

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

by Ashley Sidney Johnson

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave is the greatest event in history, for his teaching amounts to-but little if he was not "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 7:5). With reference to this stupendous proposition there are only two classes of people—those who believe that he conquered death, hell and the grave, and those who deny it. If Christ (lid not arise from the dead, "our preaching is vain." "Your faith is also vain." "Ye are yet in your sins." "They also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." "We are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:12-19). If Christ did not arise from the dead, he was a deceiver, for he said he would rise (Matt. 16: 21 ; Mark 14:9). If he did not rise from the dead, the gospel is an imposition, redemption a myth, and heaven a failure. If he arose from the dead, he is divine, the "only begotten Son of God," and the Saviour of the world. If he arose from the grave, we are "begotten again to a lively hope" (I Pet. 1:3). We have "life and immortality through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). We will rise when he comes (1 Cor. 15 : 51-57).

Paul teaches that God "hath given assurance" (offered faith) unto all men that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:3). Assurance is a strong word. But what assurance has he given? As this is simply a question of fact, let us appeal to the testimony submitted. The credibility of the witnesses and the nature of the evidence are the two questions to which our attention is called.

Friends and foes make the following admissions

1. There was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth.
2. He was born in the city of Bethlehem nearly nineteen centuries ago.
3. He lived at the time and in the country assigned him in the Bible.
4. He was a teacher, and many people forsook their evil practices for his sake.
5. He excited the Jews to wrath ,and they crucified him on account of his teaching.
6. He remained on the cross until he was dead
7. He was embalmed and buried in the new tomb furnished by Joseph of Arimathea.
8. That the grave was closed by a great stone and sealed with the Roman seal.
9. That a guard of Roman soldiers, knowing that if they neglected their duty by falling to sleep they would Pay the penalty by death, was stationed at the grave with the command, "Make it sure as ye can" (Matt. 27: 65).
10. That the body was missing after the morning of the "third day."

What became of the body? The soldiers say it was stolen by his disciples. Was this possible? Where were they when the theft was committed? Around the grave. What were they doing? They were asleep, according to their testimony (Matt. 28:13). How did they know the body was stolen? How did they know that the disciples stole it? How did they know that the body did not come to life and get out of the grave and walk away? Admitting that these soldiers were asleep, the disciples could not have "rolled the stone away" and secured the body without making sufficient noise to arouse them. If the body were stolen, why did they not produce it? Is it

possible that a small band of disappointed and heartbroken men could evade the vigilance of the Roman army and all the Jews? The very thought is preposterous. The testimony of these soldiers is unreasonable, contradictory, absurd. It would not be accepted in any court of justice. It is a fabrication invented by the emissaries of the devil.

The disciples say the body came to life and arose from the grave. Were they expecting this? Not one of them (Luke 24:11) Had they anything to hope for by saying, "Jesus is risen," if it were not so? Nothing, because the combined powers, religious and political, were against them. Were they sincere? They attested their sincerity by dying for what they believed. Did they have sufficient opportunity to see and know him? "To whom he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Here is proof-proofs-infallible proof. They saw him (John 21: 1, 2). They ate with him (John 21:13, 14). John saw him, Peter saw him, Paul saw him, all the apostles saw him, five hundred brethren saw him (1 Cor. 16:1-8). This evidence is pointed, sufficient, conclusive. It would be accepted in any court of justice on earth.

If any man doubts this, behold the results of the gospel seven days after the ascension. Admit that Jesus was an impostor, that his teachings were false, that he did not rise from the dead, what then? Twelve men, unaided by education, money or soldiery, stood up before the people, who knew everything pertaining to Jesus Christ, and persuaded three thousand, in a single sermon, to believe in the divinity of Christ and that he arose from the dead, and this in the face of the most malignant and intense opposition the world has ever known. Not only this, but the next sermon convinced five thousand more, and in forty years the gospel had spread over the entire Roman Empire, and after the expiration of eighteen hundred years the work moves on until the temples of superstition and sin are trembling on their foundations in every land, and all infidels who write a letter or a legal document sign their name, and endorse it the year of our Lord 1912. Look at the stupendous changes that Christianity has wrought! The man who can believe that this is the result of a lie has credulity enough to believe anything. If a lie has done all this, it is the author of more good than all the truth the world has ever known.

Well may we join the triumphant strain indulged by the apostle Paul: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept, for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15: 20-22).