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## The First Disciples and the Resurrection

**I**n the Book of Acts Luke represents the early Christians as looking at the Resurrection of Jesus from a very different point of view to that commonly taken at the present time. They did not ignore the deductions to be drawn from it as to a future life and as to our Lord's divinity, but quite a different conception was primary in their thoughts of the resurrection.

Peter brought out the ruling idea of the first disciples as to the resurrection in his explanation to Sanhedrin of the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate. He said: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in Him doth this man stand here before you whole." In other words through the resurrection Jesus Christ continued to be an active personality in human concerns. The risen and living Jesus restored the paralytic. "In Him doth this man stand here before you whole." To the first disciples the chief value of the resurrection did not consist in the evidence that it afforded to other truths. It was something vastly more vital than a link in a chain of logic. What fastened their attention was the fact that the resurrection meant that Jesus was still alive. The resurrection gave them not so much an argument as a fact—the fact of the living Christ.

And this natural, unsophisticated way of looking at our Lord's resurrection is one that is full of large suggestions to us at this Easter time. The essential nature of Christianity itself is involved in it, for Christianity is not expressed in a series of propositions, no matter how sublime or inspiring they may be, nor do we embrace Christianity by ascending to these propositions. The religion of Christ consists primarily in the relation of a human soul to a Person. When Jesus was on earth He said: "Come unto me"; "Follow me"; "Abide in me." Those commands were not simply for the Hebrews of Judaea and Galilee during those short years of the first half of the first century. They are perpetual calls, opening perpetual privileges, because He who spoke them then is still living, and speaks them to us, inviting us to the fellowship that He offered to the first disciples.

When Paul said that if Christ was not raised from the dead, "your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins," a profounder thought was in his mind than that a denial of the resurrection would invalidate an evidence of faith. What he meant was that if Christ is not alive through the resurrection faith has no object. We are yet in our sins because the tie of personal fellowship with Christ that emancipates from sin has no real existence. There is no present, active, living Jesus between whom and ourselves there exists this vital fellowship. If Christ is not risen Paul cannot say: "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"; he cannot say: "Christ in you the hope of glory;" for there is no actually living Christ with whom we may sustain this relation to us.

You get another aspect of this truth when you reflect that it is just this truth of the living Christ that separates Christianity from every other religious faith. The primary distinction of Christianity is not that it has the resurrection of Jesus as evidence for the truth of its doctrines, valuable as that evidence is. The primary distinction of Christianity is that it makes so much of relationship to a Person, so much that if He is dead, the heart and vital principle of the religion is taken away. Every other religious faith elaborates its theories of human life and God, and urges man to guide his life by these theories. They do not bring new elements into the problem. That is exactly what Christianity does. The profound difference between it and every other faith in Christ, and not Christ as a mere teacher, or as a sacrifice for sin alone, but Christ as a Person with whom each believer may enter

into such intimate fellowship that he shares the destiny and glory of Christ. The first disciples had this fellowship in the flesh for a few months. We delight to trace the impress of Christ upon them, and to study their spiritual reactions under His influence. The resurrection makes these experiences possible for every man.

This view of the teaching of the resurrection will profoundly influence our attitude toward the New Testament. The Christ of history gives us the basis for understanding the Present Christ of Christian Experience. When a friend has departed to a distant land we know what manner of man he is now because we knew what he was a week or a month or a year ago. We know how Christ thinks and feels now; what are His purposes, standards and ideals because of what He did and said upon the earth. We know Him as we know an absent friend. Our past acquaintance is the basis of our present knowledge. You never get the best of the New Testament; you never penetrated into its heart until its pages are flooded with the Easter light, and you meditate upon it, and let its words sink into your heart as revelations of the mind and temper of the soul's Lord and Lover.

The claim is often made that the resurrection of Jesus is a part of all men are immortal. It would not be altogether easy to trace the logic of this inference. We can never be sure that we shall rise from the grave because Christ did, for we cannot be sure that it was not the divinellement in Him that effected the resurrection. The more you emphasize the deity of Jesus the weaker the inference. Only a thorough-going Unitarian can find much force in the argument that we shall rise from the dead because Christ rose. We need to shift our point of view a little and introduce another factor to get the force of the resurrection argument for immortality. Jesus expressed it in a sentence when He said: "Because I live ye shall live also." The living Christ is the pledge of our life because we share His destiny. His union with man and man's union with Him is the solid ground for believing in the immortal life.

We are not devoted to Christ simply as to a beautiful memory. We sustain the most intimate relation to a living Person. He is now thinking of us, guiding us, opening ways to us, revealing His will to us and giving us assurances of His love. No earthly analogy of the relation of brothers, or of parent and child, or of husband and wife portrays the vital unity between the Lord and His disciple. The disciple is a living branch of the living vine. And the resurrection reveals to us His eternal life in which we shall share. "Because I live ye shall live also."

## A Wonderful Fruitage.

Years ago a French Testament was given to a little Catholic girl who spent four months in a Protestant school in Canada. She went home still a Romanist. Her father discovering she had a Testament ordered her to put it away and never look at it again. She laid it in the bottom of her trunk, and the treasure remained hidden for ten years. Then she married and began to read the Testament in the family. Her husband and herself were converted. After many months of labor and prayer a brother was saved. The three united to work and pray for a sister. She was soon led to Christ. At last the whole family, the mother and sixteen children, were rejoicing in Christ. Many years afterwards a brother wrote, "Through that little Testament given to Julia at Grande Ligne thirty-five years ago, and in answer to the prayers of Madame Feller that followed it, our families, numbering eighty-five souls, are all in the light."

Men will fight for their politics, but how quiet some men do keep about their religion.

## QUARTERLY MEETING.

The quarterly meeting of York and Sunbury counties Baptist churches will convene (D. V.) in Fredericton Baptist church on May 13 and 14 inst. The first session will open on Tuesday evening at 7.30 p. m. Churches will kindly all appoint delegates.

N. B. ROGERS, Ass. Sec'y.

## A NOBLE ANSWER.

At the battle of the Alma, at a critical moment, and English ensign perceived that a particular hill-top was the key to the whole position. Whoever took and kept possession of it was master of the field. Without the slightest hesitation the brave officer scaled the height, and once displayed his colors. They are hardly seen when, from all quarters, his comrades shout to him: "Bring the colors down to the troops." Without stirring an inch, the dauntless soldier returns the bold answer: "Bring the troops up to the colors." The command is given, and the English came off victorious, and subsequently, with their allies, vanquished the Russians. In the battle of life we should never lower, or fall back with the colors of our Christian profession, but demand that every faculty of our natures come up to their sublime requirements.

## I GAVE THEM MYSELF.

Said a mother to me one day, "When my children were young I thought the very best thing I could do for them was to give them myself. So I spared no pains to talk with them, to read to them, to be a loving companion and friend to my children. I had to neglect my house often. I had no chance to indulge in many things which I should have liked to do. I was so busy adorning their minds and cultivating their hearts' best affections that I could not adorn their bodies in fine clothes, though I kept them neat and comfortable at all times.

"I have my reward now. My sons are ministers of the Gospel; my grown-up daughter a Christian woman. I have plenty of time now to sit down and rest, plenty of time to keep my house in order, plenty of time to indulge myself, besides going about my Master's business wherever he has need of me. I have a thousand beautiful memories of their childhood to comfort me. Now that they have gone out into the world, I have the sweet consciousness of having done all I could to make them ready for whatever work God calls them to do. I gave them the best I could—myself."—Selected.

## BLESSED IGNORANCE.

Not long ago an eight-year-old boy, the son of a prominent official in Kansas, paid a visit to relatives in Pittsburg, Pa. He made a continuous journey from his Kansas home, where he had never seen a liquor saloon, to Pittsburg. Soon after his arrival, on going out for a walk in the streets of that city, and passing the liquor saloons with their screened windows and other characteristic appointments, he inquired with much curiosity of his uncle, "What kind of shops are these?" He had never seen such in his own city in Kansas. What a saving of the boyhood and girlhood of the nation it would be indeed if, as completely as from Kansas, the liquor saloon could be banished from every State throughout the Union!