

THE RISEN CHRIST

– *DECEMBER 6.* – *MARK 16:1-8; MATTHEW 28:11-15.* –

**"Why seek ye the living amongst the dead? He is not here,
but is risen." – Luke 24:5,6.**

THE resurrection of the dead is an astounding proposition. Its accomplishment will be the greatest manifestation of Divine Power ever made to angels and to men. The awakening of Jairus' daughter, of the son of the widow of Nain, and that of Lazarus the friend of Jesus, are nowhere styled resurrections of the dead. They were merely awakenings, the last of these being the most wonderful because, Lazarus had been dead four days, and putrefaction had set in.

The resurrection of the dead promised in the Bible is to bring back the personality and the consciousness of thousands of millions of humanity who have died, who have gone to dust under the Divine sentence, "Dying, thou shalt die." "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." There could be no resurrection – no escape from that Divine sentence – except in the way God has arranged; namely, that Jesus took the place of the original sinner, Adam. Purchasing him back from the death sentence meant the purchase of all who died in him. Thus we read that Christ died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." – 1 Peter 3:18.

Fallacious ideas have gone abroad to the effect that it will be the body merely that will be resurrected – that God will collect from the four winds every particle of dust which once composed a portion of a human body, and will reorganize the race out of the same particles of matter which once composed it. The absurdity of this proposition grows upon us as we consider that the carcasses [R5578 : page 346] of the dead have more or less gone into vegetation, and thus into other animals and other humans. This

is well illustrated by the story of the apple tree, the roots of which penetrated a coffin and assumed the shape of the corpse. The apples were eaten by various people, and some of them by swine, which in turn were shipped to various parts of the country.

This anecdote well illustrates the unreasonableness of the common misunderstanding of the Bible teachings. The difficulty has been that we lost sight of the fact that the Bible declares that it is the soul which dies. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4,20.) Our bodies are being changed and renewed, Science tells us, every seven years. The body in which Adam sinned, therefore, passed away – and many other bodies – during the nine hundred and thirty years of his experience. But his soul, his personality, himself, died but once, nine hundred and thirty years old. It is the soul that dies, that has been redeemed, and that is to be resurrected. "Thou sowest not that body which shall be."

OUR LORD NO LONGER HUMAN

Christ, as the Logos with the Father, was a living soul, or being, on a high spirit plane. For man's sake He humbled Himself and became a bondsman – "took a bondsman's form, and was found in fashion as a man" – a human soul. As a human soul, or human being, He died – "He poured out His soul unto death." He made "His soul an Offering for sin." "He shall see [the reward of] the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." – Isaiah 53:10-12.

It was Jesus the human soul that died, but He was raised from the dead a Soul of a higher order. At that time, as He foretold, He ascended "where He was before"; that is to say, on the spirit plane. He was "put to death in flesh, but quickened [or made alive] in spirit." (1 Peter 3:18.) He took the fleshly nature merely for the great purpose of giving man's redemption-price; and after He had surrendered that ransom-price by giving Himself up to death, the Father raised Him up to glory, honor, the Divine nature – "far above angels, principalities and powers, and every name that is named."

(Philippians 2:9.) He that ascended thus in His resurrection was the same that had previously descended from the Heavenly to the earthly condition, as St. Paul says.

Because in His resurrection Jesus was so different, from this viewpoint we are prepared to understand why He conducted Himself so differently after His resurrection [R5579 : page 346] from what He had done before. After His resurrection He appeared and disappeared, we read. He showed Himself to His disciples for a few moments at a time, and then vanished from their sight. Never before had He done anything of the kind. After His resurrection He appeared in different bodies, different forms, different clothing. To Mary He appeared as the gardener. To the two walking to Emmaus He appeared as the stranger. He appeared not only as a different person, but also in different clothing; for His clothing had been parted amongst the soldiers.

How evidently He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened in spirit! It was the Spirit Jesus who showed Himself, assuming different human forms and clothing, as best suited the occasion. This Spirit Being could, and did, come into the assemblies of the disciples when the doors were shut and fastened for fear of the Jews. He created, or materialized, a body and clothing in their presence; and after a few moments He vanished out of their sight, dissolving the body and the clothing, while He, the Spirit Being, remained invisible. Thus He was with the disciples for forty days before He ascended; yet they saw Him not, except a few minutes at a time on seven different occasions.

Those forty days were very necessary for teaching the Jewish disciples, and all of the Lord's followers since, two great lessons:

- (1) That He was no longer dead, but alive;
- (2) That He was no longer a man, but a Spirit. "Now the Lord is that Spirit." – 2 Corinthians 3:17.

IMPORTANCE OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION

That our Lord was no longer flesh, but a Spirit Being with celestial glory, is clearly established by St. Paul's narrative of his own experiences. He explains that it was necessary that the twelve Apostles should be able to bear witness to the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead. There could have been no Gospel Message of hope of Divine favor through a dead Savior. If Christ had not risen, then who would there be who could ever establish the Messianic Kingdom? Who would there ever be who could give to the Church a share in the First Resurrection and make them sharers in His Heavenly glory? If Christ had not risen, who would there be who could call forth from the tomb the sleeping billions, awakening them, through the Voice which speaks peace through Jesus Christ, to the opportunities of everlasting life through obedience to the Kingdom?

The Apostle calls all this forcibly to our minds, saying, "If Christ be not risen from the dead, your faith is vain; and all who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." (1 Corinthians 15:16-18.) From this we see that St. Paul in no way shared the views of those who unscripturally claimed that Jesus, while dead, was really alive; and that the resurrection of the dead is a mere formality, quite unnecessary to the carrying out of God's Plan. The Divine teaching is that the dead know not anything, and that the resurrection of the dead is an absolute necessity to any future life or hope or blessing.

The fact that Christ has risen from the dead is a guarantee of God's power to raise the dead. Additionally, it is a guarantee that Jesus accomplished the work which He came into the world to do. It proves to us that He must have kept the Divine Law perfectly; else He would not have been worthy of a resurrection from the dead. It proves, additionally, the value of His death – the efficacy of it as the offset of Father Adam's sin, and thus as the Ransom-price for the sins of the world.

POST-RESURRECTION MANIFESTATIONS

St. Paul tells that he saw Jesus after His resurrection. He tells us that our Lord's appearance to him was as that of a bright light shining above the brightness of the sun at noonday. He tells us the effect that it had upon his character and upon his eyesight – that one glance at the glorious Jesus destroyed his sight, which was afterwards partially restored by Divine mercy. This was the eighth appearance of Jesus to His disciples. In seven of them He appeared in flesh; in one He appeared in glory above the brightness of the sun. He was the same at all times, but the manifestations were different.

The manifestations in the flesh during the forty days correspond exactly to those manifestations which Jesus had made long previously, one of which was to Abraham. He ate and talked with Abraham; but Abraham knew not that he talked with the Lord, and thought of Him only as a man, because He appeared in human form and ordinary clothing. He vanished from Abraham's sight as He vanished from the Apostles' sight and from Saul's. He was a Spirit Being when He appeared to Abraham; and He was a Spirit Being after His resurrection, when [R5579 : page 347] He appeared to His Apostles. It was in the meantime that He was made flesh for the very purpose of suffering, the Just for the unjust.

Having accomplished the suffering, there was no further reason why our Lord should remain flesh. The Lord of Glory in Heaven is not flesh, not a man. If He were, He would be "a little lower than the angels." But the Apostle assures us that in His resurrection He has ascended far above the angels. – Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3,4.

It was just as easy for Jesus to appear in one form as another, in one kind of clothing as another. He appeared in various forms, that the double lesson might be impressed that He was not dead, and that He was no longer a man. His second appearance with the

wounds to convince St. Thomas is especially noteworthy. He was ready to give any demonstration that was necessary, because, unless His disciples really believed in His resurrection, they could not do the work that was before them, nor could they even receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was not given except to those who believed in Jesus – who accepted the fact of His death as the Sacrifice for sins and who trusted in Him as the Savior through whom would come the Divine blessing, begetting them of the Holy Spirit and restoring them to fellowship with God as children of God.

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL PROOFS

If further evidence be necessary that Jesus is not a flesh being – that He is no longer a man – that evidence can be found in the Apostle's assurance that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, and that therefore every member of the Church must be changed before he can enter into and share Christ's Kingdom. The change will be from earthly state, or condition, or soul, to spirit condition, or soul, or being. The Apostle declares that we must all be changed, that we may be like our Lord. If our fleshly body must give place to a spirit body in order that we may be like our Lord, it is manifest that He is a spirit body, a spirit being, a spirit soul. This also agrees with St. Paul, respecting the resurrection of the Church. He says, "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown an animal body, it is raised a spirit body."

A totally different thing, however, is brought to our attention by the same Apostle in Philippians 3:21, where he declares that the Lord Jesus will "change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." The thought here is in respect to the Church as a whole, and not the individual bodies of the Church. The Apostle is speaking of our vile Body, in the singular. The thought is that Jesus, the Head of the Church, had His experiences of humiliation prior to His death and His resurrection. The Head of the

Church was exalted, was glorified, more than eighteen centuries ago. Since then, all who have espoused His Cause have become identified with a Body, or company, that is despised of men, a humiliated Body, of which St. Paul says, "We are counted as the filth and offscouring of the earth." But at the Second Coming of Christ the humiliation of the Church, His Body, will cease, because the Lord will gloriously change His Body in the First Resurrection. Thereafter it will no longer be a Church, or Body, reviled but glorified.

