

"We thought it was He who would redeem Israel, but now they have taken and have slain him."

A band of men scattered, divided, prostrate, confused because their Leader had been taken and killed. Then only a short time later we find these men starting out to preach all over with absolute confidence, "He is raised from the dead. We have seen Him with our own eyes. God has indeed raised Him from the dead because He is the Lord of glory and has shown that He accepted His death on our behalf.

This could never have occurred, this change in this great number of disciples, could never have occurred and caused such a change in their attitude that they would be ready to go out and suffer martyrdom and death but for the fact that they believed to be true that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

Other religions have been spread by the sword, and by force, by compulsion. Christianity has too sometimes I regret to say. But the start of Christianity had no human force no human compulsion behind it. Just a group of poor people actually convinced that they had seen him risen from the dead and had seen the empty tomb. One person might have a queer sort of vision or an ecstasy or ~~xxx~~ imagination, but a group the size of this to have such an experience as purely imaginary! It is utterly impossible.

Paul gives the evidence in 1 Cor. 15 and stresses it. He says (v.4) that Jesus rose the third day according to the Scripture and he was seen of Peter, then of the twelve, and after that he was seen of above 500 brethren at once of whom the greater part remain unto this present though some are fallen asleep." The greater part are still living, Paul said, of 500 brethren who were ready to testify that they had seen Jesus Christ raised from the dead.

Many an important event in history has far less evidence for it than that. It is a solidly based fact upon which Christianity is based i.e. the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So John stresses the importance of Christian love, and it is tremendously important and we should learn to manifest it. But it is a love which must be based upon the truth or it will not last. It cannot last.

So John continues (v.3), Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the father in truth and love. I rejoice greatly that I found thy children walking in truth as we have received a commandment from the Father. Now I beseech thee . . . that we love one another, and this is love that we walk after His commandments."

It isn't love just to be namby-pamby and to ignore justice and rightoueness. That is not love. It is love that we walk in after His commandments. You've seen a little child walking along and heading toward the edge of a ravine, and you say, The dear little boy, I wouldn't want to hurt him for anything. I won't interfere with him. I love him too much to interfere with him! That is not love. You'll run after him. You'll pull him back, even if he yells and dislikes it. You are showing love by saving his life. You are showing love by doing what is necessary even if it is disagreeable in order to be for his good.