

June 24-30
New Testament Lesson # 25
“He Is Risen”
(Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20-21)
By Lenet Hadley Read

I. His Arms Stretch out Still!

Jesus' body remained upon the tree until the coming of the night. He remained there **with His crucified arms still stretched out**. And if our ears will hear, there is suddenly deeper meaning to many scriptures.

“I have stretched forth my hand almost all the day long” (Jacob 5:47).

“Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer... whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins.” (Doctrine & Covenants 29:1)

Christ's body remained on the cross, His arms outstretched in mercy until the night.

His arms of mercy still remain outstretched until our night --- the night of our death or until the night of His Final Judgment.

II. Out of Stone came Life!

Christ's sufferings ended, and the end of the day approached. Jesus' body was removed from the cross and was sealed in a tomb behind a great stone. **Therefore a stone symbolized Christ's burial.**

Moses had previously shown that someday living water *would* break forth from stone (Exodus 17:4-7). Jesus now fulfilled that prophecy.

Jacob had removed a stone from a well that His hoped-for- bride and the sheep of her kinsman might be watered (Genesis 29:1-14). Jesus now fulfilled *that* prophecy.

Earlier, Jesus appeared at Jacob's well, teaching **“... whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst (John 4:14);”**

Jesus Christ fulfilled all of these witnesses when He arose in life out of the tomb. He, the Fountain Everlasting, had burst forth bringing new life to all. ***No more would stones seal up the dead!***

Furthermore, it was through the Resurrection that Jesus' covenant people could really become **“One,”** with their true Bridegroom and with God, the Father.

III. Jesus the Christ was the First Fruit of the Harvest!

The Lord had commanded Israel that after they entered their promised land they should always offer the first sheaf of the year, from the winter grains, unto Him --- and to do it at Passover time. To make sure this was possible, the Jews always planted the barley seventy (70) days before Passover so that the barley would be ripe at that precise time.

God also commanded that this offering be lifted up as an offering to Him the morning after the Israelite Sabbath. So through the centuries, in obedience to this commandment, a first fruits offering was **“lifted up”** to the Lord at the harvest of the first winter grains, the **morning after the Jewish Sabbath at Passover time.**

The Lord intended this early morning, first day of the week offering would have great meaning.

Just as the sun was setting after Jesus' death, a group of religious leaders went out to cut down this first sheaf of the harvest. **Because of the timing of the Sabbath and Jesus' death, this would have occurred during Christ's removal from the cross.**

(Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, p. 203-4).

The first fruit sheaf was taken to the temple. Christ's body was taken and laid in the tomb. On the morning after the Israelite Sabbath, the priest lifted up that first fruit of the harvest as an offering to the Lord. It had always born witness, and its witness was that morning fulfilled. For **that very same morning Jesus the Christ was lifted up in the resurrection.**

Thus Jesus Christ was the very first fruit of the harvest of the dead. Paul specifically called the Savior "the firstfruit" --- "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Jesus Christ was prophesied to be the first fruit of the Resurrection.

IV. After Jesus' resurrection, He reminded His apostles that He had told them He must fulfill all things written about Him in the Law of Moses (Luke 24:44). A part of what he came to fulfill were witnesses of Him given through the Lord's Holy Days.

As taught in the Book of Mormon, "old things had passed away, and ... all things had become new" (3 Nephi 15:3)." Many old things which had witnessed of Christ's coming were now changed to **new witnesses that He had come.**

Because Jesus was resurrected the day after the old Sabbath, on the first day of the week, this *became the new Sabbath Day*. Latter-day Saints do not honor Jesus' resurrection just on Easter, **but on every Sabbath Day!**

(For more information on how Jesus fulfilled the Lord's Holy Days, see "Symbols of the Harvest," by Lenet Hadley Read, *The Ensign*, January, 1975).

V. Jesus' work for those already Dead.

While the New Testament makes only brief reference to this, it is important to understand that **Jesus did a very great work for the dead prior to His resurrection.**

The lack of reference to this great work in our Bible shows how many "plain and precious truths" truly have been lost.

He visited the captive spirits in Spirit Prison. This is briefly referred to in 1 Peter 3:19-20 "...he preached unto the spirits in prison." This was a very great work in regard to the salvation of men. The greatness of this work is revealed in Doctrine and Covenants 138, as President Joseph F. Smith saw what occurred with Christ there.

1. "I pondered over these things...and I saw the hosts of the dead... And I beheld they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing ... because the day of their deliverance was at hand. They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption [of the righteous] from the bands of death" (D&C 138:11, 15-16).

By going to them at Passover Time, He set in motion a further work to "set the captives free," just as ancient Israel was freed from captivity at Passover Time.

Part of the great significance of this work is showing that those who died without hearing His gospel are not lost and damned, as most Christians believe. Thus through Latter-day revelation we are brought to see that God truly is a God of love -- and that His love extends to people of all generations and all nations. Obviously

the Lord did not just go to those in prison to mock them, but to give them hope, that they too would be blessed through His resurrection.

- A. He did not suffer all that He had just suffered for a few persons only, **but for all who had ever lived upon the earth. All would fall within the scope of His great love and ministry.**

VI. Christ's Resurrection was not of His Spirit only, but of His Flesh and Bones!

- A. While many people claim to believe in Jesus' resurrection, they believe it was only His spirit which arose.
- B. But **this is not true resurrection**, for the body would still remain dead. *Many* people of all faiths believe that a Spirit departs a dead body and continues to live. **So if Jesus' resurrection consisted only of the arising of His Spirit, He accomplished nothing of great significance.**
- C. But He did! His resurrection was truly of His flesh and bones. His Resurrection was very significant, the reuniting of His spirit and of His body.
- D. Sometimes because we see much imagery of dead persons as spirit only, without realizing it, we can begin to see the resurrected dead as spirit only.
- E. We must continue to challenge our own natural instincts, and to really think of those in the resurrection as possessing physical bodies, far more than spirit alone.

VII. Jesus had foretold all that would occur after His Resurrection

- A. Jesus had said to those who asked for a sign, *the sign they would receive* was the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:39-41). Christ had fulfilled the sign of Jonah, by being buried in a tomb for three days, just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days. Then both had come forth alive! [Jesus Resurrected; Jonah just survived].
- B. But, unfortunately, there was more to that sign. While Ninevah had repented at the news of **Jonah's return from death**, most Jews of Christ's day would not believe, though Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus knew and warned this would be so. "... neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:30).
- C. There were other witnesses in the story of Jonah. While most Jews would not believe, though Jesus had risen from the dead, **many Gentiles did repent as they came to believe in Jesus due to His resurrection (as Ninevah had.** See Jonah 3).
- D. In time, the witnesses in the story of Jonah would be fulfilled in one more way. Jonah suffered because he would not accept the repentance of Ninevah (See Jonah 4 where the vine protecting Jonah dies due to his foolish rejection of God's good work among the Gentiles).
 - 1. **Similarly, many Israelites would later be cast off because they could not accept the repentance of the Gentiles in their day, and their coming into God's fold.** Because of this rejection of Christ and His Love, God's protection would be withdrawn. (After the vine died, Jonah suffered greatly from earth's forces because the protection from God had been removed for a time). (For more details see my OT lesson # 33 on Jonah).