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HE IS RISEN AS HE SAID

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“I am the Resurrection and the Life:
and he that believes in Me, though he die,
yet he shall live.”

(John 11: 24-26)

Cover: Golgotha outcrop

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It would be a very tall order for many of today's men and women to agree with the idea that a man could rise from the dead three days after he had been brutally killed. Not resuscitated, but arising in a new form, a glorified state that permitted the body to permeate impermeable matter, as well as other extrasensory characteristics like appearing or disappearing at will, or being in two places at once.

Over two thousand years have passed since these events took place; and more than two billion people believe them to be true in one form or another out of a world population of about six billion. That would be one third of the total who have accepted the testimony of witness to the events, and the corroboration of the several known historians of that day. Though the degree of "heartfelt" belief on the part of these people cannot be perfectly measured, it is fair to say that hundreds of millions of reasonable people accept the events of Jesus' forty days among us in his "Glorious State" as a true fact of history.

Between belief and disbelief regarding this event, there seems to be conflicting interests. Were this a scientific phenomenon we would agree with Hobbs that proof would lie in a repeated demonstration of it to others. Obviously, this event falls outside the precincts of science. It is a one time occurrence unlike any other that has unequivocally changed the course of human history. Surely, there were many natural events we know about that were physically earth-shaking, for example, the World Wide Flood; the KT Extinctions that killed the dinosaurs; The Minoan eruption of Santorini, etc., but none that could equal the spiritual Resurrection of the Itinerant Preacher who said: "I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10: 30). and "No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn. 14:6). We count ourselves fortunate to accept and understand the

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wandering's of the Israelites; the conquering's of Alexander; the spread of Rome with it's laws and engineering and so on. It's all so well documented, so historic, but a man rising from the dead after having been entombed stretches human credulity too far for many of us these days to call it certainty.

According to Aristotle the highest good for man is wisdom, but since few if any human beings attain it, Aristotle's philosophy of nature then, required a supernatural correlate: the afterlife. St. Thomas Aquinas made the theological hook-up from the philosopher's premises to the facts in the gospel stories of Jesus' life death and resurrection; however, it had been sacred truth traditionally from the very first appearances during those generous, prophetic forty days he was seen among us.

Peter and the others had witnessed the Savior in his "glorious state," but it was Paul the Apostle, two years later, when the Risen One appeared to him who understood that: "If Christ had not been raised, then our preaching is in vain...and your faith is in vain." (1Cor.15: 14-17)

"The theologian and the preacher does not create new visions of the world and of life, but he is at the service of truth handed down, at the service of the real fact of Christ, of the Cross, and of the Resurrection...On that Easter Morning something extraordinary happened, something new, and at the same time very concrete, distinguished by the precise signs and recorded by numerous witnesses. For Paul and for the other authors of the New Testament, the Resurrection is closely bound to the testimony of those who had direct experience with the Risen One. This means seeing and hearing, not only with the eyes or with the senses but also with an interior light that assists the recognition of what the external senses attest as objective fact." (Benedict XVI, from Saint Paul, 2008-2009)

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I'm sure that most of us know, historically, that many of those numerous witnesses died a martyrs death happily holding to their sensory and spiritual experiences of seeing, hearing and touching the Risen One and having been touched by him. Further, and more importantly, true belief in everlasting life, as was promised to those who kept the commandments of love, became a way of life for future generations who would be called Christians; those who had not seen and yet had believed.

At the end of his forty days with us, he commissioned the Apostles to preach the “good news”; to baptize in his name, and gave them the power to forgive sin. Through this small group and their successors, Jesus set the conditions for a future where we are bonded with him. It was his desire to remain with us, in each generation, until the “end of the age” or “the end of time,” not only in a symbolic way, but in a real way, both interiorly and actually— forming us as the one “Body of Christ” in real time and space. This is the basis of Christian worship; an actual communion with Christ and with one another; a total oneness through him, with him and in him in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

The trouble many people have with “belief” is generally of their own making. Most of us prefer a comfort zone in which we place ourselves; a rationally arrived at, almost totally subjective condition which suits the thoughts we have about ourselves and those with whom, and among whom we live. Any radical change that would disturb or upset that self identifying understanding would signal the possibility of the loss of our personal and ideal self-centeredness.

Many of us live our lives under a chosen set of ethical standards, which may have a vague relation to certain religious or secular principals we learned as children. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with a sense of morality; it is more or

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less concerned with distinguishing between the virtuous and non virtuous characteristics of persons. Virtue, we all know, is the positive aspects of human behavior. A sort of “fairness doctrine” before authority figures.

Philosophy is man made. It is a continuous flow of notions and cognitions having to do with living a gratifying life; a rational investigation of the truths and principals of being, knowledge and conduct. We have been scrutinizing ourselves all through the ages. Everyone knows, without a doubt, that as times change we change with them, and in the course of human events, new and different philosophical concepts invite our cognition and capitulation. Socrates, one of the great fathers of philosophy, told us: “An unexamined life is not worth living.” Our personal ethic is more or less based on some sort of philosophy; the philosophy of the larger group with whom we live; a philosophy we’ve come to know through study, or our own personal philosophy if we happen to be “thinkers.” Philosophy never says never, so philosophical differences, on a grand scale, bring on roiling conflicts, hardly conducive to the comfort and gratification of six billion human neighbors. In fact, way back when, the philosophical differences between Democratic and Oligarchic factions in Greece was one of the causes of the Peloponnesian Wars.

BCE (Before the Christian Era) many of the Pre-Socratic Greeks began outlining philosophies based on various conjectures which people would follow. The guy who kicked off the idea of One Great God among the Pre Socratics was Xenophanes, (570-475 BCE). It was he who started to shove the Greek Pantheon of gods out the door. Protagoras, (490-420 BCE) was said to have created a major controversy in the ancient gods-loving world with his: ”Man is the measure of all things,” his way, perhaps, of establishing Man as the central

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determining authority as opposed to the gods or god. Certainly similar to much of today's philosophy. Socrates, (470-399 BCE) principally because of Plato, (427-347 BCE) his student, is the most widely known of the great philosophers, though he wrote nothing. His primary thought was "truth in itself"; even conscience for him was above the law, and the relativism of the Sophists was to be shunned. I'm convinced he was a believer of sorts. This quote of his speaks volumes: "The end of life is to be like God, and the soul following God will be like him." Plato carried on the same thought: "We ought to fly away from earth to heaven as quickly as we can; and to fly away is to become like God, as far as this is possible; and to become like him is to become holy, just, and wise."

Aristotle, (384-322 BCE), after his *Physics*, turned next to *Metaphysics*. His belief in the Prime Mover, the first of all substances, whose activity is purely spiritual, intellectual and who exists necessarily, must be immaterial. It is God, perfection itself, who draws all things to himself and is unaffected. God, the Ultimate Good, that to which all things aim; sounds familiar.

Cicero, (106-43 BCE), introduced Rome to Greek philosophy and created a Latin philosophical vocabulary. He considered himself a Socratic and said that Socrates was the first to call philosophy down from heaven and set her in cities, and even into households, and compelled her to inquire about human life and customs, as well as matters of good and evil.

Long before all this philosophizing went on, the Jews knew of the One God of Israel through their prophets and through God's self communication to man in their sacred/historical texts and tradition. Torah was given to Moses on Sinai about (1312 BCE), that was 752 years before Xenophanes. The Jews returned to Israel from the Babylonian

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Captivity around the time of Socrates. The Greeks conquered Israel in (312 BCE) and the Torah was translated into Greek about (245 BCE). So, while the the Greeks and Romans were wrestling with the “Nature of the gods,” the Jews worshiped the One God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and all things, as Genesis beautifully expresses in not too symbolic terms.

God has always been known by man. Man saw god in nature. As far back as anthropology can trace the remnants of deity myths have been found all through the archaeological record. While Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations were flourishing, Abraham came out of the Fertile Crescent and began his trek to change the world. It was he, the father in faith of the three great religions, whose progeny would meet the Greek Paideia in the land of Israel. In Genesis (12 : 3), God is said to have told Abraham: “I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you, and through you, all the families of the earth will be blest.” With a marvelous confluence of history, the great philosophies would come head to head with the prophesies of the Old Testament; the door would be opened for the Messiah as promised in scripture. God would be understood by man, with God as man—among men. The Romans would open the roads upon which the Good News of the Resurrection of Christ would travel to the rest of the world by “apostolic succession,” particularly through St. Paul and his entourage, right up to this present day. Finally a New Testament would be written by the same men (or their immediate successors), who spent the few years with Jesus in his public life as he preached the Kingdom of God and performed hundreds of inexplicable acts of mercy for all to see, which included giving back life to the once dead.

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On June 30, 2011 Pope Benedict XVI awarded the first ever Ratzinger Prize in Theology. It was established to promote the study of the Pope's theological writings. In his remarks he said something which is pertinent to this little paper:

“ The Fathers of the Church found the precursors of Christianity (apart from the world of revelation to Israel) not in the area of customary religion...but in the philosophers, in the people who thirsted for truth and who were thus on the path to God.”

Who else but the Greeks, along with the revelations to the ancient Hebrews could bring into critical alignment God's plan for mankind. The Greeks knew of heliocentricity before Copernicus; of the atom before Dalton; of the Ultimate Good, the Prime Mover as true reality before Aquinas.

The Egyptians even before the Jews, were slowly acceding to the one god, Aten, as Abraham was following his noesis to establish “The People of God” for the whole world. Finally came “Truth as a Person, Jesus the Christ, the Good Shepherd, the Suffering Servant of mankind. This was the crucial moment of the Grand Theogony that led to the Cross and Resurrection. From “Let there be light,” to “True Light from True Light.”

Any catastrophe always seems to be followed by an uneasy calm; a time when those who are survivors or witnesses try to make sense out of what happened and why it happened. The shock associated with loss can last for some time before any kind of normalcy is resumed. Images of human brutality can have a stunning effect on the culture. Natural disasters, as well, take a tremendous toll on the human psyche, particularly on those caught up in the event.

Jerusalem, days before the Crucifixion was boiling over with people. Not only the pilgrims who had come from far and

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wide to celebrate the Passover, but members of political factions who were at odds with the Roman occupation, as well as religious cliques whose animosities towards the “Temple Cult” had been going on for a very long time. To add to all of this, there were those who were preparing to destroy the “blasphemous” miracle worker and preacher who had been causing all sorts of trouble against the temple’s status quo, and turmoil all over Judea and Galilee. They succeeded. They crucified him between two criminals, hours before that years Passover feast was to begin. He was entombed in a new garden tomb belonging to a sympathizer, on the site of an ancient quarry where there was a prominence of unusable stone called Golgotha. After a riotous morning and afternoon, stragglers returned to the city proper through the Genneth gate, and at sundown an uneasy calm settled over the city as the Sabbath began. Most of the inhabitants and visitors who had arranged for their supper in advance began the ritual by sipping from the first of four cups of wine which were obligatory. They were to be drunk to symbolize the four redemptive phrases God gave to Israel as he would lead them out of Egypt: “I will bring you out; I will rid you of their bondage; I will redeem you; I will take you to me.” As the supper went on, at a specific point, if there were children present, the youngest child would ask: “Why is this night different from all other nights?”

Jesus and his disciples had eaten their supper the evening before preparation day, the day the paschal lambs were being selected and inspected for blemishes or defects. Now on the Sabbath, the day that God rested after the six days of Creation, Jesus lay in Joseph of Arimathaea’s tomb wrapped in a burial shroud with the customary head cloth over his face, dead.

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One can only imagine the confusion and anxiety his followers felt as they quietly tried to sort things out. They recalled all the Master had told them about a New Covenant, and how he had prepared a place for them in his Father's house. They remembered being shocked at the synagogue in Capernaum when he told them about eating his body and drinking his blood, though they didn't completely understand it they stayed with him while many others left— since he had “the words of eternal life.” They saw him “transfigured” before their eyes, speaking with Elijah and Moses, and heard the thundering voice from heaven saying: “This my beloved Son, hear him.” They were there when five barley loaves and two fish fed thousands of people. They watched as the man born blind was made to see. They all heard him say: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” and “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” They had little doubt that this, indeed, was the Messiah, Son of the Most High, when he called Lazarus back from the dead, and he did say that in three days he would rise again, but now, from Arimathaea's tomb, on this Passover Sabbath, there was only silence.

What went wrong; why, with all the power of heaven, did he not become King of Israel and defeat all the enemies that were lined up against her? They knew he said his “kingdom was not of this world,” but now they were not at all sure that in a “little while” they would ever see him again. As good Jews they would keep the Sabbath holy as the commandment required until the first three stars of the late evening signaled its close. Then, in the morning, the first day of the week, perhaps they would return to Galilee where many had come from; maybe back to the fishing business and family life. Even though they had seen the incredible works he had done, that

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Greek skepticism would have caused them to have some doubt about his predictions since witnessing such an ignominious death. They even heard him cry out in the throes of agony: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?). Blood and water flowed from the corpse as a legionnaire’s lance pierced its side. They had to have been completely stunned by the way the last few years finally ended up.

Would we have thought any differently? Would our faith in his promises been stronger than our subjective observations? How convinced would we have been that the Man who said he was the Son of God, the Man who did not need to suffer the death of a common criminal, and who would not put a stop to what was being forced on him, would rise again? Why couldn’t he have done something dramatic to instantly make believers of the large crowds of onlookers, like he had done many times before?

We, most likely, would have been just like the father of the boy Jesus cured of epilepsy, crying out: “I do believe; help my unbelief!” (Mk. 9: 24) Even what little faith we have has to come from the grace of God for everything to be possible. For us it seems that nothing is proven until we rationalize it for ourselves within our personal comfort zone, following Protagoras’ remark: “Man is the measure of all things.” Unless we saw in Jesus’ hands the imprint of the nails, and put our finger into the place of the nails, and put our hand into his side, we, most likely, would not have believed that he had returned from the dead. (Jn. 20: 24-25). If it was difficult for Thomas the Apostle, who had seen all his miraculous works, how much more difficult is it for us?

The only possible way for Jesus to return to life in a “glorified state” would be through the ultimate power of God.

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The God the first men understood existed, and saw in nature, who fashioned material objects to represent him; God, the Great Spirit, that early man called upon for rain or for a bountiful harvest; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who spoke through the prophets of Israel recorded for all to read; the One God that the philosophers reasoned had to be the Unmoved— Prime Mover, the Father of the first Big Bang; God, the Father of Jesus the Christ, “Son of the living God,” who preached of his Kingdom outside of time and space, and who was enabled by him to control nature with faith, and to make grand promises in his name; the God from whom all the worlds Kings derived their power; the God in whose providence the Founders of the recent American Republic put their trust; the God most of us know intrinsically as the Ultimate Good, in conscience, as opposed to his absence in evil; the God who reasonable people innately call upon when trouble crosses their lives; the God many reject out of anxiety, skepticism and ill will at their own peril. The God of True Love and of Grace, just for the asking.

This is the God of history which is laid out before us, in whom we see ourselves as a reflection, the Pure Truth the heart knows and has always known. This is God, the ground of all being, from whom our freedom is inherited, and “from whom all good things come.” Without him, all of history becomes a figment of imagination, all love, in vain, and no hope exists, and all that was ever conceived of as good, a lost cause.

As all three stars finally appeared in the late evening sky, signaling the end of Sabbath, the disciples tried to sleep off a terrifying day. They had not slept since the Master was arrested in front of the olive press shelter in the garden of Gethsemane across the Kidron Valley. For them, this Jerusalem

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night would be filled with the terrible dread that they would suffer the same fate as the Master predicted they would.

There were two important Marys in the life of Christ. The first was Mary, the Virgin of Nazareth who welcomed him into the human family by birth, having known no man. His Incarnation, by the power of The Holy Spirit, was an historic, theogonic event, "God's actual entry into real history" accepted by almost three quarters of the world's population today. The second Mary is Mary of Magdala, a former sinner, a follower and witness spoken of in the scriptures who welcomed him once again into the family of man as the "second Adam" after the Resurrection. "An historical event that bursts open the dimensions of history and transcends it...something akin to a radical 'evolutionary leap' in which a new dimension of life emerges, a new dimension of human existence...An ontological leap that touches being as such. It must be understood that the Resurrection does not simply stand outside or above history...it has its origin within history and up to a certain point still belongs there." (Benedict XVI, From Jesus of Nazareth, Part II p.p. 274-276). That's not easy to swallow for those of us who are firmly rooted in pragmatism, and have been debauched by "modernity" and selfishness. That's why he said, unless you become like a "child" you may not get it. Simple faith is the strongest faith of all and it is absolutely neither ignorance nor stupor. Who will deny the pure trust that children are able to place. A holy innocence that must never be betrayed in any way. This is the "pure heart" all of us, in some way, desperately seek.

The pale light of the pre-dawn sky showed the rent veil in front of the Holy of Holies stirring in a gentle breeze coming through the "holy porch." The Shewbread had been changed in the sanctuary by the priests in the proper way, as it was every

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Sabbath. The city streets were strewn with litter from the huge crowds which coursed through them on preparation day, trying to get a glimpse of the condemned blasphemer, while arranging for their sin offerings as was prescribed. An occasional torch darted between the buildings casting dancing shadows on the the huge temple and city walls. The legionnaires on duty around the ominous Antonia Fortress wrapped their scarlet capes around themselves to keep warm in the chill, as the sky, ever so slowly, lightened, but could not yet be called day. The smell of the burned flesh of sacrificed animals mixed with the spiced perfume of ritual incense was still pervasive in the air. All the clamor of the Holy Days as well as the spectacle of the hurried executions had faded into the night. A new day was about to begin, but quietly.

I will exalt you, LORD,
For you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

LORD my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.
You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.

Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.
For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may remain for a night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Psalm 30

As dawn was approaching, the women from Galilee who had faithfully followed Jesus and had witnessed his

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entombment from a distance, made their way from where they were staying, alongside the Royal Bridge, past the Xystos and Hasmonean Palace. Some were carrying wrapped jars and baskets of spices on their heads to anoint the dead body of their Lord. On the way they were softly speaking about the concern they had about moving the heavy stone from the tomb's entrance. When they reached the Ganneth Gate it was just a few yards to the left and they were once again in the area of the "garden tombs" outside the city proper. Their faces were covered by their himations, as was the custom, but they were able to see in the shadow of the city wall, the uprights of the crosses upon which the men were crucified two days earlier. The cross pieces were on the ground close by, still tangled in their roping. Litter was windblown everywhere. As they looked towards the escarpment in which the tombs had been cut, they were surprised to find that the tomb in which the body of Jesus had been placed had its sealing stone already rolled away. While they were puzzling about this, Mary carefully placed the wrapped ointment she was carrying on the ground, walked up to the gaping tomb, stooped, and looked inside. The tomb was empty.

Suddenly two men in brilliant white pallium appeared at their side. Most of the women dropped their bundles and fell to the ground in fear. Then the men said to them: "Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here, he is risen." They immediately remembered what Jesus had told them in Galilee: "The Son of man was destined to be handed over into the power of sinful men and be crucified, and [would] rise again on the third day." Somewhat panicked, but still not wanting to arouse suspicion, they slowly walked back to tell the Eleven what they had seen and heard. Mary of Magdala stayed behind weeping.

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On their way back, coming to meet them, in the half light, was Jesus. "Greetings," he said. The women came up to him and, clasping his feet, they did him homage. Then Jesus said to them: "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee, there they will see me."

While back at the tomb, Mary was sitting on the ground sobbing. She sensed a person behind her who asked: "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she responded in a quivering voice: "Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him and I will go and remove him." When she turned to see to whom she was speaking, Jesus said to her, "Mary!" With tears streaming down her face she answered him in Hebrew: "Rabbuni!" (Master!). She got up and as she advanced to embrace him he said: "Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to the brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Mary slowly backed away in total amazement and immediately ran to the disciples and told them "I have seen the Lord," and then told them what he had said. When the women arrived they also told them of their encounter on the street, but since Peter and John had seen nothing, they did not believe any of them. They ran to the tomb to see for themselves. John, being the youngest, arrived first but did not go in. When Peter arrived he bent down and looked inside. He saw the folded linen cloths but nothing else. Amazed at this, he and John walked back to where they were staying pondering what could possibly be happening, and what the women had reported.

During that day, still in disbelief, they exchanged many memories about the last few years, about what the Lord had been able to do before the eyes of thousands of people. The blind were made to see, the lame walked, those diseased with

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leprosy, epilepsy and paralysis were cured, even the dead were raised to life. All the incredible, astounding things they recalled flooded over them. They counted and recounted all the lessons he taught in his wonderful parables: The mustard seed; the darnel; the rare perl, the parable of the lamp, and hundreds of others some of which they had to ask for explanations. He calmed the sea, forgave sinners, warned of riches, and spoke of the great power of faith. They remembered how he told them how privileged they were when he said to them: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it." Maybe the women had seen something.

Some of the brothers had already left Jerusalem, and the doors were locked behind them. Those who remained, were his closest followers. The whole city had seen them with him as he preached the "Kingdom of God." They feared that they would also be apprehended by the authorities and killed, or at least flogged. Suddenly Jesus materialized and stood among them, while they were eating, and in his familiar, calming voice he said: "Peace be with you." Mark (15: 14) says, he reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. He then proceeded to show them his hands and his side. They were overwhelmed with joy at seeing him again. What he had explained about the Son of Man rising after three days, was now clear; positively confirmed, and walking among them. He raised his arms over them and said again reassuringly, "Peace be with you." Then he said: "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." After saying this he breathed on them and continued: "Receive the Holy Spirit, If you forgive anyones sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyones sins, they are

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retained.” This was as much as directing them to repeat what he himself had done. In fact, passing on to them the previously unthinkable power that was reserved only for Almighty God; substantiating what was written about sin offerings in Hosea: “Faithful love is what pleases me, not sacrifice, an acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). On this occasion, Thomas, known as the twin, was not with them. The New Covenant was just beginning to take effect in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, even while the sacrificial fires were still smoldering in the temple. When Thomas returned, the others said to him: “We have seen the Lord.” but he answered: “Unless I can see the holes the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe,”

From Jerusalem, the road to Emmaus went off to the west. It passed through Lydda and terminated by the sea at Joppa approximately forty miles away. Several of the brothers, Cleopas, and probably Barnabas, were making the journey. As they walked along they talked about all that happened. As they were discussing the events Jesus himself, unrecognized by them, came up and walked by their side. He said to them: “What are all these things you’re discussing?” They stopped, incredulously, their faces downcast. Then Cleopas spoke up and said: “You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that have been happening there in the last few days.” He asked, “What things?” They answered, “All about Jesus of Nazareth, who showed himself a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified.” They continued: “Our own hope had been that he would be the one to

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set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have now gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they could not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing. Then he said to them: "You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?" Then starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

When they drew near to the village, he made as if to go on, but they pressed him to stay with them saying: "The day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at supper, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; but he had vanished from their sight. Completely astonished, they said to each other: "Did our hearts not burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?" That instant they set out to return to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven assembled together with their companions as they had left them, who said to them, "The Lord had indeed risen and appeared to Simon" (Peter). Then they told their story of what had happened on the road to Emmaus, and how they recognized him at the breaking of the bread."

On hearing this, the disciples must have all thought about the supper they had with him in the upper room. When he broke the bread and handed it to them saying: "This is my body which will be given up for you." and: "Do this in memory of

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me.” Here was the momentous inauguration of what was to become the center of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. At this point, the remarks made in the Synagogue at Capernaum, where many had left him, suddenly didn’t seem so unreal. Today, we take the real presence of “the body of Christ” at his word; on the gift of faith; for us it has been The Bread of Life for over two thousand years and will remain so until the end of time. Nothing on earth can change that. The Eucharist is the body of Christ, on Christ’s authority, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Things seemed to have settled down a bit, with the Risen One among them, though none of the disciples had any idea when or where he would appear again.

Eight days later they were still gathered in the same room behind the closed doors. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus materialized and stood among them once again. “Peace be with you”, he said. Then he spoke to Thomas directly, “Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving but believing.” Thomas, quite flustered, fell to his knees in tears and said to him: “ My Lord and my God!” Helping him to his feet, Jesus said: “You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” A most prophetic and definitive statement for those of us who would later be called Christians.

It is good to insert Luke’s continuation here after Cleopas and Barnabas returned and told them of their experience with Jesus and the breaking of the bread. Although they were told that the Lord had appeared to Simon, there was no elaboration on that appearance. Luke’s gospel contains more information than John’s, though there will be some repetition in the interest of getting the whole story together.

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While they were telling these things, (i.e. The breaking of the bread). He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a ghost. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; touch me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, he said to them: "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of a broiled fish; and he took it and ate it before them.

Now he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

The decision was made to return to Galilee; it was what Jesus had instructed the women to tell them earlier. It may be, that when Jesus appeared to Peter, he arranged for a meeting with them on a mountaintop in that district. At this point they had no clue of the enormity of the task before them. They were about to become the "fishers of men," that they were told they would be. They packed up and departed on the seventy mile journey, probably to Peters house in Capernaum. If they made

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about fifteen to twenty miles a day, it would take them approximately three to five days to get there. No one can be certain, but it is reasonable to assume that they all got settled before their “prearranged” meeting with the Risen One would take place.

As they gathered together at the place of the meeting, “when they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said: ‘All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.’”

It certainly would take a little time, not only to adjust to what they had been instructed to do, but just to try to decipher what the Lord had in mind for them. These were not philosophers, public men or lawyers, they were simple men, fisherman—for the most part. What ever experience they had they gained from seeing the miraculous things that Jesus himself had done, and understanding how the ancient scriptures had predicted his day; how even Abraham saw it and was glad. They tried, in his name to do what he did; sometimes it worked, and sometimes it didn’t, depending on the strength of their faith. One thing they knew: they would whole heartedly follow his instructions to the death if need be; Jesus was their “Lord and their God.” It would take some time for the world to embrace that understanding. Peter, especially, had come a long way in just a few weeks, from denying him during his trial.

What better way, for confused fisherman to sort things out, than to go fishing?

Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus (the twin), and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and

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two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered him, "No." And he said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after he was raised from the dead.

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend my lambs." He said to him again a

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second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” Now this he said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.

From here John’s gospel appreciably ends, except for his Ascension story and a Second Conclusion. There is good reason to believe that the brothers were summoned back to Jerusalem towards the end of the forty days The Risen One was among them to be present at the feast of Pentecost, stated in Luke’s version. Since they were in Jerusalem, Luke’s version of the Ascension is the one that is most likely closer to the facts, so we’ll add it here.

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

CONCLUSION

St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians was written about 53 or 54 CE (Christian Era). That would be approximately twenty years after the Resurrection. Christ appeared to him about two years after the forty day period

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when he appeared to the Apostles, including the women. In that letter he sums up all he had heard from them, as he preached the Risen Lord. This is the perfect place for his summation. since no one did more than he to carry the teachings of Jesus to the world and thereby, to us. The following is from (Corinthians 1, 15: 1-11), from the New American Standard Bible, NASB.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me also.

For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.