

EASTER

Luke 24:1-12

This lesson is prepared with a view to covering the events of Holy Week rather than giving the meaning of the resurrection, which will be emphasized in the next lesson. In Sunday school, the story of Holy Week should be covered briefly, and the teacher should be prepared to do more with the resurrection itself.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord is life itself.

The “stone is rolled away” when we see that the letter of the Word was not man-made but was given by inspiration by the Lord for the sake of the inner meaning.

True faith is eager to understand.

Love in the heart is the first thing necessary if we are to see the glorified Christ.

Notes for Parents

We all know that on Easter Sunday we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord. The word *Easter* is not a Bible word.* It is taken from the name of the Teutonic goddess of spring. Easter always comes in the spring because the Lord was crucified on the day following the Passover feast, which is celebrated each year according to a certain phase of the moon near the vernal equinox, which marks the beginning of spring. This is also why Easter does not always fall on the same date in our calendar.

It is quite fitting, however, that the resurrection of the Lord should be associated in our minds with springtime, when nature is waking out of the sleep of winter, new shoots are pushing up out

*This is quite correct, despite the KJV passage in Acts 12:4, where it should read “after Passover” as in later versions. –Ed.

of the ground, and returning birds are beginning to wake us in the morning. For the Lord's resurrection brought new life and hope to the world.

When the Lord was crucified, the apostles were completely discouraged. They forgot that He had told them that He would be put to death and would rise on the third day. It is hard for us to understand how they could have forgotten until we think of our own experience with trouble. All of us have had troubles and we have always come through them and we also know the Lord's promises, and yet when a new trouble strikes us, we find it very hard to think of anything hopeful, to "look on the bright side." The apostles either went back to their old work or sat together lamenting and wondering what to do.

But the women who had loved the Lord, while they had no more hope than the men, found something they could still do for Him. They prepared the spices which were used to anoint the bodies of the dead for burial, and early Sunday morning they brought them to the sepulcher. So it was the women and not the apostles who found the stone rolled away, and they were the first to be told that the Lord had risen. There is a simple lesson in this for all of us. When trouble and death enter our homes, we should not give way to our grief and spend our time mourning and questioning the ways of divine providence. We should look for active, useful things to do, and so find new life and hope opening to us.

When the apostles themselves saw the Lord after His resurrection, they lost all fear and doubt and went out and preached the Gospel—the good news—throughout the world, and so founded the Christian Church. We need never doubt that the resurrection was a fact. We see the proof of it in the history of the world as well as in the lives of all those individuals who really accept it as a fact.

The resurrection teaches us two wonderful things. The first is that we need have no fear of death. It is a normal step in life, the closing of one chapter and the opening of another. When we die, we merely go to sleep in this world and wake up in a brighter and more beautiful one, in which we really are now, although our

consciousness of it is prevented by our physical bodies.

The other thing we learn is that the Lord is not someone far away. He said to His apostles, “Lo, I am with you always,” and He says the same to us, He sees our hearts and our thoughts and hears us when we pray. As we learn of Him and try to live as He would have us live, He draws us ever closer to Him, guiding and supporting us and in every experience that comes to us preparing us for eternal life and happiness.



Primary

Make the connection with the Palm Sunday lesson and then try to show the children why the people turned against the Lord and put Him to death, and why the Lord let Himself be put to death. Speak of death and resurrection as part of the normal life of everyone.

You know that today is called Easter Sunday. Last Sunday was also a special Sunday. Do you remember what it was called? And in December we had another special Sunday. You all remember that one. Whose birthday do we celebrate at Christmas?

You know that the Lord came into the world long ago to show us the right way to live. He let Himself be born as a little baby, just as we are, and He grew up in a home, just as we do. And finally, when He was fully prepared, He began to teach and preach and heal. He was so wonderful that great crowds came to hear Him; but they did not all like what He told them, just as we sometimes do not like to be told the truth because we don't want to stop doing wrong.

The people who had received the Lord as king on Palm Sunday were disappointed and angry when they found that He was not going to be the kind of king they wanted.

Then the scribes and Pharisees saw their chance to get rid of the Lord.

How did they do this?

His body was laid in a tomb and a great stone was rolled in front of the door.

The Lord had told His disciples just what would happen to Him and also that He would rise from death on the third day.

But you know that when we are in trouble, we often forget what we have been told.

The disciples lost all courage and hope.
Who went to the tomb on Sunday morning?
What did they bring?
The spices were to anoint the Lord's body.
What did the women find?
What did they *not* find?
Who appeared to them?
What did these angels tell them?
Of what did they remind them?
When the women told the apostles, what did they think?
What did Peter do?

You see, the Lord let His enemies put Him to death to show us that what we call death is nothing we need to be afraid of. It is just the beginning of a new and happier life.

Junior

A considerable amount should be done in this class with the story of the last week of the Lord's life on earth, including the Passover feast, the betrayal, trial and crucifixion, and ending with the Lord's purpose in permitting His enemies their brief apparent triumph, and finally the meaning of the resurrection.

What was last Sunday called?
What did the Lord do on that day?
What kind of animal did He ride?
How did the people receive Him?
What did thy think He was going to do for them?
Where did He say His kingdom is?
Who were the Lord's enemies?
Why did they hate Him?
Who were His friends?
Who was Zacchaeus?
What did the Lord do for him?
When the Lord entered Jerusalem, what did He do in the temple?

We know that this was to be the last week of the Lord's life on earth. He and His disciples had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover.

When was the first Passover celebrated?
Why was it called the Passover?

The Lord spent the first two days of the week teaching in the temple. At night He went out to the village of Bethany and lodged at the home of Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. (When we study the Gospel of John, we shall have the story of how the Lord had raised Lazarus from death.) By Tuesday night the people had begun to realize that the Lord had not come to drive out the Romans, and they were beginning to believe the Pharisees and priests, who said He was an impostor and should be put to death. So after that the Lord stayed in Bethany until Thursday night, when He came into the city again and ate the Passover feast with the twelve apostles.

It was at this last Passover that the Lord instituted the Holy Supper, which all Christians have celebrated ever since instead of the Passover. The Lord called the bread and wine of the Holy Supper His body and blood. Bread is the symbol of goodness because it nourishes the body just as goodness nourishes the soul. The Lord was perfect goodness, and it is His goodness on which our souls live. The wine and also the Lord's blood picture the truth about Himself, about the soul, and about heaven. This was why the Lord spoke of the bread and wine as His body and blood. It was also at the Passover feast that the Lord told His disciples that one of them would betray Him to His enemies.

Which one was it?

After the feast the Lord went out to the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem, to pray. There Judas and the multitude found Him. Judas had told the soldiers that the one he would kiss was the one they wanted to arrest. So it is said that Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss, and this is often said when someone does an injury to another while posing as his friend. The Lord was tried first before the high priest, who condemned Him and sent Him to Pilate, the Roman governor, for sentence because the Jews were not allowed by the Romans to pronounce the death sentence on anyone. Pilate tried to avoid pronouncing sentence by sending the Lord to Herod—this is the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist, not the one who tried to destroy the Lord when He was a baby. This Herod mocked

the Lord but was afraid to be responsible for His death; so he sent Him back to Pilate. Pilate did not want to condemn the Lord, but the priests and the people insisted.

When the Lord was crucified—which happened on Friday—the disciples all ran away. They thought He had failed and that they had been mistaken in believing Him to be the Messiah. They forgot all He had told them. But the crucifixion was a victory, not a failure. The Lord could have saved Himself, but He had to show men that death is only a step in life, and He could not show this without passing through death. He let men do their very worst to Him to show that they had no real power over Him. The cross was not the end of the story.

After the crucifixion the soldiers divided the Lord's garments among themselves and cast lots for the inner garment, which was woven without seam. The Lord's body was laid in a new tomb, which a man named Joseph of Arimathea offered for the purpose, and a great stone was placed at the opening of the tomb and sealed there, and soldiers were set to guard it so that His body could not be taken away. During Saturday, the Hebrew sabbath, the body lay in the tomb.

It was early on Sunday morning that the women who had loved the Lord came to the tomb bringing spices which they had prepared to anoint His body, as the custom was. Read Mark 16:3.

What did they find? (Read Matthew 28:2.)

Who appeared to them?

What did the angels tell them?

What saying of Jesus did they remind the women of?

What did the apostles think when the women told them?

What did Peter do?

We shall have the rest of this chapter of Luke in another lesson. On Easter Day we should rejoice in the Lord's resurrection, for it changed the whole history of the world. The Lord permitted His enemies to do their worst and to put Him to death so that we might all know that there is nothing about death of which we need to be afraid. It is just a normal part of our life. We begin our lives

in this world of nature and make them what we choose to have them, and then, when the Lord sees best, we go to sleep in this world and wake up in the spiritual world where our real homes are. And our homes there will be just what we have chosen by our life here.

Intermediate

The principal lesson for this class is in the meaning of the sealing of the tomb, which comes naturally from an account of the events of Holy Week, and then the correspondence of the Easter story, stressing the fact that it is only as we really love goodness that we can be enlightened by the Lord.

When the Lord and His apostles were coming to Jerusalem for the last time, He told them that He was to be put to death. Although they did not fully believe Him, they tried to persuade Him not to go, but He rebuked them. He came to His death willingly as part of the work He had come into the world to do.

On the first day of the week He rode into Jerusalem as a king. He wept over Jerusalem, seeing it as a symbol of the church which was being brought to ruin. He cleansed the temple of the money-changers and vendors of doves, who were doing business in its very court. During the first two days of the week He taught in the temple, but at night He went out to the little village of Bethany on the Mount of Olives and rested at the home of His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. On Thursday evening He celebrated the Pass-over feast with the apostles in an upper chamber in Jerusalem, and instituted the Holy Supper. Afterward He went out to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives to pray, and there Judas betrayed Him. He was brought back the same night and tried by the high priest, by Herod, and by Pilate. On Friday He was crucified and His body was placed in a new tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. The tomb was closed with a great stone and sealed, and a guard of soldiers was set. During the Hebrew sabbath His body lay in the tomb.

We can understand the crucifixion of the Lord better if we remember one of the things He said about Himself: "I am the way,

the truth, and the life.” The scribes and Pharisees and priests put Him to death because they did not want to follow the divine way, to know the divine truth, or to live the divine life. They wanted only their own way, their own ideas, and the life of the world. People today may do the same thing. The Lord always does everything He can to show us the way to happiness, but we may choose to close our minds against Him and to believe in our own selfish ideas instead.

You remember that the scribes and Pharisees had so covered up the Scriptures with their own interpretations and regulations that the people did not know what the Word really taught. This false interpretation of the Scriptures is pictured by the great stone which was rolled in front of the entrance to the sepulcher.

You may remember too from an earlier lesson that morning always pictures the beginning of a new state. Women picture affections. The women who loved the Lord came to the tomb to do what they could for Him even though they could not understand what had happened. The spices they brought to anoint His body represent an inner understanding about Him prompted by their love. Because they were trying to serve the Lord even when He seemed to have left them, they were the first to learn of His resurrection. The apostles had given up hope when they saw Him die and saw nothing more they could do. They did not even believe the women’s story of what they had found.

This shows us the difference between a belief based on the love of goodness and a belief based on merely seeing with the mind. For after the short rest of the sabbath the tomb was burst open and a new era in the lives of men began. Even the Lord’s closest disciples thought everything was finished when He was crucified. But His death, like the death of every one of us, was merely the close of one chapter and the beginning of another. The Lord’s death on the cross marked the end of one church era and the beginning of the Christian Church era. The Christian Church began first with the apostles whom the resurrection transformed from broken and disheartened men into strong, invincible messengers of the

Gospel, able to go out and evangelize the world. The resurrection put the seal of truth upon every word the Lord had spoken and every miracle He had performed. Without the resurrection there would have been no Christian Church.

The Lord passed through death to prove to His disciples and to us that He is really the “resurrection and the life,” that the death of the physical body is nothing but an upward step in our lives and does not change us in any way. If someone says to you, “I can’t believe in a future life; no one has ever come back to tell us about it,” your immediate answer should be, “The Lord Jesus Christ came back to tell us just that.” Anyone who calls himself a Christian should accept this answer. The Lord’s life as recorded in the Gospels is the only foundation which the Christian Church has. Fairy tales do not change history.

Basic Correspondences

- the stone which closed the tomb = a false interpretation of the Scriptures
- morning = the beginning of a new state
- women = affections
- spices = interior truth from good



Senior

The Seniors need the application to their own lives of the closing of the tomb and its opening. Some of them will be going to college soon, where they are likely to meet teaching based on a fundamental misconception of the nature of the Bible, and they should be prepared to think independently while submitting to such instruction.

The thought that Christ is not God closes the door of the mind against light from heaven as it comes to us through the Word. Because Peter, James, and John believed Jesus to be the Messiah, their spiritual eyes could be opened to see Him transfigured. So our eyes can be opened to see Him in the inner meaning of the Word. Swedenborg also tells us that our ability to see the Lord in the other world is measured by the understanding of Him which we have gained in this world. If we have not thought of Him as a

person, we shall never see Him “face to face,” but shall be conscious of Him only as a diffused light, even though we accept the fact that Jesus is God from our angel instructors, as everyone must who enters the heavens.

To understand the Easter lesson we need to review the last week of the Lord’s life on earth. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was, as the Lord knew, really the beginning of the end. The temporary support of the multitude, however, gave the Lord an opportunity to denounce the scribes and Pharisees openly and to cleanse the temple. In very much the same way, there are moments in our lives when our sense of the Lord’s kingship there is so strong that we can see our own sins and hypocrisies in clear light and condemn them. We may soon lose this fervor amid the temptations of our daily environment, but its effect will persist and strengthen in us the small beginnings of regenerate life.

There is, of course, a deep spiritual reason why the Lord was crucified during the celebration of the Passover. He is called the paschal lamb. The crucifixion was the culmination of the long succession of struggles and victories by means of which He overcame the hells, the powers of evil which had grown so strong in the world that no man could resist them from his own power. As the Passover commemorated the deliverance of the Jews from bondage to Egypt, so the Holy Supper, instituted by the Lord to take its place, commemorates our deliverance from hell by means of His earthly life and death.

The Lord could have saved Himself from the cross (see Matthew 26:53). But if He had stopped short of physical death, He would not have shown us the way through it. He could have saved Himself by so mighty a miracle that all His enemies would have been forced to acknowledge Him as God. But their hearts would not have been changed. They might have obeyed Him through fear, but they would have been no happier. They would have become slaves to Him instead of to the devil. The Lord does not want slaves. Swedenborg tells us that the Lord’s final and supreme temptation was this very temptation to save men against their wills.

We sometimes wonder how the apostles, who had had so many evidences of the Lord's power, and who had even been told what was to happen, could have given up hope and forsaken Him when He was crucified. But we have only to remember how hard it is for us, when we are in the midst of a severe trial, to remember all that the Lord has done for us and all that we know of His promises, and to be steadfast and trusting.

It was the women who were first told of the Lord's resurrection. The women represent our affections. These women did not understand—any more than the apostles did—why the crucifixion had been permitted, but their thought still clung to the Lord and they occupied themselves with doing something for Him. They prepared spices to anoint His body. Spices represent interior truth in the natural from good there. Swedenborg often speaks of the “simple good.” These are the people who, without any faculty of deep understanding of the truth, simply want to be good and so are open to heavenly influences and can be given to recognize the truth in the letter of the Word as they read it. So it was the women who found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. The stone was a symbol of the false interpretation with which the church had closed the Word, and so rejected the divine truth in the person of the Messiah.

The Lord had told His disciples that His kingdom was “not of this world.” But even the apostles persisted in thinking of His mission in terms of worldly success. This should not surprise us. We too know—better than the apostles did—that our thoughts and affections are more important than our bodies, and yet we shun physical pain and discomfort and give up spiritual things again and again for the sake of physical ease and pleasure. We may despise Peter for denying the Lord, but then turn around and deny Him in our own daily lives. We wonder how the disciples could have failed to understand and remember the things He had told them about His death and resurrection, but how well do we understand and remember His teachings?

The Lord must rise for us as really as for the disciples. Do we

believe the report, or are we like the apostles when the women returned from the sepulcher with the wonderful news: “And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not”?

Adult

The effort has been made in the Adult notes to cover the major questions which people ask concerning the Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection. It is suggested that the teacher ask the class for questions to begin with and take up whatever phase of the story the questions suggest. The teacher should of course be prepared, if there are no immediate questions, to outline briefly the events of Holy Week and then discuss the meaning of the resurrection for the world and for the individual.

We should not pass from the Palm Sunday to the Easter lesson without having clearly in mind the events of the last week of the Lord’s earthly life and their general significance. The week began and ended in triumph, but in between—in the space of a few short days—came the culmination of the evil states of the church and the Lord’s last and deepest temptation, which was the longing to save men even against their wills.

The first two days of that week the Lord spent teaching in the temple, unhesitatingly exposing the worldliness and hypocrisy of the scribes, Pharisees, and priests. At night He went out to Bethany and lodged with Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. On Thursday evening He came into the city again and ate the Passover feast with His twelve apostles. At that feast He laid the ritual basis for the transfer of His presence to the Christian Church by instituting the Holy Supper to take the place of all the sacrifices and feasts, telling His apostles plainly that it was a symbol of His own sacrifice, and that they were to observe it in recognition of the fact that He gave His life for them: “This do in remembrance of me.” He also told them that the bread represented His body and the wine His blood. We recall that the paschal lamb represented innocence, which is the good of love to the Lord, and that its blood sprinkled upon the doorposts represented divine truth applied to life. The Lord is love and wisdom, His body representing His love

and His blood His wisdom or truth. The bread and wine of the Holy Supper have the same representation. So when we partake of the Holy Supper we are testifying to the fact that we recognize that all good and truth are the Lord's, and expressing our wish to receive them from Him.

We are told that throughout the period of the ancient Jewish Church the Lord was present in the world through the correspondence of their worship, because the interior life of men was so perverted that He could no longer be conjoined to them in any interior way. But by His life on earth He put in order the spiritual forces which had been perverting man's internal life and so opened the way to genuine conjunction. From that time on, it was no longer necessary for men to observe the detailed rituals of that church, since they could live out the Lord's love and truth in their daily lives in affection, thought, and conduct. But still some formal, periodic recognition and worship are necessary to keep ever in our minds our dependence upon the Lord, to keep us from setting ourselves up as good and wise. So we have our church services, and particularly we have the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Supper, which the Lord Himself ordained. If we observe these with an understanding of their meaning and a sincere desire to learn about the Lord and to do His will, they become effective means of conjoining us to the Lord. They are necessary to the Lord's closest presence with us. If we sincerely wish to follow the Lord, we shall always look forward to fulfilling this outward symbol of His presence with us. It is a spiritual feast to which the Lord invites us, and He promises to be present with us when we partake of it: "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (TCR 702-710; AE 329).

Swedenborg links together the temptation at Gethsemane and the temptation on the cross as constituting the last great temptation of the Lord. The Lord assumed a human in order to meet temptations and overcome them, for the hells could have no possible access to the Divine in itself. Also, the Lord as to His assumed human had to be in freedom just as we are in freedom, if He was

to meet and overcome the forces of the hells. So—at times called states of “exinanition”—He was conscious only on the plane of the assumed human, and at such times He prayed to the Father and struggled as a man against the attacks made by the hells upon that human. Such was the final struggle. In the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed that the “cup”—the temptation of the cross—might be removed from Him if it were the Father’s will, just as we pray daily, “Lead us not into temptation.” He felt, as we feel it, the weakness of the human nature and the strength of evil. But He also prayed, “nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” “And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him.” Swedenborg says that the angel was the divine of the Lord, of which He always became conscious again when He was victorious in temptation, every state of exinanition being followed by a state of “glorification.” The temptation of the cross and that of Gethsemane were not a shrinking from physical suffering or even from the sorrow of desertion by His followers and misrepresentation before the people, but the temptation to show forth His power and compel the world to see and be saved (AC 2821, 10528).

To have yielded to this temptation and avoided the cross would have been to defeat the whole purpose of His incarnation. Elsewhere we read, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.” (John 12:27) The Lord did not come into the world to compel men to believe in Him but by passing through all men’s possible states and overcoming all their temptations to enable them to overcome in His strength. He passed through death to show its powerlessness to destroy the real man. He permitted His enemies to do their worst to show how ineffectual that worst was.

The Lord was tried before three tribunals: the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate. The council, composed of the chief priests and elders, actually condemned Him; the others merely consented to His crucifixion. Priests always represent the will side, and the priests in the time of the perverted church picture evil in the will. This is what really condemns the Lord and rejects Him. The Lord told the priests

explicitly that He was the Christ, and they took that very claim as their excuse for condemning Him. The evil will recognizes the claim of the Lord to divine authority and for that very reason rejects Him. Herod, the Jewish ruler, represents the false principle which governs the selfish life. He was anxious to see Jesus, hoping for a miracle, and asked Him many questions, but the Lord gave him no answer. So the rational of an evil man may examine the testimony concerning the Lord out of curiosity, but cannot possibly receive any enlightenment. Pilate, the Roman governor, symbol of worldliness ruling in the outward life, also recognized the Lord's claim to be divine and actually found no fault in Him, but was willing for his own interests to concur in the judgment of the evil will, washing his hands of the whole question.

The passion of the cross was the final temptation necessary to the complete overcoming of the power of evil which attacked the Lord through the assumed human. By it He put off finally all of the finite humanity and united His own Human to the Divine, completing the process of glorification which had been going on throughout His life, as He met and overcame temptations. The earthquake (Matthew 28:2) pictured a complete change in the state of the church which took place at that time (AE 400). The darkness at the time of the Lord's death represented the falsities of the last time of that church era. The parting of the Lord's garments among the soldiers represented the picking to pieces of the letter of the Word by those who profess to accept it, and the casting of lots for the inner vesture, woven without seam, represents the fact that the internal sense could not be injured. The two thieves on the Lord's right hand and on His left are like the sheep and the goats, those who are saved by genuine acknowledgment of Him and those who are lost because they reject Him. The rending of the veil of the temple represents "that the Lord entered into the Divine Itself by dispersing all appearances; and that He at the same time opened the way to His Divine Itself through His Human made Divine." (AC 2576⁵) Before the crucifixion, the Lord could reach men only through the mediation of the heavens, always appearing

to them in the form of an angel, but after the crucifixion the Lord could come in direct contact with men in His divine human. It is in this sense that Jesus Christ is the mediator. If the Lord had not passed through the states experienced in the death on the cross, there would still have been temptations possible to men through which He had not showed the way, states which He could not reach directly. Now we have direct access to divine power in our every possible need, and in Jesus Christ glorified we can see our heavenly Father face to face.

We know that without the resurrection the founding of the Christian Church would not have taken place. The Gospels show clearly that in spite of the plain statements of the Lord as to His death and resurrection, the crucifixion left the disciples in a state of doubt and discouragement. So doubtful were the apostles that they would not believe the statements of those who first learned that the Lord was risen. They had to be convinced by the evidence of their own eyes. The testimony of the Gospels is quite contrary to the claim of materialistic critics that the apostles made up the story of the resurrection. After the resurrection they were ready to live and die for their faith in the Lord and His teachings. The fact that a small group of men, simple for the most part and not at all remarkable intellectually, could go out into a world of strangers and, in spite of persecution and even the death of some of them convince so many of the truth of their message that the Christian Church was permanently established is a sufficient testimony to their own conviction as well as to the power of the message.

What did the resurrection mean to the disciples? It meant that the Lord was really the Messiah, as they had believed, that all His promises and words were true, that He was master over the grave, that He was unchanged, still the loving friend and tender Father of His “little children,” that He was present with them even when they could not see Him, that death was the gateway to a more glorious life, and that nothing which men could do to them could affect their eternal happiness if they remained true to Him. In the strength of this assurance they went forth. In the strength of this

assurance the Christian Church was established and grew. Take away belief in the resurrection with all that it implies, and Christianity becomes a mere man-made philosophy, powerless to transcend the level of civil and moral life, with no strength for the present or power for the future.

Let us examine a little more fully the meaning of this event which we celebrate on Easter Sunday. The Lord had told His disciples that He would pass through death and rise again on the third day. He had said, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might 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) He had several times shown His power to raise men from the dead, but to lay down His own life and take it again was another thing. The mockers at the cross recognized this when they said, “He saved others; himself he can not save.” The disciples recognized it by giving up hope after the crucifixion. When the Lord rose without the help of any outside agency, He proved that He had life in Himself as no finite human being has. Swedenborg in many numbers notes the difference between the Lord’s resurrection and the resurrection of men (DL 35, AC 25, 108, 1729, 2083, 5078, and others). Only God has life in Himself (DLW 4-6), and the Lord’s resurrection therefore showed Him to be God. So Thomas, when finally convinced of the reality of the risen Lord, said “My Lord and my God” (John 20:38).

The certainty that the Lord Jesus Christ is God immediately gives all His words and promises final divine authority. If Jesus had been a mere man, no matter how great and good, He might have been mistaken. But the Lord makes no mistakes. We can be perfectly sure, as the apostles were, that if we follow the Lord and trust in Him, all will be well with us, and that, whatever may happen to us in this world, our efforts to do right will bear fruit and will be crowned with eternal life. Some men claim that belief in another life is an “escape mechanism,” a fiction invented by men

to help them endure the hardship and injustice of life. Rather, it is a reasonable assumption from the general order of the universe, in which struggle is essential to growth and development, and men voluntarily sacrifice lesser things in the present for greater things in the future. The Lord's resurrection makes this belief a certainty instead of an assumption. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

If we genuinely believe in the Lord's resurrection, we shall not only not fear death, but we shall look forward to it as the crown of life. But the resurrection gives us more help than this. It proves to us that the Lord not only came to earth many centuries ago and lived for a few years in a human form similar to ours, but that He still lives among us in His divine humanity, the same wise, strong person whom the apostles knew and followed. They did not see Him again after the ascension, but they knew He was with them. We do not need to think of God as some far-off being or as some impersonal force. We can think of Him as a man, in whose image we are made, a loving Father, always watching over us and standing near ready to help, if we turn to Him. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Apocalypse Explained, n. 400¹⁴: "It is recorded also in the Word that there was an earthquake when the Lord suffered upon the cross, and also when the angel descended and rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre (Matthew 27:51, 28:1-2). These earthquakes occurred to indicate that the state of the church was then changed; for the Lord by His last temptation, which He endured in Gethsemane and upon the cross, conquered the hells, and put in order all things there and in the heavens, and also glorified His Human, that is, made it Divine; for this reason 'there was an earthquake, and the rocks were rent.' 'The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom' signified that His Human was made Divine; for within the veil was the ark in which was the Testimony, and 'the Testimony' signified the Lord in respect to His Divine Human . . . 'The veil' signified the external of the church which was with the Jews and Israelites, and that covered their eyes

that they might not see the Lord and Divine truth, or the Word in its own light.”

Arcana Coelestia, n. 4748²: “The reason why frankincense and incenses were used in sacred rites among the ancients, is that odor corresponds to perception, and a fragrant odor, such as that of spices of various kinds, to a grateful and pleasing perception, such as is that of truth from good, or of faith from charity. Indeed the correspondence is such that in the other life, whenever it is the good pleasure of the Lord, perceptions themselves are changed into odors . . . In general they [spices of various kinds] signify interior truths in the natural, but such as are from good therein; for truths by themselves do not make the natural, but good by truths. Hence its varieties are according to the quality of the truth conjoined with good; for good has its quality from truths.”



Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Whom did the Lord meet at Jericho on His way up to Jerusalem?
Zacchaeus
- J. Can you tell the story of Zacchaeus? (*see Luke 19*)
- J. Why did the Pharisees object to the Lord’s going to the house of Zacchaeus? *he was a hated tax collector*
- J. What parable did the Lord tell them? *pounds*
- I. What does this parable teach? *do our best with what abilities we have*
- P. How did the Lord enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? *riding an ass*
- J. Why did He ride on an ass? *kings and judges rode them*
- J. How did the people receive Him? *as a king*
- P. Where does Palm Sunday get its name? *branches spread on road*
- J. What did the Lord do in the temple after He entered the city? *cleansed it*
- J. Where did He lodge during the week? *Bethany*
- J. What did He do on Thursday evening? *ate Passover*
- J. What new feast did He institute? *Holy Supper*
- J. Who betrayed the Lord? *Judas Iscariot*
- J. How was the Lord put to death? *crucified*
- P. On what day did the crucifixion take place? *Friday*
- P. What was done with the Lord’s body? *put in new stone tomb*
- P. Who came to the tomb on Sunday morning? *women*
- P. What did they bring? *spices*
- P. What did they find? *stone rolled away*
- P. What did the angels tell them? *He is risen*

- J. What saying of Jesus did they remind them of? *that he would rise the third day*
- J. How did the apostles receive the news? *did not believe*
- J. What did Peter do? *ran and looked*
- S. What does the resurrection teach us? *the Lord has power over death*