

THE RESURRECTION (II)

CHAPTER VII

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THE story of which we were speaking at the end of the preceding chapter, of the appearance to the two going to Emmaus, hangs together with the account of that to the disciples in Jerusalem on the evening of the same day. The two disciples had returned from Emmaus at once to Jerusalem, and had found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, who greeted them with the words: "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon." And they two rehearsed the things that happened in the way and how He was known of them in

the breaking of the bread. And then, while they were talking of these things, Jesus stood in their midst. There is no mention of a *coming*—the story agrees with the corresponding account in the Fourth Gospel, which tells us that the doors were shut—Jesus stood in the midst.

Now if appearances of the Risen Jesus did take place in and near Jerusalem, the accounts of these things in the Third and Fourth Gospels are explained. If they did not, they are a mystery needing more explanation than has as yet been given. But now the question arises, why is it that in Mark and Matthew stress is laid on Galilee, and I think that perhaps it may help us here to refer to St. Paul's enumeration of appearances in 1 Corinthians xv. There we read as follows:—

“I delivered unto you, first of all, that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath

been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then (*ἑἴτα*) to the twelve; then (*ἔπειτα*) he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep; then (*ἔπειτα*) he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also."

We have here the earliest written record of the appearances of the risen Lord. St. Paul's statement shows that he regarded the fact of the resurrection as based upon the evidence of those who had seen Jesus after He had risen. He claims himself to have been one of those who had seen Him, so that his witness of an appearance made to himself personally is evidence in the strict sense of the word. His statement of appearances made to others is not evidence in this same sense. It is evidence, however, that St. Paul believed these appearances to

have occurred, and as we know that he had been in personal contact with James and Peter and others of the apostles—to say nothing of intercourse he may have had with some of the five hundred brethren to whom Jesus, according to him, appeared at one and the same time—we may say at least that there is a strong presumption that St. Paul had received information on this matter direct from some of those to whom, as he here states, Jesus had appeared.

We have now to ask whether the appearances thus enumerated by St. Paul are in agreement substantially with those given in the Gospel, and to inquire whether the Apostle's words throw any light on the emphasis laid, in the first two Gospels, on an appearance in Galilee.

We observe that St. Paul says nothing about the time and place of these appearances. We know from elsewhere that the appearance to himself took place in the

neighbourhood of Damascus, but that detail finds no place here, nor does he locate or date the other appearances which he here enumerates; but his use of the words *εἶτα* and *ἔπειτα* implies that the sequence is a chronological one.

He tells first of an appearance to Cephas or Peter. This agrees with a casual statement made by St. Luke, from whom also we learn of this appearance; for when the two disciples returned to Jerusalem from Emmaus they were greeted with the words: "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon."

"Then to the twelve." This appearance is to be identified with that recorded by St. Luke and St. John as taking place on the evening of the first Easter Day—an appearance which, as we learn from St. John, was repeated the following week, when Thomas, who had been absent before, was now present with his fellow-disciples.

It may, of course, be objected that

St. Paul says nothing of the appearance to Mary Magdalene, nor yet of that to the two on the way to Emmaus. This does not prove that such appearances did not take place, nor does it show that St. Paul did not know of them. He may be thinking more particularly of those who were to be in a special way witnesses of the resurrection.

Then He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once. Of this appearance we should not have known but for this statement of St. Paul, and it may seem surprising that it should not be mentioned in the Gospels. Ought not this to have been the crowning proof of the resurrection, seeing that the appearance was made not to one, nor to a few, but to so many at once? And we cannot help asking where this appearance took place. Some may say that it is useless to attempt to decide such a question, as we are not told. But may it not well be that this appearance to more

than five hundred brethren at once took place in Galilee? Is not Galilee, in fact, the most likely scene of the event? Jesus had many Galilean followers, and it may well be that they had been specially invited to gather themselves together to behold Him. Indeed, I believe that we have here the key to the emphasis laid upon Galilee in the post-resurrection accounts in Mark and Matthew. The message to *the disciples generally*, as distinguished from the apostles particularly, was to meet in Galilee where they should see the risen Jesus. The place of meeting would be an appointed one, most probably on a mountain (St. Matt. xxviii. 16).

The First Gospel speaks of the *eleven disciples* going into Galilee, "unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him but some doubted." May we not have here again substantial truth but not perfect accuracy of statement? It seems impossible

to explain the doubts of the apostles if they had already seen Jesus in Jerusalem, but if those who doubted were some of the large number of brethren to whom Jesus simultaneously appeared, is not the doubting easily explained?

May not then the mountain in Galilee have been the appointed meeting-place of the large body of the Galilean followers of Jesus, who there revealed Himself to them according to a promise already given, a promise which had called them together? This seems to me very likely. I cannot but regard the last chapter of Matthew as very fragmentary; and if we are to reduce the history of these things to a consistent whole, we must fit in the information we have from other sources. That there was a special message sent to the disciples to go to Galilee, where Jesus would meet them, seems clear from Mark and Matthew. The statement of St. Paul that Jesus appeared to above five hundred brethren at once

enables us to interpret that message as addressed to the disciples at large. By obedience to it they were brought into the circle of favoured ones to whom this appearance was vouchsafed.

Nor need we assume that there was only one appearance in Galilee, though probably there was only one to the disciples in general. The last chapter of St. John tells of an appearance to certain of the apostles at the Sea of Galilee, and the story of it is too circumstantially told to be lightly dismissed as unhistorical.

We now return to St. Paul's statement. After the appearance to the more than five hundred brethren he tells of an appearance to James. Of this we learn nothing from the Gospels. But then we must remember that the appearance to Peter is only casually introduced in St. Luke. Then he speaks of an appearance to all the apostles. This may very well have been the last appearance before the Ascension, for we see

from the Acts that Jesus made it clear to His disciples that they were not to expect to continue to see Him with their bodily eyes. He seems to have parted from them finally by an Ascension—not a simple vanishing—so that they learnt by this acted parable to lift their hearts heavenward, and not to expect a repetition of the appearances which had been granted to them during the forty days.

We may then sum up by saying that there seems to be substantial agreement between the summary given by St. Paul of appearances of the risen Jesus and the accounts contained in the Gospels, if we take account of their record of appearances both in Jerusalem and in Galilee. It is a mistake to suppose that the earliest tradition knew nothing of appearances in Jerusalem but only in Galilee. And it may well be that the special emphasis laid on an appearance in Galilee in Matthew (and presumably in Mark too) is to be explained

by the fact that Galilee was the scene of the appearance to the large body of the disciples. Something must have called together those more than five hundred to whom, according to St. Paul, Jesus had appeared at one time. That something might well have been a message from the lips of Jesus that He would appear upon one of the mountains of Galilee.

And the bearing of all this upon our immediate subject; the historical value of the Fourth Gospel, is this. There is nothing whatever therein contained about the post-resurrection appearances which in any way conflicts with the other Gospels taken in conjunction with St. Paul and interpreted comprehensively. St. John never intended to tell the whole story of all the appearances of the risen Jesus. This he says expressly. I can see no reason to doubt that what he does record is a faithful reproduction of the facts as they would be indelibly impressed on the mind of one who

had had his share of experience in these events of such stupendous interest and importance.

And it must be borne in mind that if exception be taken to the contents of the twentieth chapter of St. John on the ground that the appearances there recorded take place in Jerusalem, then the same exception must be taken to St. Luke xxiv. as un-historical. And this would be a serious conclusion to reach in regard to one whose claims as a historian stand so high.

It has been urged as an objection to our Gospel that the writer represents the bestowal of the Holy Spirit as being made on the first Easter Day, when he records that the risen Jesus breathed on His disciples and said to them: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." But as our Evangelist does not record any events subsequent to the ascension, we cannot conclude from this statement that he meant to imply that there was no further outpouring of the

Spirit at Pentecost. I fail to see why it should be supposed that the action of Jesus which St. John here notes should exclude the later Pentecostal effusion.

Finally, objection has been taken to the account of the miraculous draught of fishes in the last chapter of the Gospel, it being said that this is simply based on St. Luke's account of a similar occurrence early in the ministry of Jesus. But why may there not have been a repetition of this occurrence? We gather from St. Luke's narrative that the miraculous draught which he records was intended to be a speaking parable to the fishermen of Galilee. For he reports the words of Jesus to Simon Peter: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Surely there is nothing impossible or even improbable that, now that the time had come for the fulfilment of this promise, the Lord should have repeated the sign, when these disciples had returned to their occupation of fishing in the interval between

their return to Galilee after the Passover and their next going up to Jerusalem to observe Pentecost. It has long ago been pointed out that there is a very significant difference between the two cases. On the first occasion we are told that the nets were breaking; on the second it is expressly said that though the fish were so many the net was not rent. On the first occasion the disciples were being called to be prepared for a work which would at a later time be imposed upon them, but for which they were as yet unready and unfit; but on the occasion of the second miraculous draught the time of preparation was over; they were even now to become fishers of men.

While, then, I confess that I am distrustful of the duplication of an event told in a different way by two writers, because I believe that such duplication proceeds too often from an impatience with difference of detail when substantial agree-

ment is all that may be expected, I am of opinion that in this case the events, recorded by St. Luke and St. John, are not the same, though they have features in common. The whole story told in the last chapter of St. John is altogether too circumstantial and detailed to be interpreted otherwise than as a genuine occurrence. It is all easily explained if the things happened as they are said to have happened, and if St. John is the author of the Gospel. I cannot see that it can be satisfactorily explained otherwise.