

apt to produce changes in the appearance. But how glad we are if, in spite of time, and distance, and all kinds of change, we recognize the old ring in the voice, the old expression in the eyes, and find that the returned one is indeed essentially the same as when he left us.

No return that ever took place was like the one we read of to-day. As there never was such a sorrowful parting as that of the disciples with their Lord and Master, so there was never such a tremendous and eventful absence as that of Jesus from his people during the time his body lay in the grave. True, its duration was short, parts only of three days—from Friday evening till Sunday morning; but the interval was from dying to rising; it included the actual sojourn of the body in the grave, and of the spirit in the abode of the departed. From that Friday night till the “first day of the week” there was an unmeasurable distance. The Man who had hung bleeding on the shameful cross returned a Conqueror. The body laid to rest in that quiet grave rose nevermore to suffer or to die. The Lamb of God on whom “the sin of the world” had been laid rose free from the burden, having put it away forever. He died in weakness (2 Cor. 13. 4), he rose in power. He who had gone down into the deepest depths was now to be Lord over all.

Was he the same? Had no change taken place in his character (if we may so speak), in his feelings, his affections, his ways? The matter is of deep importance to every one of us. We read of his life on earth, we tell children what he was here, how tender, how compassionate, how condescending, how full of love. But he is not here now as he was then. He returned from the grave no more the “Man of sorrows,” but the King of glory (Psa. 24. 7), and as the “King of glory” he went up to heaven. How shall we show that the mighty One who sits at the right hand of God is just the same as when he walked this earth? Study what is told of him after his resurrection. The passage for to-day together with the Golden Text goes far to tell us what we want to know.

The passage tells us of three of his friends, and of their visits to his tomb. Mary Magdalene (of whom, until we find her standing by the cross of Jesus, we read but once in the gospels, Luke 8. 2) had gone early to the sepulcher, in company, as it appears from the accounts, with the other women. These she probably left as soon as they saw that the stone before the entrance was rolled away, and hastened to bear the news to Peter and John. These two immediately ran to the spot, and, entering in, found the linen clothes lying in order, but the sacred body gone. How did it then fare with Peter, John, and Mary? There is just one word about John, “He saw and believed.” He was not able to explain his faith to others, or to inspire them with it, but he could go home peacefully and wait. With Peter it was different. All he knew was that his Master was gone, and he went home for the time with John, carrying with him his bit-

ter grief. Mary remained, bound by her love and her sorrow to the place where the Master’s body had lain, and where he had hoped to find it.

The risen Lord, the conqueror over death, was noticing and caring for all these three separately. If we had been told to imagine to which of them he would show himself, I think we should have said to John, the “beloved disciple,” and the only one who “believed” in his resurrection. Yet it was not so. He came first to the two sorrowful ones.

First, to her who was most absorbed with himself. Mary did not ask herself what good there was in remaining by the tomb. She stood there and gave full vent to her grief. Looking into the tomb, through her tears she beheld two angels. But the sight gave her no surprise and awakened no interest. “They have taken away my Lord out of the sepulcher,” was the burden of her thoughts, and she turned away from the wonderful sight. “Tell me where thou hast laid him,” was the answer to the next voice that addressed her. And then the sound of her own name, uttered in the well-known familiar tone, told her that all she fancied lost was more than restored, and that the tender and mighty One had indeed returned to die no more.

Secondly, to the penitent, mourning over his sin. But of this interview with Peter Scripture tells us nothing beyond the bare fact. We get it only in our Golden Text, and in 1 Cor. 15. 5. Where it happened we know not. It may be that John had joined the company of the other disciples, while Peter remained alone, wrapped in his grief. Anyhow, it was to the erring, despairing one that the risen Lord came.

But to John we never hear of his appearing alone. The beloved disciple saw him in company with the rest, but was not favored with any private interview. Was, then, he who believed when all doubted passed over? By no means. We shall hear farther on how rich a blessing came to John.

But the other disciples—what of them? They were not absent a moment from the heart or the thoughts of the risen Jesus. “Go,” he said to Mary Magdalene, designating them by the tenderest of names—“Go, tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God,” thus linking them with himself in the hour of his triumph, of his joy, of his return to the Father. Do we not see here just the same Jesus whom we have known in his life and work on earth?

And should any ask, Does he still care for those outside the fold—for the guilty and the lost? We have best to look a little farther on in the chapter, and notice his greeting to his disciples: “Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” He still has compassion on the multitude, and sends his messengers to “bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind,” saying, “Yet there is room!”