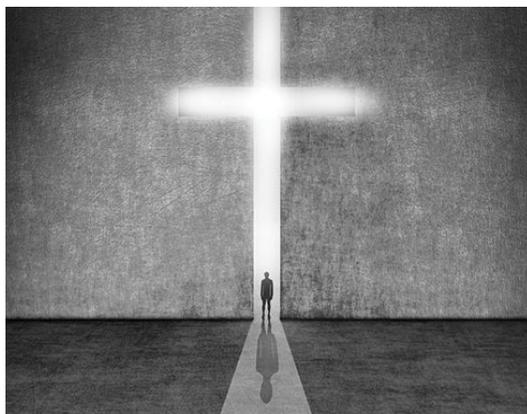




April 2017 – A NEW CHAPTER IN COSMIC HISTORY

In his book *Miracles*, C.S. Lewis considers the historical background and significance of the Resurrection:

In the earliest days of Christianity an “apostle” was first and foremost a man who claimed to be an eyewitness of the Resurrection... to preach Christianity meant primarily to preach the Resurrection... The Resurrection is the central theme in every Christian sermon reported in the Acts. The Resurrection, and its consequences, were the “gospel” or good news which the Christians brought: what we call the “gospels,” the narratives of Our Lord’s life and death, were composed later for the benefit of those who had already accepted the *gospel*. They were in no sense the basis of Christianity: they were written for those already converted. The miracle of the Resurrection, and the theology of that miracle, comes first: the biography comes later as a comment on it. Nothing could be more unhistorical than to pick out selected sayings of Christ from the gospels and to regard those as the datum and the rest of the New Testament as a construction upon it. The first fact in the history of Christendom is a number of people who say they have seen the Resurrection...



It is very important to be clear about what these people meant... What they were claiming was that they had all, at one time or another, met Jesus during the six or seven weeks that followed His death. Sometimes they seem to have been alone when they did so, but on one occasion twelve of them saw Him together, and on another occasion about five hundred of them. St Paul says that the majority of the five hundred were still alive when he wrote the First Letter to the Corinthians, i.e. in about 55 AD.

The ‘Resurrection’ to which they bore witness was, in fact, not the action of rising from the dead but the state of having risen; a state, as they held, attested by intermittent meetings during a limited period (except for the special, and in some ways different, meeting vouchsafed to St Paul). This termination of the period is important, for, as we shall see, there is no possibility of isolating the doctrine of the Resurrection from that of the Ascension...

The New Testament writers speak as if Christ’s achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe. He is the “first fruits”, the “pioneer of life”. He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has opened.¹

It is because of Christ’s resurrection that we have the hope of resurrection. As we meditate on the events that happened during Holy Week, let us be thankful that, in the words of the Gospel according to John, “...God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”²

*“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order:
Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-23 (ESV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, (New York: Touchstone, 1996), pp. 188-191.

² John 3:16 (ESV)