

[The Origin and History of the Bible]

Lecture XIV: The New Testament Story of the Resurrection

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1. A: Three General Remarks

Before beginning this lecture, I want to make two or three general remarks.

First. It is frequently said that the truth or falsity of the doctrine of immortality is involved in this question of the resurrection of Jesus. There is no connection between the two. The idea of immortality is a faith in the value of human life. The question of the resurrection of Jesus is one of historical criticism based on evidence. If it can be demonstrated that Jesus was raised from the dead, that proves nothing about immortality, it simply proves that Jesus was raised from the dead. For how long, no one knows. If it is proved that the stories are not true, what effect has it? It simply means that they are not true stories.

Second. There seems to be a feeling that this subject is one which should not be handled in a critical manner, but which should be accepted as a whole on faith. That any critical attitude towards it is sacrilegious. To that I can only answer, "The statement of historic fact that cannot bear the strain of critical examination is valueless."¹

Third. This is a very large question, and I can touch only the detail of it.

2. B: Paul's Attitude

The reason why the Athenians interrupted Paul in his speech Areopagus at Athens² was because his hearers did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees did not believe in

¹ A quotation for which I can find no source. Perhaps merely meant as a response, and not a quotation from another source.

² The Areopagus is a prominent rock outcropping in the northwest portion of the Acropolis, also known as the Hill of Ares. It is the site where the Athenian governing council met. Paul's speech there is mentioned in Acts 17:19-33.

that doctrine. In fact, there were some in the Christian Church who did not believe in the idea. That is the reason why Paul was writing his first Epistle to the Corinthians. Some of his people there did not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. Paul writes to set them straight upon this point. So, the oldest bit of document that bears upon this question of the Resurrection of Jesus is the 15th chapter of First Corinthians. In this chapter Paul sets down in order the details of the events and the witnesses thereof.

MOREOVER, brethren, I²² declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, ²³which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ²⁴By which also ye are saved, if ²⁵ye keep in memory ²⁶what I preached unto you, unless ²⁷ye have believed in vain.

³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according ²⁶to the scriptures;

⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according ²⁷to the scriptures;

⁵ And that he was seen ²⁸of Cēphas, then of the twelve:

⁶ After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

⁷ After that, he was seen of Jāmes; then of all the apostles.

⁸ And last of all²⁹ he was seen of me also, as of ³⁰one born out of due time.

⁹ For I am the least³⁰ of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I,³¹ but the grace of God which was with me.

¹¹ Therefore whether *it were* I or

they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

¹² Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, ¹³how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

¹³ But if there³ be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.

¹⁴ And if Christ³ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain.

¹⁵ Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

¹⁶ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

¹⁷ And if Christ be not raised, your faith³ *is* vain; ye are³ yet in your sins.

¹⁸ Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

¹⁹ ³If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

²⁰ But now ³is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become ³the firstfruits of them that slept.

²¹ For ³since by man *came* death, ³by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

²³ But ³every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

²⁴ Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up ³the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

²⁵ For he must reign, ³till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

²⁶ ³The last enemy that shall be destroyed *is* death.

²⁷ For he ³hath put all things under

his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, *it is* manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

²⁸ ³And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then ³shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

²⁹ Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

³⁰ And ³why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

³¹ I protest by ³¹your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, ³¹I die daily.

³² If ³after the manner of men ³I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? ³let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.

³³ Be not deceived: ³evil communications corrupt good manners.

³⁴ ³Awake to righteousness, and sin not; ³for some have not the knowledge of God: ³I speak *this* to your shame.

³⁵ But some *man* will say, ³How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

³⁶ *Thou* fool, ³that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

³⁷ And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*:

³⁸ But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

³⁹ All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind* of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds.

⁴⁰ *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another.

⁴¹ *There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory.

⁴² So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *It³⁸ is* sown in corruption; *it³⁸ is* raised in incorruption:

⁴³ *It³⁷ is* sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

44 It is sown a natural body; it^{is} is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

45 And so it is written,²⁰ The first man Ad'am was made a living soul; the²¹ last Ad'am was made a quickening spirit.

46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

47 The²² first man is of the earth,

earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment,²³ in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal²⁴ must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death²⁵ is swallowed up in victory.

55 O²⁶ death, where is thy sting? O²⁷ grave, where is thy victory?

56 The²⁸ sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jē'sus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast,²⁹ unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as³⁰ ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

This is the first, oldest, written statement that we have concerning the Resurrection. There are some important facts to be noted in connection with it.

Paul was at Ephesus. He had received a letter from the Corinthians (Corinthians 7:1) in which they had asked him concerning certain questions of doctrine. Also, news had come to him from members of the Household of Chloe that there were some cases of lax discipline, and that some among them denied the Resurrection. The Epistle was written to settle these matters. So that Paul's statements in chapter 15 are [a] deliberate answer to the persons who doubted the truth of the Resurrection.

The first point to note is that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

Second. That he appeared first to Cephas, then to the twelve, then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once and finally to Paul.

Third. Paul makes no distinction between his own witness, and that of the others, although the others saw Jesus before the ascension.

Next it is to be noted that these Corinthians have asserted that there is no resurrection from the dead. Paul is refuting them by asserting the resurrection of the dead, "for if there is no resurrection of the dead then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, then is our preaching vain."³

Paul then demonstrates the Resurrection, but his demonstration is not historical or scientific, but speculative. See chapter 15:20-28. It does not rest upon facts of experience but upon the argument that, as in Adam all died, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."⁴

The question arises naturally at this point, why, if Paul knew of the events that are recorded in the Gospels, he did not refer to the records of the Resurrection of Jesus, and the resurrection of the saints at the time of Jesus' death. But not so he has an entirely different story to tell. Cephas then the twelve and then five hundred.

Fifth. Whereas the Gospel stories make it very plain that it was a physical resurrection, that the body was raised, Paul takes great pains to argue that it was a spiritual body, not of the flesh, but incorruptible, i.e., a body that could not decay or decompose. Moreover, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Such then is the earliest record concerning the Resurrection. It is spiritual, demonstrated principally by argument, and, in so far as appeal is made to the experience at the tomb, the statement of fact varies from the statement of the Gospel.

³ 1 Corinthians 15:13-14.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:22.

3. C: [The Gospels]

First of all, then, as we turn to the Gospels and study them comparatively, we find a certain common thread, and many peculiar characteristics. From the beginning of events on the Resurrection morning until the Ascension (John gives the time as 40 days) there is only one alleged incident where all four Gospels agree in the narration of events. But even in this general agreement, the differences in very important facts are serious. The one common incident to all four gospels is the visit to the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection. Eliminating all disagreements and contradictions, and combining the story briefly into one tale, it would read about as follows:

Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away. Found the tomb empty. Is amazed and distressed. Is told that he, "The Lord," is risen. That she is to tell the disciples. They do not believe the story that she tells them. Then (if you include Mark 19:9-20) Jesus risen appears unto them and talks with them. (But in this last statement there is not an incident common to the four gospels, but the general idea of appearance in common.)

But when we come to a study of the parallel account in detail, we are impressed by the many curious and often contradictory details. In the scene at the tomb, as the chart indicates,⁵ the records do not commend themselves. For example, Matthew has Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary go to the tomb. Mark has Mary Magdalene, Mary, mother of James and Salome; Luke has Mary Magdalene, Mary, mother of James and Joanna, while John has Mary Magdalene alone, but before she enters the tomb she runs after Simon Peter and John to come with her.

In the second place, the time is interesting. Matthew says that they went to the tomb as it began to dawn;⁶ Mark says, "Very early on the first day of the week, when the sun was risen;"⁷ Luke says that it was at early dawn,⁸ while John says that Mary went, "While it was yet dark."⁹

Then the stone is another matter of interest. First of all, let it be noted that the stone was a flat circular stone such as was

⁵ See Appendix 1 for this chart.

⁶ Matthew 28:1.

⁷ Mark 16:2.

⁸ Luke 24:1.

⁹ John 20:1.

commonly used as doors of tombs. "Rolling" was the common way of opening the door.

Matthew says, "and behold, there was a great earthquake: and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow."¹⁰ Mark says, "and they were saying among themselves, who shall roll away the stone from the door of the tomb? And looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back for it was exceeding great."¹¹

Luke has the very simple statement of fact, "and they found the stone rolled away from the tomb."¹² John also has the simple statement, "and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb."¹³

Information. Mary and the others were come to the tomb thus [to] get certain information, to the effect that Jesus is risen, and that she is to bear a message to the disciples. In Matthew this information comes from the Angel who had rolled away the stone and was sitting on it outside the tomb. According to Mark, they enter the tomb, and find a young man arrayed in white sitting on the right side. He tells Mary Magdalene what to do. According to Luke they enter into the tomb and are perplexed about what they find, "And it came to pass, while they were perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel."¹⁴

But according to John, Mary does not enter the tomb, but stoops and looks in, "and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain."¹⁵

According to Matthew and John they do not enter the tomb. According to Mark and Luke they do.

These illustrate the differences where there is a common narrative. They are not differences in unimportant detail, but differences of important fact. If a witness on a stand should say that at a definite place at a definite time he saw one angel, and then later should, concerning the same time and place, [say] that he saw two angels, and again that he saw one

¹⁰ Matthew 28:2-3.

¹¹ Mark 16:3-4.

¹² Luke 24:2.

¹³ John 20:1.

¹⁴ Luke 24:4.

¹⁵ John 20:12.

man, and then two men, we would begin to question whether he had seen anything at all.

Or take the matter of the appearances of Jesus. According to Matthew he appears but once, to the Disciples on the Mountain in Galilee. According to the oldest Mark, there is no record of his appearance, but in the pseudo ending of Mark he appears first on the way to Emmaus, then to all at Jerusalem, from whence he ascends into heaven. Luke gives the Emmaus appearance in great detail, then while [in] Jerusalem and then at [the] Ascension at Bethany. John records three appearances. With Mark and Luke, he records the appearance at Jerusalem, then he has an appearance to Thomas and the rest, and the third one at the sea of Galilee. Paul accounts for none of these appearances, but says that Jesus appeared first to Peter, then to the Twelve, and finally to 500.

The second Mark ending, and John record an appearance to Mary Magdalene, which is not found in the other two.

But according to Matthew, Jesus specifically tells the Marys that the Disciples are to depart into Galilee, and there they shall see him. "But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted him. Then Jesus spoke unto them."¹⁶

But the other records know nothing of the Galilee Mountain. The other three have the first appearance to the Disciples assembled in Jerusalem. But the meeting at Jerusalem was on this first day also. The distance from Jerusalem to Galilee is at least 50 miles as the crow flies. Either the disciples had some means of rapid transit, or these two meetings did not take place at the same time. But what is still more to the point, both of these meetings are described as meetings where the first appearance took place.

So, one might go on point out these disagreements almost ad infinitum. But at this point it is desirable to turn to another line of consideration, namely the relation of these later events as described to the records in the earlier part of the Gospels. There are several points that might be taken up here, but two will suffice. One is suggested by the phrase found in Matthew 28:17, "But some doubted." And the other by the statement, to the effect that the disciples did not yet know that he must rise from the dead in order to fulfill the Scripture.

¹⁶ Matthew 28:16-18.

4. D: But Some Doubted

Just why this statement appears in the story is not easy to account for. In Matthew, for example, we have it in connection with the account of Jesus' appearance on the mountain in Galilee.

But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

And when they saw him, some worshipped him; but some doubted.¹⁷

This seems very difficult to believe. That after Jesus had met them by appointment, and talked to them, and confirmed all the story of the Marys to them, that any of them should doubt the fact of their personal experience. Does this phrase represent the record of a fact? The Matthew Gospel is generally regarded as the one Gospel that had its origin in Palestine. Why then does this record, to the effect that some doubted, appear?

The answer is indicated by another record peculiar to Matthew. That is the record to the effect that the Pharisees under Pilate caused a guard to be placed at the tomb, because they feared that the disciples would steal his body away, and then say that he had arisen from the dead. This guard was placed as agreed, and when they reported to the Pharisees what had happened, the Pharisees bribed them with money to tell everyone that they fell asleep, and while they slept, the disciples came to steal the body. Then occurs one of those naïve remarks in these stories that show its real character. "And this saying was spread abroad among, and continueth to this day."¹⁸

In other words, the writer of the Matthew Gospel knew of a story to the effect that Jesus was not raised from the dead, but that his body was stolen. He inserts this story of the guards, peculiar to Matthew, to account for that tradition. But also, he knew of a tradition that doubted the Resurrection story, and that it claimed the backing of the Disciples. Else why should he introduce the phrase, "And some doubted"?

According to Luke, he has to demonstrate to them by showing them his wounds. In answer to their doubtings, even after he had

¹⁷ Matthew 28:16-17.

¹⁸ Matthew 28:15.

explained the Scriptures to them, and how he was supposed to rise from the dead,

See my hands, and my feet, it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye beheld me having.

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, "Have ye anything to eat?

And they gave him a piece of broiled fish.

And he took it and ate before them.¹⁹

Still further doubt. What does it mean?

According to John there are three appearances to the disciples. Here they have to be shown by the same process of feeling the sides and feet, and eating fish, etc. They are even more exacting in John than elsewhere. But in John there appears another of those casual remarks that tell more than they should. Mary Magdalene had been to the tomb. She had summoned Peter and John. They had come to the tomb, and looked in. They saw that it was empty, but they went away to their homes, [John] 20:9, "For they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead."

This, then, is given by the Gospels not only in John, but also in Luke as an explanation for their doubts. What I want to point out here is this fact, the recognition of doubt among the disciples concerning the fact of the resurrection. Also, the recognition, as in the Matthew Guard story, of the persistence even to the day of writing of a tradition concerning the stolen body. Why was the doubting clause inserted, and why was the clause that not until after the Resurrection did the disciples know that his Resurrection was foretold in the Scripture? The answer is that these observations were incorporated into the story to help explain the fact that in spite of the earthquake at Jesus' death, and the raising from the dead at that time of several saints, and in spite of the earthquake at the time of the resurrection, no one knew anything about these facts. We have in these slips the necessary errors that creep into the reading of mythical matters into the fabric of history. It always betrays itself.

¹⁹ Luke 24:39-43.

But this first consideration, "But some doubted," leads to the second. We have the mention of the fact of doubt. Also, we have the attempt to overcome that doubt by actual physical handling and eating. It is no illusion, but the real thing, real body, and real flesh and blood wounds, and real fish that Jesus eats.

5. E: Scripture Fulfilled

John says plainly in 20:9 that the two favorite disciples did not yet know that "from the scripture he must rise again." Again, according to Luke, he shows them that his rising from the dead is according to the scripture, which foretold that on the third day he should rise from the dead.²⁰

Now, how does this situation, that the disciples did not know until after his death, that he should rise from the dead, and that the scripture foretold it, square up with the idea that Jesus regarded himself as Messiah? In these last chapters it is said that the disciples did not know that he must be raised up on the third day. What do the rest of the Gospels say?

The answer is plain. In three different parallel passages we have the statement. First, Matthew 16:21-28, Mark 8:31-9:1 and Luke 9:22-27. We have practically the same words used,

From that time began Jesus to show his disciples, how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.²¹

In the second place, after the story of the transfiguration, he tells Peter and James and John particularly that they should "tell no man of what they had seen until the Son of Man should be risen from the dead."²² This is common to Matthew and Mark.

Again, in Matthew 17:22-23, Mark 9:30-32 it says that Jesus taught the disciples, "that the Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men, and that they shall kill him, and on the third day he shall be raised up."²³

²⁰ See Luke 24:44-46.

²¹ See Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22.

²² See Matthew 17:9 and Mark 9:9.

²³ See Matthew 17:22-23 and Mark 9:31.

Again, in Matthew 20:17-19, Mark 10:32-34, and Luke 18:31-34:
While they are about to start for Jerusalem Jesus takes,

the twelve apart, and in the way he said unto them,

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death.

And shall deliver him unto the gentiles to mock, and to the scourge and to crucify; and the third day he shall be raised up.²⁴

After all this deliberate instruction concerning his death and crucifixion, and especially this deliberate and special taking aside of the disciples for the purpose of telling them about it, it sounds absurd to read in the accounts of the Resurrection of their terror and surprise at seeing him risen, or their stubborn unbelief, and the necessity not only of showing them the wounds but also of breaking bread with them before they could overcome their unbelief. Yet there was, hardly two intervals between the two alleged events. Then, to have John take up the statement flatly that they did not yet know that according to scripture he must rise from the dead.

What it all means is that these records are not historical, nor are they possible sources of historical facts. They are legends, or myths, which, for dogmatic reasons in part, and in part for other reasons, have been associated with the person of Jesus. That the events as described in the Gospels, the physical resurrection with the flesh and blood, the wounds, the eating of fish, etc., did not take place at all we have two good witnesses. The first is the Gospel records themselves, for they say so many things unintentionally that their intentional story is spoiled. The second witness is the witness of Paul. The Gospels bear witness to a physical resurrection. Paul, to a spiritual resurrection, declaring flatly that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

6. F: Where did these Stories Come From?

First, the doctrine of the Resurrection was a common one among the Jews. The Pharisees believed it. The Sadducees were the only ones who did not believe it. That was not a question at issue among the Jewish Christians, and for many years after the death of Jesus the followers of Jesus were confined to the Jews almost

²⁴ See Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-33.

entirely, or at least to proselytes. The question at issue among them was whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. Luke 24:21 touches what seems to be a sound spot. In the story of the appearance to of Jesus to those on the way to Emmaus, in response to questions by Jesus,

they say, The Things concerning Jesus of Nazareth which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him.

But we hoped that it was he that should redeem Israel."²⁵

That sounds natural and human. Some messianic leader, he might have been regarded by the followers, and they might have continued their work which he had begun, only to have their faith in his simple human teaching taken up and transformed into faith in his possible messianic conception. Whatever may have been the kernel of fact in his life, it seems demonstrated by the hopeless confusion of records that all the messianic, and "Son of God" material that gathered about his life story is legendary, if not mythical in character.

Paul gives the cue in his various records of his conversions, and his doctrine of the Resurrection. His risen Christ, whom he saw, was by his own demonstration not flesh and blood, but spiritual, seen in a vision and a trance. (There may be valid psychic phenomena here.) The witness of him would be the second in his glory to usher in the messianic kingdom. As we saw in a previous lecture the interest of Paul was not in Jesus of Nazareth, but in the Risen Christ.²⁶ Now the New Testament Gospels were not written by those who hoped that he should redeem Israel so much as the "Son of God" which Philo of Alexandria and others like him were teaching.

After recovering from the shock of Jesus' death, his disciples rallied about the faith in him as the heavenly Messiah, not because they had witnessed his resurrection of a body as described in the Gospels, but because they believed in his worth and teaching. They were going to continue to follow in his way of living. To this person, Jesus whom the Palestinian Jews followed, Paul attached all the Greek Christ and Logos material. Beginning, in the small way, in the faith of the disciples in

²⁵ Luke 24:19-21; emphasis added in Davis' text.

²⁶ See Lecture XI, B.

the integrity of their Jesus, it ends in the worship of the Son of God to whom all these contradictory stories about the resurrection are attached.

Where did they come [from]? Within recent years we have been getting answers to that question. We find that this idea of the death and resurrection. For example, Krishna was slain. At his death dark circles were around the moon and the sun was darkened at noonday. He descended into Hell, rose again from the dead and ascended bodily into heaven, many persons witnessing his ascent. Similarly, Buddha. In fact, we are finding that this myth of the death and the resurrection of a God is common all over the world. Professor Frazer's volume, *The Dying God*, in *The Golden Bough* series,²⁷ gives a vast amount of illuminating material upon the general subject. But the point is that practically all over the world from time immemorial people have celebrated some king with a spring festival like our easter, with customs, and ideas closely akin to our easter customs. Its essential theme has been the conflict of the seasons, the life of summer with the death of winter. In one form or another this is the background of the whole easter celebration. The eggs, flowers, etc., are natural witness to this. Also, many of the primitive folk customs that have survived. For example, in Bohemia is the folk song of Easter time.

Now carry we death out of the village
The new Summer into the Village
Welcome, dear Summer,
Green little corn.²⁸

In very primitive times, a part of the religious rite of this spring festival was the human sacrifice. That survived in various forms. First, it survived in the substituting of an image in place of the real human, which has survived to this day in some of the remote peasant districts. We saw that human sacrifice was practiced at a very late date among the Jews. But more direct is the ritual of Adonis practiced among the Greeks of Western Asia and Greece.

At the festivals of Adonis ... the death of the God was annually mourned, with the bitter wailing, chiefly by

²⁷ James George Frazer (1854-1941) Scottish social anthropologist and folklorist influential in early work on comparative religion. Davis refers here to his book, *The Dying God*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1911, Part 3 of *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, first published in 1890.

²⁸ See James George Frazer, *The Dying God*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1911, p. 237.

women; images of him dressed to resemble corpses were carried out as to burial, and then thrown into the sea or into springs.²⁹

Other aspects of this festival indicate that it was practiced in the spring. This dramatic celebration of the death and resurrection of Adonis was connected with the conflict of spring and summer.

But particularly interesting at this point is the myth and ritual of Attis, celebrated in Western Asia. Attis appears to have been a god of vegetation, and his death and resurrection were celebrated annually in the spring of each year. The cult was very strong at Rome, and the celebration herein described is such as was celebrated before the birth of Christ.

Attis was said to have been born of a virgin mother, Nana, in a miraculous manner. The manner of his death is uncertain, but the story is that he was turned into a pine tree. Each year his death and resurrection were celebrated after this fashion:

On the 22nd of March, a pine tree was cut in the woods, and brought into the sanctuary of Cybele where it was treated as a great divinity. The duty of carrying the sacred tree was entrusted to a guild of Tree-bearers. (Witness the suggestion of Palm Sunday.) The trunk was swathed like a corpse with woolen bands and decked with wreaths of violets, for violets were said to have sprung from the blood of Attis, as roses and anemones from the blood of Adonis; and the effigy of a young man, doubtless Attis himself, was tied to the middle of the stem.

On the second day of the festival, the twenty-third of March, the chief ceremony seems to have been the blowing of trumpets.

The third day, the twenty-fourth of March, was known as the Day of Blood: The Archigallus, or high priest, drew blood from his arms and presented it as an offering. Nor was he alone in making this bloody sacrifice.³⁰

²⁹ James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1890, chapter III.

³⁰ This long quotation about the festival of Attis is undoubtedly from some edition of James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1890. The quote closely follows—but unfortunately, does not exactly follow—Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1890, pp. 297-298.

At all events, we can hardly doubt that the Day of Blood witnessed the mourning for Attis over an effigy of him which was afterwards buried. The image thus laid in the sepulcher was probably the same which had hung upon the tree.

But when night had fallen, the sorrow of the worshippers was turned into joy. For suddenly a light shown in the darkness; the tomb was opened; the god had risen from the dead; and as the priest touched the lips of the weeping mourners with balm, he softly whispered in their ears the glad tidings of salvation. The resurrection of the god was hailed by his disciples as a promise that they too would issue triumphant from the corruption of the grave.

On the morrow, the twenty-fifth day of March, which was reckoned the vernal equinox, the divine resurrection was celebrated with a wild outburst of glee. At Rome, and probably elsewhere, the celebration took the form of a carnival. It was a festival of Joy.³¹

Compare Day of Pentecost. Goods in common. The next day was given to repose and rest, followed by a ceremonial washing of all sacred apparatus in the stream.

One or two other facts connected with this Attis cult throw light on the situation. There were mystery ceremonies including a baptism which washed away the person's sin, and he was said to have been born again into eternal life. This baptismal rite was carried out as its central place on the Vatican Hill in Rome at, or very near the spot where St. Peter's now stands. Further the name, "Attis" seems to mean "Father," and Attis was often called "Papás," the name which we translate "Pope."

In Egypt, the death and resurrection of the God Osiris at the same season of the year, i.e., the plowing season, was celebrated. In some parts of Egypt small images of Osiris were buried with the dead to ensure the resurrection.

An eminent scholar has recently pointed out the remarkable resemblance between the treatment of Christ by the Roman soldiers at Jerusalem, and the treatment of the

³¹ This long quotation about the festival of Attis is undoubtedly from some edition of James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1890. The quote closely follows—but unfortunately, does not exactly follow, Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1890, pp. 297-298.

mock king of the Saturnalia by the Roman soldiers at Durostorum.³²

In other words, in some places, in some of these festivals, instead of an image of the god they took a criminal and actually carried out the sacrifice of the God by making the criminal pay the penalty. It has been suggested, and it is possible, that all the story of the releasing of Barabbas and Christ may be related to this custom.³³ That the Jews at Jerusalem, in their festival of the Purim,³⁴ kept up an ancient custom of hanging or crucifying an effigy of Haman is certain. The Christians were very sensitive about the bearing of this upon their own mysteries. So, there seems to be some close relationship here.

7. G: [Conclusion]

What then is the relation between these two lines of facts that I have developed? On the one hand, the very confused and uncertain and contradictory accounts of this alleged resurrection; on the other, this wide spring festival during which the death and resurrection of gods was celebrated under varying forms, many of them so closely suggestive of the accounts concerning the death and resurrection of Christ.

We know by deliberate confession of a contemporary Church Father that the Christmas celebration, and the Christmas legends were of pagan origin, and that in the fourth century, the Christians, being unable to stamp out the pagan winter solstice festival, with which the birth of their God Mithra was celebrated, deliberately took over the whole ceremony, myth and all, and substituted Jesus. We have every reason in the world, except a direct statement for believing, that this is what was done with the spring festival of Easter, when in various parts of the

³² James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1890, Chapter 5, "The Crucifixion of Christ."

³³ Barabbas was a prisoner chosen to be released over Jesus at the Passover feast, thus leading to Jesus' crucifixion. See Matthew 27:15-21.

³⁴ Purim is a Jewish holiday which commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from the Persian Empire in the 5th century B.C.E. Haman was an official in the court of King Ahasuerus, and on being disrespected by a Jewish man named Mordecai, persuaded the king to issue a decree that all Jews in the Persian empire be killed. These events are detailed in the Old Testament Book of Esther

Roman Empire, the death and resurrection of the God of vegetation was celebrated.

Appendix 1: The Chart of Appearances at various significant events surrounding the Resurrection of Jesus as described by the four Gospels:

Appearances.					
	Matthew	Mark	Luke.	John.	Paul
Emmaus.		16/12-13	24/13-55		
Dis. in Jerusalem. (11)(10)		16/14- 20	24/36-43	20/19-25	
Thomas and Others.				20/26-29	
Sea of Galilee				21/12-24	
Mount in Galilee.	28/16-20	 			
Ascension.			24/44-53		

Peter
twelve
500
James
Apostles
Paul.