

CHRIST RESURRECTED ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

—adapted from the writings of St. Cyril, Patriarch of Jerusalem—

The most significant event in world history is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what sets Christianity apart from all other religions. If Jesus Christ indeed rose from the dead, then the Christian faith stands unshakable upon the Divinity of its resurrected God-man and Founder. If, on the other hand, Christ did not resurrect from the dead, then Christianity becomes no different than other religions who have mortal men as their founders.

In order to confirm the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we will first present the Scriptural and historical testimony, and in following we will examine the falsifications and objections of them who disbelieve in the Resurrection and, by extension, the Divinity of Christ.

Just as the prophecies spoke about the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ, we will now present the testimonies concerning the Resurrection. **“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1Cor. 15:4)**, states the Apostle Paul. Since the Apostle makes mention of the Scriptural testimonies, it is beneficial for us to become familiar with the prophecies that refer to the hope of our salvation: our Lord’s Resurrection.

The scriptures clearly indicated that the Savior would be buried. The prophet Isaiah stated, **“The righteous man is taken away from the face of injustice, and His burial shall be in peace” (Isa. 57:1-2)**, **“and I will hand over evil men in return for His burial” (Isa. 53:9)**. He specifies that **“His burial shall be in peace” (Isa. 57:2)**, for His burial restored peace between heaven and earth, and led sinful man back to God. Additionally, the prophet of Jacob informs us, **“Having laid down, he slept as a lion and a cub; who shall raise him up?” (Gen. 49:9)**. The following verse found in the book of Numbers speaks similarly, **“He lies down and rests like a lion, and like a lion’s cub. Who shall raise Him?” (Num. 24:9)**. Even the Psalm that we repeatedly hear says, **“And You led me down into the dust of death” (Ps. 21:16)**.

The place where He was buried has also been indicated by the following verse: **“Look to Me, you who pursue righteousness and seek the Lord. Look to the solid rock which you hewed, and to the hole of the pit which you dug” (Isa. 51:1)**. Indeed, Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus’ body down from the Cross and **“laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before” (Jn. 23:53)**. Christ’s burial site is also referred to in the book of Songs in the following way: **“I went down to the garden of nut trees” (Song 6:11)**. Indeed, **“in the place where Christ was crucified, there was a garden” (Jn. 19:41)**. **“An enclosed garden, a sealed fountain” (Song 4:12)**. The tomb was sealed by the Jews, who **“went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting the guard” (Mt. 27:66)**. But what is

this sealed fountain? Rather, *Who* is this sealed fountain, who is also referred to as “**a fountain of gardens, and a well of living and rushing water**” (Song 4:15)? It is the Savior Christ, for whom it has been written, “**For with You is the fountain of life**” (Ps. 35:10).

Which scriptures foretold the Resurrection of Christ? The prophet Zephaniah spoke distinctly with these words: “On account of this, **wait for Me**” says the Lord, “**until the day of My resurrection as a testimony**. For My judgment shall be for the gathering of the nations” (Zep. 3:8). Who is the person who will resurrect? It is the Lord! And which exceptional and wondrous event will attest to His resurrection? The prophet clearly indicates this in following, when he says, “**For then I shall transform for the people a language for her generation**” (Zep. 3:9). He spoke thus because after Christ’s resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended and the gift of different languages was given to the Apostles: “**And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance**” (Acts 2:4). The same prophet goes on to predict, “**For all to call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him under one yoke**” (Zep. 3:9). What historical event does he refer to as confirmation that all the nations would serve the Lord under one yolk? “**From the boundaries of the rivers of Ethiopia they will bring offerings to Me**” (Zep. 3:10). We are all familiar with what is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles; namely, that the eunuch came from the most distant rivers of Ethiopia: “**And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning**” (Acts 8:27). Therefore, since the holy scriptures of the Old Testament designate not only the place of the Resurrection, but also the signs that would follow Christ’s Resurrection, let no skeptic hinder you from confessing with certainty that Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead.

There are also numerous prophecies concerning Christ’s resurrection contained in the Psalms of David. First of all, the following has been written in the eleventh Psalm: “Because of the distress of the beggars and the groaning of the poor, **now I will resurrect, saith the Lord**; I will sacrifice myself for salvation, I will be manifest therein” (Ps. 11:6).

Let us examine the fifteenth Psalm as well. Speaking on behalf of Christ the Messiah, the prophet David says, “I beheld the Lord ever before me, for He is at my right hand, that I might not be shaken. Therefore did my heart rejoice and my tongue was glad; moreover, my flesh shall dwell in hope. **For Thou wilt not abandon my soul in hades, nor wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption**” (Ps. 15:7-9). He did not say “nor will You permit Your Holy One to taste death”— because in such a case Christ would not have died. Rather, he states, “I do not witness corruption of My body, nor will I remain dead for long.” Having said this, he immediately continues, “**Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, Thou wilt fill me with gladness with Thy countenance; delights are in Thy right hand forever** (Ps. 15:10-11). Behold how after death, life is clearly being preached!

Let us move on to the twenty-ninth Psalm, where it is written, **“I will exalt You, O Lord, for You lifted me up, and did not let my enemies rejoice over me” (Ps. 29:2)**. What exactly happened? Did the Lord deliver him from visible enemies? Or was he perhaps rescued from people who were going to hit him? No! He is speaking of the Resurrection. For a few verses later, he states, **“O Lord, You brought my soul out of Hades” (Ps. 29:4)**. In the fifteenth Psalm it states prophetically in the future tense, **“Thou will not abandon”**; here, it speaks about the same event that would take place in the future as if it had already occurred, **“You brought my soul out of Hades; you saved me from them who go down to the grave” (Ps. 29:4)**. When would this take place? **“At evening shall weeping find lodging, but in the morning great joy” (Ps. 29:6)**. Indeed! The twelve disciples mourned and wept late in the evening, but in the early morning hours of Sunday they experienced the joy of the Resurrection: **“Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord” (Jn. 20:20)**.

There is yet another testimony in the eighty-seventh Psalm: **“I am counted with them that go down into the pit; I am become as a man without help, free among the dead” (Ps. 87:5)**. He did not say that I became a helpless man, but as a man without help. Because Christ was not crucified due to weakness; He voluntarily ascended the cross: **“I lay down My life [says Christ], that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Jn. 10:18)**. And even though He went down into the grave, He remained **“Free among the dead” (Ps. 87:5)**. Christ was not only Himself free among the dead, but simultaneously He also liberated the dead. What event can authoritatively confirm for us that these scriptures are referring to the Lord Jesus? It is this: **“Thou hast removed my friends afar from me” (Ps. 87:9)**; for the disciples fled from Him during the time of His Passion and Crucifixion: **“Then they all forsook Him and fled” (Mk. 14:50)**.

Several other verses in the Psalms similarly spoke of Christ’s Resurrection:

“Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Him flee from before His face” (Ps. 67:1)

“The earth feared and was still, when God rose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth” (Ps. 75:8)

“Arise O God to judge the earth. For You will have an inheritance among all the nations” (Ps. 81:8). Indeed! Christ inherited all the people from the various nations who believed in Him, according to the verse, **“The Lord said unto Me: Thou art My Son ... I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance” (Ps. 2:7-8)**. And the Apostle Paul confirms: **“God ... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2)**.

The seventh Psalm speaks of Christ's resurrection, the return of the nations to faith in Christ, and Christ's ascension into the Heavens in the following manner: **"Arise O Lord, in Thine anger, exalt Thyself to the furthest boundaries of Thine enemies. And arouse Thyself, O Lord my God, in the commandment which Thou hast enjoined, and a congregation of peoples shall surround Thee. And for their sakes return Thou on high"** (Ps. 7:6-7).

The prophet Ezekiel clearly predicted that Jesus Christ is the Lord God with the following verse: **"Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, to bring up My people from their graves"** (Eze. 37:13). Indeed! During the Crucifixion of Christ, many graves were opened, and many people were resurrected: **"And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many"** (Mt. 27:52-53).

The prophet Isaiah, speaking of Christ's resurrection, refers to Jesus Christ as the shepherd of the sheep, and as the one who would send the Holy Spirit: **"He who brought up from the earth the shepherd of the sheep. Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in them?"** (Is. 63:11). Indeed, as the Apostle Paul describes, **"May the God of peace who brought up our lord Jesus from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant"** (Heb. 13:20). And after Christ resurrected, He sent the Holy Spirit to His Apostles: **"When the day of Pentecost had fully come ... suddenly there came a sound from heaven ... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"** (Acts 2:1-4).

The prophet Hosea specifies that Christ would resurrect on the third day: **"He will heal us after two days; in the third day we will arise and live before Him and come to know Him"** (Hos. 6:2-3).

The prophet Nahum foretold that Christ would blow the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles after His resurrection: **"The one being delivered from affliction has come up breathing upon your face"** (Nah. 2:2). Indeed, on the evening of His resurrection, Christ appeared to His disciples and breathed upon them, bestowing to them the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins: **"Then, the same day at evening ... Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them ...as the Father has sent Me, I also send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' If you forgive the sins of any persons, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any persons, they are retained"** (Jn. 20:19-22).

Our Lord Jesus Christ points us to another wonderful testimony concerning His Resurrection: **"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"** (Mt. 12:40). If we examine the life of the prophet Jonah, we will discover that it has many similarities with the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus was sent from God the Father to preach repentance; Jonah also received such a calling. Jonah was asleep on the ship

when a storm broke out at sea: **“But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, had gone to sleep, and was snoring”** (Jon. 1:5); Christ, likewise, was asleep on the boat when towering waves arose (vid. Mt. 8:23). The sailors said to Jonah, **“Why are you snoring? Get up and call upon your God, that your God may keep us safe so we do not perish”** (Jon. 1:6); the Apostles said to Christ, **“Lord, save us! We are perishing!”** (Mt. 8:25). To Jonah, *“pray to your God”*; to Christ, *“save us”*. Jonah replied thus: **“Take me up and cast me into the sea, and the sea will grow calm for you”** (Jon. 1:12); Christ, however, **“arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm”** (Mt. 8:26). Jonah descended into the belly of the whale, whereas Christ the Savior descended voluntarily into the intangible whale of death, Hades. He descended willingly in order for death to give back all them whom it had ingested, according to the following prophecy, **“I will deliver them out of the hand of Hades, and will redeem them from death”** (Hos. 13:14).

When Jonah prayed from within the belly of the whale, he served as a prophetic prefigurement of our Lord Jesus Christ: **“I cried out in my affliction to the Lord my God, and He heard my voice. Out of the belly of Hades, You heard my cry”** (Jon. 2:3). Even though he was in the belly of the whale, he states that he is in Hades. This is precisely because he foreshadowed Christ, Who would indeed descend into Hades. Afterwards, as a representative of Christ, he clearly prophesies in this manner: **“My head plunged into the clefts of the mountains”** (Jon. 2:6). And yet, he was in the belly of the whale! Between which mountains was he buried? It is as if he was saying, “I realize that what I am experiencing right now is a prophetic prefigurement of Him Who will be buried in the tomb carved in the stone”; for Jesus’ body was **“laid in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before”** (Lk. 23:53). Additionally, when Jonah was in the depth of the sea, he stated, **“I descended into the earth; the bars of which are everlasting barriers”** (Jon. 2:7), precisely because what he suffered was a prophetic typology of Christ, Who descended into the heart of the earth (vid Mt. 12:40).

Furthermore, because Jonah foresaw that the Jews would attempt to convince the soldiers to lie, and report that supposedly Christ’s body was stolen by His disciples, he stated, **“Those who follow vanities and lies forsake their own mercy”** (Jon. 2:9). He who was merciful to them came to the earth and was crucified, and resurrected. He shed His own immaculate blood for both the Jews and the Gentiles; however, they truly preferred “vanities and lies,” for they said, **“Tell them His disciples came at night and stole Him away while you were asleep”** (Mt. 28:13).

Since we have all these prophecies concerning Christ’s resurrection, let us remain firmly fixed in our faith. Let them who willingly choose to stumble on account of disbelief fall. We, however, will remain standing on the solid rock of faith in Christ’s resurrection. Be careful never to allow anyone to make you think otherwise or to instill you with doubt concerning Jesus Christ’s resurrection.

The Apostle Paul has written the following, in order to safeguard us from disbelief: **“Remember that Jesus Christ rose from the dead”** (2 Tim. 2:8). And elsewhere he states, **“If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your**

faith is also empty. And we will also be found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up” (1Cor. 15:14-15). And a little further down he says, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1Cor. 15:20). And after Christ rose from the dead, “He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve” (1Cor. 15:5). If you do not want to believe only one witness, you have another twelve witnesses! Subsequently, “he was seen by over five hundred brethren at once” (1Cor. 15:6). If someone distrusts the testimony of twelve witnesses, he can accept the testimony of five hundred witnesses! Later “He was seen by James” (1Cor. 15:7), His stepbrother and first bishop of Jerusalem. Do not disbelieve this bishop who directly, personally, and truly saw Jesus Christ resurrected. One may contend that James the brother of God was biased toward Christ on account of his familial relationship, and his testimony of Christ’s resurrection lacks credibility. Listen closely: “Then last of all He appeared to me also” (1Cor. 15:9), to the Apostle Paul, his enemy. Who can discount such a testimony when it comes from one’s own enemy? “I, who was a former persecutor of Christ, now preach and confirm the good news of Christ’s Resurrection,” proclaims the Apostle Paul.

There are numerous witnesses attesting to the resurrection of the Savior. Amongst them are the following: God’s angels who appeared at the tomb and testified that Christ had risen. Peter and John who raced to the tomb and found it empty. Thomas who examined and touched Christ’s hands and feet after His resurrection and saw the wounds that had been left by the nails. The remainder of the Apostles who received the Holy Spirit through the life-giving breath of Christ the Savior on the evening of His resurrection. The women who embraced Christ’s feet when He appeared to them. The linen cloth, which had been used to wrap Christ’s body, that was found lying in the grave intact. The holy sepulcher, which is empty, and which can be seen to this very day. The sacred Church of the Resurrection that was built over Christ’s empty tomb by St. Constantine the Great. Tabitha further attests to the resurrection of Christ, since she herself was resurrected from the dead by His name alone (Acts 9:40). How can someone doubt that Christ rose from the dead, since the invocation of His name was capable of resurrecting people who had died? Additionally, there is the Mount of Olives from where Christ ascended into the Heavens. Behold! You have many witnesses.