

OUR EASTER LESSON

- MARCH 27. -

Golden Text: – "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore." – Rev. 1:18.

WITHOUT quitting our study of the teachings of the great Prophet of Galilee we must not allow Easter Sunday to pass without noting its peculiar lesson – the resurrection of the Savior from the dead. Our text comes to us as fresh as though delivered yesterday from the lips of the risen Redeemer – his special message to his people. How much there is in these few words! They affirm with positiveness that Jesus really died, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring mankind back from sin and condemnation to harmony with God. With equal force they tell us that he is dead no longer, that although unseen to our natural eyes, our faith may recognize the fact that he arose from the dead and ascended up on high, there "to appear in the presence of God for us." – Heb. 9:24.

What was effected by his death and what is the value of his life to mankind?

His death was necessary because death was the sentence against Adam and all his race, because of original sin – disobedience. St. Paul says, "By one man's disobedience sin entered the world, and death as a result of sin, and thus death passed upon all, for all are sinners." It was not an angel that had sinned and hence an angel could not be the Redeemer. The Divine Law was an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, an ox for an ox, a man for a man. Hence nothing but the sacrificial death of a perfect man could redeem the race from their death sentence. Any perfect man could have thus been substituted, but there was none in the whole world; hence the necessity that our Lord should be "made

flesh" that he might redeem us. (John 1:14.) Hence, as the Scriptures explain, "he who was rich, for our sakes became poor" – leaving the perfection of the heavenly nature and coming down to perfect human nature; he was "holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners." – Heb. 7:26.

The death of Jesus did not redeem the world, but it constituted a ransom price for the world whenever it **[R4588 : page 108]** might be applied. Our Savior laid down his life, surrendered it to the Father, in obedience to the Divine suggestion. As a reward he was highly exalted, given a name above every name on the spirit plane. Not having forfeited his human rights by sin, but merely having laid them down, in obedience to the Father's wish, he has these to dispose of, to give as a bequest or testament to humanity.

But if we may thus see clearly an inestimable value in our Redeemer's sacrifice of himself, a glance will show us that his resurrection was of equal importance. Had the Father not raised him from the dead, it would have implied some unfaithfulness, some failure on our Lord's part. And if he had not arisen, how could he have made application of his human rights on our behalf? No wonder St. Paul forcefully declares, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain....Ye are yet in your sins. And they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished....But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept." – I Cor. 15:14-20.

So, then, upon the death of Jesus and his resurrection hang the resurrection hope of the Church and of the world. We must differentiate these as the Scriptures do. The Church is to have share in the "first" or "chief resurrection," called also "Christ's Resurrection," "his resurrection." (Phil. 3:10.) The resurrection of Christ and his Church is to the spirit nature of glory and perfection. On that glorious plane the Heavenly Bridegroom will

soon claim his espoused Church as his Bride and joint-heir in his Kingdom.

Then the world's resurrection will be due to begin – not a resurrection "change" to spirit nature, etc., nor an instantaneous work at all. Theirs will be a resurrection to human nature, human perfection, but of gradual development – first the awakening, "every man in his own order," and subsequently the gradual raising of them up out of sin and death conditions to perfection of life – as many as will obey the great King of the Millennial Kingdom. And such as will refuse obedience will be cut off – destroyed in the Second Death.

It is greatly to be regretted that very many Christian people, including many of the clergy, have failed to discern the great importance of the resurrection, in connection with the teachings of God's Word. This serious omission has aided greatly in the confusion which has led many to a rejection of the Word of God under the teachings of Higher Criticism and Evolution. Let us honor the Heavenly Father and the Redeemer by heeding the testimony of the Bible respecting the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. In proportion as we do this we will be surely following the example of the Great Teacher and of all the Apostles. And are we wiser than they that we should leave their teachings or neglect them? Nay, we will "take the more earnest heed, lest we should let these things slip" and become bound, as many have been, through the neglect of the teachings of this doctrine.

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