

THE NINETY-SIXTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

First Day-Afternoon Session, April 3, 1926

At 2 o'clock the congregation was asked by President Heber J. Grant, who presided, to sing with the choir the hymn, "How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord." The hymn was sung with spirit and earnestness.

Elder Winslow Farr Smith, president of the Ensign stake of Zion, offered the opening prayer.

Address by Elder Newel K. Young Of the L. D. S. University Faculty



I feel very keenly my unworthiness and lack of preparation. Pray with me that I may be blessed to respond to the call of the servants of the Lord to say something about the resurrection of the Christ.

First, I would tell you of the witnesses of that resurrection, the people to whom the Master appeared on that Sunday morning nearly 1900 years ago-for this is Easter Sunday, the anniversary of that great day.

But may I say a word of preface -- that I would rather speak of Jesus Christ and his life, his self- sacrifice, his love, his manliness, his divinity, and of his death and resurrection than of any other theme in all the world. His death was voluntary; he gave his life, laid it down of himself, declaring that plainly, as found in the tenth chapter of John, in the sermon of the Good Shepherd. He had the power and authority from the Father to lay his life down and take it up. No man took it from him. I believe that I can say without error

that in the last fifteen years I have scarcely had a waking hour, day or night that my mind and thought and my heart have not turned for at least a minute or two to him, and many days I spend hours and hours thinking of him. In these fifteen years I have lain awake much at night with bodily pain, and my thought of him, my communion with him-not to him-his communion with me, and the touch of his presence and Spirit, have turned hundreds of nights of pain and restlessness into benedictions and blessings to be remembered forever with gratitude and joy.

I should like first to speak of the facts or incidents connected with the resurrection, and then say something of its meaning and significance.

The first to see Jesus resurrected was Mary Magdalene, with whom he spoke and to whom he revealed himself. In her joy, she hastened to embrace or take hold of him, and he said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father."

The second appearance was to a number of women, and as he spoke to them, he told them to tell his brethren that they should go into Galilee, and there they should see him. That ought to be a comfort to mothers and wives and women, that the first message of the risen Lord to his brethren was sent by these anxious, devoted, eager women, who were first to the tomb in memory and reverence of his pierced body.

During that day he appeared to two of the disciples who were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, and walked with them and conversed with them without their beholding or understanding who he was. They were astonished when he asked them what it was they were talking about as he approached, what the thing was that was in their hearts; and they asked if he was a stranger in Jerusalem. They thought no man could have been there these last days without knowing, and told him of his own crucifixion and of his own burial in the tomb, and that certain women had been there with two of the brethren, who were Peter and John, and found the tomb empty. And then they said, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

That same day he appeared to ten of the apostles in an upper room, talked to them, ministered to them, let them see the nail prints in his hands and feet. Thomas was not with them; he was away. Judas, of course, had gone.

A week from that day he appeared to the eleven, including Thomas. In the mean time, Thomas had said, that he did not believe it. Thomas thought it was an illusion. Thomas thought their senses had deceived them. Thomas was a man who had to have, it seemed, the tangible evidence of the senses, and he said, "I shall not believe, except I see with my eyes and feel with my hands." When Jesus appeared, he said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." And Thomas came and did so and dropped on his knees and said, "My Lord and my God." Then Jesus said, "Thomas because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." He does not say, "more blessed," though I think perhaps they are.

I am grateful with all my heart that it has been easy and natural for me to believe, but I do not want to be unsympathetic with men for whom it is not so easy. I want to have the patience that Jesus had and the willingness to give them all the evidence there may be.

After that he appeared to seven disciples, five, at least, of whom were apostles, these being Peter, James, and John, and Thomas and Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, at the Sea of Galilee, and ate with them. He had fish roasting on a fire of coals. They were fishing. That is the occasion on which he asked Peter three times if he loved him, and Peter answered, yes. And I do rejoice in the last time, when he almost seemed to question Peter's answer, that Peter could look him—the risen Christ, the Son of God in the face—and say, "You know I love you." Blessed is the man who can face those eyes that can see the secrets of the heart and yet say he loves or he believes! There were seven there.

He visited Peter alone, the Apostle Paul tells us. No one knows what took place in that meeting. I believe we are warranted in believing that no meeting after his resurrection, perhaps, was more vital.

We do know that his four brothers did not believe in him during his ministry, but he visited his brother James after the resurrection. That is also given to us by Paul. And James believed and later presided in the Church at Jerusalem, the Christian Church, Christ's Church, after his brother had departed, for many, many years, and is believed to be the author of the Epistle of James, a letter of advice and inspiration to the Hebrew Christians of that day. Here he wrote that piece of advice that sent our believing boy prophet into the woods to pray. This prayer opened the heavens for the Father and Son to come.

At a later meeting he visited five hundred men in a mountain in Galilee, almost all of whom were living when the Apostle Paul bore his testimony.

Some time after, he visited the eleven and some others on the mountain called Olivet, when he ascended in glory; and the witnesses from heaven said that as he ascended, in like manner should he come again.

At a later time, he visited Paul and called him to the ministry and started him out upon that great mission of his.

Then we must record the visit to the Nephites, when he came day after day. There is only time to mention this.

And then his visit to our own prophet, in our time, with his gracious, humbling, chastening ministry to us; for I do not know how you men of Israel fed, but if there is one time when I do not want to speak in a loud voice, if there is one time when I am chastened and when I am sobered, and when I am humbled, it is when I center my consciousness on the fact that we are commissioned through the Priesthood to stand before him and for him in the midst of men. That is no testimony to bear lightly; that is

no testimony to shout in thoughtlessness; it is a testimony full of awe, full of responsibility, and a testimony that should be borne in great reverence.

There is not time to say the word or two I meant to say about the significance and meaning of the resurrection, except this, that for the last year of his mortal life, or nearly that, he was trying to get his apostles to understand that his mission was not to set up an earthly kingdom. He was not to be a Jewish Caesar and set up the Jews to rule the world as Rome had ruled it. They could not understand it. We have evidence and plenty of it. After his death, Peter said, "I go a fishing." And the others said, "We also go with you." The two on the way to Emmaus revealed it; "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." When he was arrested, the brethren went to safety. He said, "Take me and let these go." and they went. They were in denial; they were despondent; they had hoped it was the Christ; but to them the evidence that he was the Messiah was for him to establish a kingdom with the Jews as kings. That is what they looked for; that is what their fathers had looked for; that is why they were so fearful, so despondent. But when he rose, when he came back to the Sea of Galilee, where Peter had gone to his nets -- not for a day's vacation, not for an hour -- if it had been that, he would not have fished all night. He went back to become a fisher of fish, because he was disappointed and thought, with his brethren on the way to Emmaus, that he was not what they had hoped he should be.

When he arose, when he visited them, it was far more to them than the sign that one shall rise from the dead. They believed in the resurrection. It was far more to them than to know that their Master lived; it gave them the testimony, borne witness to, and made secure, by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, that he was the very Christ, the Son of God. That was the great significance of it--not only that he lived but that he was what he had tried to get them to understand that he was; and borne testimony that he was. He was all they had hoped for, and a thousand times more, because he was Lord of life and King of king, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Son of God, the Revelator of the Father.

On this Easter morning I am glad to remember these things with you; somehow I feel that every Easter morning, early, out of doors if I could, just as the sun rose, I should like to meet with a band of responsive men and women and spend an hour or two hours in memory of his rising. For that is what it means to us not only that there is no death; not only that the grave lost its victory and death has been robbed of its sting; but also that he was and is the Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer and the Savior, and that we are his brethren, children of our Father. I plead that in our wanting to know our Father we may approach him as Father. That is the only way to know him. He is Father, and we are his children. I bear record here, in memory of my faithful mother, my father, my grandparents, my people -- I bear record that I know that God lives and is our Father, caring for us, watching over us; that it is his work and his glory to bring to pass our immortality and eternal life, and that Jesus is the Christ, and we are commissioned to represent him, in helping in that work and that glory. May God help us to be true, I ask, and I leave with you my love, and pray our Father's love and blessing upon you, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The choir sang the hymn, "An Angel From On High," the duets being sung by Mrs. Alfred W. Davis and Hyrum Christensen, with sympathetic interpretation.



Newel K. Young and his grandson Kay
From a snapshot taken at the gravesite
of Newel's wife Tina in 1949.

Note: I was seventy-one years old when I first read this conference talk of Grandpa Young's. It is a marvelous testimony, delivered with conviction and the clarity of a true believer of Jesus Christ and his literal resurrection. Everything I learned as a child from this great man; everything I have heard said of him by those of his children who have remained faithful to his deepest beliefs and convictions; all confirm the kind of man he was – a faithful son to a faithful mother; a grateful son to an accomplished and pioneer father; a sensitive, loving, and patient father to his nineteen children; and a thoughtful and caring husband to his two wives. Grandpa always hoped he could do more for others than he did, but he always, unfailingly did his absolute best.

Now, I marvel that modern technology will allow the sharing of this wonderful testimony, when the poverty and primitive methods of information transfer that marked his and my mother's day, precluded these sorts of blessings from very wide distribution.

-- Robert Newel Reynolds, Littleton, Colorado, February, 2009