



“He is Risen as He said, He is not Here”

By Msgr. Cantley

Matt. 28: 5-7 “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for He has been raised just as He said He would. Come and see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples ‘He has been raised from the dead...’ This mandate remains as alive today in the 21st Century as in the first, and the disciples are ourselves.

The Resurrection: **what it is not! What it is!**

The importance of the Resurrection of Jesus is stated by St. Paul in 1 Cor.15: 12-19 “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that He raised Christ”. Paul rightly argues that the Resurrection is fundamental to our acceptance of the Christian faith. Deny it, and Christianity is rejected. The centrally important issue is, therefore, Jesus’ Resurrection: it confirms the power of His death on the Cross and the salvation claimed for all of us who have believed in Him and follow His teachings.

In Jesus lifetime He raised the dead to life: the son of the widow of Naim (Lk.7:11-17); the daughter of Jairus (Mk. 5:22-24,35-43); and Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44). These miracles, however, were a resuscitation or reanimation of corpses brought back to this mortal life with all of its vulnerabilities and the need for each to die again. They and we share the same life experiences. That is what is what Jesus Resurrection **is not!** At Easter we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus; and, as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed reminds us, will be our own post-mortal experience. This is what Jesus Resurrection **is all about**, entry into a new modality of human life, a radical break-through to a new way of being human.

There have been many attempts to try to imagine what our resurrected bodies will be like. The Gospels offer 13 appearances of Jesus over the course of 40 days that suggest capabilities that we cannot accomplish in our lives. For example He entered a secured room with locked door to the fright of the apostles who are sequestered there. Calming and reassuring them, Jesus allowed them to touch Him and He ate in their presence. He engaged in meaningful conversations with them. Their first reaction was to think He was a ghost, but He disillusioned them of that “ a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have” (Lk.24:39). These appearances suggest strongly that the Resurrected Jesus is now present in a brand new form of human existence. One no longer subject to the limitations we experience. Pope Benedict XVI in his 2011 book *Jesus of Nazareth, part 2*, Pg. 244 states that Jesus appearance constitutes an “evolutionary leap” ... “In Jesus’ Resurrection a new possibility of human existence is attained that affects everyone and that opens up a future, a new kind of future, for mankind.” It is St. Paul who first connects Jesus’ Resurrection to us: “If the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised...But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1Cor.15:16, 20). There is only one conclusion we can derive from Paul’s teaching, it is that Christ’s Resurrection is a universal event and is, therefore, our destiny too.

It is obvious from the Acts description of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus that He did not return to normal human life. None of us can enter a locked room, appear and disappear, operate in distant places at one and the same time, as He did. In these appearances, Jesus spoke, could be touched, and ate in the presence of His disciples to their amazement and witness. Everything about the Resurrection appearances suggests that Jesus (and we at the end of time when we are raised) entered an entirely new way of being human. Two events that closed the public life of Jesus, Calvary and the Resurrection, were problematic to the early Disciples and to the Jews: the death of the Messiah and the Resurrection. Neither were mentioned in popular discourse, though there were hints even in the Old Testament Scriptures. Both were outside the experience of the people who witnessed them as the events show so clearly. The original witnesses to the Resurrection had to break through their expectations of a lifetime and grasp a new reality they never experienced before. Read the passages of Jesus appearances to His disciples and their struggle to see the reality of His being alive. Their initial doubts and struggle are witness to us that they were not gullible but needed proof of the reality of His presence to them. Both the Incarnation and the Resurrection introduced a radical dimension of God's creative powers, unimaginable before it became a reality in Christmas and Easter.

The risen Jesus is not a ghost (spirit), much less a mystical experience (where one is drawn beyond self to an experience of the Divine). Jesus' Resurrection is an historical fact which, at the same time, transcends history. In these facts about Jesus we encounter an ontological break-through. Jesus is now beyond history, yet Jesus left the imprint of His having been on earth, interacted with flesh and blood human beings both favorable and unfavorable to Him, who have attested to His presence; but He is still present and active in our world in grace, truth and life. Happy Easter is not a mere greeting, it is a prayerful request to the risen Lord that He draw us into His Risen Life.