

Some Answered Questions, The Resurrection of Christ

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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The Resurrection of Christ

Question: What is the meaning of Christ's resurrection after three days?

Answer: The resurrection of the Manifestations of God is not of the body. All that pertains to Them—all Their states and conditions, all that They do, found, teach, interpret, illustrate, and instruct—is of a mystical and spiritual character and does not belong to the realm of materiality.

Such is the case of Christ's coming from heaven. It has been explicitly stated in numerous passages of the Gospel that the Son of man came down from heaven, or is in heaven, or will go up to heaven. Thus in John 6:38 it is said: "For I came down from heaven", and in John 6:42 it is recorded: "And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?", and in John 3:13 it is stated: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

Consider how it is said that the Son of man is in heaven, even though at that time Christ was dwelling upon the earth. Consider likewise that it explicitly says that Christ came from heaven, although He came from the womb of Mary and His body was born of her. It is therefore clear that the assertion that the Son of man came down from heaven has a mystical rather than a literal meaning, and is a spiritual rather than a material event. The meaning is that though in appearance Christ was born of the womb of Mary, yet in reality He came from heaven, the seat of the Sun of Truth that shines in the divine realm of the supernal Kingdom. And since it is established that Christ came from the spiritual heaven of the divine Kingdom, His disappearance into the earth for three days must also have a mystical rather than a literal meaning. In the same manner, His resurrection from the bosom of the earth is a mystical matter and



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expresses a spiritual rather than a material condition. And His ascension to heaven, likewise, is spiritual and not material in nature.

Aside from this, it has been established by science that the material heaven is a limitless space, void and empty, wherein countless stars and planets move.

We explain, therefore, the meaning of Christ's resurrection in the following way: After the martyrdom of Christ, the Apostles were perplexed and dismayed. The reality of Christ, which consists in His teachings, His bounties, His perfections, and His spiritual power, was hidden and concealed for two or three days after His martyrdom, and had no outward appearance or manifestation—indeed, it was as though it were entirely lost. For those who truly believed were few in number, and even those few were perplexed and dismayed. The Cause of Christ was thus as a lifeless body. After three days the Apostles became firm and steadfast, arose to aid the Cause of Christ, resolved to promote the divine teachings and practise their Lord's admonitions, and endeavoured to serve Him. Then did the reality of Christ become resplendent, His grace shine forth, His religion find new life, and His teachings and admonitions become manifest and visible. In other words, the Cause of Christ, which was like unto a lifeless body, was quickened to life and surrounded by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Such is the meaning of the resurrection of Christ, and this was a true resurrection. But as the clergy did not grasp the meaning of the Gospels and did not comprehend this mystery, it has been claimed that religion is opposed to science, for among other things the ascension of Christ in a physical body to the material heavens is contrary to the mathematical sciences. But when the truth of this matter is clarified and this symbol is explained, it is in no way contradicted by science but rather affirmed by both science and reason.