

**Sermon preached by Mr. L.R. Broome, Pastor,
at Bethesda Chapel, Southampton,
on Lord's Day morning, 9th December, 1984**

Text: *"For as yet they knew not the scripture that He must rise again from the dead" (John 20. 9).*

If the carnal mind wants to criticise the Word of God and pick holes in it and declare that it has many things in it that are contrary, it can easily do so. And it does. The atheists and the critics find plenty of things and grounds upon which they can base their arguments that the Scripture is contradictory in places. What we read just now in Matthew was the time when Jesus said that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, and that He should be killed and rise again the third day.

Now here is something opposed to this, as it seems, and that is, "For as yet they knew not the scripture that He must rise again from the dead." What scripture? Amongst others, the sixteenth Psalm: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life ... at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." And also the direct words of the Lord Jesus that are found in each of the gospels. Jesus told them plainly that He must die and rise again, and they all heard this. So how are we to reconcile this great question that upon the very occasion (and this 20th of John is right in the heart of the account of our Lord's resurrection), how are we going to account for this seeming – only seeming – discrepancy? How are we going to say that they knew not the scripture, when they had been told it as plainly as you have? What is the answer to this somewhat difficult question? The answer is this: that it is possible – and was possible, and proven to be so here – that they knew what Jesus had said but they did not understand it. It was the same with the

example of the loaves and fishes. When Jesus mentioned the leaven of the Pharisees, we read that they could not understand what He said. Well, no, I do not expect we would have done, either. When He referred them back to the five thousand and the miraculous feeding, then they could see that He was not directly referring to what they thought by leaven as bread, but by leaven as doctrine – false doctrine of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. That cleared that matter up.

So, as we go along in Scripture, these suggested inconsistencies and contradictions are cleared up, and what a mercy that they are! And here is one point upon which this scripture is clear: “For as yet they knew not the scripture.” You may very well say, as I could, that they had all heard, had all been told, and especially in the case of the chapter, the sixteenth of Matthew which we read, that Peter himself was the one involved. It was he who, when Jesus said what was going to happen, that He should die and be raised again, said to Him, “Be that far from Thee, Lord.” He had cause to remember it. It was not something illusory or passing, but it was his own lips that condemned him. Jesus turned to him and said, “Get thee behind Me, Satan for thou savourest not of the things that be of God, but the things that be of man.” Now that could not be forgotten, could it? If you had had an incident like that in your life, you would never forget it, like some other quite natural incidents stick to us. We cannot erase them from memory. Peter could not possibly have forgotten the time when his tongue ran loose and he said what he did, for Jesus reprovved him with such language. So, with regard to the resurrection, this is but one instance. Mark tells us of the time when Jesus was saying the same thing perhaps in slightly different words, and they could not understand it and we are told that they were afraid to ask. What a position this is. And how often this may very well be our case – we are afraid to ask. It is certainly

true of the carnal mind. It does not want to hope and is afraid to ask, what really eternal judgment, for one thing, means. Or what the narrow gate means. Or some of those other solemn negatives, although positive truths of the Lord Jesus.

Luke also refers to this occasion: “And they understood not” what was said. So that there is the simple answer to this question that you can know a thing in your judgment and be well aware that it has happened and have it impressed there possibly by some other incident like Peter, and yet not understand what really was meant. And this is what this text is telling us.

There were two men there, Peter and John, a strange sight. I was going to read a part of the twentieth of John, not that there was any need to, you know it well enough: both of them ran together. We cannot place a distinction between the apostles, but these come more often to the foremost than the others. And in the fourth verse, “So they ran both together: and the other disciple” (that is John) “did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying, yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie. And the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple.” The descriptions of the resurrection, who was there first and various actions vary because the Holy Spirit gives each apostle freedom to write as he had heard or seen. Therefore they, too, vary. And the unbeliever is only too ready to say, “Well, it says one thing here and another thing there, and what are you going to do about it? How true is it? Who was first? Who came and why?” These things, whilst they cause anxiety to a young believer, they have a gracious answer in this real matter: there is a big difference between knowing in your

natural judgment and understanding in your heart. Now, if you have the latter you will not be concerned with the fact that the accounts vary. You will be concerned with the fact that Jesus did rise again, and that in that great event, when He rose from the dead, there was the fulfilment of the scripture: the scripture must be fulfilled. That was one of the greater and vital points of our Lord's teaching, that the scripture must be fulfilled, even in its blessed or more sombre, solemn cases: Judas must deny his Lord because it was written in the scripture. His word, that is, the Lord's word, must prosper because it is sent for that purpose. According to Isaiah's prophecy: "My word shall not return unto Me void," but it shall prosper – where? "In the thing whereto I sent it." So it is a sent word, a sent message. It has got a name on it, shall I say. It is directed like an arrow to a particular heart that it cannot fail to reach.

It came to that poor woman in John chapter 4: she came to Jesus, or at least she did not come to Jesus, she came to the well where He was, and He spoke to her like no other woman had ever been spoken to, not even Mary Magdalene. He took, as it were, from the archives of heaven a scroll that had never been unrolled before and He told her in simple language that God was a Spirit and they that worshipped Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. And whilst we are sorry for small congregations, yet Jesus spoke to one, full well knowing it would not fall to the ground. And she did not forget it, but all she could say about it when she got back to the village was, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that ever I did." No doubt she was known for her character, and yet she invited these very people with whom she had been so long in acquaintance, back to Jesus to hear what He had to say. Now when God says "Must" you cannot alter it to say "May." No, it is "Must," and so with the scripture. It "Must." Whatever we may say – and we have said it, have we not – we will not have

this Man, we will not go this way, we do not want this sort of religion, we will have the world whilst we can get it and as long as we can, and we will have our pleasures and walk our own way, and we do not mind if you do divert us a little and take us to chapel or give us a Bible to read, we will read a verse or two if you like. No – "MUST!" So that the appointed time comes on apace when that "Must" is fulfilled. This is the beauty of it. We are not dealing with humans and translators; we are dealing with a great God, and however much we may try to avoid it, He sends first of all knowledge, as He sent it to His disciples; and it is a remarkable thing that these disciples, all the time Jesus was with them, knew so little.

That is not speaking derogatorily towards them. Look at the blunders they made! Why, some of them did not seem to have a father's heart about them when the mothers of Salem brought their children to Jesus. They sent them away – or tried to. There did not seem to be a vestige of fatherly or human kindness in them; they looked almost cruel, as if they did not want them to come near the Lord Jesus because it interrupted Him; that was not a very good mark, was it? And that brought forth from Jesus that excellent word – "Suffer the children to come unto Me" – I shall not be cross, I shall not be confused, they will not make any difference to Me, suffer them, allow them, to come unto Me. Well that is part of the cause, but it is not the whole. The whole of it is this: "For of such is the kingdom of God." That is, a childlike spirit for entrance into the kingdom of God in the understanding. Well, you may very well say that these children had not much understanding. Anyone that knows anything about little children will soon deny that – the capabilities of a little child's understanding are wonderful. Jesus knew it, but comparing it and using it as a figure, how beautiful it is in the gospel that everyone, however they may think themselves far

beyond the range of a child's mind, if their understanding is illuminated, if they are eighty or ninety or a hundred years old, they become as little children.

The disciples themselves, before His ascending – and before His death – made many mistakes. And this is the sweetness of it, that the Lord knew all about their mistakes, and the mistakes that men make, leaving children, why should well-known fishermen who had been fishing on Lake Galilee all their lives, why should they be afraid of a storm to which that lake was common, that blew down from the mountains in a moment, and well-nigh overturned the ship? why should they, on a particular occasion in the eighth of Luke, when Jesus was not awake but asleep, cry out, as they did, afraid? Now of all men, seamen are most noted throughout the world for bravery, because they are up against such violence of the waves, that to face such waves as a seaman faces in a storm are more than we who know little about it, can comprehend. Why should they have cried, “Master, we perish”? They had been across that lake scores of times. Why should they? Because they were human. But not only that, because Jesus was asleep. But had He not been asleep it would have been altogether different. Now here you have the other side of the negative. If Jesus was awake no danger would have been apprehended, but He was not, so they awoke Him. Here they are then, giving us a lesson in the days before they were endued with power from on high. And yet critics may say that they had power before. They cast out devils, they returned to Jesus rejoicing that even the devils were subject to them and Jesus then took them to task and said, “Rejoice not that the devils are subject unto you, but rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.” Look at the distinction, and look at the difference between these two things, and how the Lord views these things as a point of instruction.

Well, to come to the text, therefore, “For as yet they knew not the scripture,” the answer is this, they did not understand, they did not believe, they could not comprehend, it was not within their hearts to grasp this tremendous truth that Jesus would be raised from the dead. Even the good women prepared the spices and the ointments and they sat up overnight to do it. Mary Magdalene before the sun rose was at the sepulchre. They never needed them, but they were fully persuaded that Jesus, lying in that tomb or sepulchre, as all others who had died, would need these things to be brought, as was the custom. And they were brought – and lovingly brought. But they had a problem with the sepulchre: there was a stone in front of it, and being women they said, “Now, who shall roll away the stone?” But when they got there, the stone was rolled away already! Another lesson! Says Joseph Hart:

“Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ has burst the gates of hell.”

(Gadsby's 485)

So that all those prearrangements and vigil of those good people (they never slept that night, of course), the last they saw and heard of the Lord Jesus was Nicodemus and Joseph taking Him down from the cross and laying Him in the sepulchre; and with what sad hearts they must have lain down that night. I do not suppose that they had a minute's rest, but they knew the Scripture: He had not only told the disciples, but the women also, that He was going to rise from the dead. But He did not say, “Look, this is going to happen: I am going to be laid in the sepulchre; do not make any preparation of these ointments for Me, as is usual; I shall not want them. And do not worry about any stone that may be laid over the sepulchre, it will not be there. Do not be concerned about the command of the judge, Pontius Pilate, that

you should put a guard and soldiers over Him: do not be concerned at those who say they might come at night and steal His body; it will not be necessary." No, Jesus did not reveal a thing. And He does not reveal a thing that is going to happen.

Now what have these things got to do with us? Is not life very much the same? Are not circumstances very much the same, that He hides what He is doing? The hymnwriter calls it, "The purpose of His grace." Now look at your troubles – and only you know what they are. Why should *you* have to go the path you have to go? Why should it all be so mysterious? Why should you be in so much inward turmoil? Why should you know that you have an immortal soul that cannot die, and that "Though after my flesh worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"? It is an ancient Job who speaks. Why should you know this, why should I know it? Why should this book be what it is to us when it is nothing to millions? Why should there be so much money and endeavour spent to send the Word of God abroad to the four corners of the earth if it was not the purpose God to bless it where and when He would? Is every volume blessed? No. Is it commercialised? Yes. But look at the unknown value of the Word of God. And it comes down to the individual, and you learn from it and you hear from it.

Thus when they got to the sepulchre and they looked and stooped – a good word and so accurate: "And stooping down and looking in." These sepulchres, you see, ran into the rock and it was necessary to stoop and look in, and this is what they did. What did they see? The linen clothes lay, and the napkin that was about His head. All lying ruffled and crumpled up in a heap? No, no. The women, of course, would appreciate this even more than the men, that the napkin was wrapped together in a place by itself.

O, the majesty I have seen in this simple sentence of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus! It was no hurried departure. There was no question of fear or anxiety lest they should be molested; it was a divine occasion, an occasion when the napkin was folded. Who folded it? You cannot answer that one, can you? You can believe that it was folded and you can take comfort from this fact, that there was no question whatsoever of a hurried departure. We know not what happened in that sepulchre during that early morning, do we, when Jesus took His life again and restored it to Himself. And by the Spirit's power and His Father's will that mighty event took place, when He came again to life and He was alive in the tomb. After the three days, that is the first day after His crucifixion, late in the day, it was toward the Jews' Passover, that was the sabbath, and He was late in the day but that counted as a day, and a whole day in the sepulchre, and then the third day, rise again. Now Mary went at dawn, so did the women. So that was a part of a day, but not a whole day: Jesus was not three whole days in the sepulchre, but He rose again on the third day: the scripture was fulfilled. There was no question of time and the scripture had foretold this.

And now in the very midst of it in this twentieth chapter, there were dear disciples so shocked as they were two days before, running to the sepulchre in great haste and finding it empty. And what did they do? They went back home. Shame on them! I say it solemnly, shame on them. Who stayed? One representative of the church of God, a poor woman, and she waited. What faith, what hope! And what is more, what affection! Now, she knew, and that knowledge was not gained from any other source than the direct teaching of the Spirit of God. This is where we stand: "They knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." I say, do we? We know about it: we shall never be able to

say, thousands will never be able to say they never heard about it. Look at the vile utterances of some of the church clerics concerning this mighty work of the resurrection. And look at what it is for poor sinners: there was left in that sepulchre a sting, and that was the sting of death. There was a victory accomplished there that now is revealed and can be understood. In fact, at the end of Luke's gospel we have that difference explained to us. But what a scene it was. And how it may so easily and practically be applied to us in our lives, as mysterious as some of the things through which we have had to pass are, were or are still likely to be. We know but we understand not, "For they knew not the scripture." How this impresses upon us then, the vital necessity of understanding the scriptures! And how are we going to do it if these men could not? If they had got the Psalms (which they had), how came it that they did not know what the sixteenth Psalm said, or other Psalms? How came it that they did not know the fifty-third of Isaiah? Now let us not appear to set ourselves up on a pinnacle of self importance, seeing we too are faced with these vital questions, "They knew not the scripture." Now if we went through one or two or more Old Testament books, or just one of them, Genesis, there is Abraham, do we know the scripture? Yes we do. We know that he had to take his son, his only son, whom he loved, and offer him up for burnt offering. An unprecedented command from God. We know it, yes we do. Ah, but do we see anything in it, believe anything from it? And then we come to the ram, caught by its horns in a thicket. There was no question of that ram escaping, was there? It was there, tied by God, and there Abraham took it. Do we know it? Yes. Was there any ram or substitute at the last minute for the Lord Jesus when He was nailed to the cross? No. Surely Joseph of Arimathea? No. Surely Nicodemus? O, no. They were there to do their office as appointed by God, but where were you, Peter? where were you, John? "I was not there." "Where were you?" "I had gone home."

"Why?" Do you not think, like the rest of us that we look back on certain incidents in our life with deep regret in regard to spiritual things? I know we do naturally. What must John and Peter have felt when they remembered that they went back home and left Mary there alone? And when the scripture was fulfilled, the Lord of life and glory resumed His flesh and the whole of the scene is presented to us in that beautiful garden scene when "She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Poor woman, she could not have lifted Him, could she? I expect she meant, "Well, but that does not matter." The fact is that we must give solemn consideration for this great truth that we may know in our judgment so much, and yet when it comes to walking through it we do not know, because we do not understand and Luke is kind, by the Holy Spirit's inditing to tell us, "Then opened He their understanding." It is a vastly different thing: it takes it from the head to the heart and that means salvation and nothing less.

Amen.