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"JESUS HIMSELF DREW NEAR"

– APRIL 12. – LUKE 24:13-35. –

"It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that was raised from the dead." – Romans 8:34.

WE ARE to study today one of the most striking manifestations of Jesus to His disciples after His resurrection. Early in the morning of the day of His resurrection He had appeared to the women who came with spices to embalm His body. They had communicated to St. Peter and St. John that the Lord had been with them. These two most energetic Apostles vied with each other to get to the sepulcher with speed. But they saw merely the empty tomb.

The disciples of Jesus were dazed, perplexed. Although He had told them that He would be crucified, and that He would rise from the dead on the third day, they had not comprehended the teaching. Even after hearing of His resurrection they were seemingly slow to connect it with what He had previously told them.

In the afternoon, two of the company were walking home, discussing their disappointment in Jesus – how, instead of becoming a great king, He had been crucified, and their hopes of associating with Him in dignity and honor had all been dashed. Jesus had been proven a [R5416 : page 74] fraud, to the satisfaction of their rulers. The fact that He was crucified seemed to settle the matter that He could not have been the Messiah, as He had declared and as they had believed.

THAT JESUS IS STILL FLESH IS UNSUPPOSABLE

While they thus talked, Jesus overtook them. They knew Him not, because of His resurrection change. The Apostle Peter tells us

that He was "put to death in flesh, but quickened in spirit." We understand this in the light of the explanation given of the resurrection change of the Church. The Apostle Paul declares: "Sown in weakness, raised in power; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown an animal body, raised a spirit body." (1 Corinthians 15:42-44.) And, of course, if the Church is to experience such a resurrection change in order to be like her Lord, He must have experienced just such a change.

The same thought is impressed again by the Apostle's statement: "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." The change which the Church is to experience, in order to be fitted for the Kingdom of God is the same change which Jesus experienced when He was raised from the dead, a life-giving Spirit – no longer a man.

Our Lord's title, "the Son of Man," still belongs to Him, just as the title, "the Word of God," the Logos, still belongs to Him. When the Logos was made flesh, the identity was not lost. Respecting our Lord's human experiences, we read: "A body hast Thou prepared Me" – for the suffering of death. (Hebrews 10:5-10.) When He had accomplished that purpose, He no longer had need of human nature; but, as He had foretold His disciples, He ascended up where He was before – to the spirit plane, to the spirit nature, as well as, later on, to Heaven itself.

To assume that Jesus is a fleshly being in Heaven, bearing wounds and scars to all eternity and surrounded by spirit beings on a higher plane than the human, is to suppose that the Father never really exalted Him again to the glory which He had with God before the world was (John 17:5), and is un-supposable. We must bear in mind, therefore, the Scriptures, which show that the Father highly exalted the Redeemer, not only restoring Him to spirit-being, higher than human, but exalting Him "far above

angels, principalities, powers and every name that is named."
– Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:20-23.

"JESUS SHOWED HIMSELF"

St. Luke declares that Jesus showed Himself alive after His resurrection. (Acts 1:3.) Again he speaks of Him as appearing. The narrative shows both terms are justified by the facts. He appeared and disappeared. He showed Himself to some and not to others, and in every way manifested the fact that some great change had taken place in Him after those three days. Not only did He appear and show Himself in different forms, in different bodies, unlike each other, but also in different clothing. Then, too, when He suddenly disappeared, the clothing disappeared also.

When we say that Jesus, a spirit Being, materialized, we are not to be understood as in any way sympathizing with the class called Spiritualists, who produce materializations [R5416 : page 75] of the dead. If we desire an illustration, let us go back to the Bible account of how Jesus, when He was the Logos – before His nature was changed from Spirit to human – appeared to Abraham, in company with two angels. We read that the Lord and two angels did eat and talk with Abraham, who knew them not, but "entertained angels unawares" until, eventually, their identity was revealed.

Just so it was with the two disciples en route to Emmaus: The stranger who overtook them sympathetically inquired, Why look and talk so sadly? They opened their hearts to Him, astonished that He did not know. They told of Jesus the Nazarene, a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and they explained to Him how the chief priests and rulers had delivered Him up and crucified Him. They explained that theirs was a double disappointment, in that not only had they lost a Friend, but their hope that He was the Messiah, who would have redeemed Israel, had been crushed. They proceeded to tell Him of the events

of that very morning – that some of the women of their company had found the tomb empty and had seen angels, who said that He was alive, etc.

This gave Jesus the opportunity He sought – to explain to His disciples quietly, without any excitement, that the experiences they had had were part of the Divine Plan. He said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken!" He declared that it was necessary that He should thus suffer in order to enter into His glory – that without such suffering He never could be the King of Glory, with power to bless and restore humanity, by and by. – Acts 3:19-21.

Then He began to point out from the writings of Moses and all the Prophets what God had foretold respecting Messiah's experiences. He probably reminded them of how Isaac had been offered up by Abraham, explaining that Abraham typified the Heavenly Father and Isaac typified Himself; and that the offering, even though not fully carried out, represented the death of Himself as it had taken place, the subsequent life of Isaac representing the resurrection of Jesus, to be with His Father again.

He doubtless told them about the smitten rock, from which gushed the waters – that that rock represented Himself, who must be smitten in order to give the Water of Life to the dying world. He doubtless told them how Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and explained that the serpent represented sin; and that He, in being crucified, was made to take the place of the sinner, that the sinner might, through faith, be made righteous in God's sight through the Redeemer's sacrifice.

He doubtless explained to them the sacrifice of the Atonement Day, in which the bullock, which died, represented Himself in the flesh; and in which the high priest, who lived, and who entered into the Most Holy and sprinkled the blood for the forgiveness of the people, also represented Himself, a spirit Being,

who after resurrection would go into Heaven itself and eventually offer up full sin-atonement on behalf of the world, and would come forth again at His Second Advent to bless those for whom He had died.

"HE OPENED THE SCRIPTURES"

He doubtless explained to them respecting the passover-lamb – that it typified Himself, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." We may assume that He proceeded to the Psalms, Isaiah and the other Prophets, explaining all the prophetic passages relating to the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. No wonder those disciples afterward declared that their hearts had burned within them while He opened to them the Scriptures!

As the early disciples were refreshed by the Message of God's grace and the fulfilment of His promises, so it is sure to be with all the followers of Jesus. The Lord prophetically declared, "My people perish for lack of knowledge." Evidently there can be only a dwarfed Christian life and experience except as the Word of God is understood and assimilated. Hence we have the frequent exhortations of Jesus and the Apostles that the people of God should grow in grace and knowledge, should search the Scriptures, etc. Let those who are cold and indifferent unite with those who are dejected and despondent, in coming to the Master for the "meat in due season." Such surely will not be turned away empty by Him who said, "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And in proportion as they find their hearts also burning within them, as they realize the fulfilment of God's promises in the past, so shall they develop faith in the fulfilment of those promises which relate to the future.

Jesus could have manifested Himself to His disciples otherwise than He did. Instead of appearing as the gardener and as the traveler, etc., in different forms, and then vanishing after

communicating with His disciples, He could have done just as He did with Saul of Tarsus, the last one to whom He appeared. As we read, "Last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born before the time." (1 Corinthians 15:8.) Those begotten of the Holy Spirit now are to be born of the Spirit in the resurrection. Then they will be spirit beings, like the Redeemer, see Him as He is and share His glory. That will be the due time for all of His followers to see Him as He is – not as He was. – 1 John 3:2.

But Saul of Tarsus saw Him thus as a spirit Being, "shining above the brightness of the sun" at noonday – saw Him before the time. The effect upon him was disastrous to his eyes, and required a miracle for his recovery of sight. And even then apparently a certain blemish was allowed to be a thorn in his flesh to his dying day, as a reminder of God's great mercy toward him, and to keep him humble in connection with his powerful ministry. – 2 Corinthians 12:7.

"THEY KNEW HIM – HE VANISHED"

When the travelers arrived in Emmaus Jesus, after being urged, accepted their hospitality. We have every reason to suppose that if they had not urged, He would not have stopped with them; for "He made as if He would have gone farther." And so it is still; He does not intrude upon His disciples. Rather, He encourages us to recognize our need of Him and to ask, that we may receive, that our joy may be full. So it was with those brethren at Emmaus. They were appreciative of what they had learned. "Never man spake like this Man." If He had ministered to them so much spiritual joy, they would delight in showing Him every courtesy in their power; and perhaps this might give further opportunities for conversation.

And so it was. When they sat down to supper, their guest assumed something of the manner of Jesus; and the way in which He asked a blessing upon the food reminded them, evidently, of

Jesus. Their eyes of understanding began to open. Immediately they realized that no one but their own Master could have given them the lessons just enjoyed on the journey. And thus having [R5417 : page 76] fulfilled the purpose of His materialization, He immediately vanished out of their sight – clothes and all – instantaneously.

Their joy was too great to permit them to sleep. They must hasten to carry the good tidings to the other disciples. So they journeyed back to Jerusalem, and there found the others rejoicing in the fact that the Lord had manifested Himself to Simon Peter. Then the two told the story of their experiences; and faith, hope and joy began to grow in all their hearts.

Who cannot see that the Lord's way of manifesting Himself after His resurrection was in every way the best! Had He appeared to many of them, or to all of them, as He appeared to Saul of Tarsus later, they would have been bewildered, shocked. They would not have been so well able to identify "the light shining above the sun at noonday" with their Master, Jesus. Even if a voice from Heaven had declared the fact of His resurrection, Jesus would not have had the same opportunity of explaining to their minds the prophecies; and they, perturbed and excited, would not so well have been able to receive the instruction.

It should be remembered that out of fewer than ten appearances during the forty days between our Lord's resurrection and ascension, He only twice appeared in a form similar to that which they had seen, and bearing the marks of crucifixion; and that on both of these occasions He appeared while the doors were shut, and later vanished while the doors were still shut, in order that His followers might learn a double lesson:

(1) That He was no longer dead, but alive, resurrected;

(2) That He was no longer flesh, but Spirit – "Now the Lord is that Spirit."

