

THE GREAT VICTORY



IT WAS early morning on the first day of the week, which would be like our Sunday. Mary and other dear friends of Jesus went to visit the tomb where their Master had been laid away to rest three days before. They went there to sprinkle sweet smelling perfume upon his body.

Jesus had not been buried in the ground as we usually bury dead people. The tomb in which they laid him was like a cave in the side of a huge rock. A stone had been placed in front of the doorway, and when this stone was rolled away one could walk directly into the tomb. As these early morning visitors neared the tomb, they said among themselves:

“Who shall roll us away the stone?”

When they reached the tomb the stone had already been rolled away! They probably thought that someone else had arrived there before them. They entered the tomb and went to the place where Jesus had been laid, but saw that their Master was not there.

First they thought that some of

Jesus’ enemies had stolen his body, and they were very sad indeed. Then they saw a young man at the other end of the tomb, who spoke

to them and said that Jesus was not there because he had been made alive.

This young man was really not a man at all, but an angel! The women were a little afraid and very much excited, but the angel told them to hurry away and tell the apostles that their Master was no longer dead. Wasn't that a wonderful message to take to the friends of Jesus?

God, the wonderful Heavenly Father of Jesus, had used his mighty power and made Jesus alive again. God could do this because it was his power which had made everything. God's power gave us life, and keeps us alive, so God was able to make Jesus alive again. God did this because Jesus had done what God wanted him to do. Jesus had allowed his enemies to kill him because he loved them, and that's what God wanted his dear Son to do. God also loves his enemies. Everyone who doesn't do what God wants him to do is God's enemy, but he loves them so much that he will make them all alive again by and by. When he makes them, alive again, if they do what he wants them to do, he will keep them alive forever.

This is what God has promised to do, and we know his promises will come true!

Jesus died because he loved the people just as God loved them. And because he died for them they will have an opportunity to live again. If a boy does something wrong at school and the teacher tells him he must stay in after school, that is punishment, isn't it? Well, if another boy who hadn't done wrong, dearly loved the one who was to be punished, and offered to stay after school in his place, that would be taking the punishment for him, wouldn't it? Now that's why Jesus died. Adam disobeyed God, and his punishment was death, but Jesus took his place. so Adam will be made alive again. All people die on account of Adam's sin, so they will all be made alive again because Jesus took the punishment. As soon as Peter, and another apostle named John, heard that Jesus had been made alive, they ran to the tomb as fast as they could. Maybe they thought they would still find him there, only he would be alive. Or perhaps they could not believe what they had

heard, and wanted to prove it for themselves. But they also found the tomb empty. Jesus was not there, for he was no longer dead. God had given him a great victory—a victory over death.

God's power had made him alive again.

But no one had seen Jesus since he had been made alive. Wasn't it strange! The tomb where Jesus' body had been placed was in a beautiful garden. Mary was standing by the tomb, weeping, when she saw a man who seemed to be a caretaker of the garden, and said to him:

"Sir, tell me where thou hast laid Jesus?"

Then the man spoke her name, "Mary!" He said "Mary" in such a way that she knew it was Jesus speaking to her. Yes, this was Jesus, she was sure, but he was so different from what he had been before. Still, she knew it was Jesus.

Later in the day two of Jesus' friends, who were called his disciples, were walking along the road, talking about him. They had not heard that Jesus was made alive again, so they were very sad. A stranger came up to them and asked:

"Why are you so sad?"

They told this stranger about Jesus, and that they had thought he would be a great king to rule over the people of Israel and the whole world, but that now he was dead.

The stranger reminded the two disciples that God had told his prophets to write about Jesus, telling how he would be like a lamb that would be killed. He told them it was necessary for Jesus to die before he could be the great king they expected him to be. This stranger walked with them all the way to the place they were going, and there they ate supper together.

Then, suddenly they discovered that their new friend was Jesus. As soon as they learned this, Jesus disappeared and they couldn't see him. How happy and excited they must have been!

But one of Jesus' apostles would not believe that he had been made alive again. His name was Thomas. Has anyone ever called you a "doubting Thomas"? If you ever do hear anyone use that expression

you will know that he is thinking of Thomas, the apostle of Jesus, who doubted that his Master had been raised from the dead. One day the eleven apostles were all gathered together in an upstairs room eating, when suddenly they looked up, and Jesus was right there with them. They were very much surprised because all the doors of the room were locked, and at first they were afraid. But Jesus said to them:
“Peace be unto you.”

Jesus spoke to doubting Thomas, and said, “Reach out thy hand, and touch my side: and be not faithless, but believing.” Then Thomas was convinced. Jesus talked with his disciples for a few moments and then, without the door being opened at all, he suddenly went away just as he had come, and they couldn’t see him any more.

Wasn’t that strange?

Of course it wasn’t really strange at all—when you understand it. You see Jesus was entirely different now. God had made him alive again, but he was not just a man any more. He was so different that his apostles couldn’t see him at all unless he made himself look like a man.

After Jesus was made alive again he was just like God, and we can’t see God! We don’t have the right kind of eyes to see God, that’s why; and the apostles didn’t have the right kind of eyes to see Jesus, either. But Jesus is very real, and he is now very powerful. When he is King over the whole earth, everybody will know what a powerful King he is.

The disciples saw Jesus a few other times; once, on the beach of the Sea of Galilee, where he had cooked breakfast for them. They had all been out in a boat fishing. They had fished all night, but had caught no fish. They were fishing with a big net which they held over the edge of the boat. Jesus shouted from the beach:

“Cast your net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find fish.” They did this, and the net was soon filled with fish. Then the apostles knew that it was Jesus who had spoken to them, and they hurried ashore as fast as they could. They enjoyed a lovely visit with

Jesus that morning. Peter told Jesus that he loved him very much, and Jesus said to Peter:

“Feed my sheep.”

Jesus’ sheep are people who love him and who do what he wants them to do.

The last time the apostles saw Jesus he told them that they were to go all over the world and tell the people of all nations about God and about the good news that a time is coming when everybody will be made happy. In the Bible, good news is called the Gospel, and Jesus said to his apostles:

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel.”

The apostles were given a big task, weren’t they? And then, after Jesus had told his apostles to preach the Gospel to everybody they possibly could, he left them and returned to his home with God.

QUESTIONS

- What did the angel say to the women who visited Jesus’ tomb and found it empty?
- What did Peter and John do when they learned that Jesus had been made alive again?
- After Jesus was made alive again, what did he tell his disciples to do?