

The Certainty of the Resurrection



Spencer W. Kimball was set apart as the 12th President of the Church on December 30, 1973. President Kimball was a dynamic leader with great vision, presiding over an unprecedented expansion in both missionary work and Church membership. This article comes from an address he delivered in general conference on April 4, 1969.

By President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985)

One Christmastime some years ago, we walked the paths that Jesus walked. We spent some precious hours in what is said to be the Garden of Gethsemane and tried to imagine the sufferings through which He moved in anticipation of His Crucifixion and Resurrection. We were near the places where He prayed, where

He was taken prisoner, where He was tried and condemned.

Outside the city walls, we climbed the caliche hill, pock-marked with little caves, making the rounded end look like a skull, and we were told that this was Golgotha, the place where He was crucified. We zigzagged down the backside of the hill around to the sheer cliff-side of

it and entered the small window-size aperture into a rough-hewn cave in which it is said the body had lain.

Some hours we spent in the little garden outside this tomb and absorbed the gospel story of His burial and of His Resurrection, which here had taken place. We read thoughtfully and prayerfully of the coming of the women to the sepulchre, the angel of the Lord rolling away the stone, and the discomfiture of the recreant keepers.

“He . . . Is Risen”

We could almost imagine we saw the two angels in shining garments who spoke to Mary, saying, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?

“He is not here, but is risen.”

The Lord had predicted: “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:5–7).

We remembered the dialogue between Mary, the angels, and the Lord:

“Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord,



and I know not where they have laid him.”

She turned and “saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

“Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:13–17). . . .

Significance of Easter

Sometimes our celebrations of notable occurrences seem to take on earthly color, and we do not fully realize the significance of the reason for the celebration. This is true of Easter, when too often we celebrate the holiday rather than the deep significance of the Resurrection of the Lord. They must be unhappy indeed who ignore the godship of Christ, the sonship of the Master. We



feel sorry indeed for those who call the supreme miracle of the Resurrection “but a subjective experience of the disciples, rather than an actual historical event.”

We know truly that all this is real. Christ spoke of Himself to Nicodemus:

“We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness” (John 3:11).

And then we remember that Peter testified:

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

“But ye denied the Holy One and the Just . . . ;

“And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses” (Acts 3:14–15).

Boldly, Peter and John stood before the council and said again:

“Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man [the former lame man] stand here before you whole. . . .

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:10, 12).

When the council chastised the two

Apostles and commanded them not to speak or teach such things in the name of Jesus, they answered and said: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20).

“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33).

Witness of Peter

We also know the Resurrection is real. The living Peter said to the council of persecutors:

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on the tree. . . .

“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:30, 32).

We stand in awe before the great Peter, who had so completely received his total assurances and who had so graciously donned the robe of leadership and the mantle of authority and the courage of the inspired and assured. What strength he had come to have as he led the Saints and faced the world with all its persecutors,

unbelievers, and difficulties. And, as he rehearsed over and over his absolute knowledge, we glory in his stamina as he faced mobs and prelates, officials who could take his life, and as he boldly proclaimed the resurrected Lord, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One and the Just, the Prince of Life, the Prince and Savior. Peter certainly now was sure, impregnable, never to falter. We should gain much sureness by his certainty. . . .

received his lost eyesight, went about in the synagogues confounding the Jews in Damascus, “proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:22).

And later Paul came to the Apostles in Jerusalem, and Barnabas, speaking for Paul, “declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus” (Acts 9:27).

Then Paul continues:

“And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

“But God raised him from the dead:

“And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. . . .

“God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again. . . .

“And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption” (Acts 13:29–31, 33–34). . . .

Witness of Joseph Smith

We are lifted by the witness of the modern prophet, Joseph Smith, when he reassures the people of the Resurrection.

Testifying of the risen Lord, Peter and John said, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Paul’s Testimony

The testimony of Paul seems most conclusive. He heard the voice of the risen Christ:

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” And to be sure of identity, Saul said, “Who art thou, Lord?” and received the assurance, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:4–5).

And now that same Paul, who had recovered his strength, who had been administered to by the priesthood, who had



Elder George A. Smith quotes the last public address of Joseph Smith in June 1844, only days before his cruel assassination:

“I am ready to be offered a sacrifice for this people; for what can our enemies do? Only kill the body and their power is then at an end. Stand firm my friends. Never flinch. Do not seek to save your lives, for he that is afraid to die for the truth will lose eternal life. Hold out to the end; and we shall be resurrected and become like Gods, and reign in celestial kingdoms, principalities and eternal dominions.”¹ . . .

Question and Answer of Job

The question asked by Job has been asked by millions who have stood at the open bier of a loved one: “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14).

And the question has been answered acceptably to numerous of them as a great, sweet peace

settles down upon them like the dews of heaven. And innumerable times hearts that were weary in agonizing suffering have felt the kiss of that peace which knows not understanding.

And when a deep tranquility of soul has brought a new warm assurance to minds that were troubled and hearts that were torn, those numerous could repeat with beloved Job:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

“Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold” (Job 19:25–27).

Job had expressed the wish that his testimony could be printed in books and cut into stone for the generations following him to read. His wish was granted, for peace has come into many souls as they have read his strong testimony.

Vision of John

And in conclusion, let me read the vision of John the Revelator:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Revelation 20:12–13).

And as the living, verdant spring follows the dismal, deathlike winter, all nature proclaims the divinity of the risen Lord, that He was Creator, that He is the Savior of the world, that He is the very Son of God. ■

Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation standardized; citation added.

NOTE

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 6:500.