of Jesus, his joint-heirs. These are all called the "*first-fruits* unto God of his creatures." (James 1:18.) The after-fruits of God's great plan will be developed during the Millennial age, yet there shall not enter into the approved condition any who will not use the means then within their grasp.

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