

# The Change Made by Resurrection

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The Resurrection brought a new spiritual régime, demonstrating the change from the earthly to the heavenly and from the outward to the inward.*

**Scripture:** Mark 16:9, John 20:1, John 20:11

**Topics:** "Spiritual Understanding", "Transformation through Resurrection"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the transformative power of the Resurrection, illustrating how it establishes a new spiritual order. He highlights the encounters of the risen Christ with Mary Magdalene and the two disciples on the Emmaus Road, showcasing the shift from an earthly understanding of Christ to a deeper, spiritual relationship. The Resurrection signifies a change in how believers possess Christ, moving from external to internal, and from earthly to heavenly. Sparks points out that true spiritual understanding comes through personal experience and revelation rather than mere knowledge. Ultimately, the Resurrection invites believers into a new way of living, filled with hope and purpose.

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## Transcript

Reading: Mark 16:9; John 20:1,11-18; 1 Cor. 15:3-8.

The forty days after the Resurrection established a new spiritual régime. The end of the phase of Christ's earthly life has - from some standpoints and in some ways - to have "Failure" written over it - failure in the world: failure with the disciples: failure of His teaching: failure of His works: failure of His claims. These failures were due to the natural and earthly level or horizon within which those concerned were living. It was in themselves that He was "straitened"; their spiritual bondage and mental darkness. The forty days were not only evidence of His resurrection, but of the change which resurrection makes. This is demonstrated in the cases of His contact during that period. The first in order was

(1) Mary Magdalene

The record seems to be quite precise about this priority and precedence. Much that is sentimental has been made of it. Viewed from the standpoint of our present purpose, that is, the spiritual change by resurrection, there is little doubt that this priority is the right one. It does contain the most definite and emphatic change of position and footing in resurrection.

The words of the risen Lord to Mary were certainly not a rebuff, as they seem to be. This was surely not a time or occasion for a rebuff, when, apparently, the Lord allowed other women to take Him by the feet, and invited Thomas to touch Him, and disciples to "handle" Him. There must be something special here. As we see it, it is nothing less than the change in dispensation, to which He had so often alluded and given intimation, as, for instance, with the woman at Sychar's well (John 4:21,23).

Some have explained it on the basis of His further words: "For I have not yet ascended... Whether this pre-ascension ascension be true or not, the real meaning is not in our text as translated - "Touch me not"; but, as the margin corrects - "Lay not hold on me".

After all that Mary had experienced and gone through His words would imply that she was not letting Him go again, not even to the Father! She had got Him back, and she was keeping Him. This would have reversed all His teaching, and this would have been to her own very serious loss. It pointed to

### The New Way of Possessing Christ

It represented the change from the outward to the inward, which is the very essence of the new order. It represented the change from the earthly to the heavenly, which is equally characteristic of this dispensation. "I go", He had said. Mary's attempted hold meant, "I will not let you go". Here, once more, we are in the presence of that incorrigible tendency and habit of the natural man, the man of soul rather than spirit, to bring Christ and heavenly things down to earth in some form that can be held by man. This is the way of systematization, formality, crystallization, organization, and aspects of materialism: the 'we must do something' propensity, we must attach titles, reputations, symbols of success, human honours, and a thousand-and-one other things to Christ to give substance to Him in this world. How impossible it is for well-meaning and even deeply-devoted people, like Mary, to keep their hands off spiritual things. How well-nigh impossible it is to believe that the Lord can do anything without the aid of organization, publicity, advertisement, committees, etc.

But His best and most real work has been, and still is, without all this. There are works of God, beautiful, fruitful, and powerful, of which you will never read in the press, secular or religious. That such should be come upon often provokes astonished exclamations - "But we have never read about this in the press". "Why have you never published this?"

Somehow man's flesh must insinuate itself into heavenly things and draw them to himself. There is a battle related to keeping things truly spiritual and all of God. The risen Lord will not put Himself in the hands that want to use Him in any way to make something for man's soul-gratification.

There is a holding which is unto loss: there is a letting go which is unto gain.

Ask Abraham. Ask David. Ask Paul. Yes, above all, ask Jesus.

If there is tragedy in Church history, surely it can be traced to this very earth-gravitation. The two letters to Timothy clearly point to the beginnings of this down-grade movement; this change from the pure spirit to the clericalism and secularism which took possession as the Apostolic age was closing. It was with this that John was contending in all of his writings.

As with Israel and Saul in days of spiritual declension, it is ever and always - "make us... like unto..." It can even be - 'make churches like unto New Testament churches!' And so a certain technique, form, practice, etc., is established, without the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, the anointing, and the heaven-given

instruments. It is all dead, imitation, make-believe, and artificial.

Mary Magdalene wept because - "They have taken away my Lord". Jesus asked why the tears. Really He was given to her in a fuller, more intimate, and more enduring way than ever before. Heaven took Him away later, but Mary did not weep then. She came to see the immense gains and advantages of the changed dispensation.

What an immense content this first appearance of the risen Lord has! We do not read things into it. The whole later New Testament shows this to be its meaning. In that tearful and yet glorious eternal few moments the Lord laid the foundation, and established the principle of His relationship to the Church for the whole of a new dispensation; a dispensation horizoned by resurrection.

## (2) The Two on the Emmaus Road

Luke 24:13-31.

This story of the Emmaus Road could be described as the story of seven-and-a-half miles transformed by a touch of the Risen Lord.

These two were disciples; probably living at Emmaus. Many efforts have been made to identify them, especially the unnamed one, but with unconvincing results. At some time, somewhere, they had come into disciple-relationship with Jesus. There must have been a first outward eventful journey which ended in this relationship, and perhaps a period before returning home. This period of companying with Him either created or stimulated their hopes and led them to the conclusion - "We hoped that it should be he who would redeem Israel". They came to esteem Him as "a prophet, mighty in deed and word". Then clouds began to gather on the horizon, and rumblings of the coming storm became increasingly audible. At length the storm broke. He was taken and cruelly killed and laid in the tomb. Their hopes were shattered. The vision was desolated. Their Sun was in eclipse. Their minds were bewildered. After a day or two they heard some rumours that He was alive, but rumours are not enough to mend and restore broken hearts and desolated lives. So - 'Let us go home'. 'Let us get away from it all, and think.'

Thus on their mournful and so-different, homeward journey, as they talk in melancholy and hushed tones, the Stranger joins them. He asks a question. Then with deft touch He helps them to their own conclusions, that is, the conclusions of the Scriptures with which they were already familiar. A touch of reproach and then the matchless exposition. Was there ever such a 'Bible Reading'? The embers upon their hearts which had almost died began to glow afresh as He talked; the dawn sent streaks of new light across their horizon - a dawn at eventide. 'Come in', they said as they reached home, and He made as if He would go further. 'Come in and abide.' We know the rest - the simple repast: the mysterious something bringing back a memory so vividly: the rent Heaven, the recognition, and He is gone.

Never were seven-and-a-half miles of familiar and lately despairingly-sombre travel so transformed. A light heart takes miles off the road says the song.

There are some incidentally helpful things here.

1. The Risen Lord knows where we are.
2. The Risen Lord knows how we are.

3. The Risen Lord knows what we need.

4. The Risen Lord is the answer to all our need.

The Risen Lord is new light; new hope; new motive; new energy; new testimony.

But when we have said all that, we have not touched the heart of this event.

Note. 1. These men knew the Scriptures; that is assumed.

2. These men had a knowledge of 'Jesus of Nazareth'.

(a) They had been associated with Him.

(b) They knew His teaching and His works.

This represented a considerable fulness. But, they were none the better for it all in the day of crisis. They were 'straitened in themselves', and 'He was straitened in them'. They lacked spiritual 'understanding', and upon that deficiency they foundered.

But the "many things" which He had said that He had to say to them, but could not, are now released.

Why? and How? Because the law of spiritual release is that we must go through experience so deep that we must know or die; we must be in a condition which makes revelation the only way of life and survival. Our souls must be broken. It is not enough to possess objective knowledge, by ear and eye. It is not enough to have pain and despair when our ideas and ambitions suffer a set-back and reverse. What we must have is an experience of resurrection in a spiritual way. We must have an open Heaven, which means

(a) A new Lord.

(b) A new Bible.

(c) A new anointing

(d) A new commission and vocation.

This is what vital union with the Risen Lord, in the power of the Spirit, means.

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