

# HE LIVES!

Seven Studies of the  
Resurrection Appearances of the  
Lord Jesus Christ

BY

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With Foreword by  
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TO ALL STUDENTS  
OF THE  
GUELPH BIBLE SCHOOL  
GUELPH, CANADA,  
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE,  
IS THIS LITTLE BOOK  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

## Foreword

**I**T is a real pleasure to write a short foreword for this series of messages on Resurrection Scenes, given last Summer at the Guelph Bible School. The young people who gathered from many parts of Canada and the United States of America were thrilled by a fresh vision of a living Christ interested in every department of their lives.

To young people particularly, we commend this book that they too may from the heart swell the triumphant strain, "Hallelujah! Christ arose!"

H. G. LOCKETT.

HAMILTON, ONTARIO.

*November, 1938*

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# HE LIVES!

## CHAPTER I

### “Alive Again!”

*“He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs” (Acts I. 3).*

COL. ROBT. G. INGERSOLL, the apostle and high priest of Agnosticism in America in the nineteenth century, once had the difficult task of delivering an address on the occasion of his brother's funeral in Washington, D.C. In the midst of his discourse his feelings overcame him, and utterly breaking down, he bowed his head on the coffin and wept in uncontrollable grief. Then, regaining his composure, he raised himself up and exclaimed with characteristic oratory :

“My brother added to the sum of human joy, and were every one for whom he did some loving service to bring a blossom to his grave, he would sleep to-night beneath a wilderness of flowers. Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of a wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word ; but in the night of death hope sees a star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing.”

On another occasion, while giving an impromptu talk at the grave of a child, the same lecturer said in part :

“We do not know which is the greatest blessing, life or death. We cannot say that death is not good.

We do not know whether the grave is the end of this life or the door of another, or whether the night here is not somewhere else a dawn. We cannot tell. Every cradle asks 'Whence?' and every coffin 'Whither?'"

What utter hopelessness lies behind these words! In the face of death, infidelity has not a beam of hope, a word of comfort, or a ray of certainty. All is dark and dreadful. The "voiceless lips of the unreplying dead" divulge no secrets, and the very best that unbelieving man can say, is: "Let us hope that it is not so terrible as it appears."

Who among us has not lost to that grim Reaper one near and dear? Who among us has not peered into the box draped in black at the pale, powdered face and echoed Job's query, "Where is he?" Who among us has not used Tennyson's mournful lines:

"Oh for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still."

Can we be certain? Is there a way out of the miasmatic fog of human speculation? Thank God there is! And so we turn from the "We don't know" of Agnosticism to the "We know" of Divine revelation. Holy Scripture shouts in triumph, "We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding."

All human religions end with death. Like the travellers who came to the sign on the highway, "No Thoroughfare Beyond the Cemetery," all mere theory reaches its terminus there. But Christianity *begins* where religion *ends*. It begins with a Man who has come back from death. It is founded on a resurrected Man, and thus life and incorruptibility have been brought to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. 1. 10).

Let it be once established that the Man of Calvary arose from the dead, bodily, and it will be a simple matter to prove the Divinity of Christianity, among the by-products of which is the fact of the resurrection of all men, righteous and otherwise. But can this be established? Everything depends upon it. Infidelity has been quick to recognise this, and hence has directed its batteries upon this Gibraltar.

A missionary and his fellow-worker were once witnessing a great religious parade in India. A bone of Buddha had been found and was being presented to the City with fanatical fervour. Thousands prostrated themselves before the sacred relic, bowing themselves in the dust. The missionary, turning to his friend, remarked, “What a striking evidence is this of the difference between the two faiths. If any part of the body of Jesus were to be found it would cause, not rejoicing, but dismay, for it would show that He had not risen from the dead.”

But the fact that His body was not to be found after that first Easter morning may not be sufficiently conclusive to convince the modern thinker that He arose, and the question persists, “How do we *know*?”

By way of answer let us consider the Predictions, the Proofs and the Pledge.

#### I. THE PREDICTIONS.

The Lord Jesus Christ predicted His resurrection. On nine occasions during His earthly life He foretold that He would arise the third day. No mere man, whose breath is in his nostrils, would be so foolhardy as to even approximate such a staggering forecast.

Just listen to one brief sentence from His lips along these lines : "Destroy this temple (body), and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2. 19). That utterance is either sober truth or else the wildest ravings of a deranged mind. Imagine my saying to an enemy, "You may kill me, but if you do I will not only personally raise again my own body, but I will do it in just three days." Such would be utter lunacy. But this glorious Speaker commands our profound attention by the very nature of His colossal claims.

While predictions are not proof, yet it must be evident to the thoughtful observer that, unless these forecasts are fully established, all our Lord's ministry must be severely discounted if not utterly rejected. Over and over again He said, "The Son of Man must go up to Jerusalem, be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, and crucified, and the third day rise again." And woe be unto Him if all did not come to pass.

## 2. THE PROOFS.

Behold a new grave hewn in the rock amid all the luxuriance of a wealthy man's estate outside of old Jerusalem. A body lies within its cool recess that is the object of considerable interest ; indeed, a cordon of soldiers, probably the temple-watch, is standing on guard nearby, their presence instigated by the religious powers. As we approach for a closer view, we notice that the civil power is also represented, for Caesar's seal has secured the stone that guards the grave's mouth. And were our spiritual apperception sufficiently keen we would see that the civil and religious has the backing of the diabolical, for he who has the power of death, Satan himself,



is rubbing his hands in unholy glee as he triumphs over the whole affair. What a combination. The power outside the tomb embraced organized religion, the greatest empire of history, and all the hostile forces of Hell itself.

What was the prize that was being so sedulously guarded? A corpse! Yes, a corpse indeed; but that of One Who had predicted His Own resurrection on the third day. To prevent this all these powers had been marshalled, and it was their purpose to keep the body in custody until the third day, when that grave would be thrown open and its undisturbed contents displayed in triumph. Thus Christ and Christianity would collapse disgracefully.

But, having considered the power outside the tomb, let us think for a moment of the power *inside*. The corpse that lay there was different from any other throughout all time: it was absolutely incorruptible. It was just as pure and as sweet on the *third* day as on the *second* after life had fled. Then, it follows that the One Who tabernacled therein must have been distinct from all the sons of Adam; and this He was, for He had never, for the briefest moment, known the defiling touch of sin. Both Testaments, Old and New, term Him, “Thy Holy One.” He was the incarnate Son of God, the Eternal Word having become flesh, the Christ of the supernatural birth, supernatural life and the supernatural death. And it soon became signally apparent that “it was not possible that He should be holden of death.” How futile to think of a few soldiers, Caesar’s seal, and even Satan himself binding the Almighty Son of God! Let them first of all “bind the sweet influences

of the Pleiades," or "guide Arcturus with his sons ;" let them first of all restrain the sun from rising, or prevent the moon in her queenly ministrations ; let them first of all control the winds, or regulate the tides, and if they fail in this let them dismiss for ever into oblivion the ridiculous notion of preventing the resurrection of Creation's Lord.

The testimony of friends and foes alike was that the new grave in Joseph's garden was vacated on the third day. Two different explanations clamour for the ear and acceptance of men ; first, that of the foes, namely, that while the guards slept the tomb was rifled by Christ's followers, and, secondly, that of the friends, namely, that their glorious Saviour had actually risen from the dead. Let us briefly examine both claims.

Let us assume that the Lord Jesus Christ did not rise again the third day. Then, it follows that His body was in the hands of either His friends or His foes. If possessed by His friends there must have been a conspiracy on their part to raid the grave, remove the body and carefully conceal it. Following this, they boldly announced to all and sundry that He had actually fulfilled His predictions and thus justified all His claims. We might give a measure of credence to this theory, providing the disciples would be personally advantaged by such a fraud ; but we have only to glance at the Book of Acts to see how the very reverse of this issued from their preaching. Instead of their reaping rich personal advantages, they received cruel persecution everywhere. The religious element did their best to muzzle them, and the Roman civil powers made things well-nigh unbearable. Cruelty, stripes, stocks, dungeons,

and multiplied anathemas were their consistent portion, and every one of them, with the possible exception of John, died a violent martyr's death. And for what reason? *For the propagation of what they all knew to be a lie?*

My friends, are you prepared to believe that? Does it sound at all logical? I submit to you to-night that it takes a great deal more credulity and gullibility to accept *that* than faith to bow to the straight-forward statements of the Word of God.

But more : If the disciples had the body they had not only suffered the loss of all things for no possible advantage, but this crowd of arch-deceivers have given to the world the finest literature extant, the New Testament, embracing the highest code of morals and ethics that mankind has ever known. And their writings have transformed throngs of natural deceivers into men of the highest moral worth. Furthermore, these same men wrote, “Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man and his deeds,” and threatened to hurl all liars into Hell for ever, when they themselves were the greatest liars that ever walked the earth! Can anyone accept such conclusions? Perish the thought!

Well, if His friends did not have the body, then it must have been in the hands of His enemies. Supposing this were the case, and a few weeks after that famous third day Simon Peter, leader of the Apostolic band, is preaching to a great throng on the streets of Jerusalem. The interest in his sermon is very keen, and the crowd follows him eagerly until he reaches a dramatic climax with these words, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.” The people are hanging

on his words, and many a gasp of startled dismay is audibly heard as he drives home with tremendous force the fact of their terrible sin and how God has answered it in the resurrection of Christ. But some in the crowd are neither moved nor startled, for at that very moment they have the Nazarene's body in their custody. What is needed now to explode the new doctrine and to silence for ever the claims of Jesus and His followers? *Simply produce His body!* Suppose that had been possible. Can we not imagine the triumphs of those cunning religionists as a few stalwart men would hold up to view the limp and lifeless corpse concerning whose resurrection Peter had been so eloquently speaking. If that had been possible Christianity, like Jonah's gourd, would have come up in a night and perished in a night. But that did not happen. Why? *Simply because His foes did not have His body to produce.*

There is but one alternative left : the Lord Jesus Christ did exactly what He said He would do : *He arose bodily from the grave and lives to-day at the right hand of God after the power of an endless life.*

### 3. THE PLEDGE.

Having established the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, is a living Man, it is not difficult to prove the resurrection of all men. His Own is the pledge, or guarantee of this. One of the arguments of Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15 is that, because Adam sinned, all die, and because Christ died and rose all men will rise. The righteous dead will come up at least 1000 years before the unrighteous. Scripture is very explicit as to this (Luke 14. 14 ; 20. 35,

36 ; 1 Thess. 4. 16 ; Rev. 20. 5. 6, 12-15). Into the details of these two resurrections it is not our purpose to go ; we simply want to emphasise the fact that some day all men, regardless of rank, position, race and religion, will be summoned out of the grave to give an account to the Son of God for the deeds done in the body. His Own Word declares that “all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth.” “The Queen of the South shall rise.” “The men of Nineveh shall rise.” The men of London shall rise, the men of Paris, Berlin, Rome, New York, Chicago and Toronto shall arise ! *You* shall arise. You may sneer and object, but no sneers or objections will keep your dust interred when the mighty Son of God shouts, “Come forth !” You shall obey that irresistible summons, and if you have gone into the grave in your sins, those very sins will accompany you when you obey that shout. How you will seek to dismiss them in that awful day. But all such attempts will be in vain, for each single sin will follow you relentlessly, and in the presence of Infinite Holiness point an incriminating finger at you, and hiss, “Thou art the man.” From the dim past those unwelcome sceptres will arise awakening a million hideous memories and saying in loudest tones, “Do you remember me ?” And as you shrink from this awful array of witnesses and furtively turn for a refuge, your eyes will meet the piercing eyes of the One Who sits on the throne, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And from those lips, from which there came in sweetest cadence the word “Come,” will now ring in sternness His awful, “Depart.” One last look into that glorious Face and the sinner will depart into eternal exile, his only companions his sins and a

condemning conscience. No wonder that God “now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”

Friend, this sentence need not be your portion. The Christ Who thus arose in triumph first died under the judgment of God in order that you might be brought into the unclouded favour of His presence, with your guilty past for ever blotted out, and your portion that of a son in His family. The atoning blood of Christ has made this gloriously possible, and to you is the word of this salvation sent. His Word is :

“Whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.” “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

## CHAPTER II

## “First Unto Mary”

*“He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils” (Mark 16. 9).*

IT is our desire during this and subsequent evenings to follow our Lord in some of His activities during that first Easter Sunday and succeeding days. You will recall that He remained on earth well over a month between the time of His resurrection and ascension, and during that interval He had numbers of interviews with those He loved. We shall seek to follow Him as He went in and out among them showing Himself alive “after His passion by many infallible proofs,” and providing demonstrations of His present ministry during this dispensation. And if we can recapture something of the thrill and joy that the various resurrection companies experienced, we shall all go away with the conviction that these meditations have been well worth while.

A good story is told about the early days before either radio or wireless telegraphy had been invented, and the world news travelled slowly. All England anxiously awaited the news from Waterloo. Special arrangements had been made to transmit the tidings by means of semaphores, flashing the news-signals from station to station. One of these stations received a message late in the day,—“Wellington defeated.” Then, because of

fog, no further news came for some time. London received the message, and the whole city was plunged into despair. Then the fog lifted, and the message that had been cut off was completed : "Wellington defeated the enemy." The change was indescribable.

The death of Christ seemed to spell defeat, but the resurrection "completed the message." He had defeated the enemy.

We rightly love to linger around the Cross ; Calvary has become to us the sweetest spot on earth. That sacrifice banishes all doubt of God's love and sweetens every bitter Marah-pool. Truthfully we sing,

"He spared not His Son !  
'Tis this that silences each rising fear,  
'Tis this that bids the hard thoughts disappear ;  
He spared not His Son."

But we must never divorce the Cross from that empty grave in Joseph's garden. And it is on the scenes associated with that Tomb that we want to dwell particularly during these studies. Thus we will obey Paul's exhortation in his valedictory letter : "Remember that Jesus Christ . . . was raised from the dead according to my gospel" (2 Tim. 2. 8).

It is worth noting that the risen Lord never on any occasion appeared to the world's crowd, always to His Own. The last time the world saw Him was when, with battered face, He hung impaled on Calvary's Tree ; the next time the world beholds Him will be when He comes down the skies on the white charger of Rev. 19, in kingly triumph and dignity. What a terrific contrast ! And how utterly confounding to His foes ! When He came the first time, there was no room for Him in the



inn, men had no room for Him ; when He comes the second time, He will have no room for them, from His face the very Heavens and the earth will flee away !

But His Own saw Him after He arose, and in connection with His appearances is it not beautiful to see that He disclosed Himself first to a woman. It was by a woman that sin first entered, and by a woman the announcement was made that it had been put away.

As we study the resurrection story in the four Gospels we gather that the order of events was something like this : Early in the morning, before the arrival of anyone, the Lord of Life was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. A mighty angel then descended and defied the boasted power of imperial Rome by breaking the seal and rolling back the stone.

Almost immediately following this, that group of devoted women who had stood at the Cross and then rested according to the commandment, arrived with their burden of embalming-spices. Apparently Mary Magdalene was in the lead, and, on seeing that the stone had been removed and hastily concluding that the tomb had been rifled, she left the spot and ran into the city where she excitedly informed Peter and John of her discovery. They responded to her appeal at once by hastening to the garden.

In the meantime, Mary’s companions saw the two angels who informed them that the Lord was risen and would meet them in Galilee, and that they were to convey to them that message. Upon their leaving, Mary, Peter and John arrived at the grave and shortly afterwards our Lord showed Himself to Mary, following the return home of the two men.

Mary's companions, the Galilean women, were the next to see the risen Christ ; while on their way to tell the disciples they met Him and held Him by the feet. It was probably during the afternoon that Peter had a private interview, as indicated in Luke 24. 34 and 1 Cor. 15. 5. That the appearance to the two Emmaus travellers occurred in the evening is clearly indicated in the last chapter of Luke's Gospel, and this was followed by the manifestation in the midst of His gathered followers in the upper room. Thus was brought to a close the wonderful events of that first Lord's Day.

We have read together the gripping story of John 20, the appearance to Mary Magdalene. Let us look first at

#### MARY COMING TO JESUS.

We know little of her. The fact that she was known as "the Magdalene" indicates that she came from the town of Magdala, on the south-western coast of the Sea of Galilee. Nothing is known of her earlier life excepting the fact that she was possessed of seven demons. Some have erroneously concluded from this that she was given to impurity, but nothing in Scripture justifies such a thought ; she was victimized by sevenfold Satanic power, and all efforts at self-liberation had ended in dismal failure. Like you and me, she was under the authority of darkness, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. But one day the Lord Jesus Christ visited her town and we can well imagine Mary coming to Him as a helpless and hopeless penitent. A few words of kingly power from His lips, and those seven evil spirits were gone, and gone for ever, and then Mary, in glad response, took her place among those

Galilean women who “ministered to Him of their substance” (Luke 8. 3).

I have often wondered if it was not Mary’s fingers which wove for her Lord that seamless coat which He wore up to the time of the crucifixion. If so, what throbs of love would go into every stitch. He had richly ministered to her ; now it was hers to show her gratitude by ministering to Him.

Beloved, do you know anything about the luxury of ministering unto Him ?

#### MARY STANDING FOR JESUS.

Many months had now passed since our friend had been delivered by her Lord and she had followed Him devotedly in His journeyings. And then the dark day of His death dawned, and in John 19. 25 we read, “Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and *Mary Magdalene*.” A few women and one man, John, were the only sympathizers in that motley, hostile crowd. Of the latter it is written, “Sitting down they watched Him there.” But notice the vivid contrast in the words, “Now there *stood*” the above-mentioned group. That was anything but the popular thing to do that day. What was it that held them spellbound to that spot ? What gave them such remarkable courage ? How account for such fortitude ? Two words give the answer : love and loyalty.

We live in a day when the offence of the Cross has by no means ceased ; nay, when its stigma is greater than ever. What a privilege then to stand by it ! “Stand in the evil day, and having done all, stand !” Anyone can

stand in the good day. Great throngs enthusiastically followed Christ during the earlier months of His ministry, for He was actually popular for a while. But Calvary changed everything. Then it was popular to run away. But remember : it is ever better to be popular with Heaven than with earth ; hence, let us seek grace to be men and women who really stand.

#### MARY FOLLOWING AFTER JESUS.

“The woman also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid” (Luke 23. 55). Mary Magdalene was, of course, in this little band. She was among the very few who attended the blessed Lord’s funeral. When a prominent man in one of our cities dies, the funeral is always large, and much publicity is given even to the details. But how very few followed the Saviour’s body when it was tenderly removed from the Cross and laid away in Joseph’s garden tomb.

“Thy death of shame and sorrow,  
Was like unto Thy birth,  
Which would no glory borrow,  
No majesty from earth.”

Yet all Heaven was interested and moved by that sight which provoked so little interest here below.

#### MARY RUNNING UNTO JESUS.

This brings us to the lovely story of John 20, some of the details of which we have already considered. I think I am justified in imagining that Mary and her friends could scarcely await the ending of that long Sabbath. They had “rested according to the commandment,” but methinks it was a bit of an impatient rest, for they

eagerly awaited the dawning of the first day when they could hasten to that garden and pour out upon that body their embalming spices.

And now the day has come, and Mary, the leader of the group, having made the discovery of the empty tomb, and having informed Peter and John, stands there, weeping. The rest of the women are at that very moment fleeing back toward the city, their hearts filled with awe and joy at the news which the angels have conveyed to them. But Mary has missed that announcement, for it was given during her absence when she was hastening to notify the two men. I think I can see her lingering about that spot. Her bosom rises and falls with unconcealed emotion ; moreover, she is pretty well out of breath, for she has been coming with all possible speed from the city. Her tears fall rapidly and sparkle with the dew that covers that garden foliage. Her soul is filled with dark uncertainty ; in her heart there is a great void ; the One Who means everything to her is gone and she cannot locate even His corpse. Peter and John have entered the sepulchre and their perplexity has been deepened by the discovery of the undisturbed winding-cloths which swathed His body. Anxiety, dismay, mystery, and kindred emotions beat in upon their souls, and I rather think they walked homeward in silence. Luke informs us that Peter returned “wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.”

#### MARY WORSHIPPING JESUS.

How would you like to see a couple of real angels ? Wouldn't that be a fine sight ? We often go miles to see human beings of strange physical appearance or of

distinguished repute. But to see an angel, who among us would not strain every effort if this were a possibility? What would we not pay for a five-minute conversation with one? I think that if I had had the opportunity Mary had when she stooped down and saw two white-clad Heavenly visitors sitting within the tomb I would have shot many a question at them, and then suggested that they wait there till I got my camera and took their pictures. But these creatures absolutely failed to hold Mary's attention or interest. No substitutes could take the place of her precious Lord. She must have Him or no one. And so she turned her back on them. Are we prepared to follow her example and turn *our* backs to-night on even religious things and be satisfied with Himself alone?

Perhaps it is the half-light of that early morning hour combined with the fact that her eyes are bedimmed by tears that causes her to suppose that the Stranger whom she now notices is the gardener. Even His tender questions, "Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" fails to identify Him. And so she sobs her reply, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." She does not name Him; out of a full heart she assumes that every one will know the Object of her search. Again, she does not stop to consider the well-nigh impossible task involved in her offer; one woman could scarcely carry the heavy corpse of a man. And yet her love knows no obstacles. She loved much because she had been forgiven much. The forgiven five hundred pence debtor loves more deeply than the fifty pence debtor every time. She had belonged to the five hundred class.

How I wish I could utter the word “Mary” as it must have fallen from the tender lips of the Lord of Glory. What soft sweetness in His utterance as He calls one of His sheep by name. Not in accents of rebuke, or even mild reproof, but in deepest appreciative love. And instantly she is at His feet, exclaiming in rapture “My Master.” Ah, her heart is satisfied, her soul too full for words. The thrill of her life is hers that morning. She discovers that in passing through the Valley of Baca, “weeping,” the rain of Divine refreshment fills the pools, and she goes from strength to strength (Psa. 84). Well does Dr. Scroggie say, “A millennium of joy was packed into that moment.” She has Himself again, but not now in just the old limited relationship and knowledge. Now she is to know Him as her mighty risen Lord, the Head of the new Creation, the Revealer of the Father’s Name, and the One Who has associated with Himself in resurrection those whom He here calls, “My brethren.” In this fourth Gospel He has already called them “servants,” and “friends” (13. 13 ; 15. 15) ; now follows the last and most intimate term, “brethren” (20. 17). Thus He fulfils Psalm 22. 22. The sin question having been gloriously settled, the Father’s heart and name can now be fully told out. The corn of Wheat—Himself, has fallen into the ground and died; therefore He does not abide alone. He associates us with Himself, His Father being our Father, His God our God. What a place of unheard-of nearness. We are as He is before God : “accepted in Him” (Eph. 1. 6), “blessed in Him” (Eph. 1. 3), and “complete in Him” (Col. 2. 10).

My heart rejoices when I remember that I have been converted, it thrills when it grasps afresh the implications

of being saved, it revels in the term "child," but it *worships* when it lays hold of the significance of these two words, "My brethren." Could any relationship be higher than that? "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one : for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb. 2. 11, 12).

How all party-ism melts before such an expression. It calls for no demonstration whatever to see that if all true believers are His brethren then all true believers belong to one another. The Church is one, and in the midst of this company of brethren He takes His place as Firstborn. This is all developed in Paul's writings, but we have the distinct intimation of it here.

How wonderful to think that Mary, and not even one of the favoured Apostles, is selected to be the honoured vessel to announce the resurrection. Why did the Lord thus favour her, especially when her intelligence was so defective? For I would remind you that she did not expect to meet a risen Christ in the garden that morning. Why then should she be so wonderfully used? Three words answer the question : *She loved Him*. The guilty conscience of the first woman had driven her *from* her God ; the intense love of this woman drove her *to* Him.

The Lord delights in our being intelligent in doctrine and well-informed as to truths of Scripture, but it is sadly possible to have all this information and at the same time the heart be cold and barren. He looketh on the heart, and when He sees that heart filled with a desire for Christ He appreciates that above mere religious exactness.

Hence the words, "Son, give ME thine heart."



A Vision of Heaven

By JAMES RUDDLE, Hamilton, Ont.

THE eastward vault scarce knows the tint of dawn,  
The morning star scarce faded from the view,  
The pearly mists still veil the distant lawn  
When Mary turns to seek her Lord anew:

Others were there, but they an hour had gone ;  
Mary alone stands, tearful, by the tomb,  
Wrapped in despair, within her heart no song,  
There only blackness and distressful gloom.

She stoops yet once to peer into the dark,  
How hard it is to see those rolled clothes,  
The napkin by itself, it shows no mark  
Of usage ; had it covered One who rose ?

Or was it all a dream ? Did He still live ?  
The cross a sign of her disordered mind ?  
Ah, no ! That agony was more than mind could give,  
In truth alone such depths of woe are found.

She mused a moment on that awful day,  
When all she had and was sank to the dust—  
Her Lord and Master hanging on the tree,  
A Victim there through Jewry's bloody lust.

She hears again that last loud wail of doom ;  
“Eli, lama sabachthani !” She hears—  
And with that sound she sees again His tomb,  
And eyes already dimmed, fill fresh with tears.

A moment more she broods upon the scene ;  
She sees that gory crown upon His head,  
Those sharpened spikes, the pierced hands and feet,  
That rude spear-thrust, the slow drops oozing red.

Her thoughts move on : she sees the cross by night,  
And tender hands which lift her Master down ;  
She follows to the sepulchre ; in sight  
Of her they roll the stone before the tomb.

And now she kneels before that hallowed door,  
No more by sealéd stone an entrance blocked,  
She wonders, gazing on the rocky floor,  
Whose hand it was, by which it was unlocked.

## HE LIVES !

Who dared to vaunt great Pilate's own command ?  
 Behind it stood all Rome's imperial power,  
 Who could, undaunted, break cemented band ?  
 What visage make Rome's bravest warriors cower ?

But what is this impinging on her thought ?  
 What shapes are these that now appear so nigh ?  
 Have they sometime been here, or sprung from naught ?  
 And have they come her presence to defy ?

Yet, no, for list ! one speaks in tender tone,  
 "Why weepst thou ? What causes such deep pain ?"  
 And Mary, weeping, answers, "I seek One  
 Just three days buried here, but gone again."

A sound behind presumes to make her turn,  
 Her eyes behold a figure standing there,  
 In softest accents He makes quest to learn  
 The reason for her tears and her despair.

With downcast mein and choking voice she tells,  
 That they have stole His body from the grave.  
 "Perhaps thou know'st the place where now it dwells,  
 Tell me the spot and I that corpse shall save !"

The gardener (for such she thinks he is)  
 Draws near, His face illumed with fondest love,  
 And in a quiet, yet most thrilling voice,  
 He speaks a single subtle word—her name.

"Mary !" Ten feet away it hardly could be heard,  
 And yet the depth of soul its welcome felt.  
 "Master !" she cried. Away fled all she feared,  
 And at His feet in rapture sweet she knelt.

In Eden, Adam, God's own creature, fell,  
 Beguiled by Eve, by Satan she beguiled.  
 We thank Thee Lord, that Thou didst find it well  
 That risen Christ by woman shouldst be revealed.

We thank Thee, Lord, that since that blessed hour,  
 We, too, have met our Master face to face.  
 That meeting stole away sin's deadly power ;  
 We stand among His people through Thy grace.

Teach us, as Mary, to spread forth the news,  
 That we great gifts from Jesus did receive,  
 Teach us to welcome those who hear His truths,  
 And kneel, enraptured, as they too, believe.

Composed shortly after hearing the foregoing address,  
 and based upon the thoughts suggested therein.

## CHAPTER III

## A Morning and an Afternoon Scene

*"As they went . . . Jesus met them"* (Matt. 28. 9).

*"He was seen of Cephas"* (1 Cor. 15. 5).

LAST evening we noticed that Mary was the leader of that little band of devoted women that journeyed to the tomb in the early morning hour of that first Easter Sunday. Moreover, we followed her back into the city upon her discovery of the removal of the stone, and noticed that during her absence the angels appeared to the rest of her companions who had lingered near the open grave, telling them that the Lord Jesus Christ was risen and would go before His disciples into Galilee.

It is beautiful to notice in passing that Matthew's Gospel both commences and concludes with groups of women. The first chapter presents among the King's genealogy four women : Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and "her that had been the wife of Urias ;" the last chapter pictures another company who become the honoured heralds of the King's resurrection. These latter are not conspicuous on account of their spiritual intelligence but they do manifest a whole-hearted devotion, which quite makes up for any lack on their part. Indeed, if some 20th century, doctrinally-correct legalist had been on hand that morning he might have handed out a sound rebuke to those devoted sisters. I just imagine I can

hear some harsh brother saying, "Ye women of Galilee, do ye not understand the Scriptures? Have ye never read, 'Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption?' Can it be possible that you have overlooked, misread, or misunderstood the 16th Psalm? These spices are, therefore, unnecessary. Thou art insulting the Messiah and ignoring His Word. Haste ye to your homes and to your knees."

But "the Lord looketh on the heart." It is true that their spiritual apprehension was very dull, but, on the other hand, their love and devotion was very bright. And He Who will not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax always put this right above the other. A "blind love" indeed it was; but love, nevertheless.

But to return to our story. The last chapter of Matthew contains two stories of the resurrection: that of His friends and that of His foes. The latter were responsible for the crazy yarn that while they slept the disciples came and whisked away the body. And this twaddle actually gained acceptance. No one seemed to stop and question them as to the improbability of their all sleeping at once; of their slumbers not being disturbed at all during the commotion of a dozen men rolling a very great stone within a few feet of them; and as to how they *knew* what happened at all while they were asleep. What a preposterous story. No wonder the chief priests paid them well for advancing it. It is a wonder they did not have to pay folks just as handsomely for believing it. But the whole trouble was that the world *wanted* to believe it. Therefore, they were given over to judicial blindness.

What did actually happen that morning in Joseph's

garden? First, there was a great earthquake. Just as the earth had shuddered at the *death* of its Creator (Matt. 27. 51), so it again convulsed, this time with joy, at that same Creator's resurrection. Then a couple of bright angels descended from Heaven. Someone has well said, "They had come from the land of light, and had brought with them some of the characteristics of that land." But the guards were men who loved to do evil and hated the light, neither came to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved (John 3. 20). Hence, terror gripped their hearts, and they became as dead men.

But while these Heavenly heralds were a savour of death unto death to the foes of Jesus, they were a savour of life unto life to His friends. Instead of embalming a corpse, as they expected, they were told that the Object of their search had risen. Unlike Lazarus, who brought his grave-clothes with him, He had left His behind. Lazarus would soon need them again; He, never! They were even invited to enter the tomb and see the place where He had lain.

In the market places of the Orient, merchants display their articles for sale. The purchaser lays down the price beside something that he desires. The moment the merchant lifts the price, the sale is made. The act is an indication that the price lifted has been accepted. At the Cross Christ laid down His life. That very morning God had lifted the price. This was the angel's message.

How dazed with wonder these women must have been as they were urged to hasten to the disciples with the information that He would meet them in Galilee according

to His repeated promises. Were they dreaming, or was it actual reality? Surprise had followed surprise; one event had followed another in quick succession, and their hearts were filled with a strange combination of emotions. Matthew speaks of their "fear and great joy" (28. 8), while Mark informs us that "they trembled and were amazed; neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid" (16. 8). They had expected an unmolested tomb, a sepulchre unchanged in appearance from their last sight of it late Friday afternoon. But now, the removed stone, the vanished body, the two angels, and the most unbelievable announcement, sent them hurrying homeward in joyous excitement.

"And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid, go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me." Notice especially the words, "*As they went Jesus met them.*" In other words, it was as they obeyed that they received the blessed revelation of Himself. All blessing is conditioned on obedience. You cannot improve on the classic saying of Samuel, as he spake by the Holy Ghost, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15. 22, 23). These women might have preferred to linger longer at the grave, to investigate more closely, or to remove souvenirs from the vacated tomb; but, no, the angels had said, "Go quickly and tell," and without further delay they obeyed.

Does this not illustrate a great Bible principle? You

will remember the ten lepers who besought our Lord for healing on one occasion, and how surprising His directions to them were. He gave just the brief command, "Go, show yourselves to the priest." They might have argued at great length the futility of such a course, for had not the priest pronounced them unclean and isolated them from society. But they did not argue; they obeyed, and "as they went they were cleansed."

Have you heard the voice of God instructing you in a certain course? If so, do it. You will know no blessing or soul-prosperity until you obey. The Lord always "meets" those who are in the path.

"All hail!" "Oh joy!" Thus does the risen Christ greet this hurrying devoted band. Is it any wonder that they bow low at His feet in homage and worship? All their doubts have now been removed. They need no angels' argument, they require no testimony from Mary, for they have Himself. Those scarred feet are sufficient marks of identification to convince the most sceptical. What a rich reward for any little sacrifice they have made. While the world sleeps on in unbelief, and even His followers nurse their grief at home, this feeble company is handling the Lord of Heaven and earth, Jesus the Son of God. What force this gives His Word, "Be not afraid." Why should they fear? They have the One Who is the Conqueror of every evil, the Christ of all power.

In these days of dictatorships and man-worship, of a universal tendency to honour the "gods of forces," and when the false philosophy of "might is right" is rapidly gaining ascendancy, the children of God are often given to strange feelings of uneasiness. Wars and

rumours of wars are in the air. The newspapers are filled with reports of troubles of all kinds, and the radio constantly dins into our ears news of the uncertainty and instability of the times. The sky is definitely blackening as the low, ominous clouds of the coming Tribulation-period gather. But how good to turn to our risen Lord in the midst of it all, and hear Him whisper in words of strongest confidence, "*Be not afraid.*" He virtually says, "Leave it all to Me. I know all about it. The situation is in My hands. Not a hair of your head shall perish."

Those very feet to which the women cling will soon tread the wine-press of the wrath of Almighty God. They will trample down Heaven's foes in fury, and to those feet all will be compelled to bow, before going into eternal exile, the Lake of Fire.

The question arises as to why the Lord allowed the Galilean women to hold Him by the feet while the same privilege was not extended to Mary. "Touch Me not," were the words addressed to the latter. Do we not see here, in picture, Israel and the Church contrasted? Mary, a type of the unique Out-calling of this age, the Church of God, is not to know Him now through the physical senses but rather by a spiritual apprehension made possible by the Holy Ghost. Though she has known Christ after the flesh, now henceforth she is to know Him no more (see 2 Cor. 5. 16). He is the glorious Head in Heaven, and the Church walks by faith, not by sight. On the other hand, the women of Galilee remind us of the time when the faithful remnant of Israel will meet the risen Messiah and in wondering astonishment lay hold of Him, exclaiming, "What are



these wounds in Thine hands ? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends” (Zech. 13. 6). In other words, the Church to-day enjoys her Divine heritage by faith ; Israel is characterised by sight and touch.

Later that day, probably in the afternoon, Simon Peter was also given the honour of a sight of the risen One. Yea, more than a *sight* was his, for we may be sure that this was no hurried interview. Two Scriptures inform us of this meeting: the text that heads this chapter (1 Cor. 15. 5), and the enthusiastic testimony of the upper-room company that same evening, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon” (Luke 24. 34). But why should He appear to Peter privately ? Ah, that man had just spent three of the darkest, gloomiest days of his history, during which the sun had been blotted from his sky and his soul had been wrapped in despair. His experience in the high priest’s palace and his base denial of his beloved Lord haunted him by day and by night. I imagine he could neither eat nor sleep, and the bitter tears that had sprung unbidden to his cheek by the significant cock-crowing that morning had flowed almost continuously since. When his Saviour had turned and looked upon him, those eyes had penetrated to the inmost recesses of his soul, and the back-slidden Apostle saw in them a depth of heart-broken disappointment that stabbed his conscience, and wrapped his soul in gloom.

What an indescribable thrill he must have received when, that day, probably in the afternoon, the risen, unchanging Christ appeared to him. Where did it take place ? We do not know. How did the Lord greet Peter ?

We do not know. What words passed between them? We do not know. How long did they talk together? Again, the question remains unanswered. No details whatever are supplied to appease our curiosity. The whole affair is shrouded in utter secrecy ; the fact is twice repeated, but the fact only. We may be sure, however, that the whole matter of Peter's denial was gloriously cleared up, and that Christ poured into His servant's wounded soul, "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61. 3).

Peter's sin had been public ; therefore, his restoration must needs be public. But before there can be public restoration, communion must be privately restored. The latter is indicated in the scene we have been considering ; the former we shall notice when we come to John 21.

In the story of the meeting between the Lord and the Galilean women we have the risen Saviour presented as the Leader of His people, the one great Object of worship, while in the private interview with Simon we see Him as the Advocate. In resurrection He is our High Priest with God and our Advocate with the Father. John writes : "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2. 1). And again : "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1. 9).

I am about to take my little girl down town, and her mother has dressed her up in her very best for the occasion. I am unexpectedly delayed, however, and instruct the youngster to sit down on the verandah until I am ready

to take her with me. Her playmates are romping on the street a short distance away, and it is not long before she yields to the temptation to join them, regardless of her Daddy's commands. Then, to make matters worse, she trips suddenly and sprawls headlong on the dirty road. Now, that child needs two things ; she needs my forgiveness and a new dress. She sincerely confesses her disobedience and gets both.

My young fellow-believer, have you been guilty of denying your blessed Lord Jesus? "Horrors!" you exclaim, "I just couldn't do that." No, I do not speak of denying Him by word of mouth ; I think that is rarely ever done. But I do mean denying that you know Him by your conduct. Someone has said that a hypocrite is not only the fellow who claims to be what he is not, but the fellow who *is* what he pretends *not* to be. Very often the true Christian denies that he knows Christ by his cowardly reluctance to defend the honour of His Name. For example, how many times you and I have been in the barber shop, the waiting-room of the railroad station, or packed into a crowded bus, and have heard men blaspheme "that worthy Name, by the which ye are called" (Jas. 2. 7), and have remained in cowardly silence. Do we not say by our actions and by our failure to reprove, that we "know not the Man?" If the elect angels were not restrained by a strong Divine Hand they would unsheath their swords and execute righteous judgment on these blasphemers in a flash. But this is not the day for Heaven's vengeance ; we live in the "Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." But it must refresh the heart of God when He sees one on earth who loves His Son, speak a word in defence of His honour.

Alas, how rarely He sees this. How many times He must detect a repeating of Peter's great failure in you and me, not by lip denial, but by that which speaks so much more loudly, that of the life.

How good to know that the risen Christ is the great Restorer of our souls. Upon confession He fills our souls with a surge of renewed joy so that through our tears of repentance we can see with undimmed vision the smiling face of One Who is our Father. He maintains His blessed work of Advocate, then, on behalf of the Father's children, pointing to His sacrificial death at Calvary as the righteous ground for remission and cleansing. And this cleansing is so necessary for restored fellowship with Himself. The unholy, harmful, and defiled cannot hold communion with Him Who is "holy, harmless and undefiled." He has told this very same Peter a few days before the Cross, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me," and we may be sure that for three days he became painfully aware of the truth of these words, until he sobbed, perhaps, into his Saviour's ear those significant words of David, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee."

At any rate, this same Lord used this same Peter as no other apostle on the day of Pentecost. The breaking of him was the making of him. The springs of self-confidence were thoroughly dried up, and in fullest dependance upon the ungrieved Spirit of God, Peter preached with such power that three thousand men and women were bowed in repentance before Heaven as the result.

Brother, have you had contact with the Living Lord to-day? I say *contact*. I do not mean mere religious performance, but real heart-fellowship with the Son of God. This is the one great requisite for spiritual power and blessing, and it solves every spiritual difficulty.

I remember some years ago, taking part with several other workers in a Gospel service in a great American penitentiary located at Jackson, Mich. At the conclusion of the meeting we made our way out through the great steel doors toward our car which was parked beyond the grounds. As we approached the outer extremity of the prison-yard we came to a large high steel gate. After working at the ponderous handle and pushing vigorously, we came to the conclusion that it was locked. Then, suddenly, one of the party happened to look directly up, and there, to our surprise, was the smiling face of a guard, peering over a look-out tower at us. "Now try it boys," he called, as he evidently pulled a lever. A little shove was all that was necessary now, and in a few seconds we were all through and out on the street. I shall never forget a remark passed by one of our Christian workers as we climbed into the car. Said he, "Boys, never forget the Man that is above!"

That is it! As we go through life we come to steel doors again and again. Sometimes through our own waywardness the Lord shuts us up in strange circumstances, but all the time His eye of deepest affection and interest is looking down on us from above, and at the right moment He pulls, as it were, the lever, and lo, the door flies open and all is well.

Praise God for the Man that is above.

## CHAPTER IV

## Light at Eventide

*"After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country"*  
(Mark 16. 12).

**T**O-NIGHT'S meditation brings us to the evening hour of that memorable first Lord's Day. You will remember that Jesus had already made three appearances ; first to Mary Magdalene early in the morning, then to the devoted Galilean women, and following this, to Simon Peter privately. This fourth interview takes place as the evening shadows are gathering. We have seen that the risen Saviour did not appear at all to the world after His resurrection, nor does He make Himself known on more than a few occasions to assembled companies ; rather, He manifests Himself to small groups and even individuals.

Is it not thrilling to know that the Almighty ascended Son of God is interested in individuals, that He is deeply concerned about me ? The prominent statesmen of earth have little or no time for individuals. The modern chest-thumping European dictators fling their words out to assembled millions and review with Lucifer-like pride, their massed armies, but have neither patience nor time for the individual. But, hallelujah, my Saviour, on the contrary, has little time for, or interest in, the big crowds,

but has all the time for individuals. He is just the opposite, you see. He never puts much value on throngs. Again and again He avoided and evaded them. But needy individuals, never! That is why I can assure you that He loves you with deepest, truest love, and longs to bless you with His Own peace at this moment, so that you may say with the late G. V. Wigram :

“I may come, and come again to Thee,  
With this, the needy children’s only plea—  
‘Thou lovest me!’”

### I. THE SAD HEART.

Look at that dejected couple with bowed heads and sad faces, walking towards Emmaus that Easter Sunday evening. They are probably man and wife, and for some days they have been mingling with the throngs in Jerusalem ; but now, all the excitement connected with the momentous events of the trial, rejection, and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth has pretty well subsided and they are homeward bound. Their feet are heavy and weary, so are their hearts. They, with others, had followed the Nazarene’s activities with the deepest of interest : in fact, they had been among those who had hoped that He would have redeemed Israel by breaking the yoke of the foreign oppressor and giving their nation its Divinely promised liberty. But now, all their fondest dreams have vanished, the bubble of their hopes has burst. He is dead! And He is buried! And with His death and burial has come the death and burial of all their expectations.

Mark tells us that they went into the country. Beloved, if Christ is not risen, then let us all turn our backs at

once upon Christianity and head for the country. His cross and His grave have positively no value whatever, if we divorce them from His rising again, and we are left of all men most miserable, in a veritable wilderness of despair. Let me ask you to-night, if I could bring to this platform indisputable proof that Christ's bones are still mouldering in some Syrian grave, how would it affect you? Would you sleep to-night? Would you lose your appetite and go to pieces, physically? Would it break your heart? God pity the man who would not be thus affected.

Evidently this couple has been with the apostolic company over the momentous week-end. "Certain of them which were *with us*," they later relate, "went to the sepulchre." Hence it follows that the report brought by Peter and John they had received, though it had only deepened the mystery of the whole affair, and increased their perplexity. Probably they had slept but little during the preceding nights, and with haggard bodies and heavy spirits they trudge along.

## 2. THE SLOW HEART.

As they walk they talk. One theme fills their minds : the murder of One they had thought to be Messiah. But more : their friends, Mary and her companions, have been to the grave early that very morning and brought back the news that they had seen a removed stone, an empty tomb, and a vision of angels. What could it all mean? Were the women's nerves just overwrought? Was it mere imagination? How could they piece together and reconcile the seemingly contradictory events of the week-end?

And then a stranger joins them. Holden eyes prevent



their recognizing Him. A conversation is immediately begun ; questions are asked and answered, their hearts are drawn out, their estimation of Jesus the Nazarene, lately crucified, is frankly given ; in fact, all the stirring events of those pregnant days are summarized.

Then the Stranger expostulates : "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ; ought not Christ to have suffered those things, and to enter into His glory ?" Then follows an exposition of Holy Scripture, the like of which they have never heard. Their Companion outlines from the beginning all the great passages referring to Messiah. He shows from history, type and prophecy that the Anointed One must first suffer, then enter His glory. We can well suppose that He would linger over Joseph's fascinating career as illustrating this, or that of David's rejection and ultimate reign. He shows them how that their sluggish hearts have failed to believe their own prophets and His repeated predictions. Their remarks indicate their entire ignorance of God's programme ; that they were looking for a crown without a cross, a triumph without a sacrifice, a feast of Tabernacles without a feast of Passover, a Joshua to lead them into Canaan without a Moses to lead them out of Egypt.

As He unfolds the Scriptures theirs becomes

### 3. THE BURNING HEART.

With growing wonder they follow Him. A strange warm glow revives their chilled lives. Their spiritual temperature rises with His every word, and they find themselves drawn by irresistible love to the Anointed of God, and somehow they cannot disassociate Him

from their Companion. Could it be possible that, after all, He . . . ?

But look, they are almost home. The lights of Emmaus make them realise that the conversation must conclude. *Must* they part ? It would seem so, for the Stranger made as though He would continue on further. But no, He *must* abide with them. He is indispensable now ; they cannot do without Him. And so they constrain Him to share their humble hospitality for the night, and He accepts.

#### 4. THE SATISFIED HEART.

The evening meal is prepared, and in a short time the three are seated at the table. Then it is that He Who entered that dwelling as Guest assumes the place of *Host*. He takes bread, blesses it, and gives them their portion, when lo, they recognise Him, and suddenly He is gone. In one glorious breath-taking moment their eyes are opened to recognise in this wondrous Stranger none other than their beloved Saviour back again from death. And not only is He Saviour, but Lord, Host, and Satisfier.

How everything changes now. The revelation of Himself has so refreshed them that they arise "the same hour" and return into Jerusalem with full overflowing hearts, to tell the assembled disciples of their thrilling experience. Their doubts are now all gone, their hearts are satisfied.

Luke tells us that the disciples greet the Emmaus couple with the words, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon " (24. 34), while Mark commenting on the announcement of their experience, says :

“Neither believed they them” (16. 13). How shall we reconcile these two statements? Simply by accepting both of them, for they are both true. *Some* had accepted Simon’s testimony and were convinced of the resurrection, others maintained an attitude of scepticism and unbelief. They believed neither Simon nor this new report of the Emmaus friends.

In the appearance to Peter, Christ is seen as Advocate restoring the back-slidden ; in His journeying the Emmaus road, He is seen as High Priest, reviving the flagging faith of His Own by the Word of God.

How many times *we* tread this road. How often fears, doubts, perplexities and questions arise in our hearts. Disappointed and disheartened, we gloomily trudge along, our hearts as cold as a January morning. But oh, it is on just such occasions that “Jesus Himself” draws near, and goes with us. His Word is ministered, our interest is captured, and a blessed Heavenly warmth thaws our souls. Let me illustrate how a verse in the twenty-second Psalm was a great blessing to me recently.

This portion is undoubtedly the Holy of Holies of the Old Testament. Here we have the very breathings of the soul of our blessed Lord Jesus as He hung impaled on the accursed cross of Calvary, and as we draw near we reverently remove our shoes and listen to His cries in silent amazement.

The first twenty-one verses have been titled “Alone,” the remaining portion (vers. 22. 31), “Not alone.” Because He was alone then, He will not be alone for ever. The solo of the first part issues in the great choir of the closing section of the Psalm. “The sufferings of Christ” are followed by “the glories.” The “assembly of the

wicked" who "inclosed" Him on the cross give place to the assembly in the midst of which He sings praises in resurrection. The One Who is in "the dust of death" in the early portion is "the Governor among the nations" in the latter.

Thus our hearts go out to Him in fullest adoration in His unspeakable woe and in His present position in brightest glory.

While standing in the surgeon's office the other day, awaiting the dreaded word that he would have to remove our little girl's eye because of the infection which had developed after she had accidentally pierced it with an unsterilized knife, the words of verse eleven came forcibly to my mind : "Be not far from Me ; for trouble is near." Our thoughts went back to that Master-Sufferer. What trouble was His ! We thought of the dreaded words that fell as the doom of death on the ear of Achan so many years before : "The Lord shall trouble thee this day !" And then of our blessed Saviour when just a few steps from Calvary : "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say ?" But after all, what was His trouble ? Was it the prospect of arrest, the floggings, the mockeries, and the physical torture of the ordeal ? Ah, no ! He would endure that ; had He not set His face as a flint ? Then what could trouble Him more ? Let us listen again.

"Be not far from Me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help." "None to help !" Ah, He was to be all alone in His trouble. No help would come from His nation, no help from His family, no help from His followers, no help from His God. He was about to endure trouble as no one has ever borne it, and He would

bear it ALONE. He would look for some to take pity, and for comforters, but find none. The comfort which He had ever drawn from above would be withheld, and the Heavens would be as brass. How our hearts should stir within us as we consider that forlorn cry, "Trouble !" —"None to help."

"Oh, what a load was Thine to bear,  
Alone in that dark hour,  
Our sins in all their terror there,  
God's wrath and Satan's power."

The doctor's verdict was given ; the infected organ would have to be removed at once. My heart cried afresh, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near." But there I stopped. *I could not follow my Lord in the next clause, "There is none to help."* And there came home a fresh realisation of the wondrous truth that *because there was no helper for Him then, there is One for me now.* What grace ! What wisdom ! And how real.

At that very moment "Jesus Himself drew near." And during the weeks of suspense and anxiety that followed how blessed was the sustaining ministry of the risen Lord as His Word was brought home to our hearts by the flood of kindly letters received from His people far and wide. Verses and portions long known, seemed to light up with new meaning and force. Surely "the Word of the Lord was precious in those days."

Beloved, you cannot meditate long on Scripture without meeting the risen Christ. And just as He revived these drooping Emmaus saints apart from any miracle or display of the spectacular, but simply by giving them the Word of God, so it is to-day. Therefore, "consider Him . . . lest ye be weary and faint in your minds" (Heb.

12. 3). He is risen. He is unchanged. He loves you. He would walk and talk with you and just as He gently took the place of supremacy in the lives of the two we have considered, divorcing their thoughts from national considerations and fixing them on Himself, so He longs to displace every dominating interest in your life and become supreme.

In a recent issue of "The Sunday School Times" appeared this poem :

#### EMMAUS AND BACK.

"This is the end, let us go home," they said.  
 "Heed not the woman's tale. The Nazarene is dead."  
 Two travelled toward the close of day,  
 With heavy hearts, along the Emmaus way.

The stones pressed hard their sandalled feet,  
 They plodded on in weary, sad retreat,  
 And each one to the other said,  
 "This is the end, the Man we loved is dead."

"Let us go back—oh, let us haste," they cried.  
 "He lives ! He lives ! We've seen and walked beside  
 The risen Lord ! The prophets wrote, but we were slow  
 Of heart in faith. Said He not so ?"  
 And on they sped as if on wings of light,  
 To bear the ages' gladdest news. Unheeded fell the night.

—*Martha Bell Tumey.*

## CHAPTER V

## Upper Room Scenes

*"He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord"*  
(John 20. 20).

**Y**OU will recall that last night we considered the Emmaus couple and their meeting with the risen Christ. To-night we learn what was going on among the Apostles during the interval. The story is given in John 20. 19-29 and Luke 24. 33-45.

Apparently quite a company had gathered together in the evening of that first Lord's Day to discuss together the startling tidings that had reached their ears. There were ten\* apostles, besides others, including women. Rome would have us believe otherwise, but Luke 24. 33 is conclusive. Look at that scene.

A large group had assembled behind those closed doors, and most, if not all, had brought food with them (Mark 16. 14). But I venture to say that there was too much excitement for much eating. For strange stories were in circulation. Yes, even numbers of their own company, Mary Magdalene and her companions, for example were on hand to relate their experiences at the grave that morning. They had already told them a score of times, and "their words seemed as idle tales"

\* See Dr. Scofield's note on Mark 16. 14. Neither Judas nor Thomas was present. See 1 Cor. 15. 5.

(Luke 24. 11). Unbelief greeted them on every hand. There was plenty of curiosity but no conviction. Peter was in that company, and I imagine him rising to his feet to give his testimony. What a thriller it would be. That very afternoon he had had an interview with the Risen One. All the doubts of his heart were now dispelled. His glowing face and moist eye all served to corroborate his testimony. Doubtless there would be breathless silence as Peter spoke, but as soon as he concluded, what a torrent of discussion and what a surge of excitement. While some doubted, others believed. Then the sound of excited feet on the stairs leading to that large, upper room ; the door bursts open and lo ! the flushed friends from Emmaus arrive. What do they know about the matter under discussion ? Plenty ! They have just walked nearly seven miles with Him.

Can we not almost hear John, or James, cry out : "Brethren, Mary is right. The women are right ! Peter is right ! He is risen ! We know that this mass of evidence cannot be . . ." Then hush !

A solemn silence grips the whole company. A Someone is in their very midst ! Every face is blanched ! Someone cries out "A Ghost !" Then the Someone speaks, "Peace be unto you !"

Those words, that voice, how familiar ! But yet they are still unconvinced, for strain, anxiety and fear are written largely on every face. "They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts ? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself : handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And



when He had thus spoken He shewed them His hands and His feet” (Luke 24. 37-40). John, the Evangelist, adds that He shewed them His side also. Mark describes the appearance as follows: “Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen” (16. 14), Thus He first reproved them, then cheered them by providing undeniable proof of His identity. Further proof followed when He requested food, and in the midst of them, ate a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb. Years later Peter refers to this when he relates in the house of Cornelius at Caesarea, “Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead” (Acts 10. 41). You never heard of a ghost eating a meal, did you? Well, He ate, for He is a real living Man with a body of “flesh and bones.”

What a thrilling sight it must have been for those gathered in that upper room that night! They hear His twice-repeated, “Peace be unto you,” and then they see Him hold out His wounded hands and invite inspection of hands, feet and side, as much as to say, “This peace is bought for you at the cost of these wounds;” no wonder we read, “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” Thus was fulfilled His Own prediction in John 16. 22. Who wouldn’t be glad?

He does not draw attention to His face, eyes, or lips, but to His hands and feet. It is not because these have healed so many or carried Him so often to the side of

the needy, but because these were wounded in death at Calvary. These wounds speak emphatically of vicarious suffering. Thus His peace is based on Divine justice. "The work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32. 17). Well does one say, "A Christ without wounds is no Saviour for mankind."

As we behold Him on Calvary, we sing with Isaac Watts,

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down ;  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown ?"

As we behold Him in resurrection we sing with F. C. Jennings :

"See Head and Side, see Hands and Feet,  
What wondrous beauties all adorn,  
For only love and glory meet,  
Where pierced the nail, the spear, the thorn."

Then He breathes on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost ; whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them ; but whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Rome's false system, based on this and two other passages (Matt. 16. 19 ; 18. 18), that her hierarchy may dispense eternal absolution to sinners on confession, collapses at once when we keep in mind that these words were spoken to *not only apostles but to the whole assembled company*, including women. Luke 24. 33 is clear on this point. Not only is it obvious that this was not an exclusively apostolic company, but Scripture is dead set against any notion whatever of eternal forgiveness being committed into the hands of men. Right here the Pharisees' question, "Who can forgive sins, but

God only?" admits of only one answer. David sang, "There is forgiveness with *Thee*, that Thou mayest be feared" (Psa. 130. 4).

Then, what does this act and commission of our Lord imply? Is He not here manifesting Himself as "a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15. 45). Just as He had in the beginning breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul (Gen. 2. 7), so here He takes His place as Head of the new creation, as the last Adam, and imparts to them His Own life, a life which death cannot touch, but which is the fruit of His death. He has come forth from the Father as His great Representative; but now He is about to return to that glory. Henceforth, then, *they* are to be His representatives, and as linked with Himself, to administer His redemption to a needy world. In His behalf, as His administrators, they may forgive and retain sins. Did not Peter forgive Cornelius, and retain the sins of Simon Magus (Acts 10. 43, 44; 8. 20-23), in this administrative sense? (See also Acts 26. 18 and 1 Cor. 9. 22).

How responsible, then, we are to go forth in His Name, as empowered by His Spirit, to carry the glad tidings to the perishing masses. I would emphasize the order that we find in these upper-room scenes. First, the sight of the risen Christ and real fellowship with Him; second, the power of the Holy Spirit; and third, going forth to offer forgiveness to the guilty.

Mr. George Cutting in his booklet, "How Shall They Hear?" points out that in the matter of evangelizing the lost, Christendom has completely reversed God's order. What professes to be the Church of Christ offers God's message to the sinner on condition that he (the

sinner) agrees to come at the properly appointed time to the properly appointed place to hear it from the lips of the properly appointed preacher. In other words, the Church does all the arranging for the proclamation of the message, and the needy one must comply with this come-to-us method. When we turn to the Book, however, we find this arrangement of things conspicuous by its absence. On the contrary, instead of the sinner being exhorted to come to the preacher, the preacher is commanded to go to the sinner. This has its counterpart in nature : the farmer does not bring the field to the seed, but takes the seed to the field ; the lumberman does not bring the tree to the axe, but takes the axe to the tree ; the fisherman does not bring the fish to the net, but takes the net to the fish. This principle finds abundant illustration in the Book of Acts. Think you that 3,000 would have been brought to Christ had Peter and his fellows remained in the upper Room, and waited for a congregation to climb the stairs to hear him preach on the Day of Pentecost? Think you that Christianity would have spread so rapidly that the pagan opposers would have described its propagators as men "who have turned the world upside down," had they remained indoors and sought to attract Jews and heathen into the preaching services? Surely not. It is pointed out by the above-mentioned writer that there are but *three* meeting-places mentioned in the Acts : the Upper Room (1. 13), the school of Tyrannus (19. 9), and the Third Loft in Troas (20. 9). In view of this, how were the multitudes of the Roman provinces reached? The answer is to be found in recognising that the early missionaries obeyed their Master's Word, "Go ye into all the world

and preach the Gospel to *every* creature” (Mark 16. 15).

Certainly not by the come-to-us method, but rather by the go-to-them method was the Evangel “preached to every creature which is under Heaven,” as Paul states in Col. 1. 23. Converted slaves, travelling Christian tradesmen, or soldiers of Rome whose hearts God had touched, told out the Old Story in the vernacular tongue of the day. These were among the early preachers.

We are not to confine the expression “preaching” to that of public discourse. In Acts 8 we see Philip the evangelist preaching to *one man*; “He preached unto him Jesus” (ver. 35). Most certainly Philip did not attempt to deliver into the ear of his black hearer a prepared dissertation on Isa. 53. Nor was the anxious Ethiopian instructed by God to drive his chariot over to Samaria where Philip was holding “special meetings,” but according to God’s ordained method, the evangelist was commanded to take his message to the needy inquirer.

This principle, then, of *our* responsibility to take the Gospel to the world shines out very conspicuously in the inspired record of the early Church. We cannot improve on God’s way; hence let us seek grace and strength to “speak a word in season to him that is weary.” Multitudes, *multitudes*, are eternally perishing all around us, and the boundless opportunities for speaking for our Lord are rapidly slipping by. Christ will soon be here. Oh, to be *moved* with compassion in behalf of the perishing!

But Thomas was absent that Lord’s Day evening, and oh, what he missed. Rather *Whom* he missed. Beloved, we always miss Him when we skip meetings, and He misses us. Never excuse yourself from assembling

with the Lord's people. If you do, you will be sure to miss *something* of profit. This man missed a tremendous revelation.

When told of that wonderful Sunday evening meeting, and how the Lord Jesus made Himself known to the brethren, Thomas voices his unbelief in a most emphatic way. "Except I shall see in His hands," he exclaims, "the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." We call him Thomas the Doubter, but surely this is a wrong sobriquet. Call him Thomas the Unbeliever if you like, but not the Doubter. When a man says, "I will not believe," that eliminates every element of doubt. Here is a man who does not believe in half-way measures ; he has convictions and he is prepared to stand by them. While we deplore his unbelief, it is refreshing to meet a man of his genuineness and sincerity.

We are not surprised, then, that Thomas is on hand at the second assembling of the disciples in Jerusalem the following week-end. The meeting is convened in the same large upper room, and perhaps the company is larger than on the first occasion. *Then* they had come together with fear, perplexity and doubt ; now unspeakable joy fills their hearts, for they know their Lord is risen and all is well. Whatever Thomas' motive may be, he is in his proper place this time, with his fellow-believers. Again the doors are shut for Jewish hatred has not been altogether allayed, in spite of the crime of Calvary. It may be that the subject of discussion is the never-to-be-forgotten appearance of one week ago, when Jesus *again* takes His rightful place in their midst,

and greets them with the same friendly salutation, "Peace be unto you."

Plenty of religious groups to-day assign God's Christ a place along the wall, or in a corner, if inside at all. But the early Church enjoyed Him in the midst. He was their Centre. And He still loves to take His place there. Let us not be satisfied with anything else.

Christ's omniscience flashes forth once again as He addresses Himself directly to Thomas, inviting him to reach hither his finger and to examine the nail-prints. We do not read that Thomas actually did this ; we do not suppose he did, why should he ? Convinced beyond all shadow of question, he falls at the feet of his risen, glorious Saviour, and voices his creed, in five short, but potent words, "My Lord and my God."

To confess the lordship and deity of Christ, from the heart is salvation. A complete answer to 20th century modernists and religious cavillers who would pluck from the brow of Christ the crown of His eternal deity, seeking justification for such blasphemy by taking the attitude that He made no such claim for Himself, is the simple consideration that here our Lord accepted this confession from the lips of Thomas without demurring a hairsbreadth. If he is not God, then Thomas, by that confession of his, constituted himself an idolater. Moreover, Jesus would have been guilty of positive blasphemy by accepting such a tribute. No, no ! He *is* Lord ! He *is* God ! Let us worship Him.

## CHAPTER VI

When the Risen Lord Prepared  
Breakfast on the Beach

*“Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them,  
and fish likewise” (John 21. 13).*

**D**ID you ever notice the dispensational forecast in John's Gospel, chapters twenty and twenty-one? “Jews, Gentiles and Church of God” is God's division of the race during this age (1 Cor. 10. 32); and these three are seen here. In the Lord's manifestation of Himself in the Upper Room to the Ten, we have a Church scene; in His revealing of Himself to Thomas, a Jewish scene; in the great catch of fish the Gentiles are pictured, taking us on into Millennial days. Thomas pictures the faithful remnant of Israelites who will recognise in the returning Wounded One their Messiah, and Whom they will confess as Lord and God (see Zech 12. 10; John 19. 37), while in chapter twenty-one, the netful of fishes suggests the day of glory when an innumerable company of Gentiles from earth's remotest corners are gathered in to share the triumph of earth's blessed and only Potentate. But into the prophetic significance of these chapters we do not purpose to go. Rather let us look at the practical side.

We saw a few evenings ago that Simon Peter had both a private and public restoration; the private we have already considered; the public is presented now.



Here we find seven disciples many miles north of Jerusalem, in the Province of Galilee ; they are in familiar country, for five of them, at least, are originally from these parts. Peter and the two sons of Zebedee have been partners in the fishing business for years on this very lake on the shores of which they now find themselves. What are they doing here now ? Why, they are waiting. Waiting for Whom ? For the Risen Lord. He has told them that He will go before them into Galilee, but He has not said *when*. Hence, here are seven men waiting for Him to appear. All their doubts have been dispelled by the Upper Room experiences in Jerusalem, and, now, with expectant hearts, they linger amid surroundings that remind them of their former calling. The strong smell of the nets, the lapping of the waves, the sight of the sails, or the wash of the oars, all serve to bring back old memories. Time goes on ; still they wait, still no Jesus.

There is nothing quite like *waiting* to test us. None of us like to be kept waiting, we would far rather be active. And how often we, Abraham-like, have sought some Hagar-method of hurrying up the plan of God, and to our great grief have found the issue in some kind of an Ishmael-experience (see Gen. 16). Or how frequently we refuse, like Saul, to await the arrival of our Samuel and "force ourselves" by taking things into our own hands, to our utter loss (see 1 Sam. 13). How often we fail to follow the holy example of our patient, perfect Lord Who would take no short-cut whatever to glory and triumph, but Who, rather, would meekly submit to the Father's time and will. And in all this hustle and bustle we miss the approval of the Speaker

of Prov. 8. 34 : "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors."

The Lord has called Peter and his friends from the fishing-business long ago. At that time they had gladly turned their backs on the whole thing and set out to follow their new Master in the great work of catching men. But now this waiting is irksome, and soon Peter's ambition is expressed in the short, significant sentence, "I go a fishing." The little boat riding at anchor there, belonging probably to relatives, proves to be too great a temptation for him. His influence carries the rest with him, and their unanimous response is "We also go with thee."

"Galilee of the Gentiles," that despised northern territory, outside the orbit of religious Jerusalem, is an apt picture of the world to-day as the place of Christ's rejection. It is just here that you and I are called to walk, and live, and serve, as we await His coming. But let the young believer lose sight of that Coming, or allow its nearness to become dimmed, and it will not be long before worldly relations are resumed, carnal entanglements are indulged, and old habits begin to assert themselves. I am sure that if Peter and his comrades had been expecting Jesus to arrive at any moment they would never have gone on that fishing excursion. As it was, they lost the hope of the promise of His return. And I am convinced that the present tendency to defer the Lord's Second Coming invariably leads to more or less coldness of heart and carelessness of ways. Many a modern professed servant has said in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming," and has begun to vigorously smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the

drunken. This is one of the greatest troubles with Christendom to-day. Early in this era the blessed hope was lost, and what professed to be the Church of Christ became a proud, worldly organisation, and up to the present hour it continues in ever-increasing apostasy, and will do so until it meets its doom beneath the smiting hand of the returning Christ.

Yes, Peter and his companions allowed the promise of the Master's appointment with them in Galilee to become dim, and the fruitless fishing trip was the result. No wonder, then, that "that night they caught nothing" (ver. 3). There is no use going fishing if the Lord is not on board.

At last the cold, grey dawn announces a new day and the dejected party are returning to their base, chilled and disappointed. On the shore stands a Stranger in the dim half-light. "Children, have ye aught to eat?" He calls out. The question is no surprise, apparently, for fish were frequently bought right out of the boats as soon as they touched shore ; evidently this Man is a prospective customer. The answer given is short, almost rude : "No !" They do not even say, "No sir," or "We are sorry, but we have had no success whatever this trip."

Saints do not have to get far away from Christ to become rude and of dull vision. This party is only about one hundred yards from the shore, but they fail to recognise their Lord and they answer His query in a blunt, impolite manner. Nearness to Jesus makes for refined speech ; let us not forget that.

Then follow the words, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find." On a former occasion, when Peter was told to lower his nets for a draught, he

had objected, but there is no objection now. Is he beginning to recognise that voice? Does he recall the experience of the fifth of Luke? Does *this* somehow recall *that*? At any rate, down go the nets, and lo, what a haul! A great shoal of fish is enmeshed and the excited group is soon hauling the over-loaded, untorn net over the gunwale.

Then John speaks, "It is the Lord." How is it that John is the first to recognise and identify the Stranger? Because his spiritual discernment is much more acute. It was he, and not Peter, who had pillowed his head on the bosom of Christ at the last supper, and it was he who had more intimate communion as a result of this great nearness; and hence he is not slow to associate the risen Christ with this miraculous catch of fish.

Do we see the Lord in the circumstances of our lives? Alas, how often we have to confess with Jacob, after awakening out of our sleep, "Surely the Lord is in this place, *and I knew it not*" (Gen. 28. 16). Let us remember that nothing happens by chance in the believer's life: all is governed and controlled by Him Whose unfailing love is designed to "do us good in our latter end."

John had beaten Peter to the grave on the resurrection morning, but Peter is determined that John shall not reach the Lord first this time; hence, he throws himself into the lake and starts swimming shoreward. By that act he virtually says, "John, you and the rest can have all the fish. I have lost all interest in them. I want to get to the Lord just as fast as I possibly can."

A little later and the whole company have beached the vessel, and they gather with wonder around the Son of God. What astonishment must be theirs to see Him,

and to observe that He already has breakfast prepared, "A fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread" (v. 9). We shall not trouble ourselves with the question as to how He got those fish ; let us think rather of the meal, its Host and its issues. He is about to probe Peter and to reinstate him into the full confidence of his fellow-apostles, but before the rebuke comes the repast. If the questions had come first, methinks Peter would have wanted no breakfast that morning. Rather, the hungry band is first fed ; thus their physical needs are met. It is written in Eph. 5. 29 that "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the Church." Both are in view in our picture here. The seven disciples are nourished by the food and cherished by the warmth.

Then He graciously says, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." But did *they* catch them ? Yes and no. It is true that they had dropped the net into the lake, but it was by His order alone that those one hundred and fifty and three "great fishes" came along just at that moment. Yet He gives them all the credit of catching them. Isn't that real grace ? Indeed it is ! And some day soon when His servants are on the eternal shore He will again say, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Though the great work of catching men is *His* work, for, "salvation is of the Lord," yet *we* shall get the pay for it at His Judgment Seat. By the way, will you have any fish to bring to Him in that day ? Or will yours be an empty net ? My ! what red faces some of us will have then ! Say, let us all get into the great Gospel-fishing boat to-night, and obey His orders, and the results will surprise us.

The meal all prepared, He says, "Come and dine," "Come and breakfast." Jesus is the Host : He serves the food. How delicious it must have tasted. Solomon once said, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." But here is the equivalent of the stalled ox, *plus love*. What could be better?

When passing through the city of Toronto, Canada, at an early hour the other day, I dropped into a restaurant for breakfast. After giving the waitress my order, I noticed this line on the menu-card, "Tell me what a man eats," wrote an ancient observer, "and I will tell you what kind of a man he is." The cafe followed up the remark with this bit of advertising : "Tell us *where* he eats and we will help you complete the picture."

May we not say with equal truth, Show us what a *Christian* eats and we will tell you what kind of a Christian he is? It is an obvious fact that our spirits require food just as much as our bodies, and the young believer who eats at the restaurant known as "The World," "The Flesh," or "The Devil," will soon become a victim of self-poisoning. It is verily possible to dig your spiritual grave with your spiritual teeth.

According to Scripture the sinner feeds on four kinds of food—if it can be called food. These are listed as follows 1, Wind ; 2, Foolishness ; 3, Husks ; and 4, Ashes. Let us quote the verses which refer to these. "Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind" (Hos. 12. 1). We have all known the wind-eating type of individual : "They speak great swelling words of vanity" (2 Peter 2. 18). Inflated by self-conceit, they belch out words that are nothing but so much vapour.

Then again, "The mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness" (Prov. 15. 14). The chap who goes in for the world's cheap frivolity will soon become frivolous. No man who has ever become great has allowed his appetite for folly and pleasure to gain control. Ask Fereday or Newton ; ask Edison or Marconi ; ask Lincoln or Gladstone ! The Christian is exhorted repeatedly to shun foolish talking, and to speak soberly and in the fear of God. Nor is his diet to be the husks of the far country. Many a prodigal to-day is trying in vain to satisfy his soul's appetite with such, and even believers sometimes forsake the true Bethlehem, "the House of Bread," and resort to the miserable stuff that the Devil feeds to his dupes. Or it may be that husks are exchanged for ashes. Long ago Isaiah made this comment concerning those who substitute an idol for the true God, "He feedeth on ashes." How would you like to sit down to a good feed of ashes for your breakfast to-morrow morning ? Not much nourishment there !

What a contrast to the food the Lord provides for His Own. Did you ever notice that when the murmuring people of Israel turned back in heart to Egypt they referred to just six articles of diet on Egypt's menu ? In contrast to that, sometime later, when Jehovah pointed them on to His Canaan, He enumerated *seven* articles of diet as being prepared for their appetites. We all know that seven is God's number of perfection, and thus it is obvious that He supplies for His hungry people meals that are, shall we say, "full-course." Egypt's bill of fare is not only unsatisfying, but damaging to good health. Look at the list ; we have it in Num. 11. 5 : "We remember the *fish*, which we did eat in Egypt

freely, the *cucumbers* and the *melons* and the *leeks*, and the *onions*, and the *garlick*." Surely a queer combination. How many young believers have suffered from spiritual indigestion by eating the world's cucumbers, and how many more have advertised their worldly living by that which answers to Egypt's onions. To hear a Christian singing the world's popular songs, speaking with apparent interest of the world's sports, or referring with approving enthusiasm to the world's entertainers, is a sad evidence that the appetite has been indulged in Egypt's diet. The spiritual breath is heavy with her garlick.

"We did eat these things *freely*," they cry. But did they? Did they really get these unwholesome things freely, without cost? No, certainly not! It cost them the cruel bondage of Pharaoh's task-masters, and the stinging lash of their oppressors. But the Devil is careful not to remind them of this. Nor does he remind the young Christian of the sleepless nights and times of soul-anxiety that were his in his unconverted days. He would have us think that the passing "pleasures of sin" really cost us nothing, when the truth is that we paid a bitter price for them.

But what an excellent bill of fare our gracious God provides His Own. He lists the seven foods of Canaan in Deut. 8. 8 : "A land of *wheat*, and *barley*, and *vines*, and *fig trees*, and *pomegranates* ; a land of *oil olive*, and *honey*." Is not our Lord brought before us here in various aspects of His work and worth? In the wheat and barley our thoughts turn to Him as the single grain Who, in order to bring forth many grains just like Himself, "fell into the ground and died." The grapes would



remind us of the precious blood upon which all the blessings of the New Covenant are based. And then may we not say that the figs and pomegranates suggest the lovely fruits of His death which His Spirit, implied in the oil, produces in the life of the yielded believer? And then, what a flood of light Scripture throws upon the significance of honey. It is likened to the Word Itself. The Psalmist cries, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste. Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Psa. 119. 103). And again, "Eat thou honey because it is good." That is a splendid reason; we should eat the Word for the sheer goodness and sweetness that it yields to our souls. "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (Prov. 16. 24).

And honey is sometimes found in strange places. For example, the day after Samson slew the lion that roared upon him he found a good supply in the carcase of the beast. Not only was his own appetite satisfied, but he carried some to his parents. And have we not found fresh supplies of God's honey in the very places where He has enabled us to overcome some besetting temptation? In submitting ourselves to God we have resisted the Devil and he has fled, just as James said he would (ch. 4. 7), and with the victory some special portion of Scripture has become fraught with new significance to us. We have eaten the honey for ourselves and felt the urge to carry the surplus to some others.

Let us each ask ourselves the question, Which menu am I choosing, Egypt's or Canaan's, the world's or that provided by our risen Jesus? But to return to our story.

The meal ended, Simon Peter becomes the object of some direct questions. Just as he had thrice denied

his Lord by a fire of coals in the high priest's palace, so by another fire of coals three times he is caused to answer the question, "Lovest thou Me?" How the great and good Physician probes him until the very root of Peter's self-confidence is reached, and with an overflowing heart he exclaims : "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

It has been often pointed out that the Saviour used for "love" a rather strong word, while Peter employed a term which carried the thought of "I am *attached* to Thee." He never once used the Lord's word ; he seemed to shrink from any approximation to the bold self-confidence of a few days previous when he had declared that though all might deny the Lord yet he would not. Since that boast he had experienced a terrible fall, and been made to realise that "the flesh profiteth nothing," and now he is not nearly so sure of himself as he was then. He has deep affection for his Lord, but will not again be guilty of the folly of the past.

How touching to see that the sheep and lambs of the Divine Shepherd are entrusted to Peter. Peter, above all others ! Why, he is the very man whom we would be the last to trust in view of his disgraceful denials. But no, he has come to an end of himself, and now those nearest and dearest to Christ can be committed to him, for the breaking of him was the making of him.

"Lovest thou Me." "Feed My lambs." "Shepherd My sheep." Notice that the lambs come *first*. If we do not feed His lambs there will be no sheep to shepherd after a while.

So love is the true motive for all acceptable service. It is the great driving-force ; "the love of Christ constrain-

eth us.” Just as a mother slaves from sunrise until long after sunset for her dear children, so our love for Jesus is manifest in our attitude toward His flock. It is not serving a sect or out of denominational loyalty, but ministering to the risen Shepherd by tending His dearly-purchased sheep and lambs wherever we may meet them. Let me emphasize this. The only motive that will be rewarded will be that of personal love for Him. This should test us to-night. Why are you teaching that Sunday School class? Is it merely because the superintendent would be annoyed if you don't? Why do you distribute tracts? Why do you give a word in the meetings now and then? Is it because you think it is your religious duty? Then, if so, you have missed the luxury of serving Christ for the sheer joy of it. If it is not because you love Him better than everything and every one else and delight to please Him, then He takes little pleasure in it, and you have become a voluntary slave to mere religious drudgery. Quit it at once and get your soul saturated by meditating on Him, not it, and while you muse, the fire will burn. Then you will find that, as in David's case, you will then speak with your tongue (Psalm 39. 3).

How beautifully Peter fulfilled his commission in later years, especially when he penned his first and second epistles. I believe he was thinking of that interview on the shores of Galilee as he diligently applied his pen to the parchment. He never forgot that. And never did he once entertain the notion that the flock was his, as some of his self-styled successors have done. Indeed not! Listen to his exhortation to elders in the assemblies: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the

oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”

But not only was Simon to serve the flock, but he also was to die a martyr's death. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst : but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God” (vv. 18, 19). Peter had had one grand chance of glorifying God in the palace of the high priest when he so utterly failed ; He shall have another chance, and in this one he will not fail. He will seal his testimony with his blood, to the glory of God. In the meantime he is given the word, “Follow Me.”

But John who is standing nearby, on hearing this, says to himself, “That is also a good word for me.” So he at once falls into line. But again, impulsive Peter blunders by taking his eyes off his Master and focusing them on John. “What shall this man do ?” he queries. In effect the Lord's reply is this : “Peter, that is none of your business. He is My servant, and I do not want you to be occupied with him, but with your Master. Follow thou Me.”

Beloved, we are too often asking Peter's question instead of Paul's. Peter's was, “What shall *this man* do ?” Paul's, “Lord, what wilt Thou have *me* to do ?”

May He give us grace to-night to get our eyes off “this man,” and focus them on the great Master Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ.

“FOLLOW THOU ME.”

## CHAPTER VII

## His Last Word

*"It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise . . .and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"*  
(Luke 24. 46, 47).

*"Go ye . . . make disciples . . . baptize . . . teach them . . . and lo, I am with you"* (Matt. 28. 19, 20).

AS we compare these resurrection appearances in the four Gospels, we are compelled to conclude that the events which formed the basis of our last meditation, and the mountain scene of Matt. 28, when the Great Commission was given, occurred during the first week of the forty days between the resurrection and Ascension. The reason for this is the fact that it was on the second Lord's Day evening when the Saviour appeared in the midst of His own in the upper room, that He expressly told them not to depart from Jerusalem ; they were to tarry in that City until the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit. Hence, it follows that the Galilean appearances took place between the first and second week-ends.

Though Matthew mentions only eleven disciples meeting their Master in Galilee, it is altogether probable that it was on this occasion that the five hundred brethren, to whom Paul refers in 1 Cor. 15, were also present. It could scarcely be said of the apostles that "some doubted,"

for *they* had all their doubts dispelled on the first Sunday evening, when they had not only eaten and drunk with their risen Lord in the upper room, but also handled Him. But if we allow that this mountain-gathering numbered a great many more than the eleven, it is what we might expect.

Apparently the Lord placed considerable importance on this meeting, for He foretold it before and after His death, and the angels confirmed it as well. It was by appointment. Hence, it follows that a great many who had not been present at the upper room appearance would be attracted to this one out of curiosity, if from no other motive.

And Galilee was very suitable for such a meeting. The commission for world-wide preaching was about to be given, so in keeping with this, it is given in a province largely peopled by Gentiles, and not Jewish Jerusalem. I believe that not only the geography, but also the topography of the land of Palestine is replete with spiritual lessons. It has been pointed out that the Jordan River is strikingly suggestive of the whole history of man. Rising in the lofty snow-crowned heights of Mount Hermon, ten thousand feet above the Mediterranean Sea, it rapidly falls until, after measuring its entire length of about one hundred miles, it loses itself in the Dead Sea, thirteen hundred feet below that same Mediterranean. Hence, it gets its name, "The Descender." Its source is in the pure heights of the snows which come direct from God in their purity and whiteness. Man was originally just like that. Made in his Creator's image, distinct from the highest brute, and formed for his Creator's pleasure, he fell from his dignified and exalted

position through sin, at once exchanging the grandeur and blessedness of the heights for the moral pollution of the depths. But just as the Jordan flows into, first, the Waters of Merom, and later the Sea of Galilee, so man's course has had two great slow-ups since the Fall. First, God gave him the Levitical system, known as Judaism, with its laws, ceremonies, sacrifices, and priesthood, all designed to restrain his evil propensities. But this only made it increasingly manifest that man at his best state was altogether vanity. The law intensified sin, bringing out its heinousness, and making it "exceeding sinful." Falling still lower from these typical Waters of Merom, he went on until that wonderful day when the Lord Jesus Christ, the express image of all that God was came forth, clothed in humanity, to undertake man's wretched case. For thirty-three sublime years He went in and out among His creatures doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the Devil. He was the incarnation of every righteous principle, the embodiment of Supreme Good, the Great Benefactor of a crushed and needy race. But instead of bowing before Him and owning His supremacy, man deliberately closed his eyes, hardened his heart and steeled his will, and the tragedy of Calvary was the great culmination. How the Sea of Galilee suggests all this. It was around this lake, in its cities, towns and villages, and on its plains, that He did most of His mighty works, and it was here, following their official rejection of Him, that He pronounced His severest woes. What is the next stop? The Dead Sea. This is Hell. Two significant things mark that Sea; first, it has *no life*; second, it has *no outlet*. And how solemn to think that there is no slow-up between the

Sea of Galilee in the north, and the Sea of Salt in the south. This teaches us that God has spoken His last word to humanity. He has no further tests for him ; it is either Christ or judgment. Friend, where are you stopping ? If you don't stop at the Cross you will most surely go on to God's eternal Dead Sea, that lifeless, deep, hopeless place of gloom, from which there is no escape, for ever. In view of this, I say that Galilee was a very appropriate place for this world-wide evangelization commission, for it is the place of grace to the Gentiles.

“Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28. 18-20).

First of all we have

#### THE PERSON.

Here He claims what no other one has claimed : that into His hand all authority in the universe has been committed. Who is this Speaker in the midst of this throng of well over five hundred persons gathered on this mountain side ? He is the omnipotent Son of God, back again from the dead. He has accomplished redemption's mighty task, defeated sin, death and hell, and here He takes His place as Captain of the Lord's host. All the staggering claims that He made during His life have now been vindicated ; His resurrection makes that abundantly clear. A man once said to an infidel, “Could you say, ‘I am the resurrection and the life ?’ ” “Sure I



could," replied the other. "Well," said the Christian, "*Could you make anybody believe it?*" But Jesus has made us believe it, because He has made it absolutely good. He is the unique Personality in all the universe to-day.

#### THE POWER.

His claim is nothing short of colossal : "All power in Heaven and in earth." H. L. Hastings has well said, "Did you ever think how much power there is on earth? There is the power of the wind. Do you know anybody who can control that? There is the power of the waves. Do you know anybody who can control or master them? There are the powers of nature ; the heaving of the tides, the swelling of the seeds in the earth, the mighty upspringing that clothes the fields with grass. There is the power of the clouds. There is the power of heat in which the strongest iron that ever was forged will melt. There is the power which pours down floods from on high. Why, an inch of water falling on a square mile means some sixty thousand tons and all that power poured out so gently that we do not notice it. We do not understand it. We think nothing is going on. We call it a shower. Think of the millions of glowing orbs that flame through the skies. Think of this world rolling in its mighty orbit. Think of the sun, sweeping on in its eternal pathway. Think of the power that moves these things. Some people do not understand how the sun could be made to stand still. Well, if you will tell me what keeps it going, I will tell you how it was made to stand still."

But this is only *physical* power. Our Lord has much more than that. His authority is also moral and spiritual.

He has transformed the lives of hundreds of millions of earth's citizens, and though He had only a small handful about Him when He walked up and down Palestine 1900 years ago, teaching, preaching and healing, to-day there are throughout the world tens of thousands who would die for Him. Though these have never seen Him, they love Him more than any person they know. Moreover, His Name has dispelled darkness and superstition wherever it has gone. Pagans of every type and hue have experienced marvellous uplift spiritually, morally, socially and mentally through the preaching of this One Whose claim to all power is thus substantiated.

We have before seen that His personal resurrection is the firstfruits of the vast harvest that will follow. By virtue of His resurrection all men will some day arise in accordance with His Word, "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth" (John 5. 28, 29). Permit me again to let Mr. Hastings tell us an incident.

"I was in the great Corn Exchange in London once, and around upon a platform sat the men who dealt in corn and other grains. One had a little saucer of wheat, one had a cup of oats, another a handful of corn, and one a little of something else. You might have taken the whole away in a one-horse wagon, yet they sold millions of bushels every day. They sold by sample. Behind those little cups were the granaries of every land. Behind them were the great elevators, filled with the treasures of the harvest. Behind them were the railway trains loaded with grain. Behind them were the waving fields of wheat and corn, the fields of the mighty harvests ; and all that they had to show was a little handful of wheat.

It was only a sample. Jesus Christ raised one ruler's daughter from the grave. That was a sample. He is going to raise your daughter, by and by, and my daughter. He raised one widow's son ; He is going to raise your son, by and by. He raised one dead brother ; He is going to raise your dead brother."

The Great Commission suggests next

#### THE PLAN.

It is noteworthy that the Lord Jesus never established a theological seminary, a training institute, a propaganda bureau or a printing establishment for the dissemination of the Glad Tidings. He organised no religious campaigns or Bible conferences. No complicated machinery whatever was set in motion. The Good News was to be propagated throughout the world by the going forth of men and women who had been in intimate association with Himself. A few years before this utterance He had chosen a dozen men "that should be with Him" (Mark 3. 13). Thus they received a preparation which could not be excelled. Later this band of twelve was expanded to include a much larger company, but these, too, had the unspeakable privilege of being in close personal touch with Him. And so, when redemption's mighty work was accomplished the Lord Jesus Christ uttered the two significant words, "Go ye." We cannot emphasize this too much. It is not that it is wrong to arrange for special services, organise Bible Conferences, etc. ; on the contrary, these have proved to be of unquestionable value, and God has abundantly set His seal of approval on them ; but we must not stop at this, for, after all, as Mr. George Cutting has pointed out to us,

these are along the lines of Christendom's "Come-to-us" method. The New Testament everywhere emphasises the individual's responsibility to take the Gospel message to the sinner wherever that sinner may be found. "Go ye, therefore." The "therefore" is of wonderful weight when we remember the statement that had just preceded it. He is saying, in effect, "All this power of Mine is now at your disposal, and you can count upon Me to the limit. Just as I was your Sufficiency as we travelled up and down the land before the Cross, so now, even though I am returned to the Father, I will still be with you and will meet your every emergency and need if you will just commit all into My hands."

The Plan is a threefold one. The messengers are to first make disciples of all nations (ct. Matt. 10. 5) by the preaching of the Gospel, the Glad News that centres in the death, burial and resurrection of the perfect Man, Christ Jesus. Nothing is to be substituted for this. The curse of the present programme sponsored by Christendom is that it substitutes social service, humanitarian uplift, alleviation of prevailing economic oppression and kindred projects for God's one and only remedy for the desperate need of guilty men and women. The story is told how that on one occasion three people went into the church to get help. The first was a business man who had failed, and was contemplating suicide. The second was a youth of extravagant tastes, who, finding his wages insufficient, was planning to steal from his employer. The third was a young woman of gay habits and conduct, who had been tempted from the path of virtue. The choir arose and sang an anthem about building the walls of Zion. The minister addressed an elo-

quent prayer to the Lord, and then preached a sermon on the theme, "Is Mars Inhabited?" And thus the hungry souls that needed bread received stones.

The man committed suicide, the boy stole and landed in the penitentiary, and the woman went home to a life of shame. How desperately guilty are all who in a way contribute to such a wretched, yes, hellish evasion of truth.

The second step in the Plan is to baptise in the Name of the Triune God, all those who have taken their place as disciples. This place of discipleship is taken when one professes to receive the Lord Jesus as Saviour. We are thoroughly persuaded that this is the only baptism that the New Testament recognises : *viz*, the baptism of professed believers by immersion.

Thirdly, and lastly, the missionary is to teach all things whatsoever the Lord has taught him. Having made and baptised a disciple unto Christ, he is to impart to such a one the truth that has been committed to him.

We find that the Book of Acts is full of examples of how this commission was carried out, and how successfully it worked. The evangelists did not merely lead souls to Christ and then leave them to the tender mercies of the wolves in sheep's clothing that were howling about ; rather, they stayed with them and sought to impart to them spiritual food that would build them up and develop them from spiritual children to full-grown, mature believers.

#### THE PROMISE.

The Lord Jesus Christ uttered many promises during His life on earth, but none can excel for sweetness and blessedness this last one of His : "Lo I am with you

always, even unto the end of the age." A Christian does not need to be very intelligent to recognise that that end is almost upon us, and in looking back over the past nineteen hundred years, we cry "Amen" to the words of the poet :

"He with His church has ever stood,  
His loving kindness, oh, how good."

Let us now travel in the disciples' company from this Galilean mountain where the Great Commission was given, to the City of Jerusalem in the south. It would appear from the closing portion of the last chapter of Luke's Gospel that all the events related there occurred on the first Lord's Day evening, but we know that this could not possibly have been the case, in view of the express command that the disciples should not depart from the City of Jerusalem. I take it that we have the chronological order given in 1 Cor. 15, where we read, "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." This, of course, was on the day of the resurrection. "After that He was seen of about five hundred brethren at once." Evidently this was when Jesus appeared by appointment to His friends in Galilee during the week. "After that, He was seen of James, then of all the apostles." Thus it is clearly indicated that there was at least one appearance to the apostolate after the Commission was given in Galilee. In fact, I doubt not that the Lord made a number of personal appearances to His Own before that fortieth day when He led them out as far as to Bethany ; Acts 1. 3 surely supports this. Probably the command of Luke 24. 49 was given toward the close of this period. Luke's closing chapter thus gives us a condensed sum-

mary of the christophanies ; we are not to think of them as all occurring at one time.

There is just this to be added : the final instructions to evangelise, given in Jerusalem, emphasise three great fundamentals for all successful missionary work. These are, first, the death and resurrection of Christ ; second, the supremacy of the Scriptures ; and, third, the endowment of the Holy Spirit. The work of Christ is the basis of the Gospel, the Holy Scriptures the authority of the Gospel, and the Holy Spirit the Power of the Gospel. Here is a threefold cord not quickly broken ; they are the great essentials for all successful testimony. The Day of Pentecost would usher in a new day for them, for it would mean that the Holy Spirit would not only illuminate the Old Testament Scriptures, interpret the full significance of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, indwell their hearts as Comforter, but also be their great Power for effective service. Their thoughts and ambitions would thus be divorced from merely national considerations, which up to that time were uppermost in their minds (Acts i. 6). Henceforth they would think of God's great *interim* programme, the out-calling of the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ. Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria, and finally the uttermost parts of the earth, would all yield their multitudinous contributions to this unique out-calling.

My Christian brother, our Lord's last word here is replete with instruction for you and me. If our hearts have pondered the cross, the empty grave, the ascension from Olivet, and the enthronement of the Man Christ Jesus, and we find that our wills are under the complete sway of the authority of Holy Scripture, then the Holy

Spirit will make our testimony by life and lip irresistible. Let us then gather fresh courage. Remember that when the blessed Lord took His last leave of His friends, He raised His pierced hands in blessing over their heads. Those hands He has never lowered, and, unlike Moses, He requires no Aaron or Hur to stay them up. He maintains that attitude of power and blessing unaided. Then, may it be said of you and me as it was of these of old, "They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

"Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead" (2 Tim. 2. 8).

Therefore HE LIVES !

"He lives ! He lives ! Christ Jesus lives to-day !  
He walks with me and talks with me  
Along life's narrow way.  
He lives ! He lives ! Salvation to impart !  
You ask me how I know He lives ?  
He lives within my heart."—*A. H. Ackley.*