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THE CHURCH INVISIBLE

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At Easter, we recall again the scene of the friends and kin of Jesus entering the garden where Jesus had been entombed, only to be met with a vision of angels guarding the cave, and the body of their beloved Master vanished.

The Edgar Cayce readings clarify this scene with, "How, why did the angels take form? That there might be implanted into their hearts and souls that fulfillment of those promises." 5749-6

Now, evidently God wished a definite effect to be produced on the bereaved company. It was that of receiving an answer to the promise that spirit is real, that we need not be overcome by earthly things, that we are worthy to be in the Presence if we have believed and have "Done what is in keeping . . ."

It is the purpose of this offering to discover how we can better bring Jesus the Christ into our lives to establish His Holy, Invisible Church on earth. We seek the *living church* and in this quest the readings clarify much for us.

The Promises of Jesus

What were the promises and what can they mean to us, personally? For unless we can apply truth to ourselves, we can not have our own personal resurrection. In reading No. 5849-6 ... the Easter message given in April, 1936, the promises and their meaning for us are described in this way: "How, why, was there the need for there to be a resurrection? Why did He come into the earth to die the death, even on the Cross? Has it been, then, the fulfillment of promise, the fulfillment of law, the fulfillment of man's estate? Else, why did He put on flesh and come into the earth in the form of man, but to be one with the Father; to show to man his (man's) divinity, man's relationship to the Maker; to show man that indeed the Father meant it when He said, 'If you call I will hear. Even though you be far away, even though you be covered in sin, if you be washed in the blood of the lamb, you may come back.'"

This Easter season, we recall the first, Easter, because of these promises given! That Resurrection morning, when not only the angels were visible, but when also, Jesus, Himself, was witnessed by his friends and family, remains in our mind's eye as the most glorious answer possible to the promises. He promised that "Though you destroy this temple, in three days it will rise again." And it happened. Then, we can easily believe that if we called upon Him, He would hear.

God keeps his promises.

The readings assure us that the promise is not only for the friends and family of Jesus, but is ours today, and "Jesus would walk and talk with thee". "But if you

would put on Him. You must claim His promises as your own. And how can you claim them unless you in own knowledge, own consciousness, have done. . . do from day to day, what your heart has told and does tell you is in keeping with what He has promised!

“For your Christ, your Lord, your Jesus, is near to you . . . just now!”

Signs of the Presence

From the same reading (5749-6) we have a clue as to how we may know Jesus is with us, and it is not anything but what we have already known in our experience. For it is in the *spirit* of living that He manifests Himself, providing we make it possible. “What separates you” says the reading “from seeing the Glory even of Him that walks with you often in the touch of a loving hand, in the voice of those that would comfort and cheer? For He, your Christ, often with you ...”

The reading then answers its own question, by saying that it is “doubt, fear, unbelief” that separates us from seeing this Glory, this great Truth. It is “fear that you are not worthy!”

Therefore, if we would be aware of the signs of His Presences it is first necessary that we cast out this doubt and fear that we are not worthy, from our minds and hearts. We are worthy, if we show the mercy and love that He requires.

As the Easter reading was given that 5th day of April, in 1936, the little group gathered around Edgar Cayce was intent, no doubt, on recording the reading and in catching every word. We can only think how fortunate they were for the privilege of hearing this reading, and all the others that they might have attended. But one of the most significant clues to our quest for understanding is to be found in that last phrase spoken directly to that group of 17 persons meeting for interpretation and further knowledge of the Resurrection.

“For your Christ, your Lord, your Jesus, is near you just now!. We are through.”

How we thrill to that phrase and how that group must have thrilled to the words, given earlier in the same reading, to “Open your eyes and behold the Glory, even of your Christ present here, now in your midst! Even as He appeared to them on that day!”

So we know that the Master Jesus does appear among us in reality, as well as manifest in the spirit of our living.

Surely, that group was quickened that day, if not before, during the course of the inspiring reading given.

But according to the promises of Jesus, He does not limit Himself to special groups, such as that one, but is present anywhere where “two or three” are gathered in His Name.

According to the readings, Jesus has always been present in the world, in Spirit, and sometimes in incarnations. How has He made Himself known? In what way does he work on behalf of mankind, now? Say the readings: “In all those periods that the basic principle was the Oneness of the Father, He has walked with men.” 364-8

Another reading asserts He “as an entity influenced either directly or indirectly all those forms of philosophy or religious thought that taught God was One ...” such as, according to the reading, “Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Brahmanism, Platonism, Judaism.” 364-9

The same reading contains the question, “What name was borne by Jesus in His reincarnations in France, England, America?”

To which was given: “Rather, these have been as the Spirit of the Christ, or the Master walked among men, than incarnated in these different countries; for whether among the priest (hood) and it were, in France, or among the lowly monks in England, or the warriors bold in America, the Spirit that God is One; prefer your neighbor, your brother, before yourself! These, as we find, took possession of, or rather labored with (these ideals) until their own personalities were laid aside in individuals. You do likewise, if you would have Him with you. ‘Not my will, O Lord, but yours, be done in me, this day, now!’”

Jesus has been active in recent times, one of which is told us in 364-8: “In the manner as He sat at the peace conference in Geneva, in the heart and soul of a man (Woodrow Wilson) not reckoned by many as an even unusually Godly man . . .”

“In the heart and soul of a man! Here is still another way in which Jesus dwells among us! We must conclude that He was also present in the heart and soul of Lincoln, of Martin Luther, of those writing the Declaration of Independence, in the Transcendentalists of over a century ago.

Finally, in this reading, the fact is emphasized that all men and women may make of themselves “channels’ through which He may speak.

Let us examine the Transcendentalist movement for a moment, for it was an amazing example of the renewal of the Christ spirit ... the invisible church ... among a nation. It was a reaction against the heel of Puritanism and Jonathan Edwards “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” It was, according to “The Growth of the American Republic,” Volume 1, by Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, “a movement to liberate America spiritually, as independence and democracy had liberated her politically; an attempt to make Americans worthy of their independence, and elevate them to a new stature among the mortals.”

Here, we have learned to discern, is the Spirit of Christ in evidence, not in one man, but in a whole generation ... the leaders of whom were Whitman, Thoreau and Emerson.

In 1832, at the age of 29, Ralph Waldo Emerson quit his pastorate in the Unitarian Church because it no longer interested him. There was this thing Transcendentalism working and according to “The Growth of the American Republic”, “Almost every aspect of it may be found in Emerson, who perfectly embodied the essential Spirit a belief in the soul's inherent power to grasp the truth.”

Emerson is well-known as an exponent of the divinity of man and nature.

Not only did Emerson express the Spirit of Christ through his essays, but also did he separate himself from the orthodox, established church and thereby pose a paradox.

What is it that repelled Emerson in the Church? I think it must have been essentially the same conditions that caused Jesus to cleanse the temple He found imperfect in many ways. In the same essay on Worship, he states many times that man is naturally moral, and “God builds His temple in the heart on the ruins of churches and religion.”

Is this not actually what Christ taught?

The Church of God and the Church of Man.

Emerson represents the finite mind of man, striking out in a human way to side with Jesus against the priests and scribes of his time. But let us compare the actions of the Infinite Man, Jesus, with the finite man, . That was Emerson: whereas Emerson simply 'lost interest' in the church and took to lecturing and

writing and being “a lay preacher to the world”, Jesus went right into the temple, and in loving concern, took action! Whereas, Emerson simply shrugged his shoulders and walked out, Jesus entered the temple and turned over the money tables and ‘told off’ the wrong-doers!

“And Jesus went into the temple of God and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, 'it is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.'”

The institutions of Jesus’ day were as hidebound as some we have today, with their false teachings and their petty laws. Jesus warned his disciples to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees”, In other words, Matthew explains, the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

We know from the Scriptures that the church’s One Foundation is Jesus. As the readings tell us, “For the Master built no churches, but He laid the foundation.” 254-35

One time the group helping Edgar Cayce asked if they should not build an educational building (a church first). Said the reading (254-35), “Begin with the hospital . . . first the hospital, for first as the Master gave, those were the lessons as were given to the individuals ., . to heal the physical, and thus gain a knowledge of that necessary.”

That was logical. Jesus always healed first and *then* said “Go and sin no more”.

So, the hospital was built. But the “church” was left to the guidance of the inner Spirit within the group.

Many persons who obtained readings were concerned as to which church they should attend. They ever told in effect that it did not matter what church they attended, so long as they kept the inner church in their hearts and minds. For one reading 674-3 stated, “Let that be within the heart. Remember the church is really within self. As to where you carry the church for its service depends upon the individual environs in which there is the finding of the better activity.”

Still another person asked, “Is there any indication of what church I should join and associate with?” And the answer was (3842-1) “Remember, rather, the church is within self. As to the organization, choose that, not as a convenience for you but where you may serve the better . . whatever its name, let it be your life proclaiming Jesus the Christ.”

Very emphatic was the next reading for a woman, (5125-1) Before that, the entity was in the English land during those periods when questioning arose between church and state. And there the entity for itself settled that question for good: the church is within yourself and not in any pope or preacher, or in any building, but in self ! For your body is indeed the temple of the living Got and the Christ becomes a personal companion in mind and in body ...”

Individual preference and temperaments were to be taken into consideration, said the readings, in the matter of choosing an outward church. Said reading, 264-56: “Then let each test themselves with what is chosen. That it will make for life if your own experience will aid an other. Not that each has the same vision, or the same experience, but the Lord adds to the church daily such as should be saved, when all of one mind!”

Note here that the reading is not speaking of the churches ... Presbyterian, Methodist, Catholic . . . but of His Church, and it is done in His way, for “the Lord

adds, not any minister or pope!”

Now, lest we seem to be disparaging the orthodox institutions on earth, we would say here that Jesus 'has not come to destroy, but to fulfill.' By his own words, He meant to establish His church on earth, not by destroying the existing frame work, but by *becoming* the Church! He knew, (and knows) that man needs the concrete towers of a building to point to and say “There’s my church”. He knew that man needs to “belong” to a group, that he needs shelter from the stormy blast . . . both literally and figuratively. So he did not come to upset our harmless system of providing our earthly necessities. But what He did do was to add to the human church Spirit, and fulfill the law, and with the Resurrection, was able to enter each heart that opened to Him and the “Invisible Church” could be established.

In the Edgar Cayce readings, we learn that God may be found in all churches. Mr. Caprice, himself, worked in the church as a Sunday School teacher, and declared that if anything in the readings took one away from the church, the readings were not good for that person.

Concerning the differing opinions as to what is the best way to serve God, that are found in the various churches, the following quotation is offered: “Because there are contentions, because there is the lack of the giving and taking as to open thought, does not change God’s attitude one whit; neither does it make one above another . . . We find the same contentions arising in that called in the present ... denominationalism ... and each one crying ‘Lo, here is Christ Lo, this is the manner of approach! Lo, unless you do this or that, you have no part in him.’

“He that loves me will keep my commandments.’ What are the commandments? ‘Thou shalt have no others Gods before me,’ and ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself.’ In this is built the whole law and gospel of every age that has said, There is ONE God!” 364-9

The Invisible Church

We are aware of the physical, outward church, and of the conflicting ideas concerning it. But what do the readings say of the invisible, the Holy Church?

From reading 262-87 we have this:

Q. “What is the holy church?”

A. “That which makes for the awareness in the heart of the individual. It is as He that was set as the head of the Church *is* the church. The Church is never a body, never an assembly. An individual soul becomes aware that it has taken that Head, that Son, that Man even, to be the intermediator. That is the Church; that is what is spoken of as the Holy Church.”

“What do you read from ‘Upon this I will build my church.’

“What church? The Holy Church! Who is the head ? That One upon whom the conditions had been set by that question asked, For here you may find the answer again to many of those questions sought concerning the Spirit, the Church, the Holy Force that manifests by the attuning of the individual, though it may be for a moment.

“He asked, ‘Whom say men that I am?’ Then Peter answered, ‘Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God!’ Then, ‘Upon this I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. He said to Peter, ‘Flesh and blood - *flesh* and blood - has not revealed this to you, but my Father which is in heaven.’

“Heaven? Where? Within the hearts, the minds; the place where Truth is in made manifest! Wherever Truth is made manifest it gives place to that which is heaven *for those that seek* and love truth. But a mighty hell for those that seek

gratification of their own selves! And these are those things which become stumbling-blocks to many an individual that becomes more and more material-minded for these must be seen but they heed not what they have seen and heard and given of old. Who communicated, you want to know, to Peter when he gave this confession? Whom did He say is your father, your mother, your sister, your brother? He that does the will of the Father in heaven, the same is your earthly father, your earthly mother, your earthly brother and your sister. They that love Truth rather than the satisfying, the gratifying of fleshly desires.

“This does not indicate that no beauty, no joy, no happiness is to be in the experience of those who claim to seek to be the channel of blessings, or the source of inspiration to others! Who is the father of Joy? Who is the father of Happiness? Who is the father of Peace? The same that you would serve in showing forth the Lord’s death until He come again. For he that is long-faced, he that is sorry for the world, is sorry most for himself; and of such has He said, “Though in my name you cast out demons, though you heal the sick, I will say ‘Depart from me, I never knew you.’ Why? For you have your own glory when such is done that it may be seen and known and heard among men alone.

“But love your neighbor. Love your enemy. Love those that despitefully use you. For what profit have you if your love only those that love you?”

This is obviously the answer to our entire question, as to what the church is, and how it was founded, and where we may seek it for ourselves.

It is necessary that we have the outward church, as a reflection of the inner one. It is as though we must have the shadow, because we have the light! And so, we have considered the outward church in our attempt to learn of the inner one.

But there is one more final reading that serves to complete this little study, and it is one which tells us something else that we must know in order to come into the Presence, the Holy Church. In reading 5177-1, we receive this: “For to obtain the consciousness and awareness of coming into His Presence; or as one would call to heaven, it will be as if it were leaning on the arms of someone you have tried to help. For as you do it unto your brother, you do it unto your Maker. . .”

In the Resurrection, we have the symbol of Truth rising out of Untruth. It is symbolized also in the lotus flower of the East, rising out of the mud to prove the triumph of good over evil.

It seems to be that the outward church of man, and the invisible, inner Church of God, are separate, and at the same time, One. The Perfect Church abides, as always, in the spiritual realm, as founded by Jesus, and is 'added to daily' by God, regardless of what goes on outwardly. The inward church is where God is met in secret by His followers, those who believe in Him and His promises.

It is as if the physical church is necessary, even as it was necessary that Jesus became flesh to fulfill the law, or so we would think, as we ponder the church visible and invisible. Here is the Easter reading in part, which gives us insight into this concept: (5749-6) “Then, though He were the first of man, the first of the sons of God in spirit in flesh, it became necessary that He fulfill all those associations, those connections that were to wipe away in the experience of man that which separates him from his Maker.

“Though man be far afield, then, though he may have erred, there is established that which makes for a closer, closer walk with Him through that One who experienced all those turmoils, strife, desires, urges that may be the lot of man

in the earth. Yet He put on the flesh, made Himself as naught ... even as was promised throughout, to those who walked and talked with God.

“And then as He hung on the Cross, He called to those that He loved and remembered not only their spiritual purposes, but their material lives. For He indeed in suffering the death on the Cross became the whole, the entire way; THE way, THE life, THE understanding, that we who believe on Him may, too, have the everlasting life. For He committed unto those of His brethren not only the care of the spiritual life of the world but the material life of those that were of his own flesh, his own blood. Yea, as He gave his physical blood that doubt and fear might be banished, so he overcame death; not only in the physical body but in the spirit body . . . that it may become as one with Him, even as on that resurrection morn . . . that you call your Eastertide.

“It is that breaking forth from the tomb, as exemplified in the bulb of the tree of nature itself breaking forth from the sleep that it may rise as He with healing in its very life, to bring all phases of many experiences to His Consciousness ... that indeed became then the fulfilling of the law.

“In what way, then, your ask, did this happen in materiality? Not only was He dead in body, but the soul was separated from that body. As all phases of man in the earth are made manifest, the physical body, the mental body, the soul body became as each dependent upon their own experience. Is it any wonder that the man cried, ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?’

“Each soul comes to stand as He before that throne of his Maker, with the deeds that have been done in the body, in the mind, presenting the body-spiritual before that throne of mercy, before that throne of the Maker, the Creator, the God.

“Yet as He, the Father, has given to each of you, I have given my angels charge concerning you and they shall bear you up, and you shall not know corruption.’

“This He demonstrated in the experience of your Brother, your Saviour, your Jesus, your Christ; that would come and dwell in the hearts and lives of you all . . . if you will but let Him, if you will but invite Him, if you will but open your own heart, each of you, that He may enter and abide with you ... further ... And when you at this glad season rededicate your life, your body, your mind to his service, you too may know, as they, that HE LIVES TODAY.

“Crucify Him not in your mind nor in your bodily activities. Be not overcome by those things that are of the earth - earthy. Rather clothe your body, your mind, with the thoughts, the deeds, the privileges that His suffering as a man brought to you, that He indeed might be the first of those that slept, the first of those that came in the flesh, that passed through all those periods of preparation in the flesh, even as you.”