

HE IS RISEN! The last chapter closed with a loving burial service at the end of the last weekday before the Sabbath, after a triumphal cry “IT IS FINISHED.” Early morning after the Sabbath, the first day of the week, another voice spake out. This time that of an angel proclaiming “He is not here, He is risen.” True to His forecast promise Jesus came back to life while in the tomb wound in burial wrappings. He emerged from the wrappings leaving them still wound up. He went through them. He emerged from the tomb hewn from solid rock without rolling back the heavy stone. Such things were not a barrier to Him in His resurrection body. They won’t be to us in ours either for we will be changed. Several scriptures tell of that marvelous hope.

1John 3:2 Beloved . . . we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Philippians 3:21 who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory, . . .

1Corinthians 15:3 - 9; 20 - 23; 35 - 57.

2Corinthians 5:1 (NKJV) For we know that if our earthly house, [this] tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

There are five accounts of Jesus’ resurrection, one in each gospel and one (1Corinthians 15) given Paul years after by the Lord Himself. There are also numerous predictions as well in the Old Testament and New. Each separate account gives some details unique to that account along with sufficient description in common agreement with the others to be a positive affirming witness that He really did rise. John’s account is personal and gives details he personally observed at the tomb and later in the room where the disciples had assembled, and in Galilee. He detailed his visit to the tomb, he and Peter the first male disciples there. But they had been preceded by the women who had risen very early. They had gone there to anoint the Lord’s body. The men were still lying low for fear of the Jews. Which of the women saw Him first? Comparing accounts there were a number of the faithful making the trip to and from the tomb before and after dawn. So the women saw Him first and He sent them to tell the others. Two are conspicuous by their absence, Mary and Martha of Bethany. Mary had anointed Jesus early in that week before He was crucified. We read no more of them in scripture.

Many fictitious stories have been produced about the cross and those having a place in that time of history. Some perhaps are well meaning attempts by believers to help others visualize those events. (Have I been accurate in these comments?) But a story also can unintentionally distort the facts as given in scripture. Once having read such an account one’s mind has difficulty separating fact from fiction. Therefore believer’s are usually better off avoiding these. Others maliciously have contrived “research” or published sensational novels and films that blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ, dishonor those who

followed Him, and corrupt the minds of those who indulge in these mischievous works. Be warned! Beware!

We are given a fair number of details in the scripture accounts which enable construction of a picture of the tomb and its surroundings. The stone was too big for the women to roll away, but it was round enough to be rolled and sized so the angel sat upon it. The opening was low, visitors had to stoop to peer in or enter. Inside it was high enough for two angels (appearing as men) to sit at the head and foot of where Jesus had been laid. The stone was rolled aside so we could see it and the graveclothes were empty.

After the disciples checked things out at the tomb they simply turned and went back to their separate homes. Even John had apparently forgotten the Lord’s promises to rise from the dead. (Jesus once had even cited the story of Jonah’s three days and nights in the belly of the fish.)

The Holy Spirit moved John to focus on Mary Magdalene and her faith and devotion to her Lord. Staying by the tomb, the last place she had seen His body, looking in she saw the two angels guarding the place where He had been laid. Note her responses to their question and her deeply respectful attitude and dignified titles she used when speaking of Him, and then to Him. “They have taken away my Lord,” “I will take Him away,” “Rabboni,” which is to say “Master.” Upon seeing Him she may have instinctively moved to cling to Him. The other women held His feet when He met them on the road. But He said “touch me not.” He had a crucial message for her to bring to the disciples, and for us, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” This reiterated their unique, personal relationship with the Father and with God that He had instructed them just before the cross, ch 13 - 17. Now that He had died and was risen their one on one relationship with the Father was about to commence. This would, in fact, be upon His ascension to His Father to whom He had prayed to, ch 17, and to His God who had sent Him on the His mission of redemption.

That evening the Lord came and stood in the midst of them gathered in hiding for fear of the Jews. There He set them up for what was ahead.

- a. He invoked “Peace be unto you” settling their frightened hearts.
- b. He aroused them, “as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”
- c. He inspired them, literally breathing on them and commanding them, “Receive the Holy Spirit!” Ten days after His ascension, on the Day of Pentecost, He sent the Spirit down upon them in power, and they were ready and willing to receive Him, Acts 2. Since then He enters the individual, never to leave, the moment one personally receives Christ as Savior (Ephesians 1:13,14).

(see over)

d. Then He assigned them authority to act on His behalf, in receiving or refusing professed believers into fellowship with them. He had first given this authority specifically to Peter, Matthew 16:18. But after the cross He then delegated this responsible apostolic authority to include the twelve. When they had established the Church, the Assembly, on earth they passed on.

But He had earlier assigned responsibility and authority to every two or three gathered unto His name (every local assembly worldwide), Matthew 18:1-20. 1Corithians 5 presents one example of the apostle Paul coaching a local assembly in taking and exercising this authority to expel. 2Corinthians 2 and 7 present its authority and responsibility to receive.

Therefore though the King is absent, each local Assembly is vested with authority to act in the Name of Christ. They represent His kingdom on earth, but their jurisdiction is solely among those who profess to be "Christians." Note: He never authorized corporeal punishment, simply reception and exclusion among the professing. But the duty has never been rescinded.

Thomas is renowned as the "doubting disciple." He had been a faithful disciple and had been a positive influence on the others, in their following Jesus to Jerusalem and to the Cross. (I doubt he regrets the Spirit's exposure of his rather rash statement.) We can openly acknowledge things that embarrass us, for our brethren love us. And Thomas after all, was only expressing what the others had held until they saw Jesus. For whatever reason he was not

present that first evening. We don't know if he was fearful, totally "bummed," had lost heart, had an errand to tend to (it was a work day after the sabbath) or what. We don't need to know. But he had missed a blessed occasion by not being present. But his other mistake was not believing the testimony of his brethren.

The Lord graciously gave them all a lesson on how He deals with our failures. As He appeared He said, "Peace be unto you." Before anything else He invited Thomas to probe His wounds and told him "be not faithless, but believing." Thomas didn't have to probe any wounds to exclaim "my Lord and my God." Then Jesus said "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." That is the position we are in almost two thousand years later. We do well to take heed to the promise of the Lord to be in our midst when gathered together unto His name. May the wonder of this promise sink in so we govern our decisions regarding attendance and demeanor accordingly. Is He really there? Thomas didn't know He would be. We do.

With that John started to close his account with a disclaimer. It was what the Spirit had moved him to write. It was not intended to be a history nor entertaining. Rather it was written that "ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." This is your opportunity if you have not yet trusted in Him.

By Ronald Canner, October 5, 2011.