

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE XXIV. 1–12.

1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words,

9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women that were* with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

12 Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

THE resurrection of Christ is one of the great foundation-stones of the Christian religion: in practical importance it is second only to the crucifixion. The chapter we have now begun directs our mind to the evidence of the resurrection. It contains unanswerable proof that Jesus not only died, but rose again.

We see, in the verses before us, *the reality of Christ's resurrection*. We read, that "upon the first day of the week" certain women came to the sepulchre in which the body of Jesus had been laid, in order to anoint Him. But when they came to the place, "they found the stone rolled away. And they entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus."

This simple fact is the starting-point in the history of the resurrection of Christ. On Friday morning His body was safe in the tomb; on Sunday morning His body was gone: by whose hands had it been taken away? Who had removed it? Not surely the priests and scribes and other enemies of Christ! If they had had Christ's body to show in disproof of His resurrection, they would gladly have shown it.—Not the apostles and other disciples of our Lord! They were far too much frightened and dispirited to attempt such an action, and the more so when they had nothing to gain by it. One explanation, and one only, can meet the circumstance of the case. That explanation is the one supplied by the angels in the verse before us: Christ "had risen" from the grave. To seek Him in the sepulchre was seeking "the living among the dead." He had risen again, and was soon seen alive and conversing in the body by many credible witnesses.

The fact of our Lord's resurrection rests on evidence which no infidel can ever explain away: it is confirmed by testimony of every kind, sort, and description. The plain unvarnished story which the Gospel writers tell about it, is one that cannot be overthrown; the more the account they give is exam-

ined, the more inexplicable will the event appear, unless we accept it as true. If we choose to deny the truth of their account we may deny everything in the world. It is not so certain that Julius Cesar once lived, as it is that Christ rose again.

Let us cling firmly to the resurrection of Christ, as one of the pillars of the Gospel. It ought to produce in our minds a settled conviction of the truth of Christianity: our faith does not depend merely on a set of texts and doctrines; it is founded on a mighty fact which the sceptic has never been able to overturn.—It ought to assure us of the certainty of the resurrection of our own bodies after death. If our Master has risen from the grave, we need not doubt that His disciples shall rise again at the last day.—Above all it ought to fill our hearts with a joyful sense of the fulness of Gospel salvation. Who is he that shall condemn us? Our Great Surety has not only died for us but risen again. (Rom. viii. 34.) He has gone to prison for us, and come forth triumphantly after atoning for our sins. The payment He made for us has been accepted: the work of satisfaction has been perfectly accomplished. No wonder that St. Peter exclaims, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Pet. i. 3.)

We see, secondly, in the verses before us, *how dull the memory of the disciples was about some of our Lord’s sayings*. We are told that the angels who appeared to the women, reminded them of their Master’s words in Galilee, foretelling His own crucifixion and resurrection; and then we read, “They remembered his words.” They had heard them, but made no use of them: now, after many days, they call them to mind.

This dullness of memory is a common spiritual disease among believers. It prevails as widely now as it did in the days of the first disciples: it is one among many proofs of our fallen and corrupt condition. Even after men have been renewed by the Holy Ghost, their readiness to forget the promises and precepts of the Gospel is continually bringing them into trouble. They hear many things which they ought to store up in their hearts, but seem to forget as fast as they hear; and then, perhaps after many days, affliction brings them up before their recollection, and at once it flashes across their minds that they heard them long ago! They find that they had heard, but heard in vain.

The true cure for a dull memory in religion, is to get deeper love toward Christ, and affections more thoroughly set on things above. We do not readily forget the things we love, and the objects which we keep continually under our eyes: the names of our parents and children are always remembered; the face of the husband or wife we love is graven on the tablets of our hearts. The more our affections are engaged in Christ’s service, the more easy shall we find it to remember Christ’s words. The words of the apostle

ought to be carefully pondered: “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” (Heb. ii. 1.)

We see, lastly, *how slow of belief the first disciples were on the subject of Christ’s resurrection*. We read that when the women returned from the sepulchre and told the things they had heard from the angels to the eleven apostles, “their words seemed to them idle tales, and they believed them not.” In spite of the plainest declarations from their Master’s own lips that He would rise again the third day,—in spite of the distinct testimony of five or six credible witnesses that the sepulchre was empty, and that angels had told them He was risen, in spite of the manifest impossibility of accounting for the empty tomb on any other supposition than that of a miraculous resurrection,—in spite of all this, these eleven faithless ones would not believe!

Perhaps we marvel at their unbelief. No doubt it seems at first sight most senseless, most unreasonable, most provoking, most unaccountable. But shall we not do well to look at home? Do we not see around us, in the Christian Churches, a mass of unbelief far more unreasonable and far more blameworthy than that of the apostles? Do we not see, after eighteen centuries of additional proofs that Christ has risen from the dead, a general want of faith, which is truly deplorable? Do we not see myriads of professing Christians who seem not to believe that Jesus died and rose again, and is coming to judge the world? These are painful questions. Strong faith is indeed a rare thing: no wonder that our Lord said, “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke xviii. 8.)

Finally, let us admire the wisdom of God, which can bring great good out of seeming evil. The unbelief of the apostles is one of the strongest indirect evidences that Jesus rose from the dead. If the disciples were at first so backward to believe our Lord’s resurrection, and were at last so thoroughly persuaded of its truth that they preached it everywhere, Christ must have risen indeed. The first preachers were men who were convinced in spite of themselves, and in spite of determined, obstinate unwillingness to believe. If the apostles at last believed, the resurrection must be true.

NOTES. LUKE XXIV. 1–12.

1.—[*The first day of the week.*] This, we must remember, was our Sunday. The Jewish Sabbath was our Saturday.

[*Very early in the morning.*] Let it be noted, that this early visit to the sepulchre is a strong proof of the love and affection of these holy women. For women to go to a place of burial near a crowded city, before the sun was risen, faith and courage were needed.

[*The spices.*] We are told by John that Joseph and Nicodemus had already used “a hundred pounds weight” of myrrh and aloes, when they buried our Lord. (John xix. 39.) But it is probable that for want of time these spices were used hurriedly and imperfectly. Some commentators say that the process of embalming and applying spices to dead bodies was

usually repeated for several days together, in order that the aromatic and antiseptic compounds might have their full effect.

2.—[*The stone rolled away.*] This, according to St. Matthew, (Matt. xxviii. 1) had been the first great sign attending the resurrection. At the sight of the angels who rolled away the stone the Roman guard was first terrified and then fled; after this the women came, and found the grave empty.

3.—[*The Lord Jesus.*] Bishop Brownrig remarks that this is the first time in the New Testament that our Saviour is so termed. The Lord,—Christ,—Jesus,—are names He frequently has had. Here, after His resurrection as a conqueror, St. Luke calls Him “the Lord Jesus.”

4.—[*Much perplexed.*] They could not tell what to make of the facts before them,—the empty sepulchre,—the linen clothes lying by themselves,—the body gone.

[*Two men.*] Here, as in another place (Acts i. 18), we are, of course, to understand angels in the appearance of men. The frequency with which St. Luke mentions angels is a peculiar feature in his Gospel. An angel appears to Zacharias, an angel appears to the Virgin Mary, angels appear to the shepherds when our Lord is born: all mentioned only in St. Luke.

5.—[*The living.*] It admits of doubt whether the Greek expression here would not have been more literally rendered, “the living One:” the great source of life, the life of the world.

6.—[*In Galilee.*] This expression shows, no less than many other similar ones, that the greater part of our Lord’s discourses and sermons were delivered in Galilee.

Some have indulged in unprofitable speculations on this verse, as to the remembrance of the things spoken in Galilee, which the angels exhibit in this verse. It ought to content us to remember that these angels were executing a commission and delivering a message entrusted to them by God. There is no warrant for the assertion that angels know everything spoken to God’s people, and can afterwards repeat it.

7.—[*Must be delivered.*] The Greek words here mean, “It is necessary that He should be delivered: “necessary for the fulfilment of prophecies and types, necessary for the redemption of sinners.

8.—[*They remembered.*] Ford quotes a good remark of Cecil’s on this expression: “It is not sufficiently considered how much more we need recollection than information.”

9.—[*Told all these things, &c.*] Augustine remarks that these women were “the first preachers of the resurrection of Christ.”

[*To all the rest.*] Who these were we do not know. It is evident that our Lord had other disciples in Jerusalem beside the eleven. On the day of His ascension the number of names was a “hundred and twenty.”

10.—[*Other women.*] Who these were we do not know. They were probably the same spoken of in a former place, who ministered to our Lord. (Luke viii. 2.)

11.—[*Idle tales.*] The Greek word so rendered is only found here. According to Parkhurst it means, “Words of no value: idle nonsense.”

12.—[*Peter.*] We can well understand that Peter would be in a peculiarly sensitive and anxious state of conscience. On the very chance of the report being true he goes to see for himself.

[*The linen clothes laid by themselves.*] All writers on the resurrection of Christ call attention, with much justice, to this fact. If the body of our Lord had been stolen from the grave by His friends, it is most improbable that those who stole it would have taken the trouble to remove the linen clothes and wrap them together in an orderly manner.

[*Departed...wondering in himself*] It is the opinion of those who are best judges, that these words would be better rendered, “departed to his own house wondering.” (See John xx. 10.)