

ENTERING INTO GLORY
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"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32)

There are parallel themes in the Easter account. One is the record of the Divine accomplishment. The other is the record of people's slowly-dawning realization of what the Lord had done. We can follow these two themes through the events following the Lord's resurrection.

Let us look at the first of these. The Lord plainly declared to His disciples before they came to Jerusalem for the last time that He would be betrayed, crucified, and raised up on the third day. When He was seized at the betrayal, He told Peter to put away his sword and not to fight, because, He said, "it must happen thus" (Matthew 26:54). Then, in final agony, He said aloud: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). His work of glorification was completed.

Human Confusion

The second side of the Easter record presents an entirely different spirit. It is an account of human confusion, doubt, perplexity, and misunderstanding. Although the Lord had clearly announced what they might expect, His disciples and acquaintances were totally unprepared for His death and resurrection.

Peter objected: "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" (Matthew 16:22). Even when they learned that the sepulcher was empty on the day of His resurrection, they did not understand. The women who first came to the tomb "were greatly perplexed" (Luke. 24:4). Although angels had announced at the tomb, "He is not here, but is risen," and even though the Lord

Himself had appeared to certain of the women and disciples, the others “did not believe” (Mark. 16:11,13).

Is not this a picture of our own faith? Our ideas are slow to change. Our misconceptions are deeply rooted in natural appearances. We are perplexed about any new thought that challenges our present understanding.

The confusion and lack of belief on the part of His followers could not in any way alter the fact of the Lord's accomplishment. The hour had come, and He was glorified.

But the Lord's purpose went beyond this. He had come to save the human race. This was not accomplished solely by His victory on the cross. If our salvation were assured by Christ's sacrifice alone, the Easter story could have ended with His burial. But it does not! Our salvation is not miraculously assured by something the Lord did *for* us once and for all, centuries ago. It is something made possible by the Lord's presence with us *here and now*. This is the importance of the resurrection and our faith in a living God. This is the promise of Easter.

The Lord's purpose found its fulfillment in dispelling human confusion and misunderstanding and in establishing the certainty of the His resurrection. Our hearts are warmed by this growing realization of the meaning of all that had happened as the events of that Easter day are disclosed.

Rolling Away the Stone

The great stone was rolled away from the tomb, not to allow the Lord to be released, but to enable the women, Peter, and John to learn the truth: “He is not here, but is risen.” This was the dawning of a new understanding of the Lord in the minds of His followers. That great stone placed at the mouth of the sepulcher signifies, we are told, “the Word closed up by the Jews, but opened by the Lord” (*Apocalypse Explained* 687:18).

Our understanding of the Word, too, can be closed and sealed up by false ideas, by natural appearances that engulf our minds

and hold them captive. The Lord by His first coming, and now by His second coming, has rolled back the stone of natural thought to allow our sight to penetrate the interiors of His Word and to find there the truths that have lain hidden so long.

Women at the Tomb

It is significant that the first to see the open tomb on that Easter morning were Mary Magdalene and other women. They had a deep love for the Lord. They had brought sweet spices to anoint His body. Their love pictures the love we need to bring us to a new understanding of our Lord. Spices are said to signify “affections of truth from good which must be in Divine worship” (*Arcana Coelestia* 10291). It is these affections of truth, giving a sincere desire to know the truth, that open our minds. Until we seek the Lord with this yearning, His Word will be a closed book for us.

On the Road to Emmaus

How we are led to a growing awareness of spiritual truth is illustrated in the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Two of the Lord's followers, not of the twelve, were on the road to Emmaus that first day of the week. This was a journey from Jerusalem of about seven miles. They had learned of the reports of the women, and they were talking together about these things. As they traveled, the Lord Himself joined them. “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad,” He asked (Luke. 24:17). They did not recognize Him but recounted to Him the events of the crucifixion, burial, and the most recent report of the empty tomb. They had failed to understand the significance of the resurrection even as they failed, then, to recognize the Lord walking with them. “Their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.”

His work with them was not yet finished. Although He had accomplished His glorification, He still had to reveal Himself to

them in His glorified form. “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken,” He said, “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24: 25-26)

The Glory Revealed

The Heavenly Doctrine teaches that the Lord “entering into His glory” signifies His being united to the Divine good which was in Him, thus to Jehovah, but also signifies His opening of the interior or spiritual sense of the Word (*Arcana Coelestia* 10053:4,9429). The Word had been a closed book. Even the most sincere worshipers misunderstood the message of the prophets. But now that He, the Christ, had suffered the things written of Him and had entered into His glory, a new idea of truth could be revealed.

The Word is the Divine truth given by the Lord for our salvation. When this truth is seen in the light of the world, it appears the same as any human statement or writing. When it is seen in the light of heaven, it is seen in its glory. The angels of heaven can see Divine truth in its own light but people on earth only in special moments of illumination. Now that the Lord had entered into His glory, He could reveal the inner glory of the Word to human minds directly and immediately by an opening of its spiritual sense.

So it was, as the risen Lord walked with Cleopas and his companion on the way to Emmaus, “He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27).

Known in the Breaking of Bread

We note with surprise that even in His opening of the spiritual sense, these disciples did not recognize the Lord. Their hearts “burned” within them in excitement and affirmation as He taught them, but they failed to know Him even then. Conviction is more than a knowledge of the truth, even a knowledge of

spiritual truth. Something more was needed. That recognition came when the Lord broke bread with them.

This has its parallel with us. The Lord has not only entered into His glory for all time and for all people, He has revealed it to us. He has opened up the spiritual sense of His Word, “expounding” to us in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. We are told that this opening of the spiritual sense of the Word surpasses all miracles. The miracle of the second advent and the opening of the Scriptures is greater than giving sight to the blind, for it gives spiritual sight to all people; greater than raising from the dead, for it raises us all into a new life.

But just as we are not to be led to belief in God by miraculous things, neither does this miracle of opening the tomb of Scripture force conviction. Something more is needed. What is needed is described in the further account at Emmaus. For when the men came to Emmaus, they invited their unknown companion and teacher to stay with them. He stayed, sitting with them at supper. As they ate, He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. “Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him,” (Luke 24:31). This sudden recognition of the Lord was the fulfillment of the Easter miracle for these disciples. Until this moment, the Lord’s resurrection was empty for them. Their hearts had been warmed by a new understanding of the Scriptures which He gave them, yet they did not experience the real joy of His presence until they received bread from Him—the bread of life. This giving of bread here paralleled the giving of bread to the disciples at the last supper. On that occasion He gave it to His disciples saying, “This is My body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). Now this similar act brought a remembrance and an awakening.

The Lord’s Presence

Can we see the significance of this incident in our own lives? As we progress through life, as it were on a spiritual journey, the

Lord is with us, walking beside us. Yet we are unaware of His presence. Like these disciples going to Emmaus, we may be burdened by perplexing questions, even sorrows, as we contemplate our spiritual progress and state. As the Lord said to the men, “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?”

Their sadness and disappointment came from their failure to understand the Lord’s purpose. “We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel,” they said (Luke 24:21), thinking of a worldly redemption. They had sadness because these hopes had been dashed. They felt sadness in the death of the son of Mary. What they lacked was a sense of joy in the resurrection of the son of Man, the Divine Human glorified.

We face similar disappointment and sorrow as the Lord allows our false hopes and illusions of happiness to die. We experience states of self-interest that draw us away from the real purpose of our life. These must be set aside to allow for the growth of a new hope based on what is spiritual and eternal. So it is that we pass through life’s “little day” until it is well spent, and we come toward “evening.”

Opening the Door

“Evening” signifies our states of temptation. During such states we seek help from the Lord. He is always present, but we must invite Him into our lives as these disciples did. In temptation, as in all needy states, the Lord’s words are true: “I stand at the door and knock. If any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him.” (Rev. 3:20).

We must “hear His voice” and “open the door.” This is our part. “‘Hearing the Lord’s voice’ signifies believing in the Word, while ‘opening the door’ signifies living according to it” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 218).

Often, we may hear the Lord’s voice, that is, read and acknowledge the truths He has revealed in the Word. Do we as

often rise up to “open the door,”—that is, live the Word?

It is the *life* of religion that brings, finally, a full conjunction with the Lord and the realization and conviction of His Divine majesty and power. So it was that the Lord was known to the two disciples only “in the breaking of bread.”

“Bread” in the Word means “all the love and charity with man” which are from the Lord. “They who are not in love and charity have not the Lord with them, and thus are not gifted with the good and happy things that...are signified by ‘bread’” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2165:5). The Lord was made known to the disciples “in the breaking of bread.” Only then did they grasp the meaning of the Lord’s resurrection. Only then did their “slow hearts” quicken to see and believe all that the prophets had spoken. Only then could “repentance and remission of sins...be preached in His name to all nations” (Luke 24:47).

Great Changes

The Easter resurrection demonstrates a great change that had taken place with the Lord. Just as importantly, the Easter resurrection allows a great change to take place *in us*. The Easter story bears the promise of our salvation. So we are taught that the Lord’s resurrection on the third day in the morning involves “His rising again in the minds of the regenerate every day, and even every moment” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2405e).

As the prophet Isaiah said: “Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.... The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory...and the days of your mourning shall be ended” (Isaiah 60:1,19,20). *Amen.*

Lessons: Luke 24:1-35; *Arcana Coelestia* 9429:1,65