

AN

EXAMINATION OF THE TESTIMONY

OF THE

FOUR EVANGELISTS,

BY THE RULES OF EVIDENCE ADMINISTERED

IN

COURTS OF JUSTICE.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE TRIAL OF JESUS.

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NOTE ON THE RESURRECTION.

THE accounts of the Resurrection and of the subsequent appearances of our Lord, have been harmonised in various methods; of which the latest, and probably the best, is that of Professor Robinson, in an article published in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for February 1845, vol. ii. pp. 162—189. As the best service the present writer could do to the English reader, he has therefore here abridged that article, by omitting the introduction, and such parts as relate to the Greek text, and a few other passages, which it seemed might be spared without injury to the narrative itself.

§ 1. *The Time of the Resurrection.*

Matt. 26 : 1, 2. Mark 16 : 1, 2, 9. Luke 24 : 1. John 20 : 1.

That the resurrection of our Lord took place before full daylight, on the first day of the week, follows from the unanimous testimony of the Evangelists respecting the visit of the women to the sepulchre. But the exact time at which he rose is nowhere specified. According to the Jewish mode of reckoning, the Sabbath ended and the next day began at sunset; so that had the resurrection occurred even before midnight, it would still have been upon the first day of the week, and the third day after our Lord's burial. The earthquake had taken place and the stone had been rolled away before the arrival of the women; and so far as the immediate narrative is concerned, there is nothing to show that all this might not have happened some hours earlier. Yet the words of Mark in another place render it certain, that there could have been no great interval between these events and the arrival of the women; since he affirms in v. 9, that Jesus "had risen *early*, the first day of the week;" while in v. 2, he states that the women went out "*very early*." A like inference may be drawn from the fact, that the affrighted guards first went to inform the chief priests of these events, when the women returned to the city (Matt. 28 : 11); for it is hardly to be supposed, that after having been thus terrified by the earthquake and the appearance of an angel, they would have waited any very long time before sending information to their employers.—The body of Jesus had therefore probably lain in the tomb not less than about thirty-six hours.

§ 2. *The Visit of the Women to the Sepulchre.*

Matt. 28 : 1—8. Mark 16 : 1—8. Luke 24 : 1—11. John 20 : 1, 2.

The first notices we have of our Lord's resurrection, are connected with the visit of the women to the sepulchre, on the morning of the first day of the week. According to Luke, the women who had stood by the cross, went home and rested during the sabbath (23 : 56); and Mark adds that after the sabbath was ended, that is, after sunset, and during the evening, they prepared spices in order to go and embalm our Lord's body. They were either not aware of the previous embalming by Joseph and Nicodemus; or else they also wished to testify their respect and affection to their Lord, by completing, more perfectly, what before had been done in haste; John 19 : 40—42.

It is in just this portion of the history, which relates to the visit of the women to the tomb and the appearance of Jesus to them, that most of the alleged difficulties and discrepancies in this part of the Gospel narratives are found. We will therefore take up the chief of them in their order.

1. *The Time.* All the Evangelists agree in saying that the women went out *very early*

to the sepulchre. Matthew's expression is, *as the day was dawning*. Mark's words are, *very early*: which indeed are less definite, but are appropriate to denote the same point of time. Luke has the more poetic term: *deep morning*, i. e. early dawn. John's language is likewise definite: *early, while it was yet dark*. All these expressions go to fix the time at what we call *early dawn*, or *early twilight*; after the break of day, but while the light is yet struggling with darkness.

Thus far there is no difficulty; and none would ever arise, had not Mark added the phrase, *the sun being risen*; or, as the English version has it, *at the rising of the sun*. These words seem, at first, to be at direct variance both with the *very early* of Mark himself, and with the language of the other Evangelists. To harmonise this apparent discrepancy, we may premise, that since Mark himself first specifies the point of time by a phrase sufficiently definite in itself, and supported by all the other Evangelists, we must conclude that when he adds, *at the rising of the sun*, he did not mean to contradict himself, but used this latter phrase in a broader and less definite sense. As the sun is the source of light and of the day, and as his earliest rays produce the contrast between darkness and light, between night and dawn, so the term *sunrising* might easily come in popular language, by a metonymy of cause for effect, to be put for all that earlier interval, when his rays, still struggling with darkness, do nevertheless usher in the day.

Accordingly, we find such a popular usage prevailing among the Hebrews; and several instances of it occur in the Old Testament. Thus in Judg. 9: 33, the message of Zebul to Abimelech, after directing him to lie in wait with his people in the field during the night, goes on as follows: "and it shall be, in the morning, as soon as the sun is up thou shalt rise early and set upon the city;" yet we cannot for a moment suppose that Abimelech with his ambuscade was to wait until the sun actually appeared above the horizon, before he made his onset. So the Psalmist (104: 22), speaking of the young lions that by night roar after their prey, goes on to say: "The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens." But wild animals do not wait for the actual appearance of the sun ere they shrink away to their lairs: the break of day, the dawning light, is the signal for their retreat. See also Sept. 2 K. 3: 22. 2 Sam. 23: 4. In all these passages the language is entirely parallel to that of Mark; and they serve fully to illustrate the principle, that the rising of the sun is here used in a popular sense as equivalent to the *rising of the day* or early dawn.

II. *The Number of the Women*. Matthew mentions Mary Magdalene and the other Mary; v. 1. Mark enumerates Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome; v. 1. Luke has Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and others with them; v. 10. John speaks of Mary Magdalene alone, and says nothing of any other. The first three Evangelists accord then in respect to the two Marys, but no further; while John differs from them all. Is there here a real discrepancy?

We may at once answer, No; because, according to the sound canon of Le Clerc:* "*Qui plura narrat, pauciora complectitur; qui pauciora memorat, plura non negat.*" Because John, in narrating circumstances with which he was personally connected, sees fit to mention only Mary Magdalene, it does not at all follow that others were not present. Because Matthew, perhaps for like reasons, speaks only of the two Marys, he by no means excludes the presence of others. Indeed, the very words which John puts into the mouth of Mary Magdalene, (v. 2), presupposes the fact, that others had gone with her to the sepulchre. That there was something in respect to Mary Magdalene, which gave her a peculiar prominence in these transactions, may be inferred from the fact, that not only John mentions her alone, but likewise all the other Evangelists name her first, as if holding the most conspicuous place.

The instance here under consideration is parallel to that of the demoniacs of Gadara, and the blind men at Jericho; where, in both cases, Matthew speaks of two persons, while Mark and Luke mention only one.† Something peculiar in the station or character of one of the persons, rendered him in each case more prominent, and led the two latter Evangelists to speak of him particularly. But there, as here, their language is not exclusive; nor is there in it anything that contradicts the statements of Matthew.

III. *The Arrival at the Sepulchre*. According to Mark, Luke, and John, the women on reaching the sepulchre found the great stone, with which it had been closed, already

* Harm. p. 525. Can. XII. fin.

† Matt. 8: 28. Mark 5: 2. Luke 8: 27.—Matt. 20: 30. Mark 10: 46. Luke 18: 35.

rolled away. Matthew, on the other hand, after narrating that the women went out to see the sepulchre, proceeds to mention the earthquake, the descent of the angel, his rolling away the stone and sitting upon it, and the terror of the watch, as if all these things took place in the presence of the women. The angel too (in v. 5) addresses the women, as if still sitting upon the stone he had rolled away.

The apparent discrepancy, if any, here arises simply from Matthew's brevity in omitting to state in full what his own narrative presupposes. According to v. 6, Christ was already risen; and therefore the earthquake and its accompaniments must have taken place at an earlier point of time, to which the sacred writer returns back in his narration. And although Matthew does not represent the women as entering the sepulchre, yet in v. 8, he speaks of them as going out of it; so that of course their interview with the angel took place, not outside of the sepulchre, but in it, as narrated by the other Evangelists. When therefore the angel says to them in v. 6, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," this is not said without the tomb to induce them to enter, as Strauss avers; but within the sepulchre, just as in Mark v. 6.

IV. *The Vision of Angels in the Sepulchre.* Of this John says nothing. Matthew and Mark speak of one angel; Luke of two. Mark says he was sitting; Luke speaks of them as standing. This difference in respect to numbers is parallel to the case of the women, which we have just considered; and requires therefore no further illustration.

There is likewise some diversity in the language addressed to the women by the angels. In Matthew and Mark, the prominent object is the charge to the disciples to depart into Galilee. In Luke this is not referred to; but the women are reminded of our Lord's own previous declaration, that he would rise again on the third day. Neither of the Evangelists here professes to report *all* that was said by the angels; and of course there is no room for contradiction.

§ 3. *The return of the Women to the city, and the first appearance of our Lord.*

Matt. 28 : 7—10. Mark 16 : 8. Luke 24 : 9—11. John 20 : 1, 2.

John, speaking of Mary Magdalene alone, says that having seen that the stone was taken away from the sepulchre, she went in haste (ran) to tell Peter and John. He says nothing of her having seen the angels, nor of her having entered the sepulchre at all. The other Evangelists, speaking of the women generally, relate that they entered the tomb, saw the angels and then returned into the city. On their way Jesus meets them. They recognize him; fall at and embrace his feet; and receive his charge to the disciples.—Was Mary Magdalene now with the other women? Or did she enter the city by another way? Or had she left the sepulchre before the rest?

It is evident that Mary Magdalene was not with the other women when Jesus thus met them. Her language to Peter and John forbids the supposition, that she had already seen the Lord: "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." She therefore must have entered the city by another path and gate; or else have left the sepulchre before the rest; or possibly both these positions may be true. She bore her tidings expressly to Peter and John, who would seem to have lodged by themselves in a different quarter of the city; while the other women went apparently to the rest of the disciples. But this supposition of a different route is essential, only in connection with the view, that she left the tomb with the other women. That, however, she actually departed from the sepulchre before her companions, would seem most probable; inasmuch as she speaks to Peter and John only of the absence of the Lord's body; says nothing in this connection of a vision of angels; and when, after returning again to the tomb, she sees the angels, it is evidently for the first time; and she repeats to them as the cause of her grief her complaint as to the disappearance of the body; John 20 : 12, 13. She may have turned back from the tomb without entering it at all, so soon as she saw that it was open; inferring from the removal of the stone, that the sepulchre had been rifled. Or, she may first have entered with the rest, when, according to Luke, "they found not the body of the Lord Jesus," and "were much perplexed thereabout," before the angels became visible to them. The latter supposition seems best to meet the exigencies of the case.

"As the other women went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said unto them, Be not afraid; go, tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." The women had left the sepulchre "with fear and great joy" after the

declaration of the angels that Christ was risen ; or, as Mark has it, "they trembled and were amazed." Jesus meets them with words of gentleness to quiet their terrors ; "Be not afraid." He permits them to approach, and embrace his feet, and testify their joy and homage. He reiterates to them the message of the angels to his "brethren," the eleven disciples ; see v. 16.

This appearance and interview is narrated only by Matthew ; none of the other Evangelists give any hint of it. Matthew here stops short. Mark simply relates that the women fled from the tomb ; "neither said they anything to any one, for they were afraid." This of course can only mean, that they spoke of what they had thus seen to no one while on their way to the city ; for the very charge of the angels, which they went to fulfil, was, that they should "go their way and tell his disciples ;" v. 7. Luke narrates more fully, that "they returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.—And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." We may perhaps see in this language one reason why the other Evangelists have omitted to mention this appearance of our Lord. The disciples *disbelieved the report of the women*, that they had seen Jesus. In like manner they afterwards disbelieved the report of Mary Magdalene to the same effect ; Mark 16 : 11. They were ready, it would seem, to admit the testimony of the women to the absence of the body, and to the vision of angels ; but not to the resurrection of Jesus and his appearance to them ; Luke 24 : 21—24. And afterwards, when the eleven had become convinced by the testimony of their own senses, those first two appearances to the women became of less importance and were less regarded. Hence the silence of three Evangelists as to the one ; of two as to the other ; and of Paul as to both ; 1 Cor. 15 : 5, 6.

§ 4. *Peter and John visit the Sepulchre. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene.*

John 20 : 3—18. Luke 24 : 12. Mark 16 : 9—11.

The full account of these two events is given solely by John. Matthew has not a word of either ; Luke merely mentions, in general, that Peter, on the report of the women, went to the sepulchre ; while Mark speaks only of our Lord's appearance to Mary Magdalene, which he seems to represent as his *first* appearance.

According to John's account, Peter and the beloved disciple, excited by the tidings of Mary Magdalene that the Lord's body had been taken away, hasten to the sepulchre. They run ; John outruns Peter, comes first to the tomb, and stooping down, sees the grave-clothes lying, but he does not enter. The other women are no longer at the tomb ; nor have the disciples met them on the way. Peter now comes up ; he enters the tomb, and sees the grave-clothes lying, and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the rest, but wrapped together in a place by itself. John too now enters the sepulchre ; "and he saw and believed."

What was it that John thus believed ? The mere report of Mary Magdalene, that the body had been removed ? So much he must have believed when he stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. For this, there was no need that he should enter the tomb. His belief must have been of something more and greater. The grave-clothes lying orderly in their place, and the napkin folded together by itself, made it evident that the sepulchre had not been rifled nor the body stolen by violent hands ; for these garments and spices would have been of more value to thieves, than merely a naked corpse ; at least, they would not have taken the trouble thus to fold them together. The same circumstances showed also that the body had not been removed by friends ; for they would not thus have left the grave-clothes behind. All these considerations produce in the mind of John the germ of a belief that Jesus was risen from the dead. He believed *because* he saw ; "for as yet they knew not the Scripture ;" (v. 9). He now began more fully to recall and understand our Lord's repeated declaration, that he was to rise again on the third day ; * a declaration on which the Jews had already acted in setting a watch. † In this way, the difficulty which is sometimes urged of an apparent want of connection between verses 8 and 9, disappears.

The two disciples went their way, "wondering in themselves at what was come to pass." Mary Magdalene who had followed them back to the sepulchre, remained before it weeping. While she thus wept, she too, like John, stooped down and looked in, "and seeth two

* Matt. 16 : 21. 17 : 23. Luke 9 : 22. 24 : 6, 7. al. † Matt. 23 : 63 sq.

angels, in white, sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." To their inquiry why she wept, her reply was the same report which she had before borne to the two disciples: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," v. 13. Of the angels we learn nothing further. The whole character of this representation seems to show clearly, that Mary had not before seen the angels; and also that she had not before been told, that Jesus was risen. We must otherwise regard her as having been in a most unaccountably obtuse and unbelieving frame of mind; the very contrary of which seems to have been the fact. If also she had before informed the two disciples of a vision of angels and of Christ's resurrection, it is difficult to see, why John should omit to mention this circumstance, so important and so personal to himself.

After replying to the angels, Mary turns herself about, and sees a person standing near, whom, from his being present there, she takes to be the keeper of the garden. He too inquires, why she weeps. Her reply is the same as before; except that she, not unnaturally, supposes him to have been engaged in removing the body, which she desires to recover. He simply utters in reply, in well-known tones, the name Mary! and the whole truth flashes upon her soul; doubt is dispelled, and faith triumphs. She exclaims: "Rabboni!" as much as to say, "My dearest Master!" and apparently, like the other women, * falls at his feet in order to embrace and worship him. This Jesus forbids her to do, in these remarkable words: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God;" v. 17.

There remains to be considered the circumstance, that Mark, in v. 9, seems to represent this appearance of Jesus at the sepulchre to Mary Magdalene, as his first appearance: "Now, being risen early the first of the week, he appeared *first* to Mary Magdalene." In attempting to harmonize this with Matthew's account of our Lord's appearance to the other women on their return from the sepulchre, several methods have been adopted; but the most to the purpose is the view which regards the word *first*, in Mark v. 9, as put not absolutely, but relatively. That is to say, Mark narrates three, and only three, appearances of our Lord; *of these three*, that to Mary Magdalene takes place *first*, and that to the assembled disciples the same evening occurs *last*, v. 14. A similar example occurs in 1 Cor. 15: 5—8, where Paul enumerates those to whom the Lord showed himself after his resurrection, viz. to Peter, to the twelve, to five hundred brethren, to James, to all the apostles, and *last of all* to Paul also. Now had Paul written here, as with strict propriety he might have done, "he was seen *first* of Cophas," assuredly no one would ever have understood him as intending to assert that the appearance to Peter was the first absolutely; that is, as implying that Jesus was seen of Peter before he appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other women. In like manner when John declares (21: 14) that Jesus showed himself to his disciples by the lake of Galilee for the *third* time after he was risen from the dead; this is said relatively to the two previous appearances to the assembled apostles; and does by no means exclude the four still earlier appearances, viz. to Peter, to the two at Emmaus, to Mary Magdalene, and to the other women,—one of which John himself relates in full.

In this way the old difficulty in the case before us disappears; and the complex and cumbrous machinery of earlier commentators becomes superfluous.

After her interview with Jesus, Mary Magdalene returns to the city, and tells the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that he had spoken these things unto her. According to Mark (vs. 10, 11), the disciples were "mourning and weeping;" and when they heard that Jesus was alive and had been seen of her, they believed not.

§ 5. *Jesus appears to two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Also to Peter.*

Luke 24: 13—35. Mark 16: 12, 13. 1 Cor. 15: 5.

This appearance on the way to Emmaus is related in full only by Luke. Mark merely notes the fact; while the other two Evangelists and Paul (1 Cor. 15: 5) make no mention of it.

On the afternoon of the same day on which our Lord arose, two of his disciples, one of them named Cleopas, were on their way on foot to a village called Emmaus, sixty stadia or seven and a half Roman miles distant from Jerusalem,—a walk of some two or two

* Matt. 28: 9.

and a half hours. They had heard and credited the tidings brought by the women, and also by Peter and John, that the sepulchre was open and empty; and that the women had also seen a vision of angels, who said that Jesus was alive. They had most probably likewise heard the reports of Mary Magdalene and the other women, that Jesus himself had appeared to them; but these they did not regard, and do not mention them (v. 24); because they, like the other disciples, had looked upon them "as idle tales, and they believed them not;" v. 11. As they went, they were sad, and talked together of all these things which had happened. After some time Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But they knew him not. Mark says he was in another form; Luke affirms that "their eyes were holden, that they should not know him;" v. 16. Was there in this anything miraculous? The "another form" of Mark, Doddridge explains by "a different habit from what he ordinarily wore." His garments, of course, were not his former ones; and this was probably one reason why Mary Magdalene had before taken him for the keeper of the garden.* It may be, too, that these two disciples had not been intimately acquainted with the Lord. He had arrived at Jerusalem only six days before his crucifixion; and these might possibly have been recent converts, who had not before seen him. To such, the change of garments, and the unexpectedness of the meeting, would render a recognition more difficult; nor could it be regarded as surprising, that under such circumstances they should not know him. Still, all this is hypothesis; and the averment of Luke, that "their eyes were holden," and the manner of our Lord's parting from them afterwards, seem more naturally to imply that the idea of a supernatural agency, affecting not Jesus himself, but the eyes or minds of the two disciples, was in the mind of the sacred writer.

Jesus inquires the cause of their sadness; chides them for their slowness of heart to believe what the prophets had spoken; and then proceeds to expound unto them "in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." They feel the power of his words; and their hearts burn within them. By this time they drew nigh to the village whither they went; it was toward evening, and the day was far spent. Their journey was ended; and Jesus was about to depart from them. In accordance with oriental hospitality they constrained him to remain with them. He consents; and as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave unto them. At this time, and in connection with this act, their eyes were opened; they knew him; and he vanished away from them. Here too the question is raised, whether the language necessarily implies anything miraculous? Our English translators have rendered this passage in the margin, "he ceased to be seen of them;" and have referred to Luke 4: 30, and John 8: 59, as illustrating this idea. They might also have referred to Acts 8: 39. Still, the language is doubtless such as the sacred writers would most naturally have employed in order directly to express the idea of supernatural agency.

Full of wonder and joy, the two disciples set off the same hour and return to Jerusalem. They find the eleven and other disciples assembled; and as they enter, they are met with the joyful exclamation: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon;" v. 34. They then rehearse what had happened to themselves; but, according to Mark, the rest believed them not. As in the case of the women, so here, there would seem to have been something in the position or character of these two disciples, which led the others to give less credit to their testimony, than to that of Peter, one of the leading apostles.

This appearance to Peter is mentioned by no other Evangelist; and we know nothing of the particular time, nor of the attending circumstances. It would seem to have taken place either not long before, or else shortly after, that to the two disciples. It had not happened when they left Jerusalem for Emmaus; or, at least, they had not heard of it. It had occurred when they returned; and that long enough before to have been fully reported to all the disciples and believed by them. It may perhaps have happened about the time when the two disciples set off, or shortly afterwards.

Paul, in enumerating those by whom the Lord was seen after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 5), mentions Peter first; passing over the appearances to the women, and also that to the two disciples; probably because they did not belong among the apostles.

* See also John 21: 4.

§ 6. *Jesus appears to the Apostles in the absence of Thomas; and afterwards when Thomas is present.*

Mark 16 : 14—18. Luke 24 : 36—48. John 20 : 19—29. 1 Cor. 15 : 5.

The narrative of our Lord's first appearance to the apostles is most fully given by Luke; John adds a few circumstances; and Mark, as well as Luke, has preserved the first charge thus privately given to the apostles, to preach the Gospel in all the world,—a charge afterwards repeated in a more public and solemn manner on the mountain in Galilee. When Paul says the Lord appeared to *the twelve*, he obviously employs this number as being the usual designation of the apostles; and very probably includes both the occasions narrated in this section. Mark and Luke speak in like manner of *the eleven*; and yet we know from John, that Thomas was not at first among them; so that of course only *ten* were actually present.

According to Mark, the disciples were at their evening meal; which implies a not very late hour. John says the doors were shut, for fear of the Jews. While the two who had returned from Emmaus were still recounting what had happened unto them, Jesus himself "came and stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you!" The question here again is raised, whether this entrance of our Lord was miraculous? That it might have been so, there is no reason to doubt. He who in the days of his flesh walked upon the waters, and before whose angel the iron gate of the prison opened of its own accord so that Peter might pass out; he who was himself just risen from the dead; might well in some miraculous way present himself to his followers in spite of bolts and bars. But does the language here necessarily imply a miracle? The doors indeed were shut; but the word used does not of itself signify that they were bolted or fastened. The object no doubt was, to prevent access to spies from the Jews; or also to guard themselves from the danger of being arrested; and both these objects might perhaps have been as effectually accomplished by a watch at or before the door. Nor do the words used of our Lord strictly indicate anything miraculous. We do not find here a form of the word commonly employed to express the sudden appearance of angels; but, "he came and stood in the midst of them;" implying *per se* nothing more than the ordinary mode of approach. There is, in fact, nothing in the whole account to suggest a miracle, except the remark of John respecting the doors; and as this circumstance is not mentioned either by Mark or Luke, it may be doubtful whether we are necessarily compelled by the language to regard the mode of our Lord's entrance as miraculous.

At this interview Thomas was not present. On his return the other disciples relate to him the circumstances. But Thomas now disbelieved the others; as they before had disbelieved the women. His reply was, "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." Our Lord had compassion upon his perverseness. Eight days afterwards, when the disciples were again assembled and Thomas with them, our Lord came as before, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you! He permits to Thomas the test he had demanded; and charges him to be not faithless, but believing. Thomas, convinced and abashed, exclaims in the fulness of faith and joy, My Lord and my God! recognising and acknowledging thereby the divine nature thus manifested in the flesh. The reply of our Lord to Thomas is strikingly impressive and condemnatory of his want of faith: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!" He and the other disciples, who were to be the heralds of the Lord's resurrection to the world as the foundation of the hope of the Gospel, refused to believe except upon the evidence of their own senses; while all who after them have borne the Christian Name, have believed this great fact of the Gospel solely upon their testimony. God has overruled their unbelief for good, in making it a powerful argument for the truth of their testimony in behalf of this great fact, which they themselves were so slow to believe. Blessed, indeed, are they who have received their testimony.

§ 7. *Our Lord's Appearance in Galilee.*

John 21 : 1—24. Matt. 28 : 16—20. 1 Cor. 15 : 6.

It appears from the narrative of Matthew, that while the disciples were yet in Jerusalem, our Lord had appointed a time, when he would meet them in Galilee, upon a certain

*Acts 12 : 10.

mountain.* They therefore left Jerusalem after the passover, probably soon after the interview at which Thomas was present, and returned to Galilee, their home. While waiting for the appointed time, they engaged in their usual occupation of fishermen. On a certain day, as John relates, towards evening, seven of them being together, including Peter, Thomas, and the sons of Zebedee, they put out upon the lake with their nets in a fishing boat; but during the whole night they caught nothing. At early dawn Jesus stood upon the shore, from which they were not far off, and directed them to cast the net upon the right side of the boat. "They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of the fishes." Recognising in this miracle their risen Lord, they pressed around him. Peter, with his characteristic ardour, threw himself into the water in order to reach him the sooner. At their Lord's command they prepared a meal from the fish they had thus taken. "Jesus then cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise." This was his third appearance to the eleven; or rather to a large number of them together. It was on this occasion, and after their meal, that our Lord put to Peter the touching and thrice repeated question, "Lovest thou me?"

At length the set time arrived; and the eleven disciples went away into the mountain "where Jesus had appointed them." It would seem most probable, that this time and place had been appointed of our Lord for a solemn and more public interview, not only with the eleven, whom he had already met, but with all his disciples in Galilee; and that therefore it was on this same occasion, when, according to Paul, "he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once."† That the interview was not confined to the eleven alone, would seem evident from the fact that "some doubted;" for this could hardly be supposed true of any of the eleven, after what had already happened to them in Jerusalem and Galilee, and after having been appointed to meet their risen Lord at this very time and place. The appearance of the five hundred must at any rate be referred to Galilee; for even after our Lord's ascension, the number of the names in Jerusalem were together only about an hundred and twenty.‡ I do not hesitate, therefore, to hold with Flatt, Olshausen, Hengstenberg, and others, that the appearances thus described by Matthew and Paul, were identical. It was a great and solemn occasion. Our Lord had directed that the eleven and all his disciples in Galilee should thus be convened upon the mountain. It was the closing scene of his ministry in Galilee. Here his life had been spent. Here most of his mighty works had been done and his discourses held. Here his followers were as yet most numerous. He therefore here takes leave on earth of those among whom he had lived and laboured longest; and repeats to all his disciples in public the solemn charge, which he had already given in private to the apostles: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations:—and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It was doubtless his last interview with his disciples in that region,—his last great act in Galilee.

§ 8. *Our Lord's further Appearances at Jerusalem, and his Ascension.*

1 Cor. 15: 7. Acts 1: 3—12. Luke 24: 49—53. Mark 16: 19, 20.

Luke relates, in Acts 1: 3, that Jesus showed himself alive to his apostles, "after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." This would seem to imply interviews and communications, as to which we have little more than this very general notice. One of these may have been the appearance to James, mentioned by Paul alone (1 Cor. 15: 7), as subsequent to that to the five hundred brethren. It may be referred with most probability to Jerusalem, after the return of the Apostles from Galilee. That this return took place by the Lord's direction, there can be no doubt; although none of the Evangelists have given us the slightest hint as to any such direction. Indeed, it is this very brevity,—this omission to place on record the minor details which might serve to connect the great facts and events of our Lord's last forty days on earth, that has occasioned all the doubt and difficulty with which this portion of the written history of these events has been encompassed.—The James here intended was probably our Lord's brother; who was of high consideration in the church, and is often, in the latter books, simply so named without any special designation.§ At the time when Paul wrote, the other James, "the brother of John," as he is called, was already dead.||

* See Matt. 26: 32.

† 1 Cor. 15: 6.

‡ Acts 1: 15.

§ See Acts 12: 17. 15: 13. 21: 18. Gal. 2: 9, 12 al.

|| Acts 12: 1.

After thus appearing to James, our Lord, according to Paul, was seen "of all the apostles." This, too, was apparently an appointed meeting; and was doubtless the same of which Luke speaks, as occurring in Jerusalem immediately preceding the ascension. It was, of course, the Lord's last interview with his apostles. He repeats to them the promise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit as soon to take place; and charges them not to depart from Jerusalem until this should be accomplished.* Strange as it may appear, the twelve, in this last solemn moment, put to him the question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" How, indeed, were they to believe! Their gross and darkened minds, not yet enlightened by the baptism of the Spirit, clung still to the idea of a temporal Prince and Saviour, who should deliver his people, not from their sins, but from the galling yoke of Roman dominion. Our Lord deals gently with their ignorance and want of faith: "It is not for you to know the times and seasons;—but ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me—unto the uttermost part of the earth."

During this discourse, or in immediate connection with it, our Lord leads them out *as far as to Bethany*, and lifting up his hands he blessed them; Luke 24: 50. This act of blessing must be understood, by all the laws of language, as having taken place at or near Bethany. "And it came to pass, *while* he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Our Lord's ascension, then, took place at or near Bethany. Indeed, the sacred writer could hardly have found words to express this fact more definitely and fully; and a doubt on this point could never have suggested itself to the mind of any reader, but for the language of the same writer, in Acts 1: 12, where he relates that after the ascension the disciples "returned unto Jerusalem by the mount called Olivet." Luke obviously did not mean to contradict himself; and the most that his expression can be made to imply, is, that from Bethany, where their Lord had ascended, which lies on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, a mile or more below the summit of the ridge, the disciples returned to Jerusalem by a path across the mount.

As these disciples stood gazing and wondering, while a cloud received their Lord out of their sight, two angels stood by them in white apparel, announcing unto them, that this same Jesus, who was thus taken up from them into heaven, shall again so come, in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven. With this annunciation closes the written history of our Lord's resurrection and ascension.

* To this interview belongs also Luke 24: 44.