

# The Life of Christ, for Family Devotions - December

by F. L. Mortimer

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*This sermon explores the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, highlighting his love, forgiveness, and compassion for humanity.*

**Scripture:** Luke 24:5-6, Luke 24:10-12

**Topics:** "Resurrection Of Christ", "Faith And Devotion"

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## Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, highlighting the faithfulness and devotion of the women who visited the tomb, the angelic messages of joy and reassurance, and the fulfillment of Jesus' own words regarding his resurrection. Despite the attempts of the Pharisees to conceal the truth with bribery and lies, the glorious news of the resurrection spread through faithful messengers. The women's unwavering belief in the risen Lord and the angelic confirmation of his victory over death serve as powerful reminders of the triumph of life over darkness and the fulfillment of divine promises.

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## Transcript

A Devotional Commentary on the Gospels

Arranged for family devotions, for every day in the year.

By Favell Lee Mortimer (1802--1878)

DECEMBER 1

Luke 23:39-43. The two malefactors.

No men who ever lived died in such remarkable circumstances as these two thieves. They were crucified with Christ. We know not whether they had ever seen Jesus before that morning, when they accompanied him to Calvary, and were compelled to pass many hours close to his side. What a different use each made of this precious though painful opportunity!

One of them took advantage of his station, to insult the Savior with his dying breath, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us." This was not a prayer, it was a reproach.

He did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, or that he was able to save either himself or his fellow sufferers. And what did he mean by "Save us?" He meant only, "Release us from the pangs of the cross." He thought not of eternal misery.

But the other thief asked, not to be released from present suffering, but to be admitted into eternal life. He heard his companion blaspheming the dying Lord, and he raised his voice to rebuke him. We do not hear of any voice being lifted up to rebuke blasphemers on that day, except the voice of this penitent. But while he reproved his fellow, he did not forget to confess his own sins. He acknowledged they had been so great, that even crucifixion was not too severe a punishment. "We receive the due reward of our deeds." And then he bore a noble testimony to the innocence of Jesus--"This man has done nothing amiss." How did he know that? Had he not beheld his heavenly meekness, and heard his divine prayer--"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do?" But besides all this, the Holy Spirit, who had convinced him of his own sins, had convinced him also of the righteousness of Jesus. Thus his testimony was added to that of Judas, of Pilate, and of Pilate's wife, and it must have been heard by those who stood around the cross.

Some think that this thief, as well as the other, when he was first fastened to the cross, railed at the Savior. But others consider that though Matthew says, "The thieves cast the same in his teeth," the expression does not prove that more than one acted thus wickedly. It seems probable that if the penitent thief had railed at Jesus, he would have confessed that sin, when he rebuked his companion for the same. But in whatever manner he may have behaved when on the cross, we are sure that he had led a very wicked life. His is the only instance recorded in Scripture of repentance in a dying hour. It has been well observed that one such instance is recorded that none may despair, and but one--that none may presume.

It was like the Son of God to close his life upon earth by an act of especial mercy--the salvation of a notorious sinner. It was like Him, who had once permitted an outcast to wash his feet with her tears, to listen to the prayer of the penitent thief--"Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

How much misery this malefactor must have endured, when detected, condemned, and dragged to execution! Yet--when all hope seemed gone--the prospect of endless happiness was suddenly opened to his view. He felt more joy while hanging in tortures upon his cross, than he had ever experienced when joining in wild uproar with his profane companions. He knew that in a few hours he would be with Jesus in paradise. His body indeed was cast in some detested grave in gloomy Golgotha, or was devoured by birds and beasts; but his spirit soared to the mansions of the blessed, and mingled with the innumerable company of saints and angels. What an evening to follow such a morning!

At a wonderful season the penitent entered heaven! The Lord's sufferings were just over--the conquest of Satan just achieved--the redemption of man just finished--when he joined the heavenly host. Perhaps he was the first who followed his Savior into glory. A brand he was plucked from the burning--a prey snatched out of the jaws of hell, by the all-powerful arm of his dying Lord. In heaven he shines a trophy of divine grace; on earth his history remains as an encouragement to every guilty creature to call upon the Lord for mercy. Though during his life he did no good, (except perhaps by his expiring words,) since his death he has been the means of bringing great glory to his Lord. Thousands when they meet him above will have to tell that they made the prayer he made, and trusted in the promise he received. But let us not wait until we are lying in our last agonies before we cry, "Lord, remember me," but let us now call upon this gracious Savior, that we may spend our lives in his service before we see his face in paradise.

December 2

John 19:25-27. Christ commits his mother to the care of John.

What a rich reward John received for venturing near his Master's cross! To him the precious charge of the blessed Mary was confided; to him the tender words, "Behold your mother!" were addressed. We do not hear that Jesus spoke to any of his disciples while hanging upon his cross, except to John. How great a proof the Lord gave him of his love when he entrusted his mother to his care, and even authorized him to regard her as his own! He still gives similar proofs of his love. Those who desire to serve him shall not be disappointed. Some service suited to his powers shall be assigned to each. To one the charge of an orphan family may be committed--to another a post in a missionary field may be assigned. But no office is more honorable than the care of the aged and destitute saints. It is a distinguished favor to be permitted to watch over their declining years, and to close their failing eyes.

What holy communion John must have held with his Lord's mother during the rest of her life! How many incidents concerning her blessed Son, that are not recorded in the Scriptures, must have been treasured up in her memory! She had watched beside him when sleeping in the manger--had held him in her arms when traveling into Egypt, and had guided his steps when a child in Nazareth. Yet she had never seen him commit a single sin--had never beheld his infant face inflamed with passion--nor heard his lisping tongue utter deceit.

If parents love so fondly their sinful offspring, what must have been the affection of Mary for her sinless Son! We may also feel certain that Jesus loved his mother better than any other Son ever loved a parent. Though enduring the acute agonies of the cross, he thought of her desolate state. Did he not prove the infinite compassion of his heart by remembering her at such a moment? He would not leave her in this world without a home; he knew where she would be most tenderly loved, and most carefully watched over, and most highly honored; and therefore he consigned her to the care of the gentle and affectionate apostle John.

The Lord Jesus has taught children by his own example never to forget the kindness they received in their helpless infancy. When they are grown up they should use every exertion to provide for their parents a comfortable home. It is melancholy to see an aged father driven from his cottage to seek an asylum among strangers, while his children are enjoying many of the comforts of life.

But are there any who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who yet fear lest they should be forsaken in their sickness or old age? Let them remember that their Savior once said, "He who shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." If he provided for the support of his earthly mother's declining years, will he forsake his spiritual mothers, and brothers, and sisters? No, he will provide for their needs until their latest breath; and it is probable he will do it in the same manner as he supplied those of his earthly mother. Ravens were not sent to feed her, as they fed Elijah, nor did a never-failing jar and barrel sustain her life, but a pious friend was raised up to minister to her needs. He who appointed Joseph to nourish the aged Israel, and Ruth to sustain the beloved Naomi, and Onesiphorus to refresh the imprisoned apostle, still puts it into the hearts of his servants to support his poor and afflicted people. It may be a son, or one dear as a son, or it may be a stranger who supplies their need; but by some means or other the promise is always fulfilled--"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4. Is. 19.)

December 3

Matthew 27:45-49. The darkness.

When the Son of God was born, a great light was seen in the heavens in the midst of the night; but when he was dying, a sudden darkness overspread the land at noonday. The shepherds were sore afraid when they saw the light. How, then, must the murderers of the Lord have felt when they beheld the darkness! What was the cause of this darkness? Sometimes an eclipse of the sun will suddenly obscure the day. But an eclipse cannot occur at the time of a full moon. As it was at that season the passover was celebrated, it is clear this darkness was not caused by an eclipse. It was a miraculous event. It was a judgment sent by God. And why? To show his wrath against the murderers of his Son. Since the beginning of the world so dreadful a deed had never been committed, as the murder of the Lord of glory. The day in which the deed was done might well be distinguished from other days. The language Job used respecting the day of his birth might be applied to it. "Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it. Let a cloud dwell upon it; and the blackness of the day terrify it." (Job 3:5.)

The crowds who had flocked to Calvary could no longer gaze with unfeeling curiosity, or malicious triumph, upon the Lord's bleeding body and agonized countenance. The Father had drawn a thick curtain around his expiring Son. No circumstance is recorded that occurred during those solemn hours of darkness; but at length a voice was heard saying "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The enemies of Jesus knew the voice. They knew it was not the cry of one of the dying malefactors that they heard. But were they melted by the anguish of those tones? No, they mocked as before. Mistaking the word Eli (which means God) for the name of Elijah, they cried out, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." The three hours' darkness had not changed their wicked hearts.

While the Son enjoyed his Father's presence, he could bear the insults of men without a complaint. But when that countenance, which had ever shone upon him, was hidden from his sight, then he uttered an agonizing cry. Other sorrows were familiar to him from his cradle; but this was a new and strange trial. Of him it is written that he "is in the bosom of the Father." What closeness of communion, what depth of love, are implied in that expression! Nothing could have interrupted this communion or deadened the sense of this love, but sin. Our sins were the cloud that for a moment hid the Father's face from his only beloved Son. For a moment it cast a deep shadow over the heart of the Son of God, and then was blotted out forever in his atoning blood. From his Father's throne, he calls to us, and says, "O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed you." (Is. 44:22.) But each sinner must come to him, that each sinner may receive pardon. Those who will not come will die in their sins. Then God will forsake them forever. When they call out, "Why have you forsaken us?" what will be the reply? Will it not be, "You would not come unto me that you might have life?" A child abandoned by its parents--a wife deserted by her husband, are regarded with pity, but the soul forsaken of his God is the most miserable of all beings. This is the misery of the lost spirits in hell. God has cast them away from his presence.

December 4

John 19:28-30. The sponge of vinegar.

When our dying Savior said, "I thirst," he revealed to those around the anguish of his body. He had before declared the anguish of his soul, by crying out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" His soul and body endured intense agony to ransom our souls and bodies from eternal torment. The pain of extreme thirst cannot be conceived by those who have not experienced it. A thick crust encases the inside of the mouth and renders the tongue stiff, while a burning sensation in the throat makes the sufferer feel as if a fire were consuming his whole frame. These were the sensations of the Savior, and they are

described in the Psalms of the prophet David. "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws." (Ps. 22:15.) "My throat is dried." (Ps. 69:3.) "My bones are burned as an hearth." (Ps. 102:3.)

Yet the Lamb of God would have endured all these pangs in silence, had it not been his Father's will that before he expired he should let men know that he was tormented by thirst. He remembered it was written in Ps. 69:21, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Therefore he exclaimed, "I thirst." A vessel full of vinegar stood near the cross, designed probably for the refreshment of the soldiers. One of them dipped a sponge into this vessel, and fixing it at the end of a long and straight branch of hyssop, applied it to the Savior's mouth. The rest (as Matthew relates) continued to utter their profane mockeries, saying, "Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." By this speech they meant to say to their comrades, "What is the use of your helping him? he has called upon one more powerful than you, even Elijah. Wait a little, and see whether he will not come to rescue him from his misery." We may imagine with what fiendish shouts of laughter these words were accompanied.

Many saints have expired in the midst of weeping friends; the Lord was surrounded by insulting enemies. But now the last insult had been offered. The Savior had filled up the measure of his sufferings, and had drained to the very dregs the cup his Father had given him to drink. Knowing this, he cried out, "It is finished." This cry was uttered by parched lips and a dried-up tongue. And why were those lips parched, and that tongue dried up? That we might never need a drop of water to cool our burning tongues. The Savior was tormented by thirst, that we might quench ours in living fountains of water. We could never have atoned for our own sins. Our tears could not have washed them away. Our good works could not have made amends for them. Therefore Jesus offered up himself a sacrifice for us. But now his sufferings are over. When we hear of them, we have the comfort of knowing that they are past, and that they will never be endured again. It is not necessary that he should ever feel another pang, or bear another insult. Are we troubled by the remembrance of our sins? Let us look with faith on the Lamb of God, and our guilty consciences shall have peace. The Holy Spirit draws the sinner to the foot of the cross, and enables him to feel that the blood once shed has atoned for all his transgressions. A penitent who had long sought for pardon, found peace as she was reading the following words--

Jesus, our great High Priest,

Offered his blood, and died;

My guilty conscience seeks

No sacrifice beside.

His powerful blood did once atone,

And now it pleads before the throne.

December 5

Luke 23:46. The last words of Christ.

When we hear that a saint has left this world we wish to know what were his last words. How precious are the dying accents of a brother--a child--or a parent! We treasure them up in our hearts, and perhaps remember them as long as we live. At this moment some of us may recollect the last words of a friend we

loved and lost. But whose words can be so precious as those of our Savior, our nearest and dearest friend? There are seven sentences recorded as spoken by him while on the cross. Three were uttered before the darkness overspread the land, and four near its conclusion. The first three concerned others, not himself. One was a prayer for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do;" the next was a promise to a penitent, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, today shall you be with me in paradise;" and the third implied a request to a beloved mother and disciple, "Behold your mother," "Behold your son."

The last four concerned himself. One expressed the anguish of his soul, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"--another the anguish of his body, "I thirst;"--the next told of sufferings ended, "It is finished;"--the last of joys begun, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." These are the words of David in the thirty-first psalm. In all the scenes of our Savior's life his heavenly perfections were displayed; but in his dying hours they shone forth with the greatest splendor. His forgiving love was seen in his prayer for his enemies--his compassion in his promise to the penitent--his faithfulness in his charge to John--his patience in his expiring cries--and his unshaken confidence in his God in his last words, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." As soon as he was nailed to the cross he called upon his Father, and when just expiring, he again said, "Father." In the moment of his greatest anguish he cried, "My God." Thus he fulfilled the prophecy in Ps. 89:26. "He shall cry unto me, You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation."

Though Jesus was God, yet he was man also, and he felt as a man. Though without sin, he was tempted in all points like as we are. He endured the pangs of death. His soul was separated from his body. The moment of separation is called "death." Every human being feels it to be a dreadful moment. There is only one thought which can sustain us then; it is the assurance that God is our Father. He who has doubts on this subject, feels like a traveler who is going to tread an unknown path--to tread it in darkness, and to tread it--alone. But how can we know that God is our Father? The Scriptures answer that question--"You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:26.) "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." (John 1:12.) When we apply to Jesus for the pardon of our sins, then we are adopted into the family of God; then the Holy Spirit is shed abroad in our hearts; then we feel that God is our Father, because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and then we cry, Abba, that is, "Father." (Rom. 8:15.) We cannot trust strangers, but a child can trust his father. We have heard of the boy who was not afraid in the storm, and who said, "My Father's at the helm." Jesus trusted in God. Even his enemies said, when they scoffed at him, "He trusted in God." Worldly people cannot trust him, for they do not know him. To them he is a stranger. They often say they trust him; they often think they trust him; but they trust him with nothing that they care about. They cannot trust him to choose their lot in life; therefore they are always forming schemes of their own--nor to provide for them in old age; therefore they are often terrified by fears of poverty and desolation. They cannot trust him to guide them one step which they do not see, nor to give them one blessing which they do not already hold in their hands. This is not to trust him. But the children of God can trust him while they live with their earthly concerns, and, when they come to die, with their immortal spirits. O that they trusted Him more! Martin Luther, the holy reformer, was remarkable for his trust in God. Three hours a day he set apart for calling upon his Father, and he received the most wonderful answers to his prayers. When he was dying, he was often heard to say, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." These were almost his last words. He added, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish."

December 6

Matthew 27:51-54. The earthquake.

Men made no public lamentation for the Son of God when he expired. But his Father caused the inanimate creation to give signs of mourning; for the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent. These terrible events shook the hearts of the soldiers--those barbarous men who had continued to insult him until he drew his last breath. With grief and dismay they exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." Had they known a little sooner who he was, they might have shown him pity--they might have implored his pardon--they might, like the dying thief, have obtained mercy. But another opportunity was granted to them--afterwards the apostles declared he was exalted a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins!

Whatever our sins may have been against Jesus, we can have the comfort of confessing them at his feet. It is painful when we have lost a friend, to feel that we cannot ask him to pardon any unkind act that we have done. What a relief it would be to a child, when he remembers his offences against a deceased parent, if he could but see him once more, to tell him how deeply he laments every word--every look--every thought, which was not affectionate--which was not reverential! But we can express to our Redeemer all the bitter regrets we feel for our past ingratitude and rebellion!

Let us now leave the scene of terror round the cross, and look at another scene in the temple. The veil was suddenly rent from the top to the bottom. At that very moment the priests were ministering in the holy place; for Jesus expired at three o'clock--when the evening sacrifice was offered. The veil had always hidden the inner chamber of the temple from every eye, except that of the high priest, who entered it once a year, when he approached the mercy-seat to make atonement for the sins of Israel. But all at once this inner chamber, called the Holy of Holies, was exposed to view, with the ark and the glorious cherubim. The veil could not have been rent without the exertion of great power; for it was four fingers in thickness, and thirty ells in length, and as a new one was hung up every year, it never became weak through age.

And what did the rending of this veil signify? The Holy Spirit has explained this mystery. (Heb. 10:19-22.) The veil represented the flesh of Jesus; the rending of the veil--his death. By his death the way into the presence of God is opened. Sinners may approach the mercy-seat without fear, because their great High Priest has atoned for their sins by the sacrifice of himself. But we have no reason to believe that the priests who beheld this wonder understood its meaning. Their hearts were hardened. They had resisted the instructions of the Son of God within that temple day after day--they had not been appalled by the confessions of Judas that very morning--and they continued to oppose the truth even when the hand of God wrought this miracle before their eyes.

There was another wonder that accompanied the death of Jesus. "The graves were opened." The Jews were accustomed to bury their dead among the rocks, and when the rocks were rent the graves were opened; but the dead continued to sleep in the dust until--their Lord arose. THEN--and not until then--many of the bodies of the saints came out of their graves. We ask, "What saints?" Were they saints lately dead, such as Simeon, or Anna, or John the Baptist, who had been known by some still living in Jerusalem? Or were they saints long since departed; saints who had seen Christ afar off, and had rejoiced in the prospect of his coming? We know not who they were. Where did they go? To the holy city--to Jerusalem. To whom did they appear? Unto many--we know not their names; but we may conclude that they were true believers; for Jesus, when he was risen, showed himself to none but them. What glorious interviews must have taken place between the righteous dead and the righteous living! How much we should like to know particulars concerning these meetings! But nothing is revealed. How long did these saints remain upon earth? Did they ascend to heaven with their Lord? We cannot tell when they left this

earth, but we are sure that they are not now wanderers below. Where Jesus is there must his servants be. These saints are favored above other saints. They have risen earlier than their brethren, even before the dawn of day--they shine in their glorified bodies among the host of disembodied spirits. They were born from the dead on the same day as their Lord--his resurrection day was theirs also. But there will be another resurrection day, when all the sleeping saints will rise. Shall we appear among the shining company?

December 7

John 19:31, 32. The death of the two thieves.

It was the custom among the Romans to allow crucified people to remain on their crosses long after they had expired. But the Jews had a law which forbade this practice. God had commanded, "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall in any wise bury him that day, (for he who is hanged is accursed of God,) that your land be not defiled." (Deut. 21:23.) If it was wrong to allow a person to remain on a cross, or tree, on a common day, it was of course more improper to allow him to remain there on the Sabbath. The Jews had a peculiar reverence for that Sabbath which occurred during the feast of the Passover. They regarded it as a high day, and they were very anxious that dead bodies should be removed before it began. As they began their Sabbath at six o'clock on Friday evening, it was necessary on this occasion to use great haste.

The Jews, supposing that none of the crucified people might be dead so soon, besought Pilate to hasten their death, in the usual, but cruel manner, by breaking their legs. They knew not that the object of their hatred had forever escaped from their hands, and that they would never have the opportunity of inflicting another pang upon his sacred person. How hateful to God was the worship of those men in his temple, on the approaching Sabbath! The words spoken by the prophet Isaiah applied to them--"When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; when you make many prayers I will not hear--your hands are full of blood." (Is. 50:15.) Their hands were imbrued in the blood of the Son of man. How could his Father bear them in his presence! Let us never imagine that we can please God by our services, while we are stained with unpardoned sins--sins not abhorred--not confessed--not forsaken. None can truly please him but those who are cleansed from guilt by faith in his Son.

When these wicked men commanded the legs of the malefactors to be broken, they accomplished the purpose of God. Jesus had said to the penitent thief, "Today shall you be with me in paradise." Had that poor sufferer been left to hang upon the cross, he might have lingered several days. The soldiers broke his legs, and that very day he was in paradise with the Savior, in whom he had believed. The other thief was killed at the same time, and in the same manner; but we have no reason to think that he went to the same place. We do not hear that he was moved by the rebuke his companion gave, or that he offered the prayer his companion offered. Death is no release to an unpardoned sinner. The agonies of a cross are not to be compared to the torments of hell, where the worm never dies, and where the fire is never quenched.

We know not in what manner we may die, by what painful disease, or dreadful accident. We will leave all these circumstances in the hand of God, trusting in his mercy to support us through every fiery trial. But let us often ask, "What will become of our souls when they leave these bodies?" The friends who stand around a dying bed cannot see the spirit as it leaves its earthly abode, nor trace its course as it is carried by angels into heaven, or plunged among devils in the abyss of perdition; but when the last struggle is

over, then we ourselves shall know where we shall FOREVER abide.

December 8

John 19:33-37. A soldier pierces the Lord's body.

After the Lord had expired, no dishonor was offered to his sacred body. The Jews intended to dishonor it by breaking his legs, but their design was defeated. When the soldiers came to his cross, they found that he was dead already. They might have broken his legs, though he was dead; but the Scriptures had declared, "A bone of him shall not be broken." It is written in Ps. 34:20, "He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken." The soldiers knew nothing of the prophecies; yet they fulfilled them, both by not breaking his legs, and by piercing his side. Jesus died at the time the feast of the Passover was celebrated, and he was the true Lamb whose blood atoned for the sins of Israel and of the world. It was commanded concerning the paschal lamb, "Neither shall you break a bone thereof." (Ex. 12:46.) It was also commanded that its blood should be shed, and sprinkled upon the lintel and posts of the door. When the side of Jesus was pierced, his blood must have sprinkled the cross, and flowed in a copious stream upon the ground.

And what a stream it was--composed not only of blood, but of water. Some think that the water came from the pericardium, (the case in which the heart is enclosed,) and that it was a proof that life was extinct. It is all-important to prove that Jesus really died upon the cross; for if he did not really die, then we must die eternally. But we possess abundant evidence of his death. There was one standing by the cross who saw the spear enter into his side, and it is he who has recorded the fact. John did not leave the cross when his Master died. He lingered near to see what would become of his sacred body. If he had left it for a short time to take his Lord's mother to his own home, he had returned. Now that the darkness was past, he could see all that was done to his Lord's body. He saw the water and the blood, "and he bore record, and his record is true, and he knows that he says true, that you might believe."

There is a spiritual meaning in this stream of blood and water. The blood atones for sin. Before it was shed the penitent malefactor trusted in it, and was pardoned. One of our sweetest poets describes his case and his own also--

"The dying thief rejoiced to see

That fountain in his day,

And there have I, as vile as he,

Washed all my sins away."

But sinners are not only guilty--they are dead in trespasses and sins. From Jesus flows the water of life--the Holy Spirit. He spoke of the Spirit under the emblem of water on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, when he said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." (John 7.) We cannot mistake the meaning of the invitation, for it is written, "This spoke he of the Spirit, which those who believe on him should receive." (John 7:39.) Let us come to Jesus for the double blessing--atoning blood and living water. Whoever shall look by faith on his pierced side shall receive both. The glorious wound adorns the risen body of our crucified Savior as the everlasting memorial of his love. Men look with wonder at the little spring which swells into the mighty Nile, and fertilizes half a continent. But with what amazement angels, as well as men, regard that wound, which is the fountain of blessedness to millions of beings

throughout eternity!

December 9

John 19:38 to end. The burial.

What a contrast there is between the circumstances of the Lord's death and those of his burial! Jesus died in a shameful manner; stripped of his garments, and exposed to the insults of the multitude. He was buried in an honorable manner; wrapped in linen, white and clean, and covered with a large quantity of precious spices. He died by the hands of Gentile soldiers; he was buried by two of the most honorable of the Jewish nation. He died in a loathsome spot, Golgotha, the place of a skull; defiled by the bones of malefactors; he was buried in a new tomb, in a rich man's garden, a spot untainted by the breath of corruption.

What was the reason for this difference? When he died, he was an offering for sin; when he was buried, the offering had been accepted. When he died, he was treated according to our deservings; when he was buried, according to his own. The prophet Isaiah foretold that he would be with the rich in his death; and he assigned the reason for this honorable treatment, "Because he had done no violence, neither was deceit found in his mouth." Jesus was executed upon a charge of violence and deceit. (Is. 53.) The Jews said he had stirred up the people against the Roman emperor, and that he had deceived them, by saying that he was a King. On account of these accusations he was sentenced to die. But it is we who have been guilty of violence and deceit. There is not one of us who can truly say, "I have never done any harm--I have never attempted to deceive." God, who knows all men, has said, "Destruction and misery are in their ways. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." It was for our sins that Jesus was put to death; but it was for his own righteousness that he was honored after death.

In old times the Lord often showed his displeasure against sin by causing the dead bodies of the wicked to be shamefully treated; thus he appointed dogs to lick the blood of wicked Ahab, and to eat the flesh of the more wicked Jezebel. The honorable burial of the Son of God was an open testimony of his Father's favor.

All that was done to Jesus was done to him as a public person. He was the surety for his people. He died, because their sins were imputed to him; they shall never die, because his righteousness is imputed to them. What a glorious exchange! Who would have made such an exchange but the compassionate Son of God! Why should the believer fear to descend into the tomb, since Christ has taken away his guilt! In the prospect of death he may say, in the words of a Christian poet,

"The place where once your body lay,

The place it did perfume;

There will I drop my breathless clay,

And rest within your tomb."

But it is possible that we may never taste even the first death; for the apostle has declared, "We shall not all sleep." There is a chosen number who, like Enoch and Elijah, shall be caught up, while yet living, to meet their Lord in the air.

December 10

Luke 23:54 to end. The women prepare spices.

Though the Lord Jesus was not followed to the grave by a pompous train, yet some sincere mourners watched his precious body until it was hidden from their eyes. These were women who had lingered within sight of his cross, even after he had expired. It is written in Matthew's gospel, "And many women were there, beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him." (27:55.) These women had long known the Lord, and had enjoyed the distinguished privilege of supplying his temporal needs. How glad would they have been could they have obtained possession of his beloved remains! But how could they venture to crave such a boon! What must have been their joy when they beheld the two honorable counselors, Joseph and Nicodemus, take down the body from the cross, and wrap it in fine linen with spices! They followed to see where it would be laid, and Joseph did not repel them from his garden. Not only were they permitted to enter, but two of them continued to sit opposite the sepulcher, even after the stone had been placed at its mouth. These two were Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of the two apostles, James and Joses, (commonly called Jude.) By the last beams of the setting sun, they beheld the sepulcher of their divine and adorable Friend. It is written in Matthew 27:61, "And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulcher."

An affectionate heart is always devising means of showing its love by actions. The faithful women who had supplied their Lord, while living, with bread, desired now to embalm his sacred body. Though a hundred pound weight of myrrh and aloes had been bound up in the linen cloth, they were not satisfied. They thought it no waste to lavish an abundance of aromatics upon the torn, the bruised, the mangled corpse of him they loved. If odors of sweet incense continually filled the temple composed of stones, what could be too sweet, or too precious, to bestow on that more glorious temple, the body of the Lord! But they could not mix their costly unguents immediately, for the Jewish Sabbath began at six o'clock on Friday evening, and that hour had almost arrived when the Lord was laid in his tomb. They rested on the Sabbath-day according to the commandment, and deferred their preparations until six o'clock on Saturday evening, when the Sabbath was ended. What veneration these holy women showed for that holy day! They delayed to accomplish their ardent desire rather than break it. How does their conduct condemn those who permit any trifling incident to interfere with the sacred day of rest!

Of all the Sabbaths that have ever dawned since the creation of the world, surely that during which the Redeemer lay in his grave, was the most mournful to the church of God. Many hearts have been wrung with anguish by the thought, "My mother is dead," "My child is dead;" but the disciples on that Sabbath could say, "Our Savior is dead." And when, on the following night, they prepared their ointments, how many bitter tears must have mingled with the precious spices! And why did they grieve? Because they remembered not the promise that the Lord would rise on the third day from the tomb. Had they remembered it, they would have passed their nights and days in singing praises, instead of in shedding tears. For lack of knowledge they suffered much sorrow.

And do not the children of God still suffer much anxiety, because they remember not the promises written in the Scriptures? When all appears dark around, how apt they are to fear that the light will never return! If we love God, we may feel sure that all things are working together for our good. And even when the great storm of the last days arises, the saints ought not to be cast down. When other men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, they should remember the command, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, for your redemption draws near." (Luke 11:28.)

December 11

Matthew 27:62 to end. The priests set a watch. around the tomb.

The "next day that followed the day of preparation," was the Sabbath. It was on that holy day that the chief priests and Pharisees applied to Pilate to make secure the sepulcher. What a glaring instance of inconsistency their conduct affords! They who had always accused the Lord of breaking the Sabbath by healing the sick, now, to accomplish their own wicked ends, violated the holy day in a public and flagrant manner. How different from theirs was the conduct of those pious women, who refrained on the Sabbath from preparing ointments to embalm the Lord's body!

But it is remarkable, that while the disciples forgot the words of Jesus, "After three days I will rise again," his enemies remembered them. Sometimes the wicked possess more knowledge of the truth than the righteous; but their hearts are always wrong. The disciples mourned because they knew not that Jesus would rise from the dead--the Pharisees trembled, because they feared lest he should. What is the state of our hearts towards Jesus? Should we be glad to see him come in his glory, or do we dread the day of his appearing?

The Pharisees were not the only people who applied to Pilate respecting the body of Jesus. On the day of the crucifixion, the two honorable counselors, Joseph and Nicodemus, had made a very different request from that of the Pharisees. They had besought Pilate to permit them to take away the body, and had obtained their desire. We know that Pilate had condemned the Lord to death against the convictions of his own conscience. Wishing to have no more to do in the mysterious affair, he permitted the friends of Jesus to take possession of his remains. It is evident that he was not pleased with the malicious request of the Lord's enemies; for he refused to give any commands on the subject, and replied, "You have a watch." There was a band of Roman soldiers, employed by the Jews to guard the temple. This band was placed around the tomb to guard the temple of the Lord's body. But the Pharisees were not satisfied even with this precaution. They thought it possible that the disciples might bribe the soldiers to open the tomb; therefore they sealed the stone.

"Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,

Christ has burst the gates of hell;

Death in vain forbids his rise,

Christ has opened Paradise."

The guards set to obstruct the entrance of the tomb, were designed by God to become witnesses of his power and glory. The schemes of wicked men against the Lord's anointed shall be overruled for the establishment of his kingdom. He who sits in the heavens laughs at their puny efforts. The day will come when it will be shown that all they have done to injure his cause, has only promoted his glory. But they will be punished for their wicked designs. Satan has not been able really to injure Christ; but he will be consigned to the burning lake because he made the blasphemous attempt.

December 12

Matthew 28:1-4. The resurrection.

In this short passage two very different scenes are described. One is a scene of sorrow; the other of joy. In one we behold weeping saints; in the other, a joyful angel. Yet there is a close connection between these

two scenes. It was the same Lord who occupied the thoughts of those mourners and of that joyful messenger. But the angel knew more than the women did. He rejoiced because he was sent to unbar the tomb; they mourned because they thought there was nothing left for them to do except to embalm the body.

What an honor was conferred upon that angel! With ease he rolled away the massive stone. The soldiers who surrounded the tomb could not maintain their post at his approach. It was not the earthquake that terrified them, but the sight of the angel. "For fear of him the keepers shook and became as dead men." The angel watches in their place; he sits upon the stone, as if to take possession of the place in the name of his Lord. A few words are used to describe his glorious person--but no words can give us a full idea of it. "His countenance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow." Both lightning and snow come from above, as the angel did, and when they come they excite our wonder and admiration. The splendor of the forked lightning, and the purity of the driven snow, are not equaled by any other objects in creation.

If angels are so glorious, what must be the glory of their Lord! There is no description given of his appearance as he rose from the tomb. None of the inhabitants of earth were permitted to behold him issuing forth from his dark resting-place. The angel went before to lay the keepers low, that no profane eye might gaze upon divine brightness. Had the faithful women arrived at the place only a few minutes earlier, they would have witnessed the rising of their Lord. But God had appointed that none but heavenly beings should behold the rapturous sight. We know not whether any glorified saints were hovering near; whether Moses and Elijah were there; we do know that angels were present.

The light of day arose just before the Lord of glory. That light had hidden its head when he expired upon the cross; but it was shining forth when he lived again. It was appropriate that the sun should shine upon that joyful morning. The morning of the resurrection will be remembered throughout eternity as a joyful morning. There have been mornings which have appeared joyful at the time, but which have been looked back upon afterwards with deep regret. Events hailed with delight, have been followed by unforeseen evil consequences. But what glorious consequences have flowed from the resurrection, and will flow from it! How many dead souls have been quickened through its divine power! How many mortal bodies will be raised from their tombs! And why? Because Jesus rose again. What joyful shouts, what rapturous songs will then be heard! What happy meetings between brethren long separated will then take place! What new sensations of delight will then be experienced! What scenes of glory will burst upon the opening eyes of waking saints! All this joy will be traced to the resurrection of Jesus! As he said to his disciples, "Because I live, you shall live also." Shall we partake of this joy? We must first ask another question. Have we now the life of Jesus in our souls? Are we born again? In the new birth we obtain new life. If we have this life in our souls, then we may say, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall (we) also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4.)

December 13

Mark 16:1-8. Three women visit the tomb.

These three women had watched the Lord while hanging upon his cross, and now they come together to visit his tomb. Their attachment to him united them to each other. Two of these women were mothers--the mothers of holy apostles. Mary was the mother of James and Jude, the relations of the Lord, and Salome was the mother of James and John, two of his most favored friends. How was it that none of these four apostles accompanied their mothers to the sepulcher? Why did they permit weak women to go alone,

while it was yet dark, to a place where they were exposed to the assaults of enemies? Surely these mothers exceeded their sons in love to their Lord. It has been said of woman by a poet--

"Not she with traitorous kiss her master stung,

Not she denied him with unfaithful tongue--

She, when apostles fled, could danger brave,

Last at his cross, and earliest at his grave."

A woman was the first to eat the forbidden fruit. It was merciful in God to permit her to be the first to visit the sacred tomb.

These women were aware that great difficulties lay in their way. They had seen on Friday evening an enormous stone placed at the door of the sepulcher. They said to each other as they approached the place, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" How glad would they have been of the help of all the eleven apostles! But greater help than theirs was afforded. An angel had rolled away the stone. Had these women known that a guard of soldiers surrounded the tomb, their fears would have been much increased. But this obstacle also was removed before they knew it existed. The angel by the brightness of his appearance had laid the soldiers senseless on the earth. How often there seems to be a great stone in the way of pious undertakings. How apt Christians are to be discouraged, and to say, "Who shall roll it away?" Let their answer be "God." When He designs that a work should be performed, he removes every obstacle.

Affection inspired these women with so much courage that they ventured to enter the sepulcher. Theirs were the first human feet that trod the rocky floor after the Lord had arisen. They hoped to see the precious body, but they beheld on the right side of the tomb a young man sitting clothed in a long white garment. As angels never die, they are always young. As they never sin, they are represented as clothed in white garments. They have never known by experience either sin or death; but they have seen a great deal of both. An angel strengthened the Lord in his agony when he was bearing our sins, and struggling with our death. An angel comes and sits in his tomb. Strange place for an angel to rest in! But he had a message to deliver to the faithful women who were coming there, and he waited to receive them. With what kindness he addressed the trembling mourners! He showed that he knew why they grieved, and why they came, and what they expected to find. He was the first to declare that Jesus was risen. What joy a kind angel must have felt when uttering the words, "He is risen." He invites the women to search the empty tomb. "Behold the place where they laid him!" Then he sends a message to the apostles. He knew they had forsaken their Lord; he sees how backward they are to honor him; yet he remembers them; for he knew that his Lord loved them, and he must love them too. He sends a special message to that apostle who had sinned the most flagrantly--even to Peter. "Tell his disciples, and Peter." Though so liable to sin ourselves, how harsh we are in judging others! This angel had never forsaken or denied his Lord, yet he felt for those who had. He was anxious that their tears should be dried up without delay.

How did the women receive the heavenly tidings? It is written in Matthew's gospel, "They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy." Their joy was greater than their fear. They trembled because they had seen angels; they rejoiced because they hoped soon to see their Lord. The fear was the consequence of human infirmity, the joy flowed from faith and love. There are many fears now in the hearts of believers, but they shall all pass away; whereas their joy shall increase and endure forever.

When they have no sin, they shall have no fear; and when they see Jesus, their joy shall be full. Do we, who never saw him, long to see him? He comes with clouds. May we meet him in the air, and be ever with him!

December 14

John 20:1-10. Peter and John visit the tomb.

Mary Magdalene did not come alone to the sepulcher. We find from the Gospel of Mark that she was accompanied by two other women, Mary and Salome. But when she perceived that the stone was rolled away from the sepulcher, she acted in a different manner from her companions. Instead of approaching to examine the tomb, she immediately concluded that the precious body had been stolen, and ran back to Jerusalem for assistance. Christians, though they resemble each other in attachment to the same Lord, have different ways of showing that attachment. Some, like Mary Magdalene, are ready to give up all for lost in the first moment of alarm; while others, like Salome and the other Mary, continue to hope even against hope.

To whom did this sorrowful woman apply for aid? To those beloved apostles, Peter and John. We often find those two apostles near each other. It seems that a close friendship subsisted between them. Peter's shameful denial had not broken the bond. John had not said to Peter, "I can no more own you as a brother." He himself was not without sin--he had forsaken his Lord, though he had not denied him.

Mary Magdalene gave a very alarming account of what she had seen in Joseph's garden--she even asserted, "They have taken away the Lord." Peter and John set off with the utmost speed towards the tomb. John was the swifter. It is generally supposed that he was the younger. But Peter was the bolder; for when he arrived at the tomb he entered, whereas John at first only looked in, though he also entered afterwards.

And what did they see in the tomb? The linen clothes. This sight convinced John that his Lord's body had not been stolen; but that his Lord himself was risen. If enemies had taken away the body, would they have left the clothes? And if they had been suddenly surprised, and dropped the clothes in their haste to escape, would those clothes have been neatly arranged?--and the napkin which had been round the sacred head, would it have been folded in a place by itself? No, it was evident that he who had reposed in the tomb, no longer wore the attire of death. We are not told in this place what effect the sight of the clothes had upon Peter; but from another passage it appears that the sight convinced him also. (See Luke 24:12.)

Both these apostles returned to their own home, without having seen either the Lord or his angels; without even having seen the women who had seen the Lord; and therefore without having heard their message. Why did they not still linger round the tomb, or search in every place for him they had lost?

It seems that the apostles, after their Lord's crucifixion, were afraid of falling into the hands of their enemies, and that on this account they kept as much as possible within their own doors.

There was one who now dwelt with John who was deeply affected by all that concerned the blessed Redeemer--it was his mother. We know that she watched her Son when dying on the cross, but we do not hear of her visiting the tomb. What sweet communion must have been held that day in the home of the beloved apostle! How the Lord's mother and his friend must have rejoiced together over his resurrection!

They are happy who, living beneath one roof, delight to talk together of their blessed Savior! How can they who love him, forbear to speak of him, to retrace his kindness in times past, and to anticipate his glorious return!

December 15

John 20:11-18. Christ appears to Mary Magdalene.

Mary Magdalene enjoyed one of the highest honors that was ever bestowed on a human creature--while on earth. She was the first to whom the Lord appeared after his resurrection.

It is interesting to consider the conduct of this honored woman; for it must have been pleasing to the Lord. She lingered near the tomb after the apostles had departed. Her companions, also, who had seen the angels, were gone. She was alone. She was weeping. Others may have wept around the tomb, but her tears alone are mentioned. Perhaps it may have been on this account that many have supposed that she was the woman who once washed the feet of Jesus with her tears; but there is no foundation for this opinion. Stooping down, she perceived the angels, but felt no fear, for it seems she knew them not. There they were clothed in white, keeping watch in the tomb. The apostles had not seen them, when they had looked in. The heavenly watchers were mindful of Mary's tears, and asked, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." The angels did not attempt to comfort her, as they had done her companions, because a better Comforter was standing behind her. She had complained to apostles, then to angels, and now she complains to the Lord himself. "Sir, if you have borne him hence, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Grief is unreasonable. Had an enemy taken away the body, would he have told Mary where he had laid it? The mourner was so transported with sorrow that she knew not what she said, or what she did; she could not distinguish faces, nor remember voices; all was confusion and perplexity.

There are some who weep now, because they fear lest the enemy should triumph over their Lord's body. The saints are the body of Christ, his flesh, and his bones. The enemy has often trampled upon that body, but he can never destroy it. There are three islands, in distant oceans, which in our days have been openly assaulted by Satan and his hosts. The prisoners of Madeira, the patriots of Tahiti, and the martyrs of Madagascar, have endured a great fight of afflictions. Some have wept over their sufferings. Jesus beholds the tears of those who feel for his oppressed people, and he says to them with tenderness, "Why are you weeping?" He bids them weep no more, for he will soon avenge his own cause.

Though Mary did not at first remember her Savior's voice, yet when he pronounced her own name she knew it. Shall we ever hear our own names uttered by our Lord? Are they now written in his book? Can we wonder that when Mary had found her Lord she was unwilling to part from him? He said, "Touch me not;" that is, "Hold, or detain me not; for I am not yet ascended unto my Father." As he was not going to ascend immediately, Mary might hope to see him soon again. Then he sent a message to his brethren. He called his disciples his brethren. This was the message--"I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God." What a message! How full of grace, of joy, of glory! It is a message to us, if we believe in Jesus. His Father is our Father, and loves us as he does him. (John 17:23.) Our elder brother has gone before us, to prepare a place for the younger children in his Father's house.

December 16

Matthew 28:9, 10. Christ appears to the faithful women.

The Lord Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, after he rose from the dead; then he appeared to her two companions, Mary and Salome. He could transport himself, in one moment, from the place where he stood conversing with Mary Magdalene, near the tomb, to the spot which these women had reached. He met them as they were running quickly to bring his disciples word.

He met them with words of joy. He said, "All hail," or "Rejoice." He found them rejoicing, but he bid them again rejoice. The first salutation that he uttered when he rose from the dead was, "Woman, why are you weeping?" His next salutation was, "All hail." He would not bid his people rejoice, if there were not great cause for joy. When he was born into the world, the angel said to the shepherds, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Since that time Jesus had passed through deep sorrow. And what was the fruit of this sorrow? Joy. What joy? The joy of saving souls from eternal death. This was the joy set before him, to gain which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. This is the Father's will, that every one that sees the Son, and believes in him, shall have everlasting life. (John 6:40.) Well might Jesus say to these believing women, "All hail!" If we could now hear Him speak from heaven, we should hear him utter those same words to all who believe in him. Though they might be languishing on sick beds, or weeping over newly-closed graves, he would say to them, "All hail!" But what would he say to unbelievers? He would denounce woe upon them, because they have not believed in the only name which can save them from the wrath to come. "Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep."

Though the faithful women felt some fear at the sight of their risen Lord, they ventured to approach him, and to hold him by the feet. They must have seen upon those feet the prints of the nails. They loved him before he died, but surely they loved him better now. The sight of his agonies on the cross must greatly have increased their love. Everyone who has lost dear friends feels, "I never loved them enough while they were with me. The remembrance of their dying pangs endears them doubly to my heart." But what must these women have felt when they remembered all their Lord had gone through, and when they knew it was all for their sakes! Do we wish we had been in their place, lying low at his feet and worshiping him? If we love him, we may look forward to such a meeting.

When Jesus rose from the dead, his enemies were not permitted to see him. He appointed a place in Galilee where all his disciples from all parts of the land might assemble to meet him--but his enemies received no invitation. There shall be a place in the air where all who love Jesus shall behold him when he comes again. The dead in Christ shall rise first; then those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. There will be no parting after that meeting. "So shall we be ever with the Lord." There will be no sorrow after that meeting. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." There will be no sin after that meeting. "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2)

December 17

Matthew 28:11-15. The Pharisees bribe the watch.

How short was the joy of the world! How soon it was turned into sorrow! Before his crucifixion, the Lord had said, "The world shall rejoice." And they did rejoice during the day that he lay in the grave. The words that God once addressed to Moab concerning their behavior to Israel applied to them--"Since you spoke of him, you skipped for joy." (Jer. 48:27.) But what dismay they felt when they heard that the object of their hatred was risen from the tomb! Yet they persevered in their horrible attempt to deter people from believing in him.

When they learned from the frightened soldiers the wonders that had happened at the sepulcher, they determined, if possible, to conceal these events. The chief priests took the lead in this dark transaction; they summoned the elders, and consulted with them by what means they should smother the truth. They decided on bribing the soldiers to spread an invented tale. "His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept." The father of lies never suggested a more dreadful lie than this. It is his constant employment to teach sinners to hide their sins under a covering of falsehood. There are numbers to be found in every place who are contriving day after day new ways of concealing their old sins. Their tongues have grown so familiar with lies, that they can tell them without a blush. But unless they repent, they will feel the power of that tremendous sentence, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." All liars of every degree shall share in that condemnation. The Pharisees were deceivers of the worst kind. What would be thought of the man who should willfully deceive his neighbors concerning the place where the fire-engines were kept, though he knew the town was in flames? Through such a man a whole town might be destroyed. The Pharisees were such men. They endeavored to deceive a perishing world respecting him who was the life of that world. The resurrection proved that he was indeed the Son of God. This was the fact that his enemies labored to conceal.

They found the Roman soldiers ready to unite in their scheme. There is nothing so wicked that men have not done for the sake of money. Some will even plead as an excuse for sin, that they should lose money if they did not commit it. Have you never heard people defend their disobedience to God's laws by saying, "I could not get a living if I acted otherwise?" Have any of us ever made such miserable excuses? There is one question which we ought never to forget. It is this--"What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

These soldiers incurred great guilt when they consented to spread the falsehood the Pharisees had invented. They had felt the earthquake, they had seen the angels, yet they did not declare the glory of the Lord. But God found other messengers. Feeble, though faithful women, first proclaimed the joyful tidings. Unlearned, though inspired apostles, confirmed their word, and spread it far and wide. We have heard the glorious truth, that the Lord rose from the dead on the third day. Have we believed it? God has promised to save all those who believe it with the heart. "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." (Rom. 10:9.)

December 18

Luke 24:1-12. Women visit the tomb.

Those who have attentively examined the history of the resurrection have come to the conclusion that two companies of women visited the tomb. Matthew and Mark record the visit of the first company; Luke that of the second. The first company consisted of at least three women, Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and Salome. We do not know how many women composed the second band, or what were their names; but it is probable that Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, was one of them. Many women had followed Jesus from Galilee, and had ministered unto him by the way. (Matthew 27:55.) It is not to be supposed that they all lodged in the same house in Jerusalem, or that they reached the sepulcher at the same moment. Those who came first saw one young man clothed in white sitting in the tomb. The second band for a time saw no one; but, when they were much perplexed, they beheld two men standing by them in shining garments. The first company, as they were running to bring the disciples word, met their risen Lord--but there is no account of the second company being honored with such an interview. By referring to the 23d verse of this chapter, we shall see that there were some women who only saw a vision of angels,

and not the Lord himself, and they may have formed the second band.

How do angels address our fallen race? They speak to us as if we were but little children in comparison to themselves. These angels said to the women, "Why seek you the living among the dead?" It appeared to them an act of folly to look for the Lord of Life in the abode of Death. They felt that his followers ought to have known that he was risen. They repeated the very words that He had said to them, "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Could any words be plainer than these? It

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