

Eastertide

From Jesus to Christ

RSArchive Blog

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This Eastertide, we highlight two lectures Steiner gave on 10-11 October 1911 pertaining to Christ's resurrection. These are contained in [GA 131, *From Jesus to Christ*](#), lectures VI and VII. There, Steiner masterfully explains the biblical account of the resurrection as a historical fact. We merely share these excerpts here to entice you to read these fascinating lectures in full.

Steiner sets the stage with a reading from the Gospel of John.

Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went towards the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and he went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkins, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' Saying this, she turned and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'

Steiner explains that in every detail of the biblical account of the resurrection, “something is described which would have no meaning if it did not refer to a fact.”

Here is a situation described in such detail that if we wish to picture it in imagination there is hardly anything lacking—when, for example, it is said that the one disciple runs faster than the other, or that the napkin which had covered the head was laid aside in another place, and so on. In every detail something is described which would have no meaning if it did not refer to a fact. Attention was drawn on a former occasion to one detail, that Mary did not recognise Christ Jesus, and we asked how was it possible that after three days anyone could fail to recognise in the same form a person previously known. Hence we had to note that Christ appeared to Mary in a changed form, or these words would have no meaning.

The death and resurrection of Christ Jesus was an Initiation to the highest degree.

According to Steiner, the events described in the biblical Gospels describe initiation events. In the mystery schools, he explains, “this or that person, who had been deemed worthy, was initiated by the hierophants. Such a person, after he had been prepared for a long time, went through a kind of death and a kind of resurrection.” Jesus Christ too was traveling an initiatory path, one of the “highest degree.”

Here, therefore, a distinction must be kept in mind. First, we have to understand the Resurrection as a translation into historic fact of the awakening that took place in the holy Mysteries of all times, only with the difference that he who in the Mysteries raised up the individual pupil was the hierophant; while the Gospels indicate that He who raised up Christ is the Being whom we designate as the Father — that the Father Himself raised up the Christ. Here we are shown that what had formerly been carried out on a small scale in the depths of the Mysteries was now and once for all enacted for humanity by Divine Spirits, and that the Being who is designated as the Father acted as hierophant in the raising to life of Christ Jesus. Thus we have here, enhanced to the highest degree, something which formerly had taken place on a small scale in the Mysteries.

Christ overcame the corruptible physical body inherited from Adam.

Steiner expounds upon the teachings of the Apostle Paul that “the corruptible body, the physical body of man that decays in death. With this body, men are clothed.” Rather than merely a physical form, Steiner describes the physical body as having an invisible aspect

—“a transparent body of force” that is penetrated by the etheric body, astral body, and ego and filled with mineral substances. He explains, “The external substances are merely loaded into the network of the human Form, as one might load apples into a cart.” He calls this force of the physical body, the “Phantom.”

The physical body is itself entirely transparent, and it is the Lucifer forces in man which have brought him to a non-transparent state and placed him before us so that he is opaque and tangible. Hence you will understand that man has become a being who takes up external substances and forces of the Earth, which are given off again at death, only because Lucifer tempted him, and certain forces were poured into his astral body. It follows that because the Ego entered into connection with the physical, etheric and astral bodies under the influence of Lucifer, man became what he is on earth and otherwise would not have been — the bearer of a visible, earthly organism.

Christ incarnated as such an “earthly organism” and overcame the physical body inherited from Adam. His initiation by the Father, that of the 'Highest Degree,' penetrated the physical body for the first time in human history and conquered death as a human Phantom.

No pre-Christian initiations went farther than the outermost limits of the physical body; they did not touch the forces of the physical body, except in so far as the inner organism impinges in a general way on the outer. No one, having gone through death, had ever overcome death as a human Phantom. Similar things had certainly occurred, but never this — that a man had gone through a complete human death and that the complete Phantom had then gained victory over death. Just as it is true that only this Phantom can give rise to a complete humanity in the course of human evolution, so is it true that this Phantom took its beginning from the grave of Golgotha.

The resurrected Christ is the incorruptible 'Second Adam.'

After Christ had appeared to the Disciples and many others, the Apostle Paul, an initiate himself, witnessed Him on the road to Damascus. In [1 Corinthians 15](#), Paul recounts this event and describes the Christ as the “Second Adam.” Steiner explains:

The second Adam, Christ, is regarded by Paul as possessing, in contrast to the first, the incorruptible, the immortal body. Paul then affirms that through Christian evolution men are gradually made ready to put on the second Adam in place of the first Adam; the incorruptible body of the second Adam, Christ, in place of the corruptible body of the first Adam. What Paul seems to require of all who call themselves true Christians is something that violates all the old conceptions of the

world. As the first corruptible body is descended from Adam, so must the incorruptible body originate from the second Adam, from Christ. Every Christian could say: 'Because I am descended from Adam, I have a corruptible body as Adam had; but in that I set myself in the right relationship to Christ, I receive from Him, the second Adam, an incorruptible body.'

By receiving the Christ within our own being, we may then trace our ancestry back to this second Adam, the Christ who rose from the dead after three days.

Let us think of the body of Christ that rose out of the grave. Just as from the body of Adam the bodies of earth-men are descended, in so far as these men have the body that crumbles away, even so are the spiritual bodies, the Phantoms for all men, descended from that which rose out of the grave. And it is possible to establish a relationship with Christ through which an earthly human being can bring into his otherwise decaying physical body this Phantom which rose out of the grave of Golgotha. It is possible for man to receive into his organism those forces which then rose from the grave, just as through his physical organism at the beginning of the earth evolution, as a consequence of the Luciferic forces, he received the organism of Adam.

Through the resurrection of Christ, the human ego was rescued from devolution.

Recall that Jesus Christ was a man who did not have an Ego. The Christ took the place of the Ego at Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan.

What now differentiates this Christ Jesus from all other men on Earth? It is this: that all other men bear within them an Ego that once was overcome by Lucifer's temptation, but Jesus no longer bears an Ego within Him; instead, He bears the Christ-Being. So that from this time, beginning with the Baptism in Jordan, Jesus bears within Himself the residual effects that had come from Lucifer, but with no human Ego to allow any further Luciferic influences to enter his body. A physical body, an etheric body, and astral body — in which the residue of the earlier Luciferic influences was present, but into which no more Luciferic influence could enter — and the Christ-Being: thus was Christ Jesus constituted.

Steiner frames the resurrection as a turning point in human evolution that saved the human Ego from continued descent.

Just as man, through his place in the stream of physical evolution, inherits the physical body in which the destruction of the Phantom, the force-bearer, is gradually taking place, so from the pure Phantom that rose out of the grave he can inherit what he has lost. He can inherit it, he can clothe himself with it, as he clothed himself with the first Adam; he can become one with it. Thereby he can go through a development by means of which he can climb upwards again, even as before the Mystery of Golgotha he had descended in evolution. In other words, that which had been taken from him through the Luciferic influence can be given back to him through its presence as the Risen Body of Christ. [...]

If we can inscribe upon our souls what is in very truth the Pauline teaching, we come to regard the Mystery of Golgotha as a reality that took place and had to take place in the evolution of the earth; for it signifies literally the rescue of the human Ego. We have seen that if the process of evolution had continued along the path it had followed up to the time of the Events of Palestine, the Ego-consciousness could not have been developed; it would not only have failed to advance, but would have gone down ever further into darkness. But the path turned upwards, and will continue to ascend in proportion as men find their relation to the Christ-Being.

Christ gave His body so that we may be saved.

Steiner emphasized that the teachings of Christ Jesus are not the most important part of His coming. He says, "The important thing is not what Christ taught, but what he gave: his Body."

For the Body that rose from the grave of Golgotha had never before entered into human evolution. Never before had there been present on earth, through the death of a man, that which came to be present as the Risen Body of Christ Jesus. Previously, after men had passed through the gate of death, and had gone through the period between death and a new birth, they had brought to earth with them the defective Phantom, given over to deterioration. No one had ever caused a perfect Phantom to arise. [...]

That is the important fact in Christian evolution. Hence the commentators are not at fault when they say again and again that the teaching of Christ Jesus has been transformed into a teaching about Christ Jesus. It had to be so. For the important thing is not what Christ Jesus taught, but what He gave to humanity. His Resurrection is the coming to birth of a new member of human nature — an incorruptible body. But for this to happen, this rescue of the human Phantom through death, two things were necessary. It was necessary, first, that the Being of Christ Jesus should be such as we have described it — constituted of physical body, etheric body, and astral body, and — instead of a human ego — the Christ-

Being. Secondly, it was necessary that the Christ-Being should have resolved to descend into a human body, to incarnate in a human body of flesh. For if we are to contemplate the Christ-Being in the right light, we must seek Him in the time before the beginning of man on earth. The Christ-Being was of course existent at that time. He did not enter into the course of human evolution; He dwelt in the spiritual world. Humanity continued along its ever-decreasing path. At a point in time when the crisis of human evolution had been reached, the Christ-Being incorporated Himself in the body of a man. That is the greatest sacrifice that could have been brought to the earth-evolution by the Christ-Being.

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