

Easter Family Service
April 21st, 2019

1st Lessons: *Mark* 16:1-8 & *Luke* 24:13-27

Human Life in the Resurrection:
Not Very Different After All

Today as we celebrate the Lord's resurrection (coming back to life after He was killed by angry, nasty people) there are a few things in particular that are important to notice in the stories about this.

First of all, it is remarkable that when Mary Magdalene and the other women came to the tomb to see the Lord's body, not only did they find the very heavy stone rolled away from the door of the tomb, but when they went in "they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed." Of course we know that this was an angel, but the women didn't know that. In fact the Gospel of Mark never says this man was an angel. But it says "they went out quickly, and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Whom do you suppose they thought this man was? A grave robber? One of the scribes or Pharisees? One of the nasty priests from the temple? Do you think that they expected to find the Lord's dead BODY in Galilee – where somebody might have taken it? Of course they would soon learn the truth – that the Lord really had come back to life, and that the man they had seen was an angel from heaven sent to *comfort* them *and remind them* that He had told them this would happen.

Then again, in the reading from Luke we find two of the disciples having a LONG conversation with the Lord Himself, walking for many miles until evening. At one point they even called Him a stranger, thinking He must not have known what had just happened in Jerusalem. Imagine! The Lord appeared to them just as if He were an ordinary man, and because they weren't expecting to see Him they had no idea who He was – even though they had just spent 3 years with Him....

What can we take from all this? What can we learn?

Well, maybe the most important thing is the fact that angels are people, just like us, and that we don't really change very much when our natural bodies die; we just continue living in spiritual bodies that look and feel pretty much the same. What's *different* is that the spiritual body the Lord gives us appears exactly the way our thoughts and feelings appear – strong and healthy if our thoughts and feelings are strong and healthy, but weak and sickly if our thoughts and feelings are weak and

sickly. And because angels are people who have learned to be strong and healthy from the Lord, they appear that way to one another – and to people who need their encouragement, or who need support from the Lord.

You see, it's our thoughts and feelings that really make us human, and so when humans leave their natural bodies at the time of death they just keep on living in their spiritual bodies, seeing, hearing, talking, touching, and doing everything else we do on earth but more perfectly than ever because nothing gets in the way.

It was the same with the Lord Himself. When His natural body died on the Friday before Easter it wasn't long before He began to appear to people in new ways in His spiritual body, which *looked like an ordinary human body* but actually was the body that He had created for Himself by living exactly according to the love and wisdom of the Word. Again, the disciples didn't recognize this body at first because they still didn't really understand His love and wisdom. But as He explained it to them – again and again – and as He came to them in mysterious ways, appearing and disappearing, gradually they began to “get it,” and to realize how infinitely great and powerful He is.

It's the same for us today. When we think of the Lord we may think of Him at first as if He were an ordinary man – especially good and wise, but not really the God of all the universe, neither male nor female but infinite and way too great for us to comprehend. But then gradually, as we think about His life, His miracles, His very deep and powerful teachings, and most of all when we think of His amazing love and care for all that is good and true, gradually we may begin to see Him in His *Divine Humanity*, His glorified, spiritual body, and we will realize that this MAN, this *perfect Man* can do for us what no other man or woman on earth can possibly do, that is, lead and guide, inspire and encourage, protect and defend us from all evil, even the evil in ourselves, if we will trust in Him and remember and follow His example, and do what He teaches.

Amen.

2nd Lessons: Isaiah 43:1-13

The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine #194-195

Overcoming Threats and Abuse,
Following the Lord's Instructions

In these readings, first of all, we are reminded that the Lord, Jesus Christ, is our God. As He said, speaking as Jehovah, “I am the Lord your God, the holy One of Israel, your Savior... I, even I am the Lord, and *besides Me there is no savior.*”

Since the very word, Jesus, means “Savior,” and every Christian knows that this is what He is all about, we can see that *He* is the God of the universe in Human form. His body was natural at first but by living in this world He created a spiritual body for Himself so that we could see Him and feel His presence everywhere and all the time, not just “here” or “there,” or “now and then.”

He came into this world as a Man to save us from our sins, that is, to save us from *ourselves*. But how? This is where our final lesson – about temptations – comes in (you will find that lesson appended).

You see, the Lord came into this world in a natural human body with the specific goal or mission of fighting against the evils and falsities of the world – not in other people but in Himself! – in order to defend and protect the goodness and truth of the Word so that people could learn from Him how to live and have the freedom to choose that path. He did this by allowing evil spirits and nasty, selfish people to attack Him and then responding to their attacks with perfect wisdom and love. We call this process the conflict, the struggle or the battle, of temptations. In His case evil attacked the Lord and the pure love of His heart and soul defended Him. Falsity called out to Him and He replied with truth.

And you can see in the lesson what the Lord accomplished by doing this.

1. The good in Him gained dominion (or control) over evil, and the truth in Him won the battle with falsity;
2. The truths in His life were confirmed, and conjoined with good;
3. The evils in His life were dispersed (or driven away), and so were falsities.
4. The Lord’s spiritual mind was opened, and took control of the natural mind;
5. The selfish and worldly loves that we all feel in the pleasures of the physical senses, were broken up and unhealthy desires brought under control.
6. So the Lord became supremely intelligent and wise.

But wait, you might say: wasn’t the Lord already supremely wise and powerful? Yes. Yes He was, but until then He had never used this wisdom and power to teach people directly. Always before that He had given His love and wisdom to angels, priests, judges, prophets and kings so that **THEY** could do this work for Him in the world – giving them important duties to make them feel useful. But

when these people could not get the job done properly any more, the Lord determined to do it all Himself – directly. And this meant that He had to be born according to the laws of nature, first as a baby and then as a boy with a purely natural body that had to be developed and trained until it was perfect so that – again – everyone everywhere could follow His example and learn from Him.

Now, because the Lord did this during His life in the world, we can do it too, **but we need His help**. As we read, “It is the Lord alone who fights for a person in temptations.” In fact, it is the Lord alone who inspires us to even **want** to fight against evils and falsities in our lives. He gives the leadership, He shows the way, and it is His power in us that enables us to win the battles of **our** temptations.

Let’s think of examples. Suppose somebody says mean things to you, tells lies about you, or even punches you and kicks you. Grown-ups, suppose somebody robs you or cheats on you or calls the police on you for no good reason. Suppose someone accuses you of something you didn’t do and you lose your job over it. How are you going to react?

Well, you could be angry and mean in return, which would just make things worse, or you could think about the Lord and what HE did, and ask for His help. Remember, He went through much worse, and He proved that He cannot be defeated. He even allowed Himself to be tortured to death, but the whole time this was happening He stayed calm and patient, He kept on loving and caring for the people who were doing this to Him, and He kept on telling the truth – about Himself and about the heavenly life to come.

Yes, they killed the Lord, but you know what? This natural body is not meant to last forever; we have it for training purposes to prepare our **spiritual bodies** for life in heaven. We have it so that we can learn how to be **truly human**, like the Lord, and the temptations – all the bad things we experience – are part of that training. So the thing is **never to give in or give up**: never stop telling the truth; never stop loving and caring for others, even when they’re mean to you; never DO what the bad people are doing, but answer them with kindness, and then, just as the Lord was raised up after His crucifixion YOU will be raised up after all the foolishness stops. YOU will be the real winner; you will have real control over evil and falsity; you will be confirmed and strengthened in what is good; your spiritual mind will be opened and your natural mind will be under control. You will gain enlightenment, perception, intelligence and wisdom, and you will have the peace that no one can have in any other way.

Amen. **Praise the Lord!**

The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine #194-195

“Temptations serve the use of acquiring dominion for good over evil, and for truth over falsity; and further, of confirming truths, and of conjoining them with good, and at the same time of dispersing evils, and hence falsities. They are of use also in opening the internal spiritual mind, and in subjecting the natural mind to it: and at the same time in breaking the loves of self and of the world, and in restraining the lusts which are therefrom. As a result of these things a person obtains enlightenment and a perception of what truth and good, and falsity and evil are. Thus intelligence and wisdom are acquired, which afterwards, increase from day to day.

“It is the Lord alone who fights for a person in temptations. If he does not believe that it is the Lord alone who fights for him and wins for him, then he undergoes merely external temptation, which does not do him any [spiritual] good.”