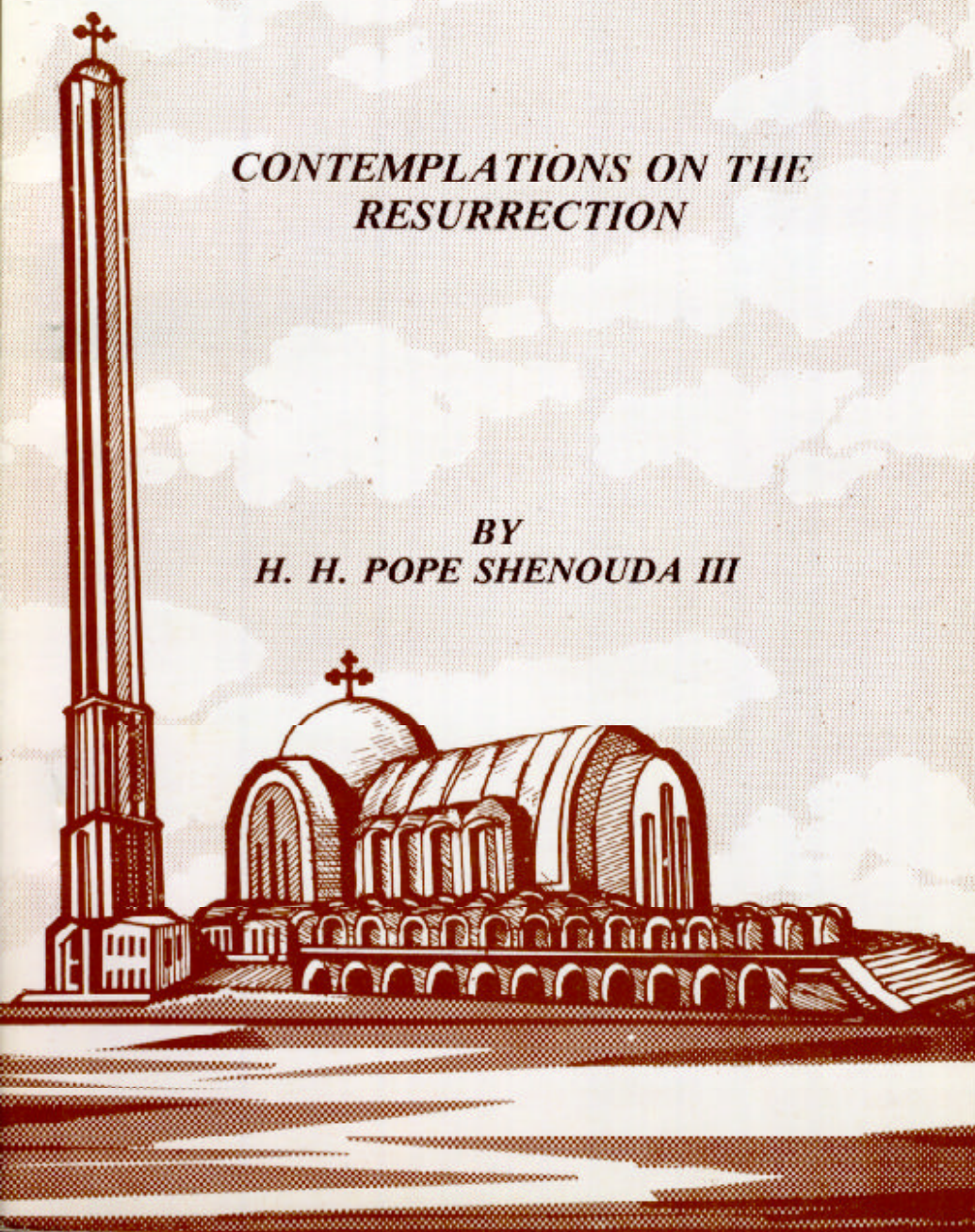


*CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE
RESURRECTION*

*BY
H. H. POPE SHENOUDA III*





**COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE**



See of St. Mark

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RESURRECTION**

**BY
H. H. POPE SHENOUDA III**

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PREFACE

This is the first book I publish about The Resurrection.

But I have published many articles about the resurrection in the Preaching magazine and in the daily newspapers.

Moreover, every year, on Easter Eve, we used to deliver a sermon about that subject in the Great Cathedral.

It was necessary to collect all these articles and sermons for this book, So we could publish it.

This book is comprised of two principal elements:

1. General - theoretical theology -talks on the resurrection.

This is an ideological trend which falls under the limits of theoretical theology or the philosophy of the resurrection written in a good style which suits all denominations.

It, also, explains how resurrection was an essential necessity; how it was potential and the uses and benefits gained from it both spiritually and generally.

2. Topics concerning the resurrection of The Lord Jesus Christ; glory be to Him.

It comprises the events of the resurrection and explains its power and its effects; how Jesus' resurrection surpasses other resurrections; the blessedness of this resurrection and its effects on your life; the joys caused by it and the proofs and confirmation of its authenticity.

3. Questions related to the resurrection.

A question about the glorified body; a question about the words of the Lord to Mary Magdalene "Do not hold on to me. "; two other questions about Saint Peter, the apostle and a question about the circumstances of the resurrection and to what extent its events agree with each other.

This last question needs a separate and complete article which will be delivered on another occasion; God willing.

Now, it suffices to wish you a happy Easter and good returns.

Pope Shenouda III

April, 1990



CHAPTER ONE

The Resurrection And Its Spiritual Depth

The Resurrection Is A Wonderful Meeting:

1. The resurrection is a wonderful meeting between two united friends who have lived together their whole life since their birth and even before it, during pregnancy in their mothers' wombs.

They never separated even for one moment; They are: the body and the spirit.

Each of them has a special nature; the body is earthly and the spirit is celestial. They have united in one nature-the human nature.

You cannot separate one from the other and say "This is the body and that is the spirit."

They have lived together in an admirable unity. The body expresses all the sensations and feelings of the spirit. If the spirit becomes glad the body will smile and rejoice. If it becomes sad, sorrow will appear in the eyes.

After a long life they will separate from one another because of death but in the end they will meet each other in the resurrection.

After a long separation they will unite again. **I wonder!! how will the sensations of the spirit be when it meets the body -**

the life long partner after hundreds and may be thousands of years as Adam, Noah and Abraham had done before!?!?

The spirit meets the body after seeing the body change into a handful of dust. Then returns more radiant than before, without any blemish.

Even the faults, stuck to the body in the past, disappear. Yes, it is raised without defects because wrong and evil deeds do not agree with eternal paradise.

The body returns more friendly. It never disagrees with the spirit in the other world for it is raised a spiritual body.

2. The second wonderful meeting in the resurrection is a meeting of nations and races of the whole history.

It will be a general resurrection since the days of Adam. All nations and races that lived through generations and centuries, with their different languages, features and lineaments, with all their heroes and leaders will meet together and try to be acquainted and understand each other.

Undoubtedly, they will do so because there will be one language the language of the spirit or that of the angels.

How wonderful this meeting will be!! It will be the greatest of all stories and the strangest narrative of long epochs.

The best of all will be the procession of the triumphant and victorious people who struggled during their life on earth, then conquered and supported truth and morals.

They will meet together and everyone has a story related by generations... then the world will become once more one nation as it had been before parting and dispersion.

I wonder!! how will the meeting of the nations which had fought with each other be? Will the causes that forced them to wage wars against each other seem insignificant?

3. The third marvellous meeting is that of the human-beings with the angels who are made of a nature more eminent than ours.

Meeting with them will be one of eternity's happy enjoyment.

4. But the most wonderful meeting with the Lord will surpass any other meeting in its eminence.

Our meeting with God, blessed is His name, will be the eternal paradise for there will be no paradisiacal life without Him.

Now my pen stops in silent submissiveness because I am before a scene which words fail to describe or interpret. It is above the standard of any language to express or any intelligence to imagine. Thus, the resurrection is a strange and wonderful meeting and what else?

The Resurrection Is A Miraculous Transition:

1. It is a transition from the limited to the unlimited.

It is an interchange from a life measured with days and years to an infinite one which has no connection with time.

I wonder! Is there another earth which revolves around itself and round the sun; and interprets its revolutions into days and years?

Or shall we rise over time and enter a new world?

Measures of time will come to an end... One moment in eternity is longer and deeper than the whole life of earth.

2. The resurrection is also a transition from the visible to the invisible.

It is an entrance to what is written in the Holy Bible "*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*" (1 Cor 2:9)

It is an entrance to the spiritual world and a way to the meeting with the angels, the invisible spirits where joys never known on earth will take place. Here, the resurrection surpasses all the grades attained by senses and rises to the realms where the spirit alone can realise everything.

3. Thus, the resurrection means transition from the world of sensation to the world of spirits.

In the resurrection we acquire spiritual senses which differ from earthly material ones.

The new senses see the spirits and spiritualities and are dazzled by them. Now, I myself keep silent once more.

Here is a kind of the revelation of human nature when it becomes conscious of what it could not perceive in the past and acquire spiritual characteristics not practised before.

In the resurrection the spirit can see the invisible or some of it or advance gradually in sight moving from spiritual satiety to more and more fullness in the life of revelation.

4. The resurrection is transition from the world of falsehood to the life of truth.

From the world of evanescence to the world of immortality. From a world in which everything will be abolished after a time to an everlasting world in which there is no falsehood but well fixed truth.

It is a world free from sin where men live with each other in association very pure, clear and everlasting.

What else about the resurrection?

The Resurrection Is A Multi-Faceted Miracle:

Here appears the miraculous power of God. How will the bodies be gathered once more after they changed into dust! ?

Isn't it He who created and formed them from dust; from nothingness?

Dust had been a nonentity before it existed. He who looks attentively at the resurrection from this side can consider the limitless power of God, our creator. It is enough for Him to wish and everything will be accomplished according to His will, even without an utterance. It is His will which is in root and essence an effective order, capable of doing everything.

We consider the resurrection a miracle not owing to its difficulty but because our mind is unable to perceive how it takes place!! But though the mind fails to comprehend that matter, yet faith can easily understand it.

Thus, the resurrection is the creed of the believers.

He who has faith in God and His power can believe in the resurrection. He who has faith in God as a creator believes also that He has raised the dead.

But the apostates intelligence cannot reach that standard. They do not believe in the resurrection. They have no faith in the spirit and its immortality. Moreover, they do not believe in God Himself.

It is also a necessary one for justice, serenity and evenness of mind.

It is necessary for justice to judge everyone according to his deeds done during his life on earth-whether good or bad. If they are good he will be rewarded; if they are evil and bad deeds he will be punished.

If there had been no resurrection men would have coveted greedily on worldly pleasures with their corruption and immorality without any care for what will happen to them in future life.

But believing in the resurrection and the following final judgement - reward or punishment - is a restraint to men because they will perceive that justice must prevail in the future life.

This final judgment will take place after the resurrection and the unity of the spirits with their bodies.

For it is unjust for the spirit to be judged alone leaving the body without retribution according to its obedience or disobedience to the spirit. Thus, the body must rise and the spirit must unite with it. And before God the two stand together because they were partners responsible for everything they did on earth.

The resurrection is also necessary for equality.

On earth there is no equality among human beings. There are the rich and the poor; the happy and the miserable, the one who lives in ease and comfort and that who suffers torture.

If there is no equality on earth, it will be appropriate to find it in heaven; and he who does not get his rights on earth can afterwards get them in heaven and the Lord will compensate him for what he had lost on earth if his deeds were satisfactory in the eyes of God.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus in the Holy Bible (Luke 16) presents to us a certain proof about equipoise between life on earth and life in heaven.

The resurrection is also a very magnificent, thrilling and admirable miracle.

It presents to the other world an idealistic life. The ideal man about whom the philosophers spoke and for whom Diogene searched but in vain, the man whom scientists fancied in their imagination, this man is presented by the resurrection to the other world in which there is no sin, no sorrow, no weeping, no depravity, no injustice, no deficiency or poverty.

It is a miracle presented by the resurrection. Moreover, it is an inordinate desire to a life of righteousness, which is ascertained by the resurrection.

Thus, the resurrection is considered a gladdening miracle.

It is cheering because life is completed by it, for man conquers death and lives forever.

The eternal life is the dream of the human-race which is threatened by death from time to time.

Although the life of mankind on earth is short yet it is full of weariness and affliction.

So great will be the pleasure of man when he gets rid of fatigue and death and lives happily in eternal paradise.

It is a dream which is ascertained by the resurrection.

Thus, we come to a very important reality.

The Resurrection Is The Gate Of Eternity:

But for the resurrection death would have been a decisive evanescence.

Evanescence is a dreadful matter. It is a distressing end which is considered the grimmest tragedy.

But God did not create man for evanescence but for continuance and life.

If man was exposed to death because of sin God laid before him the way of salvation.

He raised and rescued him from this death.

When God created man, He gave him something eternal-the spirit.

Man dies but his spirit does not perish but remains alive. In this way, man differs from other creatures which live on earth because their lives are annihilated and come to an end.

Man, by the resurrection, begins another new, endless life.

In this way, man's degree and his preference to other earthly creatures appear.

Because the spirit cannot form a perfect man, it was necessary for the body to rise and unite with it.

Thus, the eternal life cannot be complete with one part but with the two parts-the spirit and the body in order that man may return to life.

Thus, the resurrection is considered a wakefulness after a long sleep.

By this we mean the wakefulness of the body or that of the perfect man because the spirit is wakeful forever.

The resurrection is the end of death. No death will come afterwards.

It is an end to that dreadful enemy.

Man has triumphed over many enemies except death which has conquered and still conquers humanity as it was the irrefutable punishment inflicted by God against him when he fell down and sinned.

But, by the resurrection, God has saved humanity from that enemy and exterminated it forever.

Now, we stand before a bridge which separates between two lives. Death is at its beginning and the resurrection is at its end.

Death is the end of the first life and the resurrection is the beginning of the other world.

The distance between them is an interval of waiting in which the spirits of those who had gone away will wait till their brothers on earth continue their strife and probations.

The eternity presented by the resurrection must be preceded by the final judgment.

The doomsday will come between the resurrection and eternity when all human beings stand before the Lord to render an account of what they did when they were on earth whether good or bad.

They render an account about every deed, every thought, every feeling or sensation, every resolution or determination they had, every word they uttered; then the righteous go to eternal paradise while the evil doers go into continuous anguish.

So, whilst the resurrection is gladness in regard to the righteous, it is also a fright to the apostates and evil-doers.

As for the righteous, God arranges their standing once more according to their past deeds.

He gives every man a new standing according to the purity of both heart and thought and according to his carrying out God's commandments and to what extent he could establish the good and love among people and also, according to his love and strong desire towards God.



CHAPTER TWO

The Necessity Of The Resurrection And Its Possibilities

The Resurrection Of The Body:

When we speak about the resurrection we mean the rising of the bodies from death because the spirits are immortal by nature. Death has neither effect nor power over them. So, they are not in need of resurrection.

These bodies which change into dust from which God has created will come back to existence once more. The spirits will settle down in them and unite with them. All of them will stand before God in the doomsday - the day of the resurrection - in order to present an account of what they did on earth whether good or bad.

It is the dreadful day of final judgment which will be followed by the eternal termination of all humanity.

It will be either the paradise or the hell according to what one will deserve in regard to his faith and deeds.

The Resurrection Is A Possible Matter.

The possibility of the resurrection - with no doubt depends on the plenary and unlimited power of God.

All of us believe that the Almighty God is omnipotent. There is no limit to His heavenly ability.

However difficult the matter may seem to the renegades and the unbelievers or to those who depend on thought and science yet God, without any doubt, is able to raise the bodies from death.

The practice and the operation of the resurrection of the bodies is easier than creating them previously.

God, who gave these bodies the blessing of existence, is undoubtedly able to return them, once more, from the dust of earth.

Moreover, God has created everything from nonentity. He created the earth and its dust from nothingness; and from dust He created man.

Then, which of them is more difficult: the creation from non-existence or raising the bodies from dust?

Thus, it is intuitive that he who is able to carry out the most difficult matter can also execute the easiest one... and He who caused the creation to exist, can, with stronger reason, keep it.

We say so whatever obstacles and entanglements the perverts and the apostates and the half-educated savants and scientists may set before the possibility of the resurrection.

When I refer to the half-learned men I will declare innocent of the charge the scientists and the learned men who acquire complete knowledge.

The half learned man is a materialist and the resurrection seems to him and impossible operation.

Meanwhile, he ignores or may be ignorant of the other half of the truth which is the ability of God.

Half of the truth is that the earth may absorb some of the body's elements. A part of it may be decomposed or interfere with other substances or bodies.

The other half of the truth is that the material is imperishable.

Wherever the body may go, its component parts will remain extant and existing in the earth; the way of all flesh.

The infinite God knows quite well where the origins of the body are found. He, with His limitless power, can bring them back once more especially because it is His desire.

At the same time, He promised the human race to rise again according to the sayings of the prophets and what was registered in the holy books.

Thus, the resurrection, in its essence and reality, depends on God, blessed is His name. It depends on His will, His knowledge and His acquaintance and ability.

As for the will, God wishes man to rise from death. He promised him the eternal life and spoke of the resurrection, frankly and very clearly.

As long as God has promised something, there is no doubt that He will carry out His promise.

As for knowledge and ability, God knows where are the origins and the elements of the bodies which were decomposed and the places of their bones.

Moreover, He knows how to form and compose them again. Indeed He can do all that - great and dignified His great name is; high and elevated His omnipotent ability is.

With complete faith we believe in the power of our Almighty God.

He who denies the possibility of the resurrection must, consequently, deny the creation from nonentity.

He also denies the ability of God as well as His existence.

But the believers, who have faith in God and believe in His miracles and in the process of creation and the infinite power of this great Creator, consider the resurrection a very simple matter, easy to believe in.

The Necessity Of The Resurrection

There is a principal point why the resurrection is necessary and the understanding of the meaning of perpetuity.

God has promised man an eternal life. His promise was given to man as a whole and not to the spirit alone which is a part of man.

If the spirit was given the chance to enjoy perpetuity and eternal paradise we could not say that man as a whole enjoyed an easy prosperous life in eternity, but only a part of him which is the spirit.

Thus, it is very necessary for the body to rise from death and consequently the spirit will unite with it to form a complete man who can enjoy a perpetual life.

But for the resurrection, the end of the human body would have been the same as that of animals.

Then, what are the characteristics of that wise, living being, endowed with the faculty of speech whom God has gifted with

the talent of thinking, invention and the ability to build rocket , aeroplanes which convey him to the moon and whirl round the earth, then bring him back safely to it after collecting different data about other planets ?

Can it be intelligible and reasonable that the body of this marvellous and admirable man, whom the Lord gave the mastery over many sides of nature come to the same end of animals and insects? Indeed, the mind cannot accept that matter as true.

Thus, it is reasonable that the resurrection of the body keeps pace with man's prestige.

Man is distinguished and chosen out from other creatures which have bodies. With the gifts given to him by God, he can rule over them, pay attention to them and take care of them all.

So, the dignity of the body of this wise creature must be distinguished from the bodies of other unwise and dumb creatures.

The rising of the bodies from their graves is also a necessity incumbent for God's justice.

Man is a wise creature. He has his own will and consequently he is responsible for his deeds.

He will stand before God to take his recompense, whether reward or penalty, for what he did during his life on earth.

That deed was done by man, with his body and his spirit together. So, is it reasonable to judge the spirit alone? or to judge both of them together?

The spirit and the body are partners in everything, so, according to God's justice, they, together, have to enjoy the

good reward or carry out the penalty and remain in torture.

The spirit and the body

The body is the systematic organisation of the spirit, or the soul or the mind.

The spirit has an inclination for doing the good, and the body takes upon itself carrying out that good. It moves, toils, suffers hardships and passes the night awake and tolerates.

Isn't this body worthy of a reward for the good role which he plays and takes part in it with the spirit!? Is right for the spirit alone to lead an easy and comfortable life while the weariness and efforts of the body is blown to smithereens? Does such matter agree with God's justice?

Let us take the soldier in the battlefield as an example .

The soldier's spirit impels him to do reckless adventures; to be a commando and a redeemer. It forces him to sacrifice himself for the sake of his country. It is infatuated with love and patriotism for its homeland and its compatriots.

But the body carries and takes upon its shoulder the whole burden and pays all the expenses and payments.

It is the body which toils, passes the night awake and struggles. It is wounded, becomes torn and its blood flows. Is it right for the spirit; after all these sufferings, to enjoy alone the heavenly rewards without its partner-the body?

The body seems as if it got neither earth nor heaven!? God's justice does not agree with this at all.

Thus, it is necessary for the body to rise from death to share the spirit its joys.

We mention the same question in regard to doing evil deeds in which the body shares the spirit.

Perhaps the role of the body may exceed that of the spirit.

It is the body which plunges into worldly pleasures as food, drinking, drunkenness, narcotics, adultery, dancing, sport, jesting and insult.

After the body gives all these pleasures to its senses, will the spirit alone pay the price in eternity without any punishment or recompense to the body?

Certainly the answer is "No" because this does not agree with God's justice which must judge man as a whole-body and spirit.

So, the body must rise from the death to take his share in retribution.

Both the spirit and the body will be judged on the last judgement because they were partners in everything whether the spirit was the beginner and the body continued the work or the body had the bestial passion and the spirit yielded and submitted and took part in the body's libido and desires.

Let us give you one example about the partnership between the spirit and the body. It is the eye.

The spirit loves and feels pity for others and sympathises with them. Both love and sympathy appear in the eye.

The spirit flies into a rage at others or may have an inclination to revenge itself upon another; so, in the eye, you see the look of anger or the desire of avengement.

The spirit tends to pray to God. So, in the eye you see the look of supplication or you may observe the eye brimmed over with tears owing to the impression of the spirit.

With meek and humble looks, the body enters into partnership with the meek and modest spirit.

With haughty, insolent and elevated looks, the body shares with the insolent, elevated and haughty spirit.

As the eye plays its role, so do the features of the face. Also, the beats of the heart take part as well as the cerebral centres and other organs of the body.

These are examples about the partnership between the spirit and the body.

We observe such partnerships in the field of diligence and energy. The poet explains that and says: "If the spirits are eminent, the bodies will suffer much to fulfil their aims and desires."

Thus, the reward in eternity will be given to eminent spirits which had the good will and insisted to do the good. It will be given also to the body which took upon its shoulder carrying out these good deeds; that body which toiled, struggled, suffered much and was patient in order that it might fulfil the spirit's desires.

Thus, as the body took part in the spirit's deeds it must rise to share her the reward or the punishment and to carry the responsibility because recompense will be for man as a whole.

Even on earth, we also repay the body and at the same time we consider this as a reward to the spirit also.

Don't we venerate the bodies of the saints and the righteous?
Don't we visit their tombs and put flowers and roses on them?
Don't we pray for them?

We do not consider all these deeds mere respect to the body or to the bones or to the corpse or to dust but to man as a whole because with such deeds we greet the spirit as well.

Man is one unity. He is indivisible.

If he is worthy of honour and respect, we shall treat his body with deference and salute his spirit as well.

If he is unworthy of honour, we will pay no attention either to his body or to his spirit.

The bodies of the criminals who are sentenced to death or prison will obtain their punishment. At the same time, bad reputation will cling to their spirits which will be affected by what has happened to their bodies.

If our earthly justice acts in such a manner, now much the more the heavenly justice will be?

God's justice prevails man as one unity-spirit and body. Thus, the body which lived on earth and shared the spirit every action must rise.

The body was affected by the spirit's conditions, by its thought, by its sensation or reverential fear and the body bows spontaneously in submission.

When the spirit mourns the eye will weep and sorrow will appear on the face and in the movements of the body.

When the spirit rejoices the smile will appear on the features. When the spirit becomes afraid the body will shiver and fear will overcome the face.

When the self is blushing the body will perspire and shyness may appear on his features.

Both spirit and body are partners in everything. So, it is unjust to let the spirit by itself or the body alone bear the responsibility of that partnership.

The two are responsible and that is what will happen on the last judgement.

From the style of some of those who deny the resurrection, it seems that they disdain the body.

They consider it a material element while they esteem the spirit to have an essence which vies in excellence with the body's nature.

But we say that although man is formed of two natures: material nature and spiritual one, yet both of them are united together in one nature which is known as "The human nature"

The body is not evil; otherwise God would not have created it.

The evil is the submission of the body to the material with its desires and bestial passions. In this yielding, the spirit takes part.

We must not forget that the body has its virtues and advantages. He bows during the prayers. He kneels down and raises his hands and eyes to God. He fasts and toils and does the good.

It is the body who sacrifices himself for the sake of his country. It is he who stretches his hand and gives the poor and the needy.

Then, why do we reduce and lessen his important standing?

Aren't the artist's fingers which play the musical instrument and affect and move the hearts to be benevolent and charitable?

Aren't his fingers which cut out the statues, carve the wood, make pictures, paint portraits and present the art with which they direct the hearts towards the good?

Thus, the body itself is not evil; but it can work in the field of both good and evil.

The spirit can also work in the same field. Thus, they become partners.

Moreover, it is just for the bodies to rise from death in order to be compensated for what they had been deprived of, during their life on earth.

It is just for the bodies of the blind, for example, and the disabled, the crippled, the disfigured and persons whose bodies were so unlucky that they had no touch of beauty, no sign of health, no trace of power to rise on the last judgement without any shortage or deficiency in order that God may compensate them for the sufferings and deficit they had on earth.

All those, whose bodies were affected by poverty, hardship, hunger and illness during their life on earth, need to rise in soundness which will compensate them for the misery they suffered on earth.

This agrees with God's justice.

We rejoice with the resurrection and perceive that it is necessary, essential and possible.

Christ's resurrection was the first-fruit of the resurrection of all human-beings.



CHAPTER THREE

The Concept And Significance Of The Resurrection

Death is an alien and a stranger to humanity

When God created man He formed him for life. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being.

God wished him life and perpetuity but man's option inclined to sin.

So he brought death and caused it to himself as a result of his sin. *"For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23)*

Thus, death came into the world and reigned over humanity.

So, we rejoice with the resurrection because it is a triumph over death and a return of man's nature to life.

God has created man to live and not to die.

Christ's resurrection is a handsel of our resurrection. Thus saint Paul, the apostle, described Him as *"The first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep". (1 Cor 15:20)*

He is the first-fruit and we will rise after him.

Perhaps someone may ask saying "How can Christ be the first-fruit of the dead while many rose before Him? "

1. The son of the widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon whom Elijah, the prophet, raised from death (1 Kin 17:22)

2. The son of the Shunammite who Elisha, the prophet, raised from death. (2 Kin 4:32-36)

3. There are three others whom the Lord Jesus Christ Himself raised from death. They are:

- a) The son of the widow of the town called "Nain".
- b) The daughter of Jairus.
- c) Lazarus.

In fact, there are some persons who rose from death before the days of Christ but, after their rising, they died once more. They are still waiting for the general resurrection.

Christ's resurrection was the one after which there was no death. It was the first-fruit and the inordinate desire for which longs every believer in eternity.

We mean by the resurrection the way which leads to eternal life.

We know that man's life on earth is a very short story. It is nothing if measured or compared to eternity and the land of the Joy which is the good hope and the dream of all human beings.

The resurrection elevates the value of man and asserts that his life is not ended by death.

It affirms that there is another life which differs from this earthly one. We, God willing, will enjoy that new life after the resurrection.

Thus we say in "The Creed" which we recite every day in our prayers "and we are waiting for the resurrection of the dead and the eternal life as well, Amen."

So, we may say that the most important events of the resurrection are those which will follow it.

The resurrection shows that there is an extension to man's life in eternity. It proves that death is a mere stage of the journey of man's life. It is a bridge between two lives: an earthly life and a heavenly one.

Undoubtedly, the heavenly life is far better than the earthly one because it will be in heaven above any material standard.

It will be pure and without any sin.

Moreover, it will be an association with God, His angels and His saints. The holy Bible says about it *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."* (1 Cor 2:9).

So, Mar Isaac said **"Fear of death disturbs the heart of the ignorant but the righteous longs for death as he loves life "**.

Thus, Saint Paul, the apostle said *"having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. "* (Phil 1:23)

Indeed, death becomes inordinate desire to those who love God and the life in heaven. They consider it far more better than life on earth which has lost its purity.

Those, who believe in the resurrection, do not consider death as an end of life but a removal to another life.

The resurrection has changed people's look in regard to death. It is a mere transition or a bridge which leads to another life.

You can say that it is an ascent operation.

Thus, death has become the inordinate desire of the righteous.

The apprehension of death fell down forever after Christ had trodden down death by His resurrection.

Saints do not fear death any longer. They pay no attention to its causes as illness and conspiracies and aggression of the wicked.

He who fears death is the sinner who has not turned from sin. He becomes afraid of his destiny and the last judgement when he will stand before God.

The sinner, who practises certain desires and bestial passions, fears death lest it should deprive him of such lusts. But the righteous never fears death because he believes in the resurrection.

The resurrection is connected with faith. The heretics, for example, do not believe in the resurrection.

The believer believes that God has the ability to raise the body from death. He who has created human-beings from dust and made dust from nothingness can bring the body back to life in order to return and unite with the spirit.

The apostates do not believe in the spirit's existence or its perpetuity after death. They do not believe in eternity or in recompense and punishment. So, I said that the resurrection is connected with faith.

Believing in the resurrection leads to the life of righteousness and virtue.

The believer believes that in the dreadful last judgement he will stand before God to give an account for all his past deeds whether good or bad.

Thus, this faith leads him to be cautious and precision in his life for fear of the final judgment.

Consequently, he reckons himself up for every deed, every thought, every sensation and every word; then, he reforms himself as Saint Maccarius said "My brother, restrain yourself before they check you."

The true faith in the resurrection leads to the life of religious devotion and monasticism.

The resurrection drew men's attention to the glories of the other world; thus, the evanescent enjoyment of this perishable world diminished.

By their extravagant thinking in the invisible they paid no attention to the tangible and visible things.

They became as the Bible said " while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor 4:18).

But for the resurrection, men would have coveted greedily on the earthly life and plunged in its inordinate desires as the Epicurians used to say "*Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*" (1 Cor 15:32)

Those who believe in the resurrection and prepare themselves for it control themselves and keep down their desires and passions.

They practise spiritual training to make themselves right. They do not yield to bodily or material desires but lead a spiritual life and suppress their bodies, their senses and their nerves.

Love of eternity made the righteous long for something greater and more eminent than the world.

Everything in the world cannot satisfy or fill them because, from within, there is a strong desire for heaven and a great longing for the spiritual and happy life which exceeds sensation and intelligence and excels all earthly desires.

Thus, the saints looked at the earth as an expatriation and considered themselves strangers on it.

They always long for a heavenly home; long for another different spiritual and heavenly life which no eye has seen.

They longed for the other world which is adorned with holiness, innocence, spirituality, peace, love and purity. There, God fills the hearts and there is no place for any other desire.

In the resurrection, there is a kind of consolation and compensation for men.

He who does not find justice on earth feels that his rights are kept for him in heaven with the Lord who gives sentence in favour of the oppressed.

He who does not find the good on earth, as poor Lazarus, is consoled because he will find all the good in heaven. As he was tormented on earth he will find consolation in heaven.

The resurrection makes equipoise for the life of every man.

Justice makes a balance between all that man has got on earth and what he will get in heaven.

The resurrection offers a true consolation to all friends and lovers because it will gather them together once more after death separates them.

If life came to an end in the tomb without resurrection our dear friends who had passed away would perish. Our relationship would be all over with them and we would never see them.

Undoubtedly, this case wearies the heart and causes disaster to lovers who will lose their friends forever.

The resurrection gives us an idea about the power of God and His love to man.

This powerful loving God who can raise the bodies after they have been decomposed and changed into dust and who is able to bring them back to their first form in a kind of transfiguration- spirituality and luminosity - did not wish to enjoy the Cosmos alone but created other creatures.

He did not like to be alone in eternity, so, He bestowed perpetuity upon both men and angels and granted human beings an eternal life after rising from death.

One of the enjoyment of the resurrection is cessation of evil and all that sin has caused.

In paradise where the righteous live, there is neither evil nor sin. Our sins will come to an end. We will lead the life of plenary plainness and complete purity and cleanness.

We will be like angels and children in their innocence. The soul will get rid of the blemishes caused by sin as fear, doubt, lust, anxiety etc.

Then, the soul will be adorned with the crown of righteousness. All defects whether psychic or corporal will vanish.



CHAPTER FOUR

The Message Of The Resurrection

As we rejoice at Christ's resurrection, we also delight in the resurrection itself, I mean the resurrection of all human beings.

We, also rejoice at the profound, spiritual and good points of the resurrection which elevate the value of humanity and show clearly the good and the enjoyment the Lord has prepared for man in the other world.

First, we say that the resurrection is an indication to faith.

Undoubtedly, it refers to man's faith in God, and man's faith in spirit and in eternity as well as the other world. It shows his faith in the general last judgement which will be after the resurrection.

The resurrection clears up man's faith in reward and punishment and consequently his belief in heaven, in saints and in God's kingdom.

Because the apostates believe neither in the resurrection nor in the other world, they consider Nian's life equal to that of animals saying that both of them perish and come to an end by means of death.

Indeed, how worthless and significant the life of both man and animal, which ends in death is, in the eyes of the apostates.

Surely, man's life will be of no importance if he is content with some years spent on this planet and no more!

How inexorable and ugly death is in the eyes of those apostates. It is like an eraser which effaces existence, intelligence and knowledge of human beings and annihilates and leads them to nothingness.

Like the apostates are the Sadducees about whom the Holy Bible said that they did not believe in the resurrection or the spirit or the angels.

The Epicureans are no less ignorant than the apostates. They say "Let us drink and eat because we will die to-morrow".

Undoubtedly, the devil is the cause of repudiating the resurrection.

It is he who inspires the apostates, whether philosophers or ignorant, with such pretension.

If he succeeds in convincing them with the idea that there is no life after death, then, they will plunge themselves into mundane life with its anxieties and pleasures without thinking neither in their eternity nor in their standing before God in the last judgement. In this way they perish.

But the believers who have faith in God, believe in the resurrection and the Last Day.

The resurrection shows the unlimited capability of God.

All the abilities of man stand still before death. Both his power of intelligence and science and even his mind seem helpless before its potency.

But the Holy Bible teaches us that *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."* (Mark 10:27)

God is omnipotent. Both life and death are at His hand. He vitalises and He Himself puts to death. He can raise man from death.

As He has created him from the dust of earth, He can bring him back to life after the incorporation of his body into death inside the dust of the earth.

God, who has the ability to create everything from nothingness, can also raise man from death.

The resurrection proves God's love as well as his munificence.

God, who did not wish to be alone in the Universe, has originated and created creatures amongst which was man.

But after man's death, God did not wish him to perish and through His love and His generosity donated him life after death in order that his existence might be incessant, not for a time but forever.

Thus, God has endowed the mortal man with immortality.

The resurrection is something gladdening. By means of it, men will meet with their friends and loved ones who departed from this life.

What will be the case of the lovers whose hearts unite together during their life on earth and are separated afterwards by death?

I wonder!! Will it be an eternal separation without any connection or meeting in future?

Of course, God's love and mercy do not tolerate that matter.

After death, the spirits of lovers and friends will meet together but after the resurrection they will see each other with their bodies and spirits.

It will be a general meeting in which, not only shall we meet with our friends, but also with all generations that passed through history.

After the resurrection, there will be a great festival, made by God, in which all men will become acquainted with one another.

In this wonderful festival we shall be acquainted with all historical personalities about whom we have read without seeing them or knowing their shapes or their styles and dialects whether they were governors or rulers, or scholarly or idealists.

Perhaps God may send His angels to acquaint us with all the Fathers and apostles and also, we shall see fathers Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Job.

We shall also see our mothers Eve, Sarah, Elizabeth, Rebecca, Rachel and in the front our mother Saint Mary the Virgin.

The resurrection presents to us many other joys as the association with the angels and the saints. Above them all, the enjoyment of being in the presence of God Himself, before which the mind becomes so astonished and delighted that a person cannot express himself. It is sufficient for him to relish and enjoy its sweetness.

The resurrection carries within itself an operation of equipoise and compensation.

Those who did not receive their merits on earth will get them completely in heaven after the resurrection and those whom the

human race treated with injustice will receive complete heavenly justice as well.

Also, those who offered their charities in secret, without telling any one, will get their reward in heaven because God used to record their good deeds in order to reward them.

God will also repay all those who were not rewarded on earth for their good deeds.

In the resurrection men will perceive that God's judgments differ from those of men and that His justice will be completed in heaven.

Moreover, those who were born under certain circumstances or in special environments which could not guarantee for them happiness and social equality, will be compensated by God for everything they could not get on earth. See the story of the rich man and Lazarus. (Luke 16)

In the resurrection man is brought back to his first rank. His spirit restores its dignity and the body gets back its radiance.

Moreover, the body as well as the soul will have a kind of revelation and glory. Both of them will get rid of their deficiencies.

Thus, the Holy Bible said about the body *"It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. "* (1 Cor 15:43,44)

By the resurrection, the body gets rid of all its illnesses, infirmities and deformities. It appears in full radiance.

The soul also will be cleared of its sickness and defects.

There will be no fear, no doubt, no hesitation, no anxiety, no libido, no bestial passions and no cowardice ... etc.

The philosophers, who used to search for the superman will find him in the resurrection.

The man of the resurrection will be in his best form. All will have luminary bodies. Everyone will shine according to his own standard.

The dream of humanity will be ascertained and a righteous complete society will come to existence.

In the city of God about which Saint Augustine has given some descriptions, there are no combats, no dissension, no disagreements, no hatred, no selfishness and no competition. It will be a society of love and sanctity.

In the resurrection men lead a simple and innocent life. The Bible says they become like God's angels in heaven.

In it, sin vanishes and the body yields no more to it or to depravity.

The body is completely cleansed from sin. God washes it till it becomes whiter than snow (Psalm 50).

Thus, man lives in a spiritual standard fit for heaven and its purity.

In the resurrection, the indigenous obtains victory over the foreigner.

Truth overcomes falsehood because truth is the former and the origin while the untruth is foreigner and exotic in regard to this world.

In the resurrection life triumphs over death, because life is the origin and the source while death is a stranger.

Man is composed of a spirit and a body. The spirit is living and active by its nature and will remain, so, forever but the body, which was disposed to death when it was on earth, will become an immortal, animate and spiritual one after the resurrection.

Man will have a spiritual perception. He will never depend on his bodily senses.

Thus, man struggles and does his best on earth in order that he may enjoy the glories of the resurrection.

But not all men will enjoy such glories. They will only be for the worthy because, after the resurrection, there will come the Last Judgement in which all peoples will stand before the Just God *"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."* (Rev 22:12).

Blessed is the one who becomes worthy of the glories of eternity and the happy companion-ship with the saints.

Everyone, with strenuous effort, must do his best to make good deeds on earth in order that he may find them there.

Everyone must be in good relationship with God and with men. He must be dutiful both to himself and to the society in which he lives.

He must do good to all. So, he will have good reminiscence on earth and good reward in heaven.

For All Reasons, It Was Necessary For Christ To Rise

1. It was necessary for Christ to rise because in Him was life.

So, said Saint John, the Evangelist *"in Him was life"* (John 1:4). He who has life in Him cannot remain dead.

He said to Martha *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."* (John 11:25)

As long as He Himself is life, how can't He rise? Jesus confirms this meaning saying *"I am the way, the truth and the life"* (John 14:6)

How can't He rise, He who said to John, the Visionary, *"I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."* (Rev 1:18)

For these reasons, the angel of the resurrection rebuked the women saying *"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"* (Luke 24:5)

2. It was necessary for Christ to rise from death because He Himself has raised many others from death with a mere command.

Elijah has raised a dead person after prayers. Also, Elisha has raised a man from death but after many prayers.

But The Lord Jesus Christ, with an order, raised the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain as well as Lazarus because He is the Donor of life. On raising the daughter of

Jairus "He took her by hand and said to her ***"Talitha kowmi!"*** (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!") Immediately the girl stood up and walked around. (Mark 5:4,42)

On raising the son of the widow of Nain, He went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said ***"Young man, I say to you, arise."*** So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. (Luke 7:14,15).

On raising Lazarus Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, ***"Lazarus, come forth!"*** And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ***"Loose him, and let him go."*** (John 11:43,44).

Then; Was it difficult for Jesus to rise? He who ordered the dead to rise and they rose?

Indeed, it was necessary for Him to rise because He is the raiser of the dead. Yes, it was necessary for Him to rise as it was written about Him ***"For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will."*** (John 5:21)

Can't He who gives life to others raise Himself?

3. It was necessary for Jesus to rise because His resurrection was a prophecy which had to be fulfilled.

After Peter's testimony that Jesus is the Son of God, the Bible says *"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the*

elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." (Matt 16:21)

After the miracle of the Transfiguration and as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them *"Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.""(Matt 17:9)*

Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, *"The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." And they were exceedingly sorrowful." (Matt 17:22,23).*

After He had explained the parable of the vineyard, and as He was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, *"Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." And they were exceedingly sorrowful." (Matt 20: 18,19) (Luke 9:31-33).*

After the resurrection, men began to remember all those topics and remind each other of them.

But the angel answered and said to the women, *"Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." (Matt 28:5,6)*

The phrase *"as He said"* means the prophecies He had mentioned about His resurrection on the third day. In the Old Testament, there are other prophecies about His rising from death.

Thus, after His resurrection, The Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples *"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me. And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day. "* (Luke 24:44-46)

In the Old Testament, the story of the prophet Jonah, is one of the indications which refers to this resurrection.

When the Jews said to Jesus *"Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from You. "* He answered and said to them, *"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matt 12:39,40)*

4. It was necessary for Christ to rise because His resurrection was under His own influence and authority.

He died by His own will. He presented Himself to death.

In His immortal words, He explained that matter saying *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."* (John 10:17,18).

Indeed, how wonderful is this phrase!! "*and I have power to take it again*" which means "I have authority to take back the life which I Myself had laid, and no-one could take it from Me".

For these reasons, it was necessary for Him to rise by His own will.

We may ask a question: Why did He lay Himself? What is the use of that matter in regard to the resurrection?

5. It was necessary for Him to rise because His death was a mere temporary one to perform a double message.

It was possible for him not to die according to His nature and also "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Rom 6:23).

Moreover he did not commit any sin. He accepted to die instead of us in order to give His life for us as the apostle said "*being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.*" (Rom 3:24,25)

This was the chief message of death; I mean redemption

After the resurrection, it was also necessary for Him to go and announce good news to those who died in hope and open the gate of paradise and transfer the sleeping from hell to heaven.

About this matter, Saint Peter says "*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the*

Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison. " (1 Pet 3:18,19).

Yes, He preached those spirits with salvation and carried them to paradise as well as the right thief.

Saint Paul, the apostle, says " *Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.*" (Eph 4:9, 10)

6. It was necessary for Christ to rise because His divine nature was never separated from His human nature not even for a twinkling of an eye.

About His death, the Syrian Division says "His spirit was separated from His body but His divine nature was not separated at all from His spirit or from His body.

His spirit which was united with His divine nature went down to the underground depths and preached the imprisoned spirits and elevated them to heaven. His body remained in the tomb united with His divine nature.

As for the separation of the spirit from the body, He died as a human being but He was alive with His spirit.

He had the life of the divine nature for which Nicodemus, when he was shrouding him, cried "The all holy, the all powerful, the living forever. "

Yes, it was necessary for that body, which united with the divine nature, to rise. It was impossible for the Body to remain dead.

Death could not overcome The Lord Jesus Christ. It was impossible for it to defeat Him. By His death, Christ Himself trampled over that death which triumphed over all human beings.

The Lord died on behalf of us to save us. He paid the price of our sins and in this way He did away with the influence of death.

7. Thus, it was necessary for this one who, by his death, exterminated the power of death, to rise.

It was necessary for Him to rise in order that He might proclaim His victory over death by His resurrection and to announce to all peoples that death would have no sting according to the praise of Paul, the apostle *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor 15:55)*

8. It was necessary for Christ to rise in order to console and support the disciples.

It was necessary for Him to rise to obliterate the horrible results of His crucifixion because some of the disciples became afraid and others hid in the attic.

The rest of the believers dispersed for fear of the violence of the Jews...

Some ignored and denied Him; others mistrusted Him, but it was necessary for Christ to rise in order to repair and overhaul people's faith and to encourage them to remain firm in their faith and to hold out against Jews' persecution.

Thus, His resurrection was the greatest motive which urged them to preach the Gospel.

9. It was necessary for Him to rise to prove that he was not a common man who dies as other people.

All men die and remain dead waiting for the general resurrection in order to rise but it was necessary for The Lord Jesus Christ to rise immediately, otherwise, they would have considered Him a common man. His resurrection has proved His divinity especially because He rose by Himself without any help from anyone.

10. It was necessary for Him to rise to be the first fruits according to which all men will rise.

So, Saint Paul said " But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. " (1 Cor 15:20-22)

He also speaks of the importance of the resurrection of Christ and says " *And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. " (1 Cor 15:17-19).*

11. It was necessary for Christ to rise in order to lay the foundation of Christianity.

And to stay with the disciples a period of forty days through which He speaks with them about the matters which belong to

the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3) and to lay before them the rules of faith and give them the secrets and the rituals and to breathe on them saying " *And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*" (John 20:22,23).

Then He promises them saying " *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8)

After that, He commits to them preaching the Gospel saying:

"*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*" (Mark 16:15,16)

"*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" (Matt 28:19,20)



CHAPTER FIVE

The Reality Of Christ's Resurrection And Its Results

The Jews' opposition to the resurrection

Christ's resurrection from amongst the dead was the greatest occurrence which shook the entity of the Jews. So, they tried, by all means, to resist it.

Moreover, they tried to oppose the resurrection before its happening. Even after it had taken place, they made great attempts to resist it.

Before His crucifixion, The Lord Jesus Christ had announced the good news of His resurrection. More than one time, he said to His disciples that the Son of Man would be betrayed and given to the hands of the Gentiles who would condemn Him to death and would turn Him over to the Jews to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day He would be raised to life!!

He said these words while they were going to Jerusalem. (Matt 20:18,19); (Mark 10:33,34); (Luke 18:31-33). He, also, said the same words on their way to Galilee. (Matt 17:22). He repeated these words after Peter's confession that Christ is the Son of the living God. (Matt 16:21).

So after the transfiguration He ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen " ... *tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.* " (Mark 9:9)

He, also, said to them on the great Thursday I have power to take it again *"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."* (Mark 14:28). Moreover, he gave them the sign of Jonah. (Matt 12:38)

On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, *"Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."* (Matt 27:62-64)

What was that fearful evil which the resurrection would bring to them that they imagined it more dangerous than the instructions of Christ whom they gave the nickname "The first deception".

Christ's resurrection proved His truthfulness and that His prophecies were true. It proved that He was powerful and His crucifixion was not due to His weakness but it was an arrangement for saving humanity.

All the matters lead men to have fixed and firm faith in Him.

So, they made all precautions against the rising of Christ. They rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb.

They made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard (Matt 28:66) They were not ashamed of doing that on the Sabbath evening (After preparation) although they accused The Lord Jesus Christ of opening the blind's eyes on a Sabbath. (John 9:16:24)

All their precautions became a great evidence in regard to Christ's rising from among the dead.

Every action made against the resurrection turned to be a proof and a witness for its existence.

Both the seal on the tomb and the guards in front of the empty tomb proved the reality of Christ's resurrection.

They also asserted that Jesus went out of the tomb while its entrance was closed and sealed.

This matter resembled Jesus' coming of Saint Mary's womb without causing any decoration to her virginity. It also resembled Jesus' visit to His disciples, who were together, with the doors locked, when He came and stood among them and said "*Peace be with you.* "

As for the bribe paid by the chief priests to the guards in order to announce that Christ's disciples carried Him away during their sleep, it was a false artifice which was too Weak to stand against the power of the resurrection.

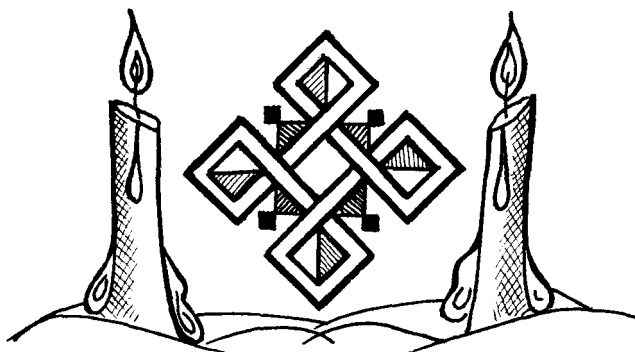
The burial cloth of the head and the shrouds

The existence of the strips of linen lying by themselves and the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head folded by itself separate from the linen are clear proofs of the reality of the resurrection. Then; how was it possible for Jesus to get out of these linen shrouds which were wrapped strictly around His body?

And if anyone had stolen the body how could He have denudated it from the strips of linen sticking to it?

And what is the aim and the use of separating the linen cloth from the body? How did this event take place very quietly while the soldiers were on guard?

Thus, it is not strange to read in the Bible that " *Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.* " (John 20:8)



The Lie Concocted About The Stealing Of The Body

It is incomprehensible for any-one to believe that the disciples stole Christ's body because they will not benefit by stealing it.

Moreover, on grasping Jesus, they escaped because they were afraid of the Jews.

Also, it is something unbelievable for the disciples to contrive the tale of the resurrection and suffer imprisonment and flogging and face death for the sake of a false and untrue story.

No-one can believe that the disciples denuded their master from His shrouds and took Him naked.

If they had done so there would have been no dignity either for Him or for them.

You can add to such bad deeds, the loss of time and exposing the matter to be shown up.

What is the use of pretending that Christ has risen from among the dead then they themselves face death for preaching the resurrection and at the same time they have no faith in it?

Indeed, stealing the body was something impossible.

How can they penetrate the lines of the guards at the tomb?

How can they roll the big stone from the entrance of the tomb without making any noise which attracts people's attention and causes the guards to wake up from their sleep?

How can they carry a corpse on Sunday? How can they perform all these matters while the eyes are gazing at the tomb?

How can we believe that the guards were asleep and paid no attention to the severity of the Roman law?

If the sentinels wished to sleep, why didn't they divide the watch-time among themselves and did the thing by turns?

If they were all asleep, how couldn't the noise of the act of stealing the body arouse even some of them?

Why weren't they tried by a court martial for their negligence?

Why did they remain without punishment? Why was there no judicial inquiry about the act of stealing? Why didn't the authorities make any inspection?

The disciples and their dwellings are well known... Where did they hide the stolen body?

How did they bury it on Sunday?

And if the guards were asleep; how did they know that the disciples came at night and stole the body?

Indeed, it was a cunning stratagem of an evil, weak thought, non acceptable by anyone.

It showed the depravity, the falsehood and the lies of those priests and proved their false pretence, the bribes they paid and their deviating people from the truth and from the right course.

What about the great numbers of those eyewitnesses who were contemporary with the resurrection?

Were they liars? Then, how did God make miracles through them if they were impostors and deceivers?

Any how, as the chief priests of the Jews tried to oppose the resurrection before its happening, they also made great efforts to mar its glories after it was accomplished.

For these reasons they were neither religious nor truthful.

They broke the Sabbath when they sealed the tomb and put guards at its entrance.

They told many lies about the resurrection and tempted the guards to say false stories.

They gave bribes to the guards in order to broadcast their lies about the resurrection.

Through their authority and their relations with the governor they could deceive all the people. They persecuted the disciples wrongfully although they know....

As they brought false witnesses during Christ's trial, they also brought other false witnesses to deny His resurrection.

Also, the chief priests of the Jews were not men of faith.

They did not believe in the miracles done by Christ during His life among them.

Although the miracle of the resurrection was very clear before them, they did not believe in it.

Moreover, they had no faith in the miracles done by the disciples in the name of Christ.

Their hearts were closed completely before the clear truth.

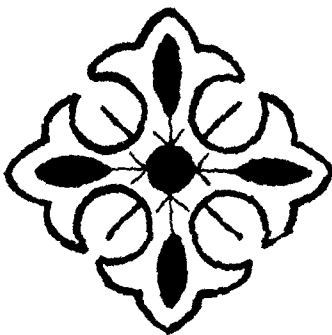
They proved that they would have no response to any miracle even if they witnessed it.

They also did not believe in the disciples' preaching the Gospel.

Christ's resurrection frightened them because His existence used to tire them and reveal their wrong deeds.

So, they rejoiced when they thought that, by His crucifixion, they got rid of Him.

The phrase "*The living Christ*" tires the sinners but gladdens the righteous. There are many men like the priests of the Jews. They wish to get rid of Christ because His existence admonishes them with their wrong deeds.



CHAPTER SIX

The Blessings Of The Resurrection In Our Life

1. Everything is possible:

Nothing is impossible. Men do their best in all fields but if they stand before God they will stop both work and abilities completely for every attempt will be of no use.

This was the sensation of Mary and Martha after the death of their brother Lazarus who had already been in the tomb for four days. It was said about him "By this time, there is a bad odour".

When The Lord Jesus Christ raised him from death, they became sure that nothing is impossible. After Jesus had raised Lazarus from death, this Lazarus died once more and has not risen yet.

But Jesus Christ, by His own resurrection, conquered and smashed death forever.

Christ's resurrection was an eternal one after which there would be no more death.

Paul, the apostle looked at the power of this resurrection and said "*O Death, where [is] your sting? O Hades, where [is] your victory?*" (1 cor 15:55).

Indeed, death was broken up and everything became possible.

Not only did men believe that all things are possible with God (Matt 19:26) who is able to do everything but the apostle also says " *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* "

(Phil 4:13) He also said " that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection ... " (Phil 3:10)

The Holy Bible gives us a general rule about *"impossibility"* and says *" All things are possible to him who believes."* (Mark 9:23)

The resurrection has given men a gigantic power.

As death has been conquered and smashed before them, all the obstacles and difficulties became smooth and easy and there was no impossibility. What else did the resurrection present? What is its second blessing?

2. Longing for the eternal life.

The apostle said *"I desire to depart and be with Christ , which is better by far. " (Phil 1:23)*

The apostle desires to be with Christ who rose from among the dead and went up to heaven, then sat on the right of God. Christ who said *" And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all [peoples] to Myself."*(John 12:32)

Christ who said *" I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. " (John 14:2,3)*

Love of eternal life made men long for some-thing greater than life on earth, more dignified than substance and elements and more powerful than any desire or lust on earth.

The saints looked at the earth as a remote strange foreign land. They considered themselves aliens and foreigners.

They longed for a heavenly residence. They wished to lead a spiritual and eternal life.

Also, men longed for the other world where there is no sorrow, no gloominess, no sighing, no sin, no hatred and no fights. A world of love, joy, peace and purity, where there is no evil and where the good prevails.

3. By means of the resurrection the human nature is cleared up both physically and spiritually.

As for the bodies; some are raised spiritual and imperishable. They do not become tired, or hungry. They do not feel thirsty. They never fall ill or decompose.

They become like the angels of God in heaven. They rise taking the similarity of "*His glorified body*".

How thrilling and magnificent is this revelation through which the human nature becomes glorified.

Indeed, this brings back to our minds the happenings of the transfiguration on Mount Tabour.

Also, the spirit takes part in the transfiguration. It returns as it had been in the beginning and resembles God's image and likeness in an inexpressible purity.

Some approaches to the resurrection

Many miracles took place during Christ's crucifixion. The sun gave no light and darkness came over the land. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Earthquakes shook the earth and the rocks split and the

tombs broke open. But did all men make use of these miracles? No, everyone benefited by them according to the aptitude and readiness of his heart.

When the earth shook, the robber believed in Christ while the priests and their chiefs did not believe in Him.

When blood and water drew out of Christ's side the centurion and his soldiers believed in Him while the leaders of the people denied Him and His resurrection.

The matter is not connected with the miracle and its might and strength but with the inner readiness of man's heart and his wish to benefit by it.

As for the miracle of the man who was born blind and whom Christ healed, the man himself believed in Christ but the Pharisees did not trust the man although the miracle was very powerful and clear.

They became agitated because the man defended Christ who healed him. So, they threw the man out of the Synagogue. (John 9:34)

Also, when Christ healed the man with the paralysed hand they refused to make use of the miracle pretending that it was made on the Sabbath. All these matters remind us of the Parable of the Sower which the Lord explained.

The growth of the plants depends on the kind of the soil. Is it formed of stony layers; is it good for sowing; is it full of thorns?

The sower is the same sower; the seeds are the same seeds but the soil on which the sower scatters the seeds differs in

regard to its reclamation, its efficiency and its acceptance to the divine sowing.

This is what happened in regard to the story of the resurrection and the story of the crucifixion.

The miracles have taken place but the people differed from each other; some benefited by them while others gained nothing.

Seeds on a stony soil

Although the chief priests and the leaders of the Jewish people witnessed the darkness that spread at the time of Christ's crucifixion, yet they got no benefit because their hearts were darker than the obscurity and the darkness that covered the whole world.

Even after the miracles in which the right robber and the Centurion believed, they went to Pilate and said *"Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'* Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first." (Matt 27:62-64)

Thus, they took some soldiers with them and went to the tomb to make it secure.

They sealed the tomb and set some soldiers to guard it.

They did all that on the Sabbath although they criticised Jesus and said that He was a sinner because He healed the sick on the Sabbath.

They were very enthusiastic and had great zeal for the Sabbath. They contracted the enmity of Christ because of this day "The Sabbath".

Moreover, they claimed from the authorities to break the bones of the crucified and to bring them down from the crosses lest they should contaminate the Sabbath.

What a strange zeal for the Sabbath!!?

In spite of this enthusiasm, they, in the evening before the Sabbath, took the soldiers with them, sealed the tomb and set the guards to keep its entrance on the Sabbath without considering their deed as a sin.

After sealing the tomb, they seemed to say in their hearts "We have broken the Sabbath in order that we may break the one who infringed the Sabbath".

While they were sealing the tomb, Christ, Himself, set free the redeemed and rescued them from hell, and disjoined the seals of the closed paradise, then, let in those who have fallen asleep in hope.

It is very easy for men to play with their consciences as they wish.

Some persons have consciences which resemble the balls which roll on every side and in every direction till they come to a stop.

Indeed, the chiefs of the Jews were of the same moulds.

What they have done was against them and not in their interest.

If they themselves had not sealed the tomb and set their own guards at its entrance they would have been able to protest and

say that the disciples stole the body. But, now, they have set the guards and sealed the tomb. What could they say about the empty tomb?

Christ has risen from among the dead with great glory and came out of the sealed tomb as He had come out of Saint Mary's womb while she remained virgin.

After Christ's resurrection " And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men." (Matt 28:2-4)

Did the guards benefit from of this great miracle? Did the priests and the elders benefit from it?

No, the sacred seeds had fallen on a stony soil.

How truthful our Father Abraham was when he said " *If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.* " (Luke 16:31)

If we can fumble for an excuse for the Gentile soldiers who do not know anything about Christ and His glory, what about the priests and the teachers of the law.

They should have taken care of God's commandments and their execution.

When they heard of the resurrection from the guards, they gave them bribes and put false words on their tongues and told them "...Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him [away] while we slept.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." *So they took the money*

and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported” (Matt 28:11-15).

Thus, they did not only make use of the miracle of the resurrection but their wickedness and their evil grew more also.

Not only did they tell lies but they taught others to be liars.

Their falsehood was not perfect. They suggested to them to say that the disciples stole Him while they were asleep.

If you were asleep how could you know that He was stolen by His disciples!?

Indeed, lies' string is too short.

They were not satisfied with their lies. They placed some accusations to others, falsely and spuriously.

They accused disciples of theft. They paid bribes to cover their deeds. They spoiled the soldiers' fame, deceived the ruler and misled the people and cheated them.

In spite of all this deviation from the truth they described Christ as a delusive deceiver as if they wished to say to Pilate "Rescue the people from this deceiver in order that we may delude them.

Scattering the seeds of the miracle of the resurrection in the hearts of those leaders is like sowing them in a stony soil. So the miracle did not affect them.

Their care of keeping their posts trespassed their thinking of eternity.

From their behaviour we can see how man glides down from sin to sin, then, rolls down in a long endless chain of sins.

The principle of their sins is love of worthless glory. This love led them to resentment.

They envied Christ because they wished to be the most outstanding nation without competitors.

What would be the matter with that Nazarene who covered their fame and revealed their hypocrisy?

Resentment led their leaders to weave conspiracies which led them to be false witnesses in Christ's judgment; to treat Him with cruelty during His crucifixion and to delude all the people.

This wrong attitude led them to fear, and fear guided them to seal the tomb and set the guards at its entrance although it was the Sabbath.

Certainly, they took the people in their partnership in breaking the Sabbath.

These sins, revealed by the resurrection, led them to bribery, telling lies, apostasy, instigation to evil and deluding the people.

By such bad deeds, they wished to become magnificent in their own eyes and in people's eyes as well. In fact they lost themselves and gained neither heaven nor earth.

They are a stony soil. They are a sin surrounded by fear. They feared Christ even after His death. They feared His resurrection lest it should destroy what they had done. They felt that He still had work to do.

It is well-known that the killer always fears the ghost of the killed person.

Psychologists were true when they said that the killer hovers about the place of the crime. So the Jews, continued hovering about the spot of their crime.

The disciples forgot that He had told them that He would rise on the third day but those priests and elders, who were afraid of Christ, did not forget His words. They said to Pilate: “ *We remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'* ”

It is something strange that they remembered that phrase and did not remember His words “*I and My Father are one.*” (John 10:30)

They did not remember the deeds done by Him, which no one had carried out before Him.

They did not remember how He raised Lazarus from death after four days.

They did not remember how He offered sight to the born blind. They only remembered His resurrection because it disturbed them and made their thoughts uneasy. So they committed crimes to get rid of their troubles.

They seemed to be samples of those seeds which were scattered on the stony soil.

There were many other samples. There were some seeds which sprouted but thorns choked them afterwards.

Mary the Magdalene was the most outstanding example during the events of the resurrection.

As for the effect of the resurrection on the disciples, we say that it was like the seeds which were picked up by the birds.

The birds, in regard to the disciples, are the devil of doubt which snatched their faith and flew away.

How did these matters take place? How did Christ change them into a good cultivable land which yielded hundred fold.

How did He restore faith to their hearts and to Mary Magdalene's heart as well?

Seeds snatched by the birds

What happened was heavy and cruel to God's heart.

Even His disciples doubted in His resurrection and did not believe in it.

But He did not face such doubts with admonition. He embraced their weakness with love and treated their doubts with convincing.

Mary Magdalene went and told them about the resurrection of the Lord. *" And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe." (Mark 16:11)*

When the women returned from the tomb and told them about God's resurrection *" And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them."* (Luke 24:11)

When the Lord came up and walked along with the disciples from Emmaus *" Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. " (Luke 24:13)*

When Jesus Himself stood among them, they did not believe that He rose but "*But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.*" (Luke 24:37)

The devil of doubts could snatch the seeds of faith which God had scattered on their soil, so the Lord condescended and came down to their weakness in order that He might convince them of His resurrection.

In the same way He behaved with the two disciples of Emmaus who were not intelligent as He "*And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*" (Luke 24:27)

He stayed with them till "*Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; ...*" (Luke 24:31). Then they went and told the Eleven.

The Lord, also, condescended to the weakness of the Eleven and said to them "*Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.*" (Luke 24:38,39)

Then, He, who rose in a glorified body, condescended to convince them and asked them ; "*Have you any food here?*" "*So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.*" (Luke 24:43)

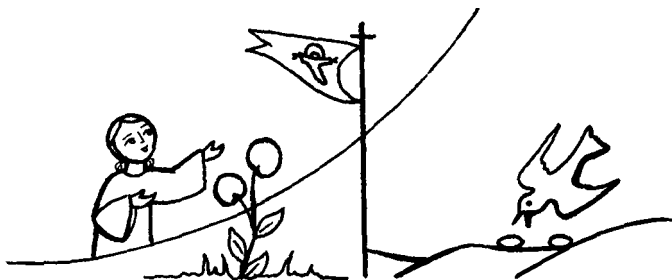
As Thomas was absent, the Lord showed Himself especially to him to reveal his doubts and to convince him.

The Lord stayed with them till they became sure and believed. "
He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. "
(Acts 1:3)

He did not leave them but appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

He sent away the birds which used to snatch their seeds. He changed them into a good soil which did not give thirty only but sixty and hundred also.

Their faith became a big fruitful tree which yielded all kinds of good fruit.



CHAPTER SEVEN

The Resurrection Is Joy And Gladness

1. On announcing the good news to the women, the two angels said to them *"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!"* (Luke 24:5,6)

The phrase "The living Christ" caused great joy to the disciples while it caused terror to the chiefs of the Jews and to the sinners as well.

This phrase did not only intimidate them at the time of the resurrection and preaching it but this fear will chase them till the next coming of Christ and will pursue and follow them in the Dooms-day.

About this the Bible says *"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so."* (Rev 1:7)

Like the priests of the Jews, there were many who wished to get rid of Christ lest He should reprimand and show them up.

2. Christ's resurrection was a joy and gladness to the disciples and to us also.

The day of crucifixion was a mournful and a distressing day as to the psychic side but as for the divine side, it was a day of deliverance.

The people witnessed the pains, vituperations, insults, spittle and nails only, but they did not witness either the deliverance or

the opening of Paradise's gate and how the sleeping in hope were transferred to it.

The disciples were filled with terror but they rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Equal to the disciples ' grief and restlessness on Friday, there were much more joy on Saturday because of the resurrection. Thus, the words of the Lord were verified " *but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.*" (John 16.-22)

They rejoiced because they saw the Lord. They saw Him alive outside the tomb after thinking that there would be no future meeting.

They, also, rejoiced because the Lord obtained victory in His combat against falsehood and that He " ... *who always leads us in triumph in Christ, ...* " (2 Cor 2:14)

They also rejoiced because they got rid of their enemy's gloating and malevolence as well as their disturbance, anxiety and disappearance.

At that time, they were able to go out of their places and face the situation and speak publicly with might and power about Christ's resurrection.

They rejoiced because the cross was not the end of the story.

The end of it was the gladdening and cheering resurrection which removed and eliminated the pains of Golgotha and Gethsemane and the events which took place before and after them.

He said to them "*I will see you again and you will rejoice* " .

We celebrate the joys of the resurrection which give the sensation that the Lord is living with us and among us and that no tomb can enclose Him, who holds all men in His heart. **The disciples rejoiced at Christ's resurrection.**

They also rejoiced when they saw Him. His resurrection was the point which changed both their history and the history of Christianity.

3. By means of the resurrection and by this material proof which they witnessed, they rejoiced and believed that it was something possible.

So, Saint John, the apostle, said about Him " *which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, " (1 John 1:1)*

Saint Peter, the Apostle, said " *Us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. " (Acts 10:41)*

By means of the resurrection the disciples' fear changed into courage, boldness and non observance of the powers and forces which declare war against the word of God.

Thus, after the resurrection, saint Peter could say " *We ought to obey God rather than men. " (Acts 5:29)*

By means of the resurrection, the disciples never feared anything.

All that their enemies can do, is to threaten them with death. But what can death do to those who have seen the resurrection and believed in it!?

Thus, Christianity believes that death is mere transition and "To die is gain " and "it is better by far" and "never feared by anyone. "

4. By means of the resurrection, the disciples felt that they were overshadowed with a powerful God.

They believed in Him "who holds the keys of death and Hades." Life is in Him. He is the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Him will live, even though he dies. He is the source of life not only on earth but in the eternal life also.

5. The disciples rejoiced because the Lord kept His promise with them.

Because the promises of Christ, that He would rise and that they would see Him, were fulfilled; they believed in the other promises as " ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. " (John 14:2,3)

They had confidence in what He said about sending the Counsellor to them (John 16:7) and that "*they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them. (Acts 1:8)*

They believed in His promise "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" (Matt 28:20)

All these promises gave them power, faith and joy.

6. Not only did the disciples rejoice at the resurrection but they also, with pleasure, met the pains caused to them as a result of giving testimony in favour of the resurrection. Pain had a new conception in the minds and feelings of the disciples because they had the “ *But we have the mind of Christ.* ”. (1 Cor 2:16).

They became convinced that pain was the way to glory as it happened with Christ through His crucifixion.

They put this perception before them “ *We suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*” (Rom 8:17)

So, he tolerated and suffered pains saying “ *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.* ” (2 Cor 6: 10)

7. By means of the resurrection, the cross became honour and glory but not pain.

The disciples were not disturbed any more. So, Paul, the Apostle, says “ *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.*” (2 Cor 12:10) He also says “*As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.*” (2 Cor 6:10).

8. The resurrection became joy to all the believers and good news for the general resurrection.

The resurrection gave the Christians hope and trust in the other world. So, they concentrated all their desires in it and renounced worldly pleasures.

All that Christianity proclaimed about the life of devoutness, religious devotion and monasticism and forsaking the world depends on believing in the resurrection and longing for the other world which surpasses all earthly desires.

Thus, in every liturgy, the church repeats the words of the apostle " *Do not love the world or the things in the world. ... And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; ...* " (1 John 2:15-17)

9. In the joys of the resurrection they rejoiced at the kingdom and the eternal paradise which would come afterwards.

They knew that, after the resurrection, there would be great happiness. Saint Paul, the Apostle, could say about these matters " *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.* " (1 Cor 2:9)

The same apostle spoke about the crown prepared for the righteous saying " *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.* " (2Tit 4:8)

In the "Revelation" God explained other glories which those who overcome will get after the resurrection. He spoke about the tree of life, the crown of life, the hidden manna authority, the morning star and the white robes ... (Rev 2,3)

How beautiful his words were when He said " *To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also*

overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. " (Rev 3:21)

We cannot separate the resurrection from its glories for which the saints longed for death.

Saint Paul said "*Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. " (Phil 1:23)*. He also said "and be with the Lord all the time. "

In "Revelation", saint John spoke about the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven which is the dwelling of God with men.

Indeed, how beautiful is the resurrection which leads to all that we, in hope, are waiting for rejoicing at the Lord and His promises.

10. Thus, the resurrection gave us hope to be with Christ forever.

The joy of the resurrection is not only to rise from death but also to rise with Christ and live with Him.

So, the resurrection, in itself, became a means and not end aimed at.

It is a means to live with God and enjoy His companionship in continuous inexpressible and glorious joy, with the queues of His angels and saints.

The resurrection has become the desire and the passion and the faith of all men.

They consider it the way to eternity and living with God which is the aim of our life on earth.

11. At the time of Christ's resurrection, the disciples who had been afraid of being related to Him, rejoiced at being His followers.

In the past, they were so terrified of being attributed to Him that Peter, the night before judgment, denied his relationship with Christ and with an oath he said "*I do not know the Man!*" (*Matt 26:74*)

Now, after the resurrection, they became proud of Him.

They rejoiced because the Lord, by His own will, appeared to them for forty days, in the attic in Jerusalem, on the shores of the sea of Tiberias, and in Galilee.

They were filled with joy because the Lord spoke with them, tranquillised their hearts, forgave Peter's denial, convinced Thomas of his doubts and came down to their weakness in order that He might elevate them to his power without rebuking them because of their escape, hiding, and doubt.

12. They rejoiced because The Lord Jesus Christ searched for them after His resurrection.

The time He spent with them was a period of dressing their wounds, removing their doubts and forgiveness for their sins.

It was an interval of preparation for the coming service.

The Lord spent with them forty days through which He showed Himself to them "*Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*" (*Acts 1:3*).He gave them many convincing proofs that He was alive.

13. They rejoiced because through Christ's appearance to them, they perceived His glory and His greatness.

With a light from heaven flashed around Him, He showed Himself to Saul of Tarsus that he fell to the ground puzzled. (Acts 9:3-6)

He appeared to John the visionary. *" His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. "* (Rev 1:16,17)

14. The disciples rejoiced because, after the resurrection, they were trusted with a mission.

The Lord said to them *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matt 28:19,20) *" Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; ... And these signs will follow those who believe ... "* (Mark 16:15-17)

Thus, they had a mission, a great and important one for which they Eved and do their best for its ascertainment. Thus, they will be crowned and the words of the Lord *" I will make you fishers of men."* (Matt 4:19) will be realised.

Undoubtedly, Peter has rejoiced when the Lord said to him after the resurrection *"Feed My lambs. ", "Tend My sheep."* (John 21:15,16)

No doubt, all the disciples rejoiced when the Lord, after the resurrection said to them *"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. ... As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. -"* (John 20:21-23)

15. After the resurrection, the disciples rejoiced at the spiritual body because The Lord Jesus Christ will raise their bodies as He rose.

This transfiguration which will happen to human nature after rising from death was mentioned with extended detail by Saint Paul, the Apostle who said *"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown perishable, it is raised imperishable,. it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. (1 Cor 15:42-44).*

He also said about Jesus Christ *" who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, ... "* (Phil 3:21) take note of *"**Like His glorious body**"*.

These words give us an idea how beautiful the other world is. They, also, give us a notion about its spirituality and the splendence of the spirit when it is freed from the bonds of materiality and the abilities of the spirit and its talents.

16. The resurrection supported preaching the Gospel with confidence and faith.

Confidence in Christ who rose from among the dead; with whom the disciples lived forty days after the resurrection *" He*

also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. " (Acts 1:3)

John, the Apostle, said about Him *"Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched. "* (1 John)

A summary of the disciples' joys:

"Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." (John 20:20). Joy remained with them as a plain course of their life.

They rejoiced at the Lord's resurrection. They were very happy when He showed Himself to them.

They rejoiced at His true promises and at the resurrection in general.

They rejoiced at His triumph over death. They were glad because the Jews would not gloat over them any more.

They rejoiced at the power they were given. They were very glad because of the mission which the Lord gave them after the resurrection.

They were delighted with the spreading of preaching the Gospel.

They were happy in spite of the persecutions and the difficulties they met because of their testimony in favour of God.

The Bible said about them " *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.* " (Acts 5:41)

They rejoiced also because He fulfilled His promise and sent to them the Holy Spirit.

They rejoiced when He said to them " *But tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.*" (Luke 24:48)

They rejoiced at His saying " *For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*" (Matt 18:20) and His saying " *I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" (Matt 28:20)



CHAPTER EIGHT

The Lord Jesus Christ's Resurrection Its Power And Its Effectiveness

There is a great difference between the two days

They were two days. As for the human senses, they were diametrically opposite: Friday, 14th of Nisan and Sunday 16th of Nisan, the year 34 AD

Friday was a gloomy day in regard to all the disciples and the followers of Christ.

It was an exciting and thrilling surprise which they never expected to happen to their great teacher.

The conspiracy which was accomplished very soon. It was woven very quickly; the crowds who shouted all the louder "*Crucify Him; Crucify Him*".(Luke 23:21),(John 19:6) the disciple who betrayed His master in return for thirty silver coins, the series of insults to which the Lord was exposed as cursing, derision, mockery, slapping on the face, spittle in addition to the pains caused by the thorns, the flogging and fastening on the cross with nails.

Was it true that everything had been accomplished so rapidly.

Did the doer of the miracles and the great teacher who amazed all men become so delusive and deceptive that the authorities crucified Him between two robbers?

And those who benefited by His love, kindness and miracles disappeared from existence! Even His disciples scattered and escaped and left Him alone as it is written " *I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.*" (Matt 26:31) (Zech 13:7)

Peter Himself, the most enthusiastic among the disciples denied his master before a servant girl and called down curses and swore to the people that he did not know the man (Matt 26:74)

As for Christ's enemies, they got grip of everything. They could hold the Sanhedrin and take a decision against him. They could excite people's anger and make them repeat their words.

They could make an impression on the governor till he rendered a judgment against Christ although he said " ... *I find no fault in Him.*" (John 19:4) that he had found no fault in Christ

So, evil seemed so triumphant and cruel and the words of Christ to those rulers we fulfilled " *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*" (Luke 22:53)

All that the devil could do was done. He could get rid of Christ who was beloved by all men and followed by thousands who were amazed by His instructions. Jesus, " *He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.*" (Luke 4:40)

He also raised the dead, gave sight to the blind and, by His power, evil spirits came out of many.

Even after they killed Him, they made the governor give an order for the tomb to be made secure by putting a seal on the big stone and posting the guard.

They completely felt assured that Christ came to an end. It was a bad end "And He was numbered with the

transgressors , ... " (Is 53:12). All His followers were scattered ... !!

Thus, that Friday was a distressing one in which injustice predominated, treason and cruelty spread and covetousness and evil obtained victory.

Christ's disciples found themselves perplexed and at a loss. Belonging to Christ was a dangerous matter. Christ was still in the tomb.

Everything was in the hands of the authorities. It seemed that there was no hope in enjoying once more the good days they had spent with their beneficent teacher.

As for the deliverance which was accomplished on the cross, none has felt it. All that was seen by men was that the crucified one seemed too weak to save Himself.

They defied Him saying " *If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross ...* " (Matt 27:40)

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked Him " *He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.* " (Matt 27:40-42)

Also, one of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Him " *If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.* " (Luke 23:39)

In this way, Friday was a day of gloating, injustice and dispersion but something took place and turned the rudder towards the opposite direction, It was the resurrection which shook the whole Jewish existence whether rulers or people.

The resurrection took place at the dawn of Sunday in spite of the existence of the guards, the big stone and the seals.

Great precautions were taken to guard the tomb but the empty tomb stood as a material witness for the resurrection as well as the well arranged strips of linen and the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head.

The chiefs of the Jews tried, by all means, to deface and disfigure the reality of the resurrection but they could not.

Indeed, the tangible occurrence was much more deeper than all pretence.

Christ appeared alive to His disciples. His appearance banished their fears, encouraged them and gave them an extra-ordinary power to be witnesses for His resurrection.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. (Mark 16:9) and to Simon Peter (1 Cor 15:5) and to the two companions of Emmaus. (Luke 24:12-3 1) and to the ten disciples in the absence of Thomas. (Luke 24:33-43) and to the disciples in the presence of Thomas and showed them His wounds. (John 20:26-29)

He, also, appeared to seven of His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. (John 21:1-7) and to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, then appeared to James. (1 Cor 15:6,7) and " *He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*" (Acts 1:3)

He was with them when He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (Acts 1:9)

He appeared to Saul from Tarsus; on his journey to Damascus and chose him as an instrument and apostle to carry His name before the Gentiles. (Acts 9:3-15)

All these events gave the disciples a abnormal power. About this the Bible says " *And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. " (Acts 4:33)*

What was the power of the resurrection which gave them strength?

The power of the resurrection

The Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection from among the dead was the greatest event that shook the Jews' entity.

By all means, they tried to resist it saying "This last deviation from the truth will be more powerful than the first straying" They meant preaching the Gospel.

Then, what was that power of the resurrection and what were its effects?

1. Christ came out of the tomb while it was closed.

This miraculous performance was not something strange for Jesus as He had come out of Saint Mary's womb while she remained a virgin.

Also, during His appearances to His disciples after the resurrection; while they were gathering together in the attic, He

came in and stood among them " *when the doors were shut.* " (John 20:19)

2. One of the signs which prove the resurrection's power is that Christ rose by Himself and not by others' help.

All those who rose before Him were raised by others' help.

Elijah, the prophet raised the son of the widow at Zarephath. (1 Kin 17:22)

Elisha, the prophet, raised the son of the Shunammite. (2 kin 4:36)

The Lord Jesus Christ raised the daughter of Jairus, and the son of Nain's widow and Lazarus but He rose by Himself because the energy and the power of the resurrection were in Him. It was impossible for death to keep Him under its control because " *In Him was life.*" (John 1:4)

3. The Lord Jesus Christ rose in spite of the stressed guardianship, the strong guards, the seals and the big stone at the entrance of the tomb.

The worldly power used its utmost energy but Christ was stronger than it.

The resurrection proved that it was more powerful than all the obstacles. It was a victory against all Christ's opponents and adversaries; a triumph over death, over Hades, over the tomb, over the big stone, over the seals and over the strips of linen that were wrapped around His body.

Thus, when Saint Paul knew Him, He said " I may know Him and the power of His resurrection. " (Phil 3:10)

Paul knew the power of Christ's resurrection when he saw Him after the resurrection. The Bible says " *As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.*" (Acts 9:3)

Thus, this apostle became sure of Jesus' powerful resurrection and could share in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death.

Saint John, the beloved one, experienced the same power when Jesus appeared to him " *His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*" (Rev 1:16) **Inside the tomb, Christ's power was greater than any power outside it.**

On sunday, at dawn, He left the tomb in a moment not known by anyone. The stone was in its place till the angel came and rolled it to announce the resurrection which was accomplished. So the women could see the tomb empty.

4. The aspects of His power after the resurrection:

These are some sides of the power which men witnessed on earth, in addition to the powerful numerous appearances; the power of His ascension to heaven and sitting on the right of God; the power of entering the attic with the doors closed and the power of changing the disciples from weak terrified persons into brave heroes who could preach the Gospel with all ability and without any objection.

As His resurrection was powerful, so, there was another power which preceded that resurrection.

5. His power between the time of His death and that of His resurrection.

After His death, it was His own power with which He could open the gates of Hades and go to preach to the spirits in prison. (1 Peter .3:19)

With this power, He could descend to the lower, earthly regions and lead captives in His train and give gifts of redemption to men, then, after the resurrection, He could ascend higher than all heavens, in order to fill the whole universe. (Eph 4:8-10)

6. By His resurrection, The Lord Jesus Christ, proved that He was more powerful than death and that His death and His silence during the judgment were not due to any point of weakness in Him.

If He had spoken, He would have dumbfounded and convinced His audience, but this was not His aim. His aim was to redeem us.

So, when they asked Him to come down from the cross He did not respond to them although He was able to come down. His only aim was to suffer pain and die on behalf of us and pay the price of sin, return and redemption for us.

The resurrection proved that Christ's silence was not weakness.

The power of the resurrection was the strongest reply to those who charged Him with weakness, or those who thought that His crucifixion was a sign of His disability.

By the resurrection, it was proved that Christ's silence had eminent aims.

He kept silent because He wished to give Himself for us. If he had defended himself he would have won the case without any doubt.

Many a time, He answered the chiefs and the elders and the priests of the Jews and they gave no reply.

Moreover, they witnessed the power of His words when He was twelve years old. Even His audience certified that He spoke as one who had authority.

Christ's silence during His judgment was a proof that He died by His own will.

He said about Himself "I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. ... " (John 10:18)

He laid it down at the time of crucifixion and took it up at the time of the resurrection.

Jesus has given up the Spirit with love and self sacrifice not because of weakness and disability and as He rose in power, He died in power as well.

When He breathed the last, He cried out with a loud voice while the body was completely exhausted. His water and His blood were drained.

Flogging, walking, beating, bleeding and hanging on the cross made Him powerless.

His body died but His divine spirit remained alive without death.

During His death He could give good news to those who slept on hope. Also, He could open the closed gates of paradise and let in it the robber to be with Adam, his descendants and the saints of the past ages.

He could also rise and His resurrection mocked at the guards, the seals and the big stone at the entrance of the tomb.

It did not happen; in the history of humanity, that anyone other than Christ could overcome death by his own authority; or rose by his own will or went out of a tomb with an entrance closed by a huge stone and guarded with fully armed soldiers.

7. The power of Christ's resurrection smashed the chief priests of the Jews as well as all the Sadducees. It proved their crime of His judgment and His crucifixion.

It proved that all their past pretences were false. So, by the resurrection, they became blamable before the nation.

When the disciples proclaimed the resurrection in every connection, the chief priests said to them *"Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"* (Acts 5:28)

The power of the resurrection terrified the chiefs of the Jews because it showed His righteousness.

If He had been culpable, He would not have been able to rise from among the dead.

As the resurrection was a proof of His righteousness, the resurrection at the same time proved the injustice of those chiefs and their trumping up charges against Him. Those chiefs who had rejoiced thinking that they had got rid of Him by killing Him.

The speech about His appearance after He had been killed terrified them.

The holy saints did not stop blaming them for this point itself. So, Saint Peter, the Apostle said to them after the miracle of healing the crippled beggar *"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.. "* (Acts 3:13-15)

8. The Saddukees, in general, do not believe in the resurrection. so, Christ's resurrection was a dangerous practical proof against the proceeding of their creed and instructions.

Thus, with all their power, they resisted the resurrection and opposed the disciples when they announced it.

So, the Bible says *" Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.. "* (Acts 5:17,18)

But the power of the resurrection was stronger than their resistance.

Indeed His resurrection from death was more powerful than His coming down the cross.

Moreover, His resurrection proved that He died by His own will and not by force especially because He Himself rose without others' help and by Himself came out of the closed and sealed tomb as He came out of Saint Mary's womb with her virginity sealed.

Indeed as He said about Himself "*I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*" (John 10:18)

9. His resurrection proved that He was more powerful than death; so, He was stronger than all human powers which kill and put to death.

He was more powerful than the injustice of the evildoers; more powerful than their conspiracies and their authority.

They did all that they could do till they prosecuted Him and fastened Him with nails on the cross.

They defied Him and mocked at Him. They thought they triumphed over Him especially because Christ remained silent all the time of His judgement and challenging Him. "*He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent.*" (Is 53:7)

His resurrection proved that His death was a self-sacrifice and not by force.

Trusting His resurrection meant believing in His love, in His self-sacrifice and in redeeming humanity.

It meant trusting His power, His past words about Himself and His relationship with God.

This is the power of the One who died by body and remained alive by His divinity.

It is the power of that One who said to John in the Revelation " ... *I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death..* " (Rev 1:17,18). That powerful One " *whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.* " (Acts 2:24)

10. The power of Christ's resurrection, with which it was distinguished from other preceding ones, is that there will be no death after it. It will be a continuous eternal resurrection.

All those who had been raised from death died once more and are still under the power of death waiting for the general resurrection.

But Christ has risen alive and will remain so forever. Death has no power over Him. So, the Bible gave Him the surname " *the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.*" (1 Cor 15:20)

11. One of the clear and strong signs of Christ's resurrection is that it was a glorified one.

He was raised in a glorified body which did not feel tired or feel sick.

A body which did not feel hungry or thirsty. A body which did not become decomposed.

A body which could come out of the tomb with its entrance sealed and could enter with the doors closed. A body which could ascend to heaven.

In the general resurrection, we expect to be raised in the same way as the apostle said " ... *we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,* " (Phil 3:20,21)

12. As Christ's resurrection was powerful so was its effect on the church and all men.

It could change the occurrences on every side. The disciples who were afraid and dared not declare openly their relationship with Christ gained a strange power to preach the Gospel.

And Peter, who formerly denied Christ before a slave maid, could bravely say to the chief priests "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" (Acts 5:29) "*For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*" (Acts 4:20)

13. The power gained by the disciples from the resurrection may be concentrated in two points:

a) They knew quite well that Christ was more powerful than death.

He has triumphed over death. As we say in our prayers "**By death He trampled over death.**" It means that after He died He could trample over death by His resurrection.

The knowledge about this occurrence confirmed their faith and they remembered the Lord saying " *I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.* " (John 10:17,18)

b) By Christ's resurrection, they knew that they would be raised from death like Him.

Thus, they never feared death. The dread of death was smashed before them when Christ trampled over it and went out of the tomb alive and glorified.

They feared death no more and paid no attention to it. Such bravery remained the characteristic peculiarity of the disciples and of all the members of the church.

Saint Paul, the Apostle, says more than that " *Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*" (Phil 1:23)

14. One of the remarkable signs of Christ's resurrection is confirmation of faith.

The Lord Jesus Christ spent forty days with His disciples talking to them about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)

During that period, He confirmed their faith and explained to them everything about Himself in detail.

He put before them all the disciplines of the church, as well as the Liturgy and all the rules of faith and its creeds.

After the period which Christ spent with them after His resurrection, they were filled with spiritual and faithful abilities with which they could face the whole world with steadiness and stability. **They spoke about the resurrection from their own experience.**

As Saint John, the beloved one, says " *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, ...* " (1 John 1:1)

The resurrection was no longer a mere theoretical creed but something which they themselves witnessed and viewed.

This experience endowed them with a power of faith that they could spread it all over the world with confidence and certitude.

15. The power of the resurrection appeared in the resurrection itself, in its circumstances, in its results and in what happened after it.

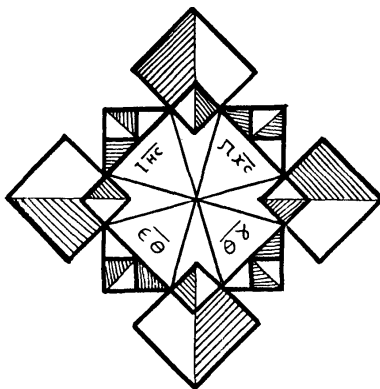
It was not a single resurrection special for The Lord Jesus Christ alone but for all of us.

It was a handsel for the general resurrection, for heavenly Jerusalem and for eternity with its enjoyments and happiness according to God's promises.

The resurrection was so powerful that it revealed Christ's nature - What was it? Who is he who could do such things?

It was also a forepart to the miracle of ascension.

It was a silencing and conclusive answer to the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection as they trusted neither in spirits nor in angels.



CHAPTER NINE

Contemplations On The Resurrection

The first thing we observe is the modesty of the Lord when He allowed His crucifixion and the insults of the Jews against Him to occur publicly before all the people. At the same time He made His glorified resurrection in private and a secret not seen by anyone.

He did not rise in glory before all men in order that He might be compensated for the insults and the reproach caused to Him during the crucifixion but He rose in secret.

He chose the dawn to be the time of His resurrection because at that time all human were sleeping.

He chose the dawn in order that no one might see Him during His glorious resurrection.

He was far from the dazzling views of His resurrection as it happened on His birthday.

Then, He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the other Mary, to Peter, to the women, to the two of Emmaus, to the Eleven, to Saul from Tarsus and to some of the brothers to the favourites, to His own but not to those who formerly gloated on Him.

In spite of all that, the resurrection which took place in secret troubled the Jews and caused to them terror beyond measure. They made great efforts to oppose it or at least to prevent people from believing in it but in vain.

When they found that they had failed in preventing the occurrence of the resurrection by setting the guards, the big stone and the seals, they wished to prevent it from being conveyed to men in another way, by telling lies, with bribery and by rumours.

When their trials failed and they could not prevent the news of the resurrection by their false means and when the news spread all over the world through the preaching of the disciples they resorted to another stratagem.

They tried to prevent preaching the resurrection by arresting the disciples, flogging them, putting them in jails and making complaints to the governors against them.

All the human plans done to prevent men from believing in the resurrection failed.

It was true when the Bible said " *No weapon formed against you shall prosper.* " (Is 54:17)

What was the secret of this great resurrection? Its secret was that for the first time and also for the last time a person could rise from death by himself. He was raised by no one.

Indeed, this occurrence terrified them.

The Lord Jesus Christ has fulfilled what He said about Himself. "*No one can take it from Him.*" " *I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*" (John 10:18)

The powerful Nazarene has triumphed over them. That Nazarene whom death could not conquer.

That Nazarene who trod death down and rose at the time He had fixed and according to His former prophecies. No one could oppose His resurrection. But why didn't Christ

appear to them after the resurrection? Wasn't it suitable to convince them to believe in Him!?

He did not appear to them because they were unworthy of Him... Even if He had appeared to them, they would not have believed in him.

This point reminds us of what Abraham, the Father of Fathers had said to the rich man who was contemporary with poor Lazarus *"If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead"*(Luke 16:31)

Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ made many other miracles before them and they did not believe in Him.

When He healed the born blind they said to the man *"We know that this Man is a sinner."* (John 9:24)

During the crucifixion, darkness came over all the land; the earth shook and the rocks split; the curtain of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom and some of the holy people who had died were raised to life and in spite of all these occurrences they did not believe in Him.

He did not appear to them because they were not only unworthy of Him but also because they had no faith. Then, why did He not appear to other men?

The Lord Jesus Christ left a field for faith about which Paul, the apostle, said *" ... faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. "* (Heb 11:1)

If the resurrection had been something visible it would have been added to the circle of viewing and not to that of faith because faith means: "to be certain of what we do not see."

It was enough that when He appeared to the rulers, all men believed in Him through them.

As for faith, all men could not bear this matter, so, when Christ appeared in His resurrection, He did not appear in His glory, even to His own, because they could not bear it.

With the two of Emmaus, who did not know Him at first, He spoke to them gradually.

With Mary Magdalene, He hid His personality that she thought Him to be the gardener; then He revealed Himself bit by bit.

As for Saul, from Tarsus; when Jesus appeared to him in some of His glory, his eyes were blinded by the radiant light of Christ's face, then He healed him.

Also, when Jesus appeared in some of His glory to Saint John, the beloved one, he fell to Christ's feet as if he were dead. The Lord raised him and told him not to be afraid.

Indeed, who can bear seeing Christ in His glory? But as for His modesty, it was enough for Him to make Himself nothing.

He will appear to them with His glory in the second coming and then they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall on us!" and all nations on earth will mourn.

With the spirit and power of the resurrection Christianity began its glorious history.

The disciples went forward into a new epoch of power. *" And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. " (Acts 4:33)*

All the attempts they had done to smash Christ, He Himself smashed by His resurrection.

Even the devil himself was completely destroyed by this resurrection.

The Christ who conquered death and who said " ... *I have overcome the world. ...* " (*John 16:33*) is able to do everything. He can always lead us in His victorious procession.

This triumphant, the rising from the dead, can lead a group of the triumphant ones and give them from His grace and from His power.

Thus, the defenceless Christianity could face Judaism and other ancient religion. It, also, could stand firm before pagan philosophies, Roman authorities, conspiracies, judgments and persecutions.

Christianity remained persisting and moved forward under the power of Christ, the rising from the dead, till it changed the Roman nation to a Christian one.

Paganism disappeared from the world and the whole land became for God and His Christ.

Also, the resurrection of the body was a sign of rising from sin.

About this matter, the apostle said "*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* ", "*and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,* " (*Eph 2:1,6*)

May we all live under the power of the resurrection. This resurrection which changed the disciples and made the empty tomb a sign of perpetual triumph.

This resurrection which was the beginning of the power in the life of the first church.



Some Of The Occurrences Of The Resurrection

The Lord Jesus Christ, glory be to Him, did not stop work for the benefit of humanity even when His body was in the tomb.

He has done work between the crucifixion and the resurrection.

God, by His resurrection, sanctified the human nature which is liable to death and made it liable to the resurrection.

Before the resurrection, God, also, worked for our sake even when His body was on the tomb.

By means of death His spirit was separated from His body but His divinity never separated from His soul or His body.

His spirit, united with His divine nature, could do a wonderful rescuing action for the sake of those who are sleeping on hope.

With His death He paid the price of sin and bought us by His blood. So, after He redeemed humanity, it was His right to carry the sleeping from Hades to Paradise and it was so.

With His spirit, united with divinity, He went down to Hades to say the good news to the sleeping there on hope. “... *He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.*” (Eph 4:8).

He opened the gate of paradise and carried to Him the righteous who were waiting in Hades. With them, He also let in the right robber to paradise.

Indeed, how trustful He was when He said to Saint John, the visionary, *"And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."* (Rev 1:18) (Phil 4:3)

Indeed, blessed are those whose names are written in the book of life because death has no authority on them.

They may stay there for a time, as Jonah remained in the belly of the huge fish (whale) then He rescued him safely without any harm.

Thus, God brought out those who were in Hades and by His authority He let them into Paradise.

This great deed was done by god in secret. Heaven praised God. The sayings of the prophets were accomplished and in secret, also, the Lord rose from the dead.

His spirit, united with His divinity, came and united with the body which was united with divinity, then, He was raised by the power of His divinity and went out of the tomb with its seals.



The Women Carrying Spices And Perfumes

It was something strange that the women took spices and perfumes and went to the tomb while these perfumes do not agree with believing in the resurrection.

But the Lord took interest in their love and treated the defect found in their faith.

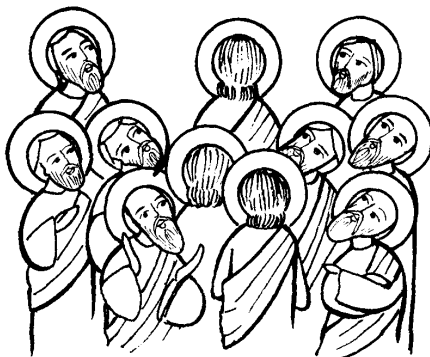
Did they carry the perfumes for the body which was in the tomb? Hadn't they the faith that Christ had risen and left the tomb?

Thus, the good tidings of the angel revealed the same meaning when he said to the two Marys *"I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. "* (Matt 28:5,6)

The same words of reproach were said to the women, who were carrying the perfumes and the spices, but with clearer style *"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'* And they remembered His words." (Luke 24:5-8)

Yes, He, formerly, said that He would rise from the dead. He did not only say those words to the women but many a time, he said them to His disciples also.

If the Lord informed the disciples of His resurrection and they did not believe Him, how much the more would those women be?



The Disciples' Doubts

The resurrection of Christ was an occurrence never happened before as He rose by Himself without any help from others and His strange words, never said by anyone before, were verified. *" I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." (John 10:17-18).*

Who dared say such words except Christ? So, His resurrection distracted the minds. It was above intelligence especially after the events of the cross and the pains and the insults directed to Him. And after the potency and authority with which the Jews treated Him.

Thus, it was not easy for the disciples to believe in the resurrection while they were afraid and hiding in the attic.

On the cross, He said "It is finished" which meant that the redemption was completed and the price of sin was paid.

But, there was another work for Him to complete. It was a work special for patronage.

Before Him, there were righteous persons who were troubled and in need of soothing.

What would He do to strengthen their weakness and to banish their doubts and fears?

He did not wish to blame these persons kindly for their weakness or for their doubts or for their ingratitude but He came to soothe them.

As He formerly said that He had not come to judge the people but to save them; how much the more His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love. (John 13)

Saint John said about this love *"We love Him because He first loved us."* (1 John 4:19).

He did the same thing with Thomas who doubted in His resurrection and insisted on putting his finger in the places of the wounds. He did not blame him kindly for his doubts but tackled the matter with him.

Jesus responded to Thomas and let him put his finger to be sure of the places of the wounds.

The same thing happened with Peter, with Mary Magdalene and with the two from Emmaus.

The Lord wished to strengthen the faith of those persons who would carry faith all over the world and it was so.

Thus, the matter was not limited by His resurrection, but there happened many appearances afterwards.

He stayed with the disciples for forty days during which " ... *after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. to whom He also presented Himself alive*" (Acts 1:3)

What did the Bible say about the disciples who did not believe in that resurrection and their repeated doubts which caused others to stumble?

The Holy Bible says that He appeared first to Mary Magdalene " ... She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. " (Mark 16:10)

How did the disciples receive her good news about the resurrection?

Saint Mark, the evangelist, gives the answer saying: "*And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.*" (Mark 16:9-11)

He appeared to the two from Emmaus who did not know Him and who did not believe what the women had said about the resurrection that Lord Jesus rebuked them saying "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*" (Luke 24:25-27)

At last, those two from Emmaus believed. What was the impression of their faith on the apostles?

Saint Mark says "*And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either..*" (Mark 16:13)

We hear, afterwards; that the women went to the tomb, entered it and did not find Jesus' body. Then the angels appeared to them and announced the good news of the resurrection.

They hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples.

Saint Luke, the evangelist says *"And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. "* (Luke 24:11)

These were the eleven apostles, the columns of the church, before whom there were many testimonies as Mary Magdalene; the two from Emmaus and the women... and they did not believe them.

Afterwards, Mary Magdalene hurried to Peter and John and told them about the empty tomb. They immediately arrived and went into the tomb *"and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths. "* (John 20:6,7).

Here the Bible says about John "... he saw and believed. " But inspite of all that we read something strange...

We read that after all of them knew that saying, *"The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon! "* (Luke 24:34), it happened that the Lord Himself stood among them and said to them *"Peace be with you. "*

Did they believe when He appeared to them and spoke with them?

No, *"But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit."* . (Luke 24:37).

The Lord rebuked them for their situation and said to them *"Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."* (Luke 24:39).

If the disciples had thought that what they had seen had been a ghost it would have been a heresy which would shake their as if

the body did not rise. For this reason, the Lord showed them his hands and His feet.

Thus, the problem was not that of Thomas only to whom the Lord said “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” (John 20 :27). But, it was the problem of the eleven apostles.

All of them complained; all of them were in need of proofs. They needed feeling, touching and seeing the places of the wounds in order to believe.

The Lord tackled the problem of their thinking him a ghost or a spirit practically.

About this matter Anba Peter the Sedmenty, said that **the Lord, during the period he spent in human nature on earth, He proved his divine nature, but after the resurrection He proved His human nature**



The Lord Proves His Human Nature

Thus, after the resurrection, we hear that, in order to convince them of His human nature, And He took it and ate in their presence. (Luke 24:43)

He said so, while we know that the body of the resurrection is a luminous spiritual body which neither eats nor drinks.

God did so to convince them of His human nature but, after the ascension, His body had not any relation with this material food.

In all these matters we see that the Lord met the disciples' doubts with convincing and not with rebuking or punishment.

They are the persons in whom He will have confidence to promulgate faith all over the world. So, they themselves must have a strong, firmly established faith which they can convey to others, convincing and without any doubt. So, the Lord led them to this strong faith.

If they did not acquire the faith which believes without seeing, there would be no objection for them to begin with faith which depends on senses although it is of a weak degree.

The Lord condescended and accepted their sensuous faith, not to be stabilised in Him but to be mere beginning that leads to faith. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"*. (Heb 11: 1).

Thus Saint John said "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, " (1 John 1:1).

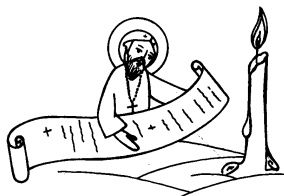
This faith which, in the beginning, depended on senses because stronger and could convince the whole world with what it had seen and heard lest some men should think that the apostles had been deceived or believed in some matters which had not taken place.

So, we notice Saint Paul, the Apostle, announce good news about what he had seen and heard on his way to Damascus.

He explained the whole matter to king Agrippa saying " ... *O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me ...* " (Acts 26:13-15)

The apostle concluded his words saying " *Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,* " (Acts 26:19)

This is The Lord Jesus Christ who worked to strengthen the disciples' faith; who tackled Thomas' doubts; who comforted Peter's sorrow and Mary Magdalene when she wept. It is He who gave faith back to the church.



The Risen Christ Works For Us

The Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead because it was impossible for death to overcome Him. He bore in Himself the power of His resurrection.

So, He was the only one who rose from the dead by Himself without any help from anyone.

He rose, and by His resurrection, He gave humanity the blessing of the resurrection “ ... *for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth ...* ” (John 5:28,29)

He rose triumphant and trod on death to lead us in the procession of His victory and to teach us not to fear death as the apostle said afterwards “*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*” (1 Cor 15:55)

God who has allowed death to enter our human nature, also, with His mercy, has allowed the resurrection to do the same thing.

As He had created man from dust and, because of sin He has brought Him back to dust, He, also, by the resurrection, allowed this dust to be changed into a body once more but in a better nature.

Before His crucifixion, He said “*My father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too am working.* ”

After the resurrection the Lord continued His work not only to soothe the fatigued souls and strengthen the weak disjoined knees but also to make His disciples ready for service and able to take over the great responsibility of preaching the Gospel to all creation.

In this way, after the resurrection, the Lord continued to work for patronage.

By His resurrection, He gave the spirit of joy to His disciples as He had told them before His crucifixion " ... *but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.* " (John 16:22)

It was so, and they got rid of fear and terror "*The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.* (John 20:20)

They were greatly affected by the resurrection which strengthened them so deeply that they testified to it.

In every circumstance, they used to preach the rising of the Lord from the dead.

Those, who were afraid and hiding in the attic, appeared with stout hearts and filled the world with evangelising.

They did not care for the threatening of the chiefs of the Jews. They said to them "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" Acts 5:29)

"And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.. " (Acts 2:47)

"And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. " (Acts 4.33)

As God stayed with Moses on the mountain a period of forty days to give him the Laws and the copy of the tent of meeting and its contents, the Lord also appeared to the Disciples over a period of forty days and spoke " *of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* " (Acts 2:3).

Indeed, there is time for tranquillity, contemplation and recess while attending others has another time.

The Lord Jesus Christ stayed with God a period of forty days in a spiritual recess. He, also spent another period of forty days with his disciples during which he taught them and confirmed their faith. He gave them the creed and all the details of faith, the sacred sacraments of the church and instructed them how to practise them.

He also gave them all the arrangements concerning worship.

The resurrection of the Lord became the centre of the disciples' joy and the subject of their preaching.

It was a period of delivery, teaching and comprehension.

After that, He also appeared to Saint Paul who said about the Sacrament of Eucharist "*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you ...* " (1 Cor 11:23).

Thus, the act of delivery went on successively from the Lord to His disciples and then to others and so on.

The Lord delivered Paul; but what did Paul do? He says to His disciple Timothy "*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also..* " (2 Tim . 2:2).

Thus, after He had taught His disciples, He said to them before his ascension, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. "* (Mark 16:15).

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; " (Matt 28:19,20).

And, as He handed instruction over to them he committed baptism as well.

As for instruction and baptism. He did not charge the whole people with them but only the disciples who delivered them to their successors, the bishops.

Those bishops, by turns, gave them to honest persons adequate for the job and not to the common people. It is a sacerdotal work done by priests.

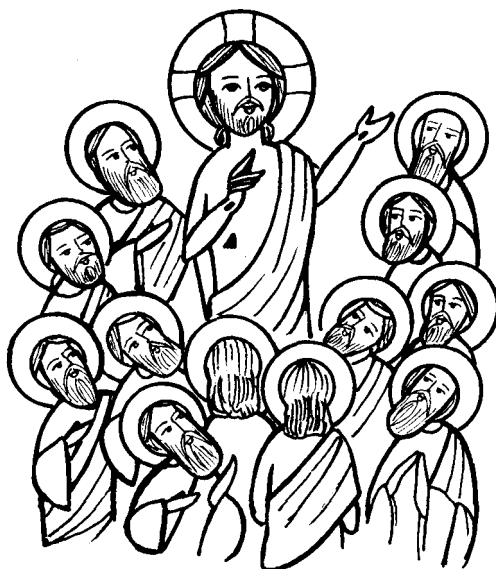
So, He handed priesthood over to them before delivering instruction and baptism.

With priesthood He gave them the power to forgive sins.

Thus, Saint John, in his gospel, explains to us how the Lord appeared to His disciples.

He entered, with the doors locked, and said to them *"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."* (John 20:19-23)

The act of the Holy Spirit bestowing authority of priesthood and forgiving sin on the disciples differs from that on the Pentecost when the Holy Spirit bestowed on them the talent of speaking in new tongues and the power of preaching the Gospel.



CHAPTER TEN

The Power Of Christianity And Abolition Of Impossibility

The resurrection was so powerful that it reminded us of the words of the Bible *"With men this is impossible , but with God all things are possible."* (Matt 19:26)

This power which amazed Paul, the Apostle that he said about the Lord " *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection,* "(Phil 3:10).

God has granted us that power of His resurrection that everything became possible with the believer, About this matter, Paul, the Apostle, said " I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. " (Phil 4:13).

After the Lord has trampled death, there is nothing difficult or impossible before us.

He gave us victory over it and opened the locked gate of Paradise.

He put that nice song in our tongues.

"O Death, where [is] your sting?

Hades, where [is] your victory?" (1 Cor 15:5).

The power of the resurrection encouraged the disciples and gave them boldness to preach the Gospel.

Who could think that those weak persons who had hidden in the attic could preach the Gospel publicly and without opposition!?

Who could think that twelve men, most of them were ignorant fishermen can spread Christianity all over the world?

The resurrection has taught us that there is nothing impossible. With God everything is possible, It is possible for the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

It seemed very difficult for Christianity to stand against Paganism and the ancient religions whose roots were fixed and stable in men's creeds.

Moreover, it seemed difficult to oppose or stand against Judaism which tried to exterminate or to extirpate Christianity.

It also seemed difficult to stand against the philosophies which were prevalent at that time or against the Roman Empire with its tyranny and its armed forces.

It seemed difficult for Christianity to face all these powers and to overcome them but the power they received from the resurrection of Christ and His triumph over death gave them an admirable energy.

Who could think that Peter, the ignorant fisherman can with one sermon, transmute three thousand Jews to Christian faith?

A famous eloquent preacher needs great effort to turn, with one sermon some sinners to repentance but to let three thousand persons change their religion after listening to one sermon seems to be something imaginative!

It is the power which the apostles received from the Holy Spirit and which changed them before they could change the people.

It remained with them and with it they did miracles.

Who could think that those apostles go to foreign countries where there was not even one Christian, no possibilities to perform religious service and in spite of all these difficulties they began from naught and could change the inhabitants' religion into Christianity ... ?

Indeed the resurrection taught us that there is nothing difficult and that everything is possible with the believer.

Who could think that Saul, from Tarsus, the most enormous persecutor of his time against Christianity becomes Paul, the greatest apostle who evangelised Christianity?

Who could think that the centurion, the general of the soldiers, who crucified Christ, adopted Christianity and died as a martyr because of it becomes a saint?

Who could think that the robber, on the right, believes when he was on the cross?

Who could think that Pilate's wife believes and asks her husband for the sake of "that righteous one?"

With Grace of God everything becomes possible. God is capable of everything. He who overcomes death, the most dangerous enemy, has the power to overcome any difficulty. Everything is quite easy before Him.

Who could think that Mary Magdalene, in whom there were seven devils becomes a preacher and announces good news of the resurrection to the apostles.

This power of the resurrection assured us that there is nothing impossible.

What we saw in preaching we witnessed in repentance:

The power of repentance which changed the worst sinners into the greatest saints and not to mere repentant taught us that there is nothing impossible.

The utmost thing men expected from Augustine, the debauchee, was his repentance. But to become a saint by whom the generations benefit was something difficult not expected by anyone.

The same thing can be said about Black Moses, the cruel killer, who became a modest, meek and humble saint.

Nothing is difficult before God. Isn't He who said "***What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!***" (Zec 4:7).

God who makes the barren a rejoicing mother with sons and says to her "*Sing, O barren, You [who] have not borne! ... Enlarge the place of your tent, ... For you shall expand to the right and to the left, And your descendants will inherit the nations, And make the desolate cities inhabited.*" (Is 54:1-3)

Christ's birth as well as His resurrection were wonderful and strange events which prove that there is nothing impossible. His miracles, also, prove the same thing.

The act of incarnation seemed, in men's view, to be something impossible!! How can God make Himself nothing and take the very nature of a servant? How can a virgin become pregnant and give birth to a child without matrimony?

So, the resurrection was something impossible. Thence, the Jews were afraid lest it should take place and considered it worse than the first deception.

In spite of all that, incarnation took place; the virgin gave birth to a child and the resurrection happened.

Christianity is not a religion of weakness but a religion of strength. It gives man wonderful energies. It cancels the word "impossible."

Christianity is a religion of power

There is nothing difficult in Christianity. In it there is neither despondency nor failure. Through it " *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* "(Phil 4:13).

There are some things which seem difficult in Christianity such as: the cross; the narrow gate, and in spite of that the Christians carried the cross and entered through the narrow gate chanting the words of the apostle "And His commandments are not burdensome. (1 John. 5:3)

Yes, in the world's view, how difficult it is to turn the other cheek, to go the second mile, to love your enemy and to sell everything and give the price to the poor.

How difficult it is to follow a religion which calls upon devoutness and monasticism.

This religion, which seems difficult, spread everywhere. The people entered in its devoutness by their own will. They longed for its pains and were desirous of being martyrs. They took up the cross as an emblem.

The difficult commandment in Christianity bears in itself the power to carry it out.

Christianity has offered humanity excellent models and eminent commandments. But at the same time it presented to people spiritual ability and assistance from Grace to practise these models easily and with pleasure.

It gave men the spiritual life as well as the Holy Spirit to reside in them and offer them the power to behave spiritually.

Christian commandments seem difficult to those who are outside, who do not live in Grace and who did not take part in the Holy Spirit.

But, to the believer, these difficult commandments become an inordinate desire and spiritual enjoyment that he does not find any difficulty.

The believer puts on the full armour of God with which he can take his stand against the devil's schemes.

He fully believes that he does not stand alone in his spiritual and religious war.

He believes that *"for the battle is the Lord's."* (1Sam 17:47) who is able to conquer whether with great numbers or few numbers.

He always feels that a divine power keeps close to him and works with him.

Thus, the life of the believer is a lasting victory because God leads him in His triumphal procession and *"The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."* (Ex 14:14).

He who becomes conscious of failure has not put Grace to the test yet. He has not experienced the work of God whether in him or with him.

How wonderful are the words of the Lord to His disciples when He spoke to them about miracles *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do,"* (John 14:12)

Christianity is a religion of power. It began with the resurrection which overcame death, opened the gates of Hades, led captives in His train and let the righteous enter Paradise.

Then we witness the power of preaching and the powerful endurance of the martyrs.

With great power, the apostles used to give testimony. With it they stood before the authorities and spoke without opposition.

Stephen could astound three synagogues *"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke."* (Acts 6:10).

Thus *"Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly"*(Acts 6:7) with the power of miracles and marvels, with the power of the word, with the power of a heart, stood firm before sword and fire, with a power put on them from heaven. As the Lord said to them *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me"* (Acts 1:8).

With this power He gave them authority on all the devils and on the cruelty of the enemy.

He, also, gave them the keys of heaven and earth.

In their prayers, there was a power which shook the place. They received power from the angels around them who broke the chains and brought them out of prison.

Thus, there were two powers, one, within themselves and the other around them.

This power caused Paganism to be exterminated and fade away.

It is the power of the defenceless Christianity which overcame an empire fully armed till it yielded to the new religion and adopted it.

It is the power of the cross which they thought a sign of weakness while it was a source of power and pride.

The Christian is a strong man with a sturdy spirit and perfect morals. He fears nothing. His power is derived not from his own self but from the Spirit of God.

Pilate feared the defenceless Christ and wished to set Him free. Felix, the governor, trembled when Paul, the captive, spoke about the judgement day.

It is the power of Christ who said *"but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33).

It is the power of the monastic hearts which lead an ascetic life and which overcame all the worldly desires. They led a sacred life which distracted men's minds and terrified the devil.

It is the power expressed in Augustine's words **"I sat on the top of the world when I felt within myself that I desired nothing and feared nothing. "**

It is the power of divestment, monasticism and chastity.

If we are enjoying the joys of the resurrection let us live in its power and overcome death, that death which resulted from sin, in order to rise in the resurrection of the righteous.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Questions Related To The Resurrection.

The Glorified Body Between The Body Of The Resurrection And The Body Of Birth

Question:

With what kind of body did the Lord Jesus Christ rise? Did He rise with an ordinary body like ours or with a glorified body? If He rose with a glorified one what would be the meaning of: *"He ate in the presence of His disciples?"* (Luke 24:43). What is the meaning of *"they touched His flesh and His bones?"* (Luke 24:39)

Was the glorified body, with which the Lord rose, the same body He took from The Virgin? Why don't we say that He was born with a glorified body?

Answer:

1. Undoubtedly, the body of the resurrection, in general, is a glorified body.

Saint Paul explained this glory saying *"The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable,. it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power,*

it is sown a natural, it is raised a spiritual body. " (1 Cor 15:42-44)

2. If we shall be raised with a glorified body - a spiritual body - how much the more was Christ's resurrection?

This resurrection was the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Cor 15:20,23). So will it be with us when we will be raised in the general resurrection.

The clearest proof that we will be raised in the likeness of His glorious resurrection is the saying of Saint Paul, the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Philippians *"who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, "* (Phil 3:21)

Thus, The Lord Jesus Christ has risen with a glorified body and so will it be with us *"conformed His glorious body. "*

This is a clear matter which needs neither proof nor argument.

It is well known that the glorified body is a spiritual one according to the words of Paul the Apostle in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:44,49).

The spiritual body has risen high above materials as food and drink and above flesh and bones....

3. How was it said then that Christ had eaten after His resurrection and that He had flesh and bones?

This matter is very clear in the Bible according to our teacher Luke, the Evangelist. He wrote about Christ's appearance to

His disciples after the resurrection " *But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have. When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. "* (Luke 24:37-40)

In the same chapter and in the same occasion He took a piece of broiled fish and ate it in their presence (Luke 24:41-43). How can we explain that matter?

4. We explain that matter by the following: He wished to prove to them the resurrection of His body, while they did not understand the meaning of the spiritual body.

At that time, they did not understand the entity of the spiritual body. They never heard of such words.

Of course, without the proofs given to them as eating and touching His flesh and His bones, they would have thought Him a spirit. (Luke 24:37), a mere spirit without body. In their understanding it meant that the body had not risen.

5. The important matter in the resurrection is "The rising of the body."

It is because the spirit is, by nature, a living thing which does not die.

Only the body dies when it is separated from the spirit. It changes into dust, but the spirit remains alive in the waiting place.

Thus, the resurrection is the rising of the body which will unite with the spirit once more.

In the Liturgy of renouncing the devil from the baptistery we say **"We believe in the resurrection of the body."**

As the disciples thought they had seen a ghost, it meant that the idea of the rising of the body was far from their minds.

So, it was necessary to convince them with it in order that they might convince others.

Here, we mention the words of Saint Peter, the Sedmenty "Before His crucifixion, The Lord Jesus Christ used to prove His divinity to the people, but after the resurrection He wished to prove man's proper nature."

The spirit alone does not represent a complete human nature. It is necessary to prove that the body has risen. Thus He said to Thomas *"Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."* (John 20:27) He said to His disciples *"Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."* (Luke 24:39)

Also, He allowed Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, when they came to Him and worshipped Him after the resurrection to clasp His feet (Matt 28:9) All this was to prove the rising of the body.

7. This spiritual glorified body was that which went up to heaven.

Perhaps the act of ascension may not agree with a material body submitting to the law of earthly gravity because it is heavier

than air; but He went up, in glory, with a spiritual body and with the same glory He sat at the right hand of God.

This same glorified body will come back *"in His glory. "* (Matt 25:3 1) *" in His [own] glory, and [in] [His] Father's, "* (Luke 9:26)

The glory of the ascension and that of the second coming is not only a mere miracle but it is also special case in His nature permanent forever.

8. This glorified body is that body with which He appeared to Saul, from Tarsus, on his way to Damascus. when *" suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."* (Acts 9:3-5)

9. This glorified body is the same body with which He was born of the Virgin.

But that body with which He was born was not so glorious as that of the resurrection because in His birth, *"but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant,"* (Phil 2:7).

The act of making Himself nothing ended in the glory of the resurrection and ascension.

10. The body of the resurrection was the same body of the birth; but in a case of transfiguration. He gave us a handsel of it on the mountain of transfiguration. (Mark 9:2,3)

As an example of comparison - measurement but with difference the three young men in the fiery furnace. Their bodies were the same bodies but they were granted, for a time, a kind of transfiguration which kept them from the harm of the fire.

The resurrection of The Lord Jesus Christ was with the same body of birth but in glory or in a case of transfiguration which gave the body a glorified nature, then it became a spiritual one. The same steps will happen to us.

11. Some may ask "Did Christ's body take His glorified nature immediately after the Resurrection or after the Ascension?"

I say to you "His body took that nature during the resurrection itself."

The cases with which He proved His human nature were nothing but exceptional cases in order that the disciples might believe that His body had risen and, with confidence, spread faith saying " ... *which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,*" (1 John 1:1) "*even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.*" (Acts 10:41)

In cases other than these cases, the glorified body of the resurrection does not drink or eat any material thing. It needs nothing. It does not feel hungry or thirsty.

In glory it does not feel tired. It does not suffer pain. It does not become subject to death.

12. Entering the locked doors and coming out of the closed places are clear proofs of the glory of the body of the resurrection.

In the attic, with the doors locked, He came in and stood among the disciples. He did so many times (John 20:19,26)

In His resurrection, He went out of the tomb with the entrance sealed. It was after the resurrection that the angel came and rolled the big stone in order that all men might see the empty tomb. (The women and all men) and not for Christ to come out because He had formerly come out with the entrance closed and sealed.

Among the examples of His coming out of the closed things is His getting out of the shrouds with the mummification substances while they remained where they were.

He, formerly, came out of The Virgin 's womb. Here some may ask: Was the Lord born with a glorified body as that of the resurrection? The answer is as follows:

13. The Lord Jesus Christ was born with a body like ours. He resembled us in everything except sin.

He took our human nature for which He was called "*The Son of Man* " and with which He could redeem us.

"So the child grew and became strong in spirit,. " (Luke 1:80)

"He was hungry." (Matt 4:2)

"I thirst!" (John 19:28)

"Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey," (John 4:6)

"But He was asleep." (Matt 8:24)

In Gethsemane "Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:44)

14. If He had not taken our human nature, He would not have felt pain.

He was in a nature liable to feel pain. Through the body He suffered pain. He experienced the pains of beating, flogging and crucifixion.

Many a time He fell under the cross when He carried it, that Simon, from Cyrene, carried it for Him.

His nature was liable to death, so, He died on behalf of us and redeemed us while the glorified body did not feel pain and did not die.

Thus, He was born with a human nature liable to pain and death, to suffering and sorrow.

In this way, this human nature could accomplish the act of redemption, then, it was glorified in the resurrection.

15. The glory of His nature before the redemption was an impeccable one.

His birth, the period of Mary's pregnancy, the time He spent on earth were spiritual glories done by His good will but His body was, in everything, like ours except for sin.

He made Himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant.

16. His unity with divinity is considered one of His glories.

This unity lessened nothing of His human nature. It did not nullify the weaknesses of the body as hunger, thirst, weariness and death. Otherwise redemption would have lost its nature and its value.

His pains were true, so was His redemption. He made Himself nothing in order that He, in His resurrection, might bestow glory on us.

Because He made Himself nothing from glory, He, before the crucifixion, said to God "Father glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You." "O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." (John 17 :1-5)

17. It was said about the resurrection "but when Jesus was glorified,.... (John 12:16).

18. The disciples could not bear seeing His glory.

Thus, when John, the beloved one, saw some of God's glory in the Revelation "*I fell at His feet as dead.*" Why? "*His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire*". (Rev 1:17,16,14)

19. For these reasons, the Lord advanced gradually with His disciples when He showed them the glory of His resurrection.

He did so with the Magdalene, who, at first, thought Him the gardener, then, at last He revealed Himself to her (John 20:14,16)

He did the same thing with the two of Emmaus, with whom He walked along But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.. (Luke 24:16)

With the disciples, He used the same style of graduation in order that they might bear these matters because seeing Him after the resurrection with His glorified body was not so easy.

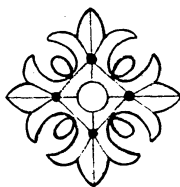
It was a story too long to be supported by this treatise.

20. Does this mean that we shall not see Him in His glory? If we shall see Him: how and when?

Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, (Phil 3:21) then we shall see Him and as the apostle says *"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. "* (1 Cor 13:12)

What is the meaning of the phrase ':face to face"? How will that be accomplished?

My brothers, now, it is better for me to keep silent for this is easier and better by far.



Do Not Hold On To Me

Question:

Why did the Lord appear to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection?

Why did He say to her ""Do not cling to Me," (John. 20:17) While He allowed Saint Thomas to touch Him? (John 20:27).

He, also, allowed the rest of the apostles to touch him. (Luke 24:39)

Did He prevent her from touching Him because she is a woman?

Did He allow them to touch Him because they are men?

Answer:

The Lord Jesus Christ allowed Mary Magdalene to touch Him before anyone of the apostles, as it was mentioned in their first meeting after the resurrection in (Matt. 24)

Mary Magdalene, with the other Mary went to look at the tomb. The tomb was empty. The big stone was rolled away from the entrance.

The angel told them the good news of the resurrection of the Lord. On leaving the tomb, the Lord met them and said to them "*Peace be with you.*" (John 20:19).

Here, Saint Matthew, the Evangelist says, *"So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ". (Matt 28:9)*

So, Mary Magdalene has touched Christ after the resurrection.

The Lord did not prevent her from touching Him because she is a woman but, on the contrary, He charged her with going to His disciples and telling them about the good news of the resurrection and her meeting with Him in the Galilee.

It was a great honour that the Lord charged a woman with carrying good news to the apostles.

But it happened afterwards that Mary Magdalene yielded to the doubts spread by the chief priests about the resurrection.

They filled the world with rumours announcing that the body was stolen from the tomb while the guards were sleeping.

It was possible for these rumours to leave no effect on Mary were it not for her to see that the apostles themselves did not believe in the resurrection.

As for the doubts of the disciples, they were very clear as they did not believe the story of the resurrection.

Mary has gone to them and told them the good news of Christ's resurrection. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen Him, they did not believe it. (Mark 16:9-11)

When Mary Magdalene saw that Jesus' apostles did not believe her and trusted neither the other women nor the two from Emmaus, she began to doubt.

She was still a young lady and perhaps what she had seen at the tomb was a dream or imagination. Had she faith stronger than that of the apostles? It is something absurd.

She thought in herself; perhaps some men might have stolen the body and carried it from its place!

They might not be the apostles but other men, perhaps the gardener, for example, might have taken it for any reason!

Of course, all these were doubts against faith because she herself saw the empty tomb. She also saw Christ, touched Him and heard His voice.

Moreover, she heard the good news from the angel, then from the two angels.

As Peter had denied Christ three times during the judgment, so did Mary Magdalene. She denied the resurrection of the Lord three times. These denials are written in one chapter. (John 20:12,13,15)

1. **The first denial** took place when she went to the Saints Peter and John and said to them *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"* (John 20:2)

These words mean that God has not yet risen from the dead as they have taken His body and put it another place.

2. **The second denial** took place when she was weeping outside the tomb and the two angels asked her *"Woman, why are you weeping?"* She said to them, *"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."* (John 20:13)

3. **The third denial** took place when The Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her. Because of her weeping, she did not see Him well and thought Him to be the gardener. Perhaps He concealed Himself from her ... She said to Him *"Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him. "* (John 20.-15)

When He showed Himself to her and she knew Him, she cried out "Rabboni!" (which means: Teacher)

The Lord prevented her from touching Him to rebuke her for denying His resurrection three times.

Also, it was not permissible for her to touch Him with her precarious faith as if He were a common person carried by someone to any place.

She said to Peter and John *"They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."* (John 20:2).

She said to the two angels *" they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him "* (John 20:13).

She said to the Lord thinking He was the gardener *"Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, "* (John 20:15).

All her words were repetition to the soldiers' pretence and showed her precarious faith.

The Lord said to her "Do not cling to Me ..." which means 'Don't approach Me with your shaken faith and with you doubts after you have seen Me, clasped My feet and heard My voice.'

'Don't approach Me after I have charged you with a message to My disciples.'

'Don't approach Me after you have seen the tomb and heard the angels' testimony.'

'Don't hold on to Me with your denial, for I have not yet returned to the Father.'

As for the phrase "*I have not yet ascended to My Father.*" (*John 20:17*) Saint Severus, from Antioch as well as Saint Augustine did not take it literally but symbolically because she had held on Him before.

The two saints added that the Lord wished to say to her "Don't hold on to Me with your precarious faith because I have not reached in your mind the standard of My Father's divinity. "You think My body is still dead and the people can carry it wherever they wish!!"

However, He consoled her and at the same time He charged her with a message to the apostles.

Feed My Lambs, Take Care Of My Sheep

Question:

Why do we deny Peter's headship while the Lord said to him after the resurrection: "Feed My lambs,. take care of My sheep?"

Answer:

The Lord Jesus Christ did not say these phrases to him in order to appoint him Pastor of the Universal Church but to bring him back to the apostolic rank which he was on the point of losing because of his denial.

With this phrase, the Lord made him equal to the other apostles.

He was exposed to the text which says *"But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God."* (Luke 12:9) to be applied to him.

It is clear that The Lord Jesus Christ said to him *"Tend My sheep."* in a reprimand situation as He asked him three times saying *"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"* (John 21: 15-17)

By these words, the Lord wished to remind him of his denials.

Moreover His question carried a light reprimand with which the Lord reminds Peter of his words *" Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble "* (Matt 26:33)

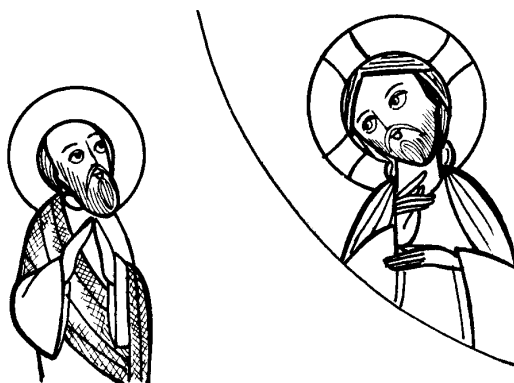
In that situation we notice that The Lord Jesus Christ called him by his old name before he was given the name "Peter".

The most conspicuous proof that the Lord meant by his words some reprimand was the shame and the sorrow that appeared on Peter's face after the Lord had said to him "Take care of My sheep" because he understood the Lord's aim.

If the phrase had been said in a good circumstance of magnifying or investiture, it could have caused Peter joy and pleasure.

Patronage is a job God has invested with rank to many as it appears in many texts of the Holy Bible.

All the apostles are patrons. The Lord Jesus Christ is the chief patron.



But Go, Tell His Disciples And Peter

Question:

After Christ's resurrection, the angel said to the Marys *"tell His disciples; and Peter; that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, "* (Mark 16:7). Does mentioning Peter by name mean that he was preferable to other disciples?

Answer:

The Lord wished to give Peter special care because he was perturbed about himself and about his destiny after his denial, blasphemy, denunciation and saying *" I do not know the Him. "* (Luke 22:57).

If the Lord applied to Peter the text *" he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. "* (Luke 12:9) he would perish.

He mentioned Peter by name as a kind of sympathy and consolation because of denial and sin.

Perhaps he was too ashamed of the Lord to be able to meet Him without a special call.

Don't, you see with me that Adam, after he had sinned hid from the face of God and was afraid of Him?

When the Lord God called to him *"Where are you?"*, he answered *"I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."* (Gen 3:9).

Peter was in the same situation. He was in need of a special call by name.

Thus, the matter is not a subject of headship or preference but consoling a poor person.



About The Events Of The Resurrection And Their Coincidence With Each Other

Question:

Is there any contradiction among the events of the resurrection according to what was written in the four gospels?

A gospel mentions one angel. Another gospel mentions two angels.

Also the persons who visited the tomb. Some gospels differ in regard to them.

Answer:

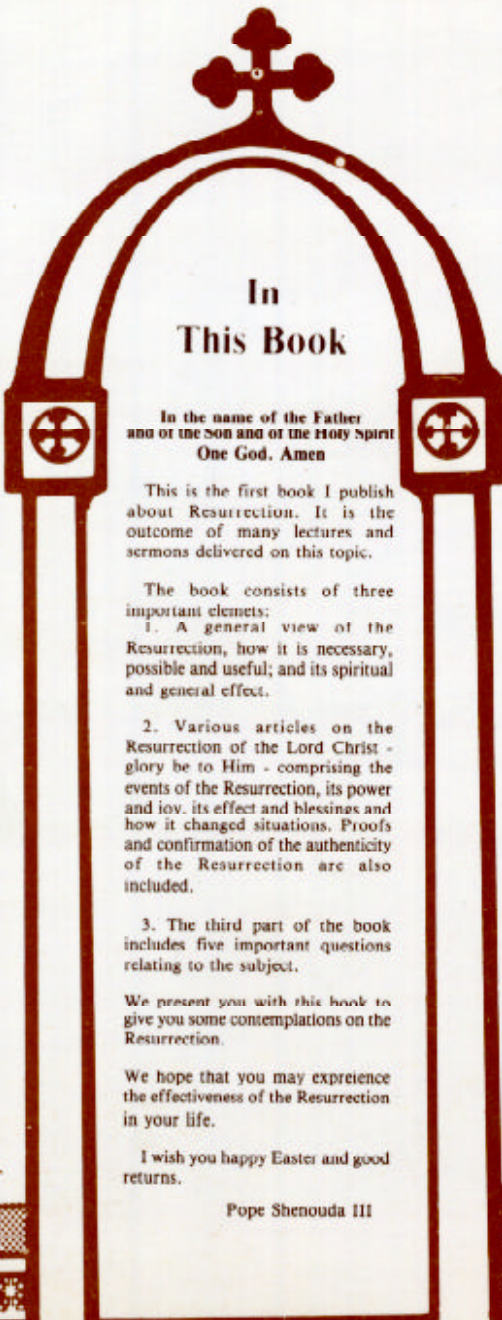
There is no contradiction. Each gospel mentioned a special visit accomplished at a time different from that of the other visit and with other persons.

The first visit was mentioned by Matthew's gospel. The tomb was empty. The angel said the good news to Mary Magdalene and to the other Mary. The appearance of the Lord to the two of Emmaus, The women's visit. (Luke 24)

But the visit of Mary Magdalene and seeing the Lord as if He were the gardener was accomplished afterwards. (John 20). Different visits at different times.

If it had been one event, there would have been contradiction but they were many events, appearances and visits.





In This Book

In the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
One God. Amen

This is the first book I publish about Resurrection. It is the outcome of many lectures and sermons delivered on this topic.

The book consists of three important elements:

1. A general view of the Resurrection, how it is necessary, possible and useful; and its spiritual and general effect.

2. Various articles on the Resurrection of the Lord Christ - glory be to Him - comprising the events of the Resurrection, its power and joy, its effect and blessings and how it changed situations. Proofs and confirmation of the authenticity of the Resurrection are also included.

3. The third part of the book includes five important questions relating to the subject.

We present you with this book to give you some contemplations on the Resurrection.

We hope that you may experience the effectiveness of the Resurrection in your life.

I wish you happy Easter and good returns.

Pope Shenouda III

