

On the Resurrection of Christ

Catechetical Lecture 14.3-10, by St. Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 350)

3. That the Savior then was buried, ye have heard distinctly in the preceding discourse, as Isaiah saith, *His burial shall be in peace* (Isa. 57:2): for in His burial He made peace between heaven and earth, bringing sinners unto God; and, that *the righteous is taken out of the way of unrighteousness* (Isa. 57:1): and, *His burial shall be in peace, and, I will give the wicked for His burial* (Isa. 53:9). There is also the prophecy of Jacob saying in the Scriptures, *He lay down and couched as a lion, and as a lion's whelp: who shall rouse Him up* (Gen. 49:9)? And the similar passage in Numbers, *He couched, He lay down as a lion, and as a lion's whelp* (Num. 24:9). The Psalm also ye have often heard, which says, *And Thou hast brought me down into the dust of death* (Ps. 21:15). Moreover we took note of the spot, when we quoted the words, *Look unto the rock, which ye have hewn* (Isa. 51:1). But now let the testimonies concerning His resurrection itself go with us on our way.

4. First, then, in the 11th Psalm¹ He says, *For the misery of the poor, and the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord* (Ps. 11:5). But this passage still remains doubtful with some, for He often rises up also in anger (Ps. 7:6), to take vengeance upon His enemies. Come then to the 15th Psalm, which says distinctly: *Preserve Me, O Lord, for in Thee have I put my trust; and after this, their assemblies of blood will I not join, nor make mention of their names between my lips; since they have refused me, and chosen Cæsar as their king, and also the next words, I foresaw the Lord always before Me, because He is at My right hand, that I may not be moved, and soon after Yea and even until night my reins chastened me. And after this He says most plainly, For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hades; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption* (Ps. 15:1, 4, 8; cf. Acts 2:27, 31). He said not, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see death, since then He would not have died; but *corruption*, saith He, I see not, and shall not abide in death. *Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life* (Ps. 15:11). Behold here is plainly preached a life after death.

Come also to the 29th Psalm, *I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted Me up, and hast not made My foes to rejoice over Me. What is it that took place? Were you rescued from enemies, or were you released when about to be smitten? He says himself most plainly, O Lord, Thou hast brought up My soul from hades. There he says, Thou wilt not leave,*

¹ The Psalms are numbered according to the *Septuagint*, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures from which Christ and His apostles quoted. Likewise, the Old Testament quotations herein are from the *Septuagint* which was the Bible of the early Church.

prophetically: and here he speaks of that which is to take place as having taken place, Thou hast brought up. *Thou hast saved Me from them that go down into the pit.* At what time shall the event occur? *Weeping shall continue for the evening, and joy cometh in the morning* (Ps. 29:1, 3,5); for in the evening was the sorrow of the disciplines, and in the morning the joy of the resurrection.

5. But wouldst thou know the place also? Again He says in Canticles, *I went down into the garden of nuts* (SS 6:11); for it was a garden where He was crucified (cf. Jn. 19:41). For though it has now been most highly adorned with royal gifts, yet formerly it was a garden, and the signs and the remnants of this remain. *A garden enclosed, a fountain sealed* (SS 4:12), by the Jews who said, *We remember that that deceiver said while He was yet alive, After three days, I will rise: command, therefore, that the sepulcher be made sure;* and further on, *So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone with the guard* (Matt. 27:63, 65). And aiming well at these, one saith, *and in rest Thou shalt judge them* (Job 7:18). But who is the fountain that is sealed, or who is interpreted as being *a well-spring of living water* (SS 4:15)? It is the Savior Himself, concerning whom it is written, *For with Thee is the fountain of life* (Ps. 35:9).

6. But what says Zephaniah in the person of Christ to the disciples? *Prepare thyself, be rising at the dawn: all their gleanings is destroyed* (Zeph. 3:7); the gleanings, that is, of the Jews, with whom there is not a cluster, nay not even a gleanings of salvation left; for their vine is cut down. See how He says to the disciples, *Prepare thyself, rise up at dawn;* at dawn expect the Resurrection.

And farther on in the same context of Scripture He says, *Therefore wait thou for Me, saith the Lord, until the day of My Resurrection at the Testimony* (Zeph. 3:8). You see that the Prophet foresaw the place also of the Resurrection, which was to be surnamed “the Testimony.” For what is the reason that this spot of Golgotha and of the Resurrection is not called, like the rest of the Churches, a Church, but a Testimony? Why, perhaps, it was because of the Prophet, who had said, *until the day of My Resurrection at the Testimony.*

7. And who then is this, and what is the sign of Him that rises? In the words of the Prophet that follow in the same context, He says plainly, *For then will I turn to the peoples a language;* since, after the Resurrection, when the Holy Spirit was sent forth the gift of tongues was granted, *that they might serve the Lord under one yoke* (Zeph. 3:9). And what other token is set forth in the same Prophet, that they should serve the Lord under one yoke? *From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia they shall bring me offerings* (Zeph. 3:10). Thou knowest what is written in the Acts, when the Ethiopian eunuch came from beyond the

rivers of Ethiopia (Acts 8:27). When therefore the Scriptures tell both the time and the peculiarity of the place, when they tell also the signs which followed the Resurrection, have thou henceforward a firm faith in the Resurrection, and let no one stir thee from confessing Christ risen from the dead (cf. 2 Tim. 2:8).

8. Now take also another testimony in the 87th Psalm, where Christ speaks in the Prophets, (for He who then spoke came afterwards among us): *O Lord, God of My salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee*, and a little, farther on, *I became as it were a man without help, free among the dead* (Ps. 87:1, 4, 5). He said not, I became a man without help; but, as it were a man without help. For indeed He was crucified not from weakness, but willingly and His Death was not from involuntary weakness. *I was counted with them that go down into the pit*. And what is the token? *Thou hast put away Mine acquaintance far from Me* (for the disciples have fled). *Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead?* Then a little while afterwards: *And unto Thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer come before Thee* (Ps. 87:8, 10, 13). Do you see how they show the exact point of the Hour, and of the Passion and of the Resurrection?

9. And whence hath the Savior risen? He says in the Song of Songs: *Rise up, come, My neighbor*, and in what follows, *in a cave of the rock* (SS 2:10, 14)! A cave of the rock He called the cave which was erewhile before the door of the Savior's sepulcher, and had been hewn out of the rock itself, as is wont to be done here in front of the sepulchers. For now it is not to be seen, since the outer cave was cut away at that time for the sake of the present adornment. For before the decoration of the sepulcher by the royal munificence, there was a cave in the front of the rock. But where is the rock that had in it the cave? Does it lie near the middle of the city, or near the walls and the outskirts? And whether is it within the ancient walls, or within the outer walls which were built afterwards? He says then in the Canticles: *in a cave of the rock, close to the outer wall* (SS 2:14).

10. At what season does the Savior rise? Is it the season of summer, or some other? In the same Canticles immediately before the words quoted He says, *The winter is past, the rain is past and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the pruning is come* (SS 2:11, 12). Is not then the earth full of flowers now, and are they not pruning the vines? See how he said also that the winter is now past. For when this month Xanthicus (i.e., March/April) is come, it is already spring. And this is the season, the first month with the Hebrews, in which occurs the festival of the Passover, the typical formerly, but now the true. This is the season of the creation of the world: for then God said, *Let the earth bring*

forth herbage of grass, yielding seed after his kind and after his likeness (Gen. 1:11). And now, as you see, already every herb is yielding seed. And as at that time God made the sun and moon and gave them courses of equal day (and night), so also a few days since was the season of the equinox.

At that time God said, *let us make man after our image and after our likeness (Gen. 1:26).* And the image he received, but the likeness through his disobedience he obscured. At the same season then in which he lost this the restoration also took place. At the same season as the created man through disobedience was cast out of Paradise, he who believed was through obedience brought in. Our Salvation then took place at the same season as the Fall: when the flowers appeared, and the pruning was come.

11. A garden was the place of His Burial, and a vine that which was planted there: and He hath said, *I am the vine (Jn. 15:1)!* He was planted therefore in the earth in order that the curse which came because of Adam might be rooted out. The earth was condemned to thorns and thistles: the true Vine sprang up out of the earth, that the saying might be fulfilled, *Truth sprang up out of the earth, and righteousness looked down from heaven (Ps. 84:12).* And what will He that is buried in the garden say? *I have gathered My myrrh with My spices; and again, Myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices (SS 5:1; 4:14).* Now these are the symbols of the burying; and in the Gospels it is said, *The women came unto the sepulcher bringing the spices which they had prepared (Lk. 24:1); Nicodemus also bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes (Jn. 19:39).*

And farther on it is written, *I did eat My bread with My honey (SS 5:1);* the bitter before the Passion, and the sweet after the Resurrection. Then after He had risen He entered through closed doors, but they believed not that it was He, *for they supposed that they beheld a spirit.* But He said, *Handle Me and see.* Put your fingers into the print of the nails, as Thomas required. *And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and honeycomb (Lk. 24:37, 41).* You see how that is fulfilled, *I did eat My bread with My honey.*