

RESPONDING TO THE RESURRECTION

He had given hope to the despondent, a sense of direction to the confused. In a cruel and unjust world, he had been kind and loving. What a friend they'd found in Jesus!

He had the power and wisdom to deliver them from their oppressors, both within and without Jewry. Surely he was their salvation, their Deliverer, their Savior.

And, in his compassionate forgiveness for their shortcomings, he had shown them a path of righteousness that they might follow.

He answered all their needs—and then he allowed his enemies to capture him, to crucify him. Those other times, he had remained unharmed, walked from their midst untouched. This time, he told his friends not to defend him. He healed the ear of his captor.

Why didn't he perform one of his miracles in the judgment hall? Why didn't he call for the twelve legions of angels to help him? His friends would not have taunted him as those passersby had done, but why DIDN'T he come down from the cross?

He was dead. Dead! Their Scriptures taught, "The dead know not anything." Exactly like Adam and all his posterity, dust he was, to dust he had returned. Of course there would be the resurrection at the last day. But for now, Jesus was dead.

So they sorrowed. Respecting his memory, the women went to honor his dead body with embalming spices. The Jewish Sabbath, which so shortly followed his death, had prevented this work from being completed two evenings before. Who would help them roll away the heavy stone that sealed his tomb? Would the guards dare to assist them? They did not know, but they did know they must try to do what they could for their dead Master.

How astounded they were to see the mouth of the sepulcher open, unsealed! The guards had disappeared—and SO HAD THE BODY OF JESUS! The linen grave clothes were there, but not Jesus. Mary ran to the home of John, with whom Peter was lodging. What had happened? Peter and John went quickly to verify Mary's report and to see what they could do.

Helpless and perplexed, the apostles returned to John's home. But Mary stayed at the tomb. Sometimes we have to be still and see the salvation of the Lord. And Mary did. She wept, but she saw—saw two angels in white. "Why weepest thou?" they asked. And then another voice asked the same question, "Woman, why weepest thou?"

Jesus had taken on the form of a gardener. Mary spoke to him as such. And then he said her name, Mary knew by his voice that it was Jesus! She yearned to cling to him, and clinging to the Lord is good. She had to adore him and adoring the Lord is good. But at

that moment, there was work for her to do. How much we can learn from these lessons taught by the risen Lord!

What are we to do when our eyes are open to see the risen Lord? Mary was told, “Go to my brethren.” “Say unto them.” When a truth has been revealed to us, we are to GO and TELL. SHARE the good news! Gathering all her strength, Mary was to tell the others of God’s POWER in raising Jesus from the dead, and of the MERCY of God. Telling Peter especially—Peter, who had denied the Lord three times.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary also saw an angel of the Lord. It was he who descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the door. Now he sat upon it. His countenance was like lightening and his raiment white as snow. But he said to the women, “Fear not. The Lord is risen. See where he lay. Go quickly. Tell the disciples he is risen from the dead. You will see him in Galilee.” The women LISTENED to the angel, VERIFIED that what he said was true, BELIEVED, and TOLD his message. Do WE listen to the Word of God? Do WE study to prove its Truth? Do WE tell others of its comfort and promises?

That afternoon, two of Jesus’ followers walked home to Emmaus. Of course, they were speaking of their terrible disappointment in what had happened at Calvary. Their hopes were dashed. The rulers of Judea were delighted to set him aside in death as a fraud. These disciples were dazed and perplexed, but welcomed the stranger who was going their way. They opened their hearts to him. They told him how they had lost their best friend. They confessed that they had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah, the one who would redeem Israel. But now their hope was crushed.

Quietly, and without excitement, this stranger explained that the Scriptures taught that the Messiah would suffer. Like Father Abraham and his son Isaac, the Heavenly Father had offered His Son as a sacrifice, Isaac’s subsequent life representing the resurrection of Jesus. Like the smitten rock in Sinai’s wilderness, Jesus had to be smitten in order to give the water of life to the dying world. Did not Isaiah (53) speak of him as an offering for sin?

Those disciples afterward declared that their hearts burned within them while he opened to them the Scriptures. Do WE respond in this manner? Do OUR hearts burn for the knowledge from God? Let US search the scriptures, growing in grace and knowledge that we may not “perish for lack of knowledge.” (Hosea 4:6) Let US seek that we may find; knock that it shall be opened unto us. (Matthew 7:7)

Luke 24:29 tells us that “they constrained him, saying, ‘Abide with us.’” If they had not urged Jesus to accept their hospitality, he would have gone away. He does not intrude where he is not welcome. We must recognize our need of him and make the effort to abide with him. If the disciples had not had that extra time with Jesus, their eyes of understanding would not have opened. It takes TIME to abide with Jesus, to ponder on his words.

Now they knew that their fellow-traveler had been Jesus, their Master, their Teacher. Their joy was too great to permit them to sleep. They HASTENED back to Jerusalem to carry the good tidings to the other disciples. As they related their experience of Emmaus, FAITH, HOPE and JOY grew in their hearts. Do we hear a voice asking US, “Why tarriest thou?” Is OUR meditation on Jesus’ words cultivating faith and hope and joy in OUR hearts?

Thomas knew his brethren had experience a traumatic period in their lives. He could not blame them if they were so nervous and excited that they THOUGHT they had seen Jesus risen from the dead. He wished they were right, but he knew they could not be. He would wait patiently for God to show him His will, but he would not lose his head over the impossible tales he had been told.

And so Jesus, who understands our frailties as he understood Thomas’, appeared in the upper room when Thomas was present with the others. After saluting the rest, Jesus said to Thomas, “Read hither thy finger into my side. Be not faithless, but believing.” This time, to help Thomas’ unbelief, Jesus used a body like to one they had seen on the cross. And Thomas GLADLY BELIEVED, ADMITTING he had been mistaken. He ACKNOWLEDGED that Jesus was the risen Lord.

There is no more important lesson in connection with the Gospel than that of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. The death of Jesus exhibits to us his love and the love of the Father on our behalf. But, in order for the proper benefit to come to man from the death of Jesus, he must rise from the dead; he must be the Captain of our Salvation, our Leader, who opens the new and living way, as well as our Ransomer. A dead Christ could not guide and strengthen us today. John 14:19—“Because I live, ye shall live also.” Revelation 1:18—“I am he that liveth and was dead. Behold I am alive forevermore.”

We have a responsibility to this Truth. It should transform our lives. When it brings us comfort, we should comfort others. When it brings us joy, we should gladden the hearts of others. As we find the peace of God, our response must be to calm the troubled hearts around us. Let us HEED the Word of God, ACT according to it, SHARE its strength with others. Let us respond to Christ’s resurrection as the early disciples did—and that quickly. They HASTENED. They RAN!

LITTLE OPPORTUNITIES

“We all might do good where we often do ill’
There is always a way, if we have but the will;
For even a word, kindly breathed or suppressed,
May guard off some pain, or give peace to some breast.

“We all might do good in a thousand small ways’
Forbearing to flatter, yet giving due praise:
In spurning ill rumor, reprovng wrong done,
And treating but kindly the heart we have won.

“We all might do good whether lowly or great—
A deed is not judged by the purse or estate;
If only a cup of cold water is giv’n,
Like the mite of the widow ‘tis something for heav’n.”