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THE CHRISTIAN'S SINGULAR HOPE

"Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts 23: 6).

The greatest fact that has ever woven itself into the minds, meditations and aspirations of the human race is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Before the foundation of the world, the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God had concurred not only to offer upon the burning sacrifice of Calvary the Son of God himself, but to rob death of its victim and the grave of its tenant ere the powers of corruption had done its relentless work.

Long before that day of distant glory when the morning stars sang together and the first light of day had kissed away the gloom of pre-creation chaos; the ageless and immutable fact of the resurrection was settled in the minds of the Divine Godhead.

The dying lamb on the altar of righteous Abel could have meant nothing to him or succeeding generations had it not prefigured an open grave and an empty tomb in Joseph's garden.

Sacred history for four thousand years was punctuated with faint and feeble types of the resurrection of the God man, over whose silent form it was impossible for death but for a moment to reign.

Faithful Noah looked forth from the window of

the ark upon a newly baptized earth where he was to begin to live a bright and happier life. Above the carnage and stench of a watery waste, Noah beheld the multi-colored rainbow with its graceful, endless arch testifying to the ages in unmuffled acclaim that One would come who would rise above a world of sinful waste and establish beyond the realm of its ruthless reign a new life, a new generation, a new world where death would have no power.

The blood-sprinkled dove sailing from the altar of sacrifice into the far vaults of the blue, the scapegoat ascending the rugged heights of the mountain with the marks of blood upon him can only be interpreted in the light of the dual aspect of Redemption. In these types we see Jesus dying on the altar of Calvary as a victim, and then rising as the victor over death and the grave with the marks of death upon Him.

Abraham, moving with complete submission and in humble obedience to God, journeyed up Mt. Moriah to offer his son Isaac to God. Offering in his stead the sacrifice provided, Abraham received back from beneath the knife of death the son of promise and returned from the mountain with Isaac, the hope and promise of unnumbered generations.

Israel, as good as dead, was crowded into a death trap at the Red Sea; but God opened the waters and they walked over on dry ground, singing the song of deliverance as they marched.

Jonah, swallowed by the fish and closed in the narrow confines of that dark prison, found himself, contrary to all natural laws, lifted from the "belly of hell" into the light of a new day to live again. Jesus in later years snatched this bit of sacred

history out of the archives of the past and silenced His critics by saying: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12: 39, 40).

All Old Testament types, however beautiful and truth telling, are but poor, limited types that look forward to that unprecedented hour when the first traveler to the silent halls of death should shake aside His grave clothes, and in His own power, wrench the keys of death from that monster's hands and come forth from that horrid prison.

Christianity stands in a category to itself because of this one fact. The stupid philosopher who places all other religions of earth on the same plane with the religion of Jesus Christ, does so at the risk of placing a wreath on Joseph's new tomb, and stilling the pulse beat of hope in the soul of every Christian since Mary met her Lord at the Garden tomb and thought He was the gardener.

Socrates drank the fatal hemlock and today his ashes rest beside the venerable sons of Athens to await the resurrection morning.

Buddha has his shrines and temples around the world and his followers number into the millions. His disciples still bow at his shrines, but somewhere in that mountainous Himalayan land where he was born, his bones are undisturbed in a silent grave. He has no power to come forth.

Mohammed, with his sign of the crescent and myriad of Arab legions screaming fanatical allegiance to his memory, cannot be classed with Jesus Christ. With all of Mohammedanism's

fantastic claims, his followers have not dared to say that he rose from the dead. They can make no such claim, for yonder in far away Mecca, the founder of Mohammedanism rests in his tomb with seal unbroken.

Communism claims to possess the virtues that will cure the world's ills and outdate and eclipse the claims of Christianity. But before they go too far, they must remember that in the public square of Moscow, there lies the embalmed body of the great Lenin, mutely speaking to all who pass by that death was his master.

By this and a thousand other illustrations, I do hereby declare the eternal supremacy of Christianity. We have an empty tomb in Joseph's garden. Need we call to record those witnesses, who for two thousand years have not deviated one iota from their first testimony?

Hear the voice of the angel, God's first appointed herald of this truth: "He is not here: for he is risen . . . Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Mary Magdalene, faithful, trusting, hoping, saw Him in the garden and was convinced when He called her name.

Then there were the eleven, gathered in a room, with windows and doors closed. Suddenly, He stood in the midst of them and showed Thomas His wounded side and nail-scarred hands.

You might like to take a stroll with Cleopas and his unnamed companion as they walk and talk with Him with burning hearts, having their eyes opened at the end of the journey to recognize this stranger as their resurrected Lord.

These, with many other reputable witnesses, attest beyond any doubt that our Saviour did rise from the dead.

But for this one unique aspect of Christianity, it would long since have been antedated by a thousand man-made religions. It was upon this fact that Jesus Christ staked every claim of His divine mission and sonship. Every Christian martyr from the sainted Stephen to the last victim of Caesar's sword gave their lives with a personal testimony that Christ was alive and was living in their hearts.

Of all the indisputable evidence from angels and men proving the resurrection to be a historic fact, the most remarkable thing of all is that we do not have to depend on what the angel said. We do not have to go back to Joseph's garden and see the place where the Lord lay. We do not have to take the testimony of the women who were first at the tomb. We do not even have to rest our faith on the words of the Apostles, or on the Emmaus travelers.

We can have a more current, more convincing, more personal witness.

We can say without the confirmation of any man, dead or alive:

*He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me, He talks with me,
Along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart.*

-Alfred H. Ackley