

one and only thing that will bring peace to the world; it offers a plan of life and salvation to all who will accept it. May the Lord cause that every soul seeking the truth shall come to the testimony that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and the gospel has been restored in its fulness, and that Christ's Church is here upon the earth today with a prophet at its head is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He who has just addressed us is Elder

Nathan Eldon Tanner of the Council of the Twelve.

Following a brief organ interlude, the Tabernacle Choir and Congregation, with Richard P. Condie conducting, will sing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

Singing by the Choir and congregation, "Now Let Us Rejoice."

President David O. McKay:

We shall now hear from Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve.

ELDER HOWARD W. HUNTER

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

We approach the season of the year which marks the anniversary of one of the most significant events of all time. It was one of the many events of nearly two thousand years ago which divides history into two segments—that which took place before the death and resurrection of the Savior and the happenings of the two millenniums since that time.

Throughout Christendom this coming week, thoughts will turn to the little walled city on a hill in what was once Palestine. Jerusalem has been known as the "City of Peace," yet scarcely a decade in its history has gone by without wars or bloodshed. Its history is one of conquest and change—the Babylonians, the Jews, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, the Crusaders, the Turks. John the Baptist walked its streets; great kings and rulers of Bible fame lived in this ancient city.

To Christians everywhere, as spring comes again, there is the reminder of the one who came to earth with the message of peace, yet was condemned in Jerusalem for his teachings, convicted and sentenced to die by crucifixion, what Cicero called "the most cruel and hideous of tortures." After execution of judgment and death on the cross, the body was placed in a tomb prepared for the dead.

Those who knew him best did not fully realize his purpose for being with

them, nor did they understand the testimony of the ancient prophets that the Master would give his life and be resurrected, that all men should overcome death and the grave and live again.

Repeatedly Jesus had made mention of his impending death and resurrection and on one occasion said:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17-18.)

In spite of his teachings there was lack of understanding, and despair fell upon the little group of his followers. Some who had been the most devoted had forsaken him and fled. The sun rose and set on Saturday, the Jewish sabbath, and in the early hours before the dawn on that first Easter Sunday, while the Roman guard was keeping watch, a marvelous event took place.

"And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." (Matt. 28:2.)

In the darkness of the early morning Mary Magdalene and the other devoted women, the last to leave the cross, were the first to reach the sepulchre, bringing

spices and ointment for the body of the Master. Here they saw the angel and were afraid, but he said to them:

“. . . Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

“And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; . . .” (*Ibid.*, 28:5-7.)

Many questions come to men as they travel through this mortal realm, but the one of greatest concern to many is this: Is it true we will be resurrected and live in a future life? Man in his scientific quest can only trace life to the moment of death, beyond this his research produces no tangible evidence. Socrates, who lived before the time of Christ, argued that the soul of man is immortal, yet, when sentenced to death, his statement was this:

“The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways, I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.”

Those who have a steadfast faith in a Personal God, who have a yearning to keep his commandments and a hope for a future life, will carefully and meticulously examine the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those, on the other hand, who lack this faith and see only the mechanical laws which are the subject of experimentation and proof will either reject the evidence on the grounds that it lacks positive proof or will say it is insufficient. For a few moments let us consider the claims of those who have attempted to refute the evidence of the resurrection of Christ.

As soon as the guardsmen at the tomb had recovered from their fright, they reported the happenings to the chief priests who were Sadducees, a sect which had discredited and firmly denied the possibility of resurrection. The chief priests paid the guards a large sum of money to say: “. . . His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.” (*Ibid.*, 28:13.)

It would seem incredible to believe that all of the soldiers were sleeping, knowing they could be put to death for sleeping at their post, but if they had been sleeping how would they have

known it was the disciples who had stolen him away? The facts indicate the hoax was not on the part of the disciples of Christ as claimed, but on the part of those who had openly denied, prior to this time, the possibility of resurrection from the dead.

There are some who claim the body might have been stolen by the gardener, the Sanhedrin, Mary Magdalene, Pilate, the Sadducees, or any number of other persons. Wouldn't it seem reasonable to assume that as soon as the apostles began to proclaim that Christ had arisen from the tomb, or when those who saw him after the resurrection declared this fact, that the persons who had taken the body would come forward quickly to deny the resurrection by producing the body or explaining why it was taken? No such denial or explanation was ever made.

Another theory which has been advanced and perhaps the weakest of all is that Jesus did not die on the cross but fainted or lapsed into unconsciousness. It seems absurd to think that a living person would be buried. The very day of the resurrection he walked on the road to Emmaus. Does it seem reasonable that one with pierced feet and the wound of the spear in his side would be making such a journey? The facts themselves refute such a theory.

It is important to know the belief of the first Christians on the subject of the resurrection of Christ, particularly those living at the time of his death. If we turn to the writings of Paul as documentary evidence, we will find the answer. Nearly all critical scholars admit the genuineness of the principle epistles of Paul. He said to the Saints at Corinth: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

“And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”: (1 Cor. 15:3-4.)

Then speaking of the other apostles he said: “Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.” (*Ibid.*, 15:11.)

Paul's teachings are identical with the teachings of the other apostles. We are assured, therefore, that the resurrection

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of Jesus Christ was regarded as one of the foundation doctrines of the early church and was taught to all converts "first of all."

One of the best authenticated writings in the New Testament is the First General Epistle of Peter in which he confirms the statements of Paul. We can add the testimony of two other apostles, Matthew and John, and in a lesser degree, Luke and Mark gave accumulative evidence.

Some critics point out what appears to be discrepancies in the testimony of some of these witnesses. Luke and John relate the presence of two angels at the tomb while Matthew and Mark mention only one. The first three gospels indicate the angels were seen by the women, but according to John, by Mary Magdalene alone. Luke and Matthew state the women brought the news that the tomb was empty, while Mark states "they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid." One of the fundamental rules of evidence is that the disagreement of the witnesses in matters of detail does not invalidate their testimony as to the principal facts to which they agree. The question then to be resolved is whether or not the testimony contains such variance in the material facts as to discredit the main issue.

It would make no difference if there was one angel or two angels at the tomb. The fact that he was arisen would not be changed by whether the women did or didn't bring the news concerning the resurrection itself.

The testimony of those who saw him as a living person after his death has never been contradicted. He appeared at least ten or eleven times: to Mary Magdalene and the other women in the garden, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to Peter at Jerusalem, to the apostles when Thomas was absent and again when he was present, to the apostles at the Sea of Galilee, and on a mountain to over 500 brethren at once, to James the brother of the Lord, and to the apostles at the time of the ascension.

We can come to only one conclusion, the resurrection is a historical fact amply proved by authenticated documentary evidence and the testimony of competent witnesses. The man-made theories devised to discredit are without substantiation, and any discrepancies in the narrative are too slight to be given weight.

The walled city still stands on the hill, silently reminding the Christian world of the reality of the resurrection. I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the resurrection and the life, and he that believeth in him, though he were dead, shall live, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve.

We shall now hear from Elder Boyd K. Packer, Assistant to the Twelve.

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

In 1833 a revelation was given by the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith known as the Word of Wisdom, given as a principle with a promise. This principle has not been neglected by the leaders of the Church nor abandoned by them. It has been reaffirmed vigorously as one theme of this conference, for we have learned that however much a generation of people learn a truth, it must be rediscovered by each succeeding generation.

It is to the young people of our generation that I speak. Some may regard as trivial the assignment to speak to young people. I consider it otherwise and sense the meaning of an appeal made by the late President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in speaking to the teachers of the Church. "May he," President Clark said, "give you entrance to the hearts of those you teach and then make you know that as you enter there you stand in holy places."