

all that He can do for your salvation. The rest is up to you. Either you trust in Jesus and be saved, or else you reject Him and be lost. If like the Jewish religionists you insist on choosing your own way to be saved; if like the Greek culturists you ignore Jesus; if like the Roman power you rebel against Him—then there is no other way for you to be saved! A sovereign God offers you salvation on His terms, not yours. His offer as stated in I Peter 1:18-19 is that you are to be redeemed not “with cor-

ruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

I offer you that salvation right now, without money and without price. No matter how good you are you must be saved. No matter how sinful you may be you can be saved. All must be saved the same way—through faith in the Christ who died that you might live. Will you trust Him right now? Write and tell me that you have.

WHEN SHADOWS FLEE

March 22, 1959

Scripture: John 20

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre” — John 20:1

Before daybreak on Sunday morning Mary Magdalene and other women (Lk. 24:1f) left their homes to go to the tomb of Jesus, but when they arrived shortly after sunrise they found it empty. Immediately, Mary Magdalene ran to Peter and John with what to her was distressing news, but which was in reality the most glorious word ever spoken. Thus we are introduced to the climatic theme of the gospel, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

No critic has ever been able to explain away the empty tomb of Jesus. Speaking many years ago, Lord Lyndhurst, one of the greatest legal minds in British history, declared, “I know pretty well what evidence is; and, I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet.” With that avowal we turn from the fact of the resurrection to consider something of its meaning for you and me. Note therefore the meaning of the empty tomb, the response of Jesus to love, and His revelation to doubt.

When Mary Magdalene announced the fact of the empty tomb, Peter and John immediately had a foot race to ascertain the fact. John, the younger of the two,

was the first to reach the tomb. Being a timid soul he did not enter, but merely peeped in to see the empty grave clothes. Upon arrival, Peter rushed in to see the same. Then John followed. John 20:6-8 dramatically relates the incident. “Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple . . . and he saw, and believed.” Peter saw the evidence, but went away wondering (Lk. 24:12). John saw the orderly arrangement of the grave clothes as proof that it was not a grave robbery, and believed.

BELIEVING ATTITUDES

The same thing says different things to different people. Like Peter, many of you see the empty tomb, and go away wondering. What really happened to the body of Jesus? That it is not in the tomb is quite evident. But what is its significance? All of the doubts of skeptical minds still perplex you.

But others of you, like John, see and believe. You look behind the phenomenon to its phenomenal meaning. What did John believe? He believed that Jesus was alive — somehow He had overcome death. He saw the authentication of His deity which Jesus had promised to the doubting Pharisees (Matt. 12:39ff.). He was “de-

clared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). He was truly the redeemer of Israel (Lk. 24:21), and of the whole world. John saw the promise of his own resurrection from the dead (Jn. 11:24-26). Jesus had in truth come again to receive him unto Himself (Jn. 14:3). Darkness had given place to morning. The shadows fled away. Even the very birds in their morning serenade sang a song of hope, of assurance, and of life.

As we enter the week of all weeks climaxed with Easter Sunday, I would challenge you to be like John — see, and believe. Thus the day will be more than an occasion for you to parade your Easter finest. It will be a time to give thanks to God for His finest, as He conquered the realms of sin and death, that through faith in His Son you might have eternal life.

WEEKLY REMINDER

But faith like that of John will tell you that every Lord's Day is a reminder of the resurrection of Jesus. As God rested from His work of natural creation on the seventh day, so He rested from His work of spiritual re-creation on the first day of the week. So should you dedicate that day to worship of Him who on the first day of the week (Jn. 20:1) was declared to be the Son of God with power to save all who will believe on Him.

Second, consider Jesus' response to love. After Peter and John had left, Mary Magdalene arrived back at the tomb (Jn. 20:10f.). Her eyes were filled with tears of doubt, but her heart was filled with love for Jesus. The angels questioned her as to her tears. Her reply? "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (v.13). Then sensing that someone stood behind her, she turned to see Jesus, whom, because of her blinding tears, she mistook as the gardener. To His inquiry as to her tears, she replied, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away" (v.15).

What was Mary's condition? Why her tears? Was it not because she allowed her faith to end with the dead body of Jesus? When Jesus died, that was the end for her. Though her love persisted, her faith

faltered. She was left with the twofold despair of personal loneliness and of hopelessness as to the fate of Jesus.

First, most of you never go beyond the death of loved ones to the reality of life beyond the grave. The average Christian funeral finds you hemmed in by doubt and despair. Although the Lord has promised eternal life to those who believe in Him, yet your faith falters before the open grave. Instead of tears, it should be a time of rejoicing. The Bible teaches that the moment the Christian dies he goes immediately to be with the Lord (Lk. 23:43; Jn. 11:25ff.).

It is human to weep in the presence of death. But it should be for ourselves, not for our saved loved ones. We are left behind, and are lonely. But they are with the Lord, which is far better (Phil. 1:23). So, unlike Mary, who wished only to give a fitting and final resting place to One she loved, you should look beyond the night to the morning. When the daughter of the great scientist, Louis Pasteur, lay dying, he said, "I know only scientifically determined truth, but I am going to believe what I wish to believe, what I cannot help but believe — I expect to meet this dear child in another world."

A LIVING LORD

Second, multitudes of you have fixed your faith in a dead Jesus rather than in a living Lord. It was so with Mary Magdalene. The average preacher dwells more upon the crucifixion than upon the resurrection. It was not so with the early Christians. Their message emphasized the resurrection. Theirs was not a dead Jesus but a living Lord. While the crucifixion was necessarily a part of God's redemptive plan, yet a Jesus on a cross or in a sealed tomb cannot save you. "If Christ be not risen . . . ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:14,17).

Note that Jesus spoke to Mary in her grief. One word He said, "Mary." But in that word, perhaps in the tone of His voice, she recognized Jesus. Her reply was "Rabboni," greatest, highest Master. Thus the shadow of doubt fled before the light of faith. It is significant to note that Jesus' first revelation of Himself after the resurrection was not to the haughty Sanhedrin or to the commiserating Twelve.

It was to love, love mingled with the tears of doubt, but, nevertheless — love!

Which suggests that where your faith cannot go, your love can. And where love clears the way, faith will follow. Your mind may be beset with unanswerable questions, but if in your heart you will love the Lord, faith will find a way. As the father in Mark 9:24 will you pray, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." And the love of Christ will find your love. In that fusion the light of faith will burst upon your soul.

Finally note the revelation of Jesus to doubt. On the evening of resurrection day Jesus appeared to ten of His disciples, Thomas being absent. Immediately He quieted their fears by showing them the evidence of His resurrection (Jn. 20:19f.). Later, Thomas hearing about it, said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." So incredible was the resurrection to Thomas that he demanded physical evidence of the fact.

DOUBTING THOMAS

For this reason he is called "doubting Thomas." Doubt within itself is not bad. It is a protective measure given to all of us. For instance, if I tell you that strychnine is not poison, you doubt it. If you tell me that Jesus did not rise from the dead, I will doubt it. Doubt becomes an evil when in the face of irrefutable facts you stubbornly continue in a state of unbelief. It is well to note that Thomas de-

manded the proof that the other disciples already had.

So the next Sunday night Jesus appeared to the disciples with Thomas present. Immediately Jesus challenged Thomas to do as he had demanded (v.27). But Thomas did not do it. Jesus' presence was enough for him. Immediately he addressed Jesus as "My Lord and my God" (v.28). Doubting Thomas became believing Thomas, as he became the first person to call Jesus God. To which Jesus replied, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (v.29).

That blessedness can be yours right now. You cannot see the resurrected Jesus in the flesh. But you can know Him in the experience of faith. Peter seems to have remembered Jesus' words to Thomas when he wrote in I Peter 1:8-9, "Whom not having seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

I cherish that experience for you. Jesus died for your sins. He was raised for your justification. Paul in Romans 10:9 challenges your faith. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus [Jesus is Lord], and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Believe in Him as your risen Lord. Confess Him in the church and in your life before men. If you will do this in truth God has promised to save you. And God keeps His promises.

THE LENGTHENED SHADOW OF JESUS

March 29, 1959

Scripture: John 21

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep"—John 21:17.

John first ended his Gospel with the words in Chapter 20: "These are written,

that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John selected certain incidents in the life of Jesus to prove His deity and to evoke from his readers faith in Him. With the greatest sign of the resurrection climaxed by Thomas' confession "My Lord and my God," he closed his account.

Then shortly thereafter, since the Gos-