

"HE IS RISEN, EVEN AS HE SAID"

– MATTHEW 28:1-15. – *DECEMBER 16.* –

(1) Our Lord's death could not have been a case of suspended animation: the spear-thrust in his side made this evident, not only because it was a mortal wound, but because it furnished evidence that our Lord was already dead in that there issued from his side water as well as coagulated blood.

(2) The centurion charged with the execution was convinced of his death, and so reported to Pilate, the Governor.

(3) The request of the chief priests, that the stone against the door of the sepulcher be sealed and the Roman guard placed around the tomb, so that no one could remove the body and then pretend that Jesus had risen, was a further evidence that he was regarded as dead.

(4) His friends believed that he was dead and wrapped him in spices for burial: indeed in their grief they seem to have forgotten his promise of a resurrection – so much so that even after he had risen it was with difficulty that they were convinced.

(5) The record that the guards dissembled and declared that the disciples stole his body while they slept, being bribed by the Jewish rulers, served at last to prove that the guard had been set and that everybody recognized that Jesus was dead.

(6) The tomb in which Jesus was buried was a new one, in which no one had previously been buried, so there could be no doubt as to the identity of the one who arose. We are glad that there is such satisfactory evidence that Christ died, and that thus we have further foundation for the Scriptural assurance that he died as the Redeemer of the world. Even Strauss, the agnostic, is

constrained to say on this subject, "The whole countryside knew he was dead."

THE WITNESSES MOST RELIABLE

The resurrection of Christ is vouched for by many most honorable witnesses, of whom it cannot be said that they were shrewd and learned and took advantage of opportunity to hoax the public. On the contrary, they had nothing to gain by their course – everything to jeopardize. The witnesses were not only poor but unlearned, and write themselves down as "ignorant." It would have been to their advantage to have dropped Jesus and the malodorous reputation associated with his name. They testified to his resurrection, and preached in his name and through his power [R3903 : page 381] as the risen one the forgiveness of sins – and did this at their own expense, with sufferings, stripes, imprisonment and cruel death as the reward. Their testimony fully concurs with the Master's own words before he died – words which his own intimate followers could not appreciate, could not comprehend – that on the third day he would rise from the dead.

The doctrine of the resurrection itself is peculiar to the Jewish and Christian religions. Other religions the world over ignore the necessity for a resurrection, and claim that those who die are more alive than they were before their death. The Apostles, on the contrary, admitted that all their hope rested in the fact that Christ did rise from the dead. Mark the Apostle Paul's words, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain; yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified that God raised up Christ: whom he raised not up if the dead rise not; for if the dead rise not then is not Christ risen: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." – 1 Cor. 15:14-18.

It is not reasonable to suppose that honest men would misrepresent such a matter as the resurrection of our Lord, and it would be foolish for them to lay such stress upon a matter of which they were not morally convinced themselves. Why dwell so earnestly upon the resurrection of the dead if they had the least doubt on the subject? Why declare that all faith and all hope in Christ, all hope of forgiveness of sins, all hope of a future life by a resurrection was at an end if Christ had not risen, unless they were satisfied beyond peradventure? Especially so when the learned of that time were teaching Plato's philosophy, that the dead are not dead but more alive, and hence need no resurrection.

Our Lord announced in advance that he would rise from the dead on the third day. In any view of the matter our Lord could not have been exactly three days and three nights in the tomb according to the record – it would have been either more or less, because he died in the afternoon and rose from the dead in the morning, hence no exact statement of even days and nights would fit the case. We recognize the custom of the times of reckoning a portion of a day or a year as though it were a complete one. For instance, throughout all the records of the chronicles of the kings we find that a portion of a year is counted for a year; that if a king reigned three years and three months it would be counted a reign of four years, or if he reigned two years and three months it would be counted three years, since he did reign for a portion of the third year. So in the statement of our Lord's period in the tomb, it is properly enough spoken of as three days and three nights, and shown thus:

JEWISH RECKONING

4 to 6 P.M. Friday—2 hours.

6 P.M. Friday to 6 P.M. Saturday—24 hours.

6 P.M. Saturday to 4 or 5 A.M. Sunday—10 or 11 hours.

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BY MODERN RECKONING

4 P.M. to 12 midnight, Friday—8 hours.

From midnight Friday to midnight Saturday—24 hours.

From midnight Saturday to 5 A.M. Sunday—5 hours.

Or another possible view of the matter would indicate Thursday as our Lord's death-day as follows: —

Laid in tomb – 6 P.M. Thursday.

6 P.M. Thursday to 6 A.M. Friday – First night.

6 A.M. Friday to 6 P.M. Friday – First day.

6 P.M. Friday to 6 A.M. Saturday – Second night.

6 A.M. Saturday to 6 P.M. Saturday – Second day.

6 P.M. Saturday to 6 A.M. Sunday – Third night.

6 A.M. Sunday – Beginning third day.

Either view thus reckoned fulfils Peter's words, "He rose again the *third day*."

TWO VIEWS OF THE RESURRECTION

The view of the majority of Christian people is that our Lord arose from the dead to the same conditions exactly that he had during his life on earth – a man subject to the same limitations that he had before he died. The other view is ours, namely, that our Lord arose from the dead a spirit being, but since human beings cannot see a spirit being without injury, our Lord – really

a spirit being – clothed himself as it were with flesh and clothing in order to appear to his followers – in order to give them a demonstration that he was no longer dead; and secondarily by appearing to them in various forms, as a gardener, as a stranger, as a man on the shores of Galilee and as the one who was pierced – that by all these changes he might demonstrate to his followers that, although risen from the dead, he was no longer the same being as before nor subject to the same limitations as before; but now as a New Creature, a spirit being, even as he explained to Nicodemus, he had power to come and go as the wind, and none could tell from whence he came or whither he went – so is everyone born of the Spirit, everyone who experiences a resurrection to the spirit nature. – John 3:6-8.

Our Lord had indeed appeared subsequently to Saul of Tarsus, and manifested to him a certain measure of the glory of his resurrection condition, but the effect upon Saul was to blind him so that it required a miracle for his relief. To have so appeared to the eleven apostles and the others of the five hundred brethren who believed on him would not have been a satisfactory proof of our Lord's resurrection. They would merely have known that they had seen a great light, experienced a shock, and that they had heard certain wonderful words, but where would have been the proof to them or others of mankind that the one who was buried in Joseph's tomb had arisen from the dead and was now a spirit being? Our Lord, therefore, evidently chose by all means the better plan for making known the great fact of his resurrection. He appeared as a man, but under varying conditions, showing that he was not bound by the limitations of the human nature, but that he appeared and disappeared in bodily forms as the angels had in previous times, as for instance the three who appeared as men to Abraham for the purpose of communion with him, who ate dinner with him and whom he afterwards came to know as the Lord and two angels. For a similar purpose the Lord

had appeared to his disciples after his resurrection: he veiled his glory and they saw it not when he appeared in various forms.

ERROR ALWAYS CONFUSING

The majority of Christian people are greatly confused over the matter of the resurrection anyway. Having received from heathen philosophies in the "dark ages" the same doctrines that were communicated by the Adversary to all the heathen, namely, that the dead are more alive than they ever were before, Christian people in general wonder why the Scriptures lay such stress upon the resurrection – why [R3904 : page 382] there is any necessity at all for a resurrection. They properly enough reason that if they were told at the time of the funeral that their dead friend was now "free," no longer trammelled with the earthly body, etc., why would he need to be trammelled with it in the future any more than in the present? and if some had gotten along without bodies for eighteen centuries or more, why would they need bodies thereafter any more than before? All this confusion of thought is directly traceable to Satan's falsehood, "Ye shall not surely die," and the rejection of God's statement, "Ye shall surely die." When we accept the teachings of the Word of God that the dead are really dead, then we perceive that there is no hope for them ever to have any knowledge or consciousness except by resurrection of the dead – we learn that there is neither knowledge nor device nor wisdom in the grave, sheol, the state of death, whither all go. (Eccl. 9:10.) As an illustration of how confused some of the ablest clergymen of the country are on this matter, we quote a few words from Doctor Peloubet. He says: –

"The resurrection of Jesus shows us the meaning of the New Testament teaching concerning the resurrection of the body. So in the Apostles' Creed we declare our belief in the 'resurrection of the body.' But these things do not express what the New Testament teaches concerning the resurrection, especially in 1

Corinthians 15. Jesus himself did not have his resurrection body till he ascended. The disciples saw the same body they had seen before the crucifixion. Our present bodies with flesh and bones cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, but out from them in some way will grow spiritual bodies."

What confusion we find here! The cause is not far to seek: it is first the error of supposing that the dead are not dead, and secondly the failure to see that our Lord was "put to death in the flesh but quickened in the spirit," as the Apostle most explicitly tells us. (1 Pet. 3:18.) Thank God that with the morning light shining upon the divine Word these shadows so confusing to heart and mind are gradually fleeing away, disclosing to us new beauties in our heavenly Father's Word – consistencies, harmonies. Here we see the Apostle's statement that we are sown in weakness, raised in power, sown in dishonor, raised in glory, sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:42-44) – not sown a natural body and raised a natural body out of which will grow a spiritual body. The Scriptures are consistent, harmonious, beautiful, when allowed to interpret themselves.

REVEREND DOCTORS CONFUSED

We suggested foregoing that the doctrine of the resurrection is a confusion to the majority of Christians, and we give another sample of this from Doctor Peloubet: –

"What is the need of a resurrection body? The body is the instrument of the soul: it is probable that the soul must have some medium of communication with other souls and with nature."

Now consider: Our dear friends hold that the souls never die, although the Scriptures tell us that a death sentence is upon every soul of man, and that Christ poured out his soul unto death as our ransom price.) For our views on this subject, "What is the soul?" we refer the reader to MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. VI., page

346.) Doctor Peloubet probably holds in common with others that the undying souls go either to heaven or hell immediately at death, that the resurrection will not take place until the second coming of Christ, which he in common with others probably places a long way off; and yet he tells us here that the souls in heaven and in hell would have no instrument of communication with each other and with nature without a body. Hence we might reason, if they could not in any manner communicate with nature, they could not even enjoy pleasures or suffer pain. How much more reasonable is the Scriptural proposition that man himself is a soul, a being, that in dying his being is dissolved, that the resurrection is a resurrection of being by a reorganization of conditions necessary to restore him – the producing of a body with talents and powers to correspond and vitalized by the great Life-Giver who declares, "I am the resurrection and the Life."

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION

With the foregoing suggestions respecting the fact that our Lord's resurrection is well vouched for by good authority, and that he was raised a spirit being, let us proceed to an examination of the lesson. The narrative is simple, unvarnished, natural. The different gospels tell of the matter in different language, narrating sometimes the same item in different form and sometimes different items connected with the manifestations of the forty days of our Lord's presence after he arose from the dead and before he ascended on high. Although these accounts differ they in nowise contradict each other; each told what he himself saw and knew, whereas had the account been a spurious one, gotten up to deceive, undoubtedly great care would have been exercised to have every witness tell the same thing. Here, then, is a sure proof of the truthfulness of the records.

To draw an illustration from more modern history: We notice the fact that several generals present at the battle of

Waterloo gave very different accounts of the same – especially respecting the time of the beginning of the battle. Two armies of men witnessed the matter, yet an authoritative account of just when it opened cannot today be known. The Duke of Wellington declared that it began at ten o'clock in the morning, and General Alba, who rode beside him, says the hour was eleven-thirty; Napoleon and one of his assistants, Douret, claimed that it began at twelve o'clock, and General Ney asserted that it began at one o'clock. Evidently these different persons had different conceptions of the matter: one may have counted from the [R3905 : page 382] time the first gun was fired, another from a period of the general engagement, or what not. No one thinks of questioning the fact that there was a battle of Waterloo because of these divergent statements respecting the time it began. So with the matter of our Lord's resurrection, the fact that the different records of it are not in the same language militates nothing against the fact as a fact. All agree that the resurrection took place on the first day of the week (Sunday) following the Passover, early in the morning. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the mother of James the Less and of Joses, were there (Matt. 27:56), and Mark and Luke tell us that shortly afterward came Salome the mother of John, Joanna the wife of Chuza, and other women, who brought spices for a more thorough embalming of the Lord's body than was possible on the night of our Lord's [R3905 : page 383] burial, on account of the lateness of the hour and the approach of the Passover.

The earthquake had already rolled away the stone, the sentries had fled in terror from the manifestation of the angel's presence – they fled to the high priest, who probably had engaged to be their paymaster – having them detailed for a special police duty by Pilate. But the angel, so terrible to those out of harmony with the Lord, spoke graciously to those who were his friends, assuring them that Jesus was risen, and directing them to go quickly and tell his disciples, also assuring them that Jesus would

go into Galilee, and intimating a general meeting of his friends there, which later took place. En route they met Jesus, who sent the same message to his disciples. Seemingly the Lord recognized that woman can exercise faith more readily than can man, and here he used them as his servants and mouthpieces to bear his message – to prepare his disciples, to assist them more readily to accept the truth of his resurrection. Meantime the affrighted guard fled and told the circumstances to the prominent elders who had set them their task and who were probably special enemies of our Lord. They were assured that their work would be considered satisfactory if they would keep the facts to themselves or report that Jesus' disciples had stolen the corpse. They gave them a handsome present for their cooperation in this matter and assured them of protection should their conduct ever be called in question.

ELEVEN APPEARANCES AT MOST

For forty days our Lord was with his disciples before his ascension, yet he revealed himself to them, according to the records, not more than eleven times in all – and some of these instances are probably duplications. His interviews with the disciples lasted but for a few moments each, and were surrounded by circumstances and conditions which said to them in thunder tones that a great change had occurred to him – that he was no longer the same being, although he evidently had the same loving interest in them as before. He was still their Lord and Master, this same Jesus, although no longer Jesus in the flesh. He was "the Lord, that spirit," a "quickenning spirit." To bring the matter more clearly before our minds let us note the records covering these manifestations or appearances, as follows:

ON THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION

(1) Sunday morning early – to Mary Magdalene – near the sepulchre at Jerusalem. – Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18.

(2) Sunday morning – to the women returning from the sepulchre – near Jerusalem. – Matt. 28:9,10.

(3) Sunday – to Simon Peter alone – near Jerusalem. – Luke 24:34.

(4) Sunday afternoon – to the two disciples going to Emmaus – between Jerusalem and Emmaus. – Luke 24:13-21.

(5) Sunday evening – to the apostles excepting Thomas – at Jerusalem. – John 20:19-25.

All five of these were on the first day, the resurrection day, the remaining six appearances being scattered through the remaining thirty-nine days of our Lord's presence, as follows:

THE NEXT SUNDAY – THE EIGHTH DAY

(6) Sunday evening, a week after the resurrection – to the apostles, Thomas being present – at Jerusalem. – John 20:26-29.

Following this was a long interval apparently in which there was no appearance whatever, and the disciples, discouraged, perplexed, resolved to go back to their homes in Galilee and there to reengage in the fishing business, considering that the Lord and his mission had been a failure. Our Lord evidently expected just such a process of reasoning on their part, and his delay was undoubtedly to help them over the difficulty and to start them afresh as servants of the Kingdom of God on a higher and still grander plane than their previous ministries had been – under the ministration of the holy Spirit.

APPEARANCES IN GALILEE

Quite probably three weeks intervened without the slightest communication. Meantime the apostles had reengaged in the

fishing business, when our Lord appeared to them on the shores of Galilee.

(7) As a stranger on the shore Jesus called to seven of his disciples who were fishing – John 21:1-13.

(8) Shortly after the manifestation on the shores of Galilee Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee. – Matt. 28:16-20.

(9) Very shortly after this he again appeared to a general company of his followers gathered together by previous appointment, "above 500 brethren at once" – in Galilee. – 1 Cor. 15:6.

LAST APPEARANCE IN JERUSALEM

(10) At the close of the forty days our Lord appeared to the Apostle James only, probably at Jerusalem. – 1 Cor. 15:7.

(11) At the end of the forty days our Lord appeared to all of the apostles at the time of his ascension. This was at the Mount of Olives. – Luke 24:50,51; Acts 1:6-9.

It was years after this that Paul wrote, "Last of all he was seen by me also, as of one born before the time." He was seen of the other apostles as the gardener, as a stranger, as the Crucified One, etc., etc., but when Paul, the last of the apostles, saw him it was not so, but as we shall see him by and by when we are changed to his likeness – he saw him as one of premature birth. The Church of the First-Born are at the resurrection changed to be like their Lord and see him as he is. Any special revelation of the Lord might have been withheld from the Apostle Paul until the same time except that it was necessary that the apostles should be "witnesses," testifiers to the fact that Christ had not only died but had also risen from the dead; and in order that Paul as an

Apostle might thus testify he was granted the vision of the glorified one. He saw him as we shall see him in that he saw him in the brightness of his excellent glory and not as the others, veiled in the flesh. Thank God that the time is not far distant when, those who sleep in Jesus having been changed to his image, we who are alive and remain shall also be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to be made like him, to see him as he is, to share his glory. Not all in the same moment, but each in his own moment, changed instantly – until gradually, thus being changed by passing from death to life, the full number of the very elect shall be completed and the reign of glory shall begin.
