

TWO MEN AT THE EMPTY TOMB

AFTER TWO DAYS, ON THE THIRD DAY

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre bringing spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

And they entered and found not the body of Jesus.

And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two men stood by them in shining garments” (Luke 24:1-4).

Comparing the four different gospel accounts having to do with events at and surrounding an empty tomb, it is evident that there were at least two men present, and possibly at least two or three angels as well. To render announcements and provide explanations pertaining to Christ’s resurrection, *two men* are seen in Luke 24:4, and either *men* or *angels* are seen in the other three gospel accounts.

That seen in the account in Luke pertaining to two men at the empty tomb is *the key* to understanding the whole panorama of that stated in the gospel accounts surrounding Christ’s resurrection. And that stated in the account not only shows that these two individuals were *men* (not angels) but reveals their *identity* as well.

Then, since *men* are being dealt with in Luke 24:4 (as will be shown), the issue needs to be raised about the possible identity of those referred to as “angels” in Matthew’s account (28:2-7), farther down in Luke’s account (24:23), and in John’s account (20:12), or the “young man” referred to in Mark’s account (16:5). Conceivably, only the two men in Luke 24:4 could be in view throughout these accounts — one referred to as an “angel” in Matthew’s account, as a “young man” in Mark’s account, and both referred to as

“angels” in the other two gospel accounts.

Aggelos

Aggelos is the word translated “angel” in the New Testament, though “angel” is more of a transliterated form of the word than a translation (there is a Greek word for “angel” [*angelos*], though it is not used in the N.T.). *Aggelos* means “messenger” or “announcer.” And the word, within its basic, primary meaning, would have no more reference to angels than to man, or vice versa. The word would simply refer to a *messenger*.

Aside from at least six references (Matt. 11:10; Mark. 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52; James 2:25 [*aggelos* translated “messenger” each time, referring to *men*]), possibly the cited references surrounding Christ’s resurrection in the gospel accounts, and seemingly three references in the account of Cornelius in Acts chapter ten (vv. 3, 7, 22; cf. v. 30), the remaining usages of *aggelos* would appear to refer to “angels” as *God’s messengers*.

Anthropos, Aner

Anthropos and *Aner* are the two main words used for and meaning “man” in the Greek New Testament. *Anthropos* appears over five hundred times and *aner* over two hundred times. And there is little distinguishable difference between the two, other than *aner* being the word used in a non-generic respect when distinctions between men and women are in view (e.g., I Tim. 2:1-12 [*anthropos* is used in vv. 1-5; *aner* is used in vv. 8-12]).

A plural form of *aner* is the word translated “men” in both Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10 (two men seen at both the tomb following Christ’s resurrection and on Mt. Olivet at the time of Christ’s ascension).

Aner is never used in the New Testament to refer to other than “men,” unless Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10 (also Acts 10:30) form exceptions, as some Bible students and commentators attempt to teach (though *aner* is used in this manner in the Septuagint [ref. Gen. 18, 19; Dan. 9:21]). However, as will be shown, the thought that *aner* references angels in Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10 (evidently Acts 10:30 as well) is *incorrect*. Those seen in both passages are not only *clearly revealed to be men*, but they are *clearly identified* as well.

Clearly Revealed to Be Men

To properly understand the full thrust of the way in which the men in Luke 24:4 were arrayed (which is

the previously mentioned key to the whole of the matter), it will be necessary to draw some background material from Genesis. And this would have to do with the purpose for man’s creation, fall, and restoration.

Man was created to take the earth’s sceptre from a disqualified provincial ruler (Satan), his fall resulted from this ruler’s attempt to continue on the throne, and his restoration (redemption, beginning with Adam and Eve, continuing today) has to do with man ultimately realizing the purpose for his creation in the beginning. All of this is laid out in the opening thirty-four verses of Genesis, with the remainder of Scripture simply forming commentary on these opening verses.

In the preceding respect note man’s fall, that which he lost at the time of the fall, and that which must be regained before man can occupy the position for which he was created in the beginning.

When man sinned in the garden in Eden, the complete being of man — spirit, soul, and body — became in a fallen state. God had commanded Adam concerning the fruit of *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, “thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). After Satan had deceived Eve into eating of the fruit of this tree, she then “gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” Immediately following this, “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:1-7).

At the time of the fall, Adam and Eve lost something; and it is clearly stated in Scripture that both immediately recognized this fact. That which they lost could only have been a covering of pristine glory which had previously clothed their bodies, for they, following the fall, found themselves in a twofold condition:

- 1) *Naked.*
- 2) *Separated from God.*

God is arrayed in a covering of “light,” connected with “honour and majesty.” And man, created in the “image” and “likeness” of God, could only have been arrayed in a similar manner prior to the fall.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art covered with [‘you have put on’] honor and majesty.

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain” (Ps. 104:1, 2).

Recognizing the loss of this covering, realizing that they were naked, explains why Adam and Eve immediately sought to clothe themselves following the fall. They tried to replace the covering which had been lost with a work of their own hands, with fig leaf “aprons.” And then, apparently realizing the utter inadequacy of this covering, they, in their fallen state, sought to hide from God.

God, finding Adam and Eve in this condition, completely rejected the works of their hands. God completely rejected their feeble efforts to atone for their own sin through seeking to replace the covering of pristine glory with fig leaves.

Then, to bring His fallen creature back into a right relationship (although not in complete keeping with their previously unfallen state — something still future even today), God provided a covering consisting of animal skins (Gen. 3:21). This necessitated *death and the shedding of blood*; and herein lie basic, unchangeable truths concerning the state of fallen man and the means which are necessary to effect his redemption.

Unredeemed man is a fallen creature, alienated from God; and two things are necessary to effect his redemption:

- 1) *Divine intervention.*
- 2) *Death and shed blood.*

These truths have forever been set forth in the opening chapters of Genesis and can never change.

(Two different words are used for “naked” in the Hebrew text of Gen. 2:25 [before the fall] and Gen. 3:7 [after the fall]. In the latter [3:7], the word has to do with *absolute nakedness*, but not so in the former [2:25].

Remaining within the way a person dressed in the East at the time Moses wrote Genesis, and at later times as well, the word used relative to *nakedness* pertaining to Adam and Eve preceding the fall [2:25] could be used to describe a person clothed in a tunic [inner garment] but lacking the mantle or cloak [outer garment]. In the preceding respect, prior to the fall, Adam and Eve were clothed in the Glory of God but had yet to possess the regal, outer garments worn by kings [fulfilling the reason for man’s creation — to rule the earth (Gen. 1:26-28)].

Then, following the fall, no longer clothed in the Glory of God, Adam and Eve were no longer in a position to be further clothed in regal garments, realizing the purpose for their creation. They, apart from the inner garment [the Glory] could not wear the outer garments [royal apparel].

Adam, prior to the fall, never wore regal garments or held the sceptre. In this respect, he never moved beyond the description given in Gen. 2:25 — a “naked” condition, “naked” in relation to the reason for his creation [lacking the outer regal garments].

Thus, if man, now separated from the Glory, is to ever fulfill the purpose for his creation, God must act. Redemption has to occur; and this, of necessity, has to include the complete man — *spirit, soul, and body* — with a view to not only a *restoration of the Glory but to regality beyond this restoration.*)

The preceding furnishes the background material to properly understand that revealed in Luke 24:4 concerning the manner in which the two men at the tomb following Christ’s resurrection were arrayed.

First and foremost, they were arrayed in *a covering of Glory*. The word “shining,” describing their “garments” is the same word in the Greek text (*astrapto*) which Luke had used earlier in his gospel to describe Christ’s garments at the time He was transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John on the Mount — “...his raiment was white and *glistening*” (9:29). As well, Moses and Elijah, on the Mount with Christ, had the same type raiment (v. 31).

(There is one difference in the word *astrapto* as seen in both Luke 9:29 [trans. “glistening”] and Luke 24:4 [trans. “shining”]. In chapter nine, relative to Christ, the preposition *ek* is prefixed to the word. This preposition means, “out from,” and provides an added emphasis on *the Glory shining out from Christ.*)

The raiment seen on Christ, Moses, and Elijah while on the Mount had to do with *a covering of Glory*, the covering which Adam and Eve lost at the time of the fall.

The preceding is evident from that depicted by the scene on the Mount — *the Son of Man coming in His kingdom, with power and great Glory.*

And this is how the two men at the tomb were arrayed as well. They were arrayed in *a covering of Glory*, something reserved for *man*, not angels. Only *man*, among those in God’s creation, has been created in the “image” and “likeness” of God; and *man* was created in God’s “image” and “likeness,” arrayed in Glory, for a purpose, which is *regal*.

Angels simply *do not* occupy a position of this nature in relation to God’s “image” or “likeness.” They are seen associated with God’s Glory but *never* in a covering of Glory. *That is reserved for man alone*, which provides the means to know and understand that the two individuals at the empty tomb in Luke 24:4 have to

be looked upon, exactly as Scripture states, as “men.”

Clearly Identified

Then, beyond the preceding, these two men can be *identified*. They can be identified *by name* as well.

There are only three men in all of human history that could have been clothed in Glory at the time of Christ’s resurrection — Enoch, Moses, and Elijah — for all others had died and have yet (unlike Moses [Jude 9]), even today, to be raised from the dead, providing bodies to be clothed (and those raised during Christ’s earthly ministry or following His resurrection cannot be considered; none could have possessed a body enswathed in glory).

(Note that even Christ was not raised in a body with a covering of Glory. The Glory did not enswathe His body until forty days later, when a Cloud received Him out of the disciple’s sight, when He was caught up into Glory [Acts 1:9; I Tim. 3:16].

Rather He was raised in *a spiritual body* as opposed to *the natural* — the same body which had been placed in the tomb but with the life-giving, animating principle being the Spirit rather than the blood. His blood is presently on the mercy seat in heaven.)

Nothing is revealed about Enoch in relation to a covering of Glory, just Moses and Elijah. Moses and Elijah were with Christ on the Mount in Matt. 17:1-5. Thus, they also had to be the ones present on the Mount of Olives when Christ ascended. This is plain from the fact that Jesus is going to return *exactly* as He went away (Acts 1:11). And since He will return with Moses and Elijah, as seen in Matt. 17:1-5, the two men present when He went away can only be identified as Moses and Elijah.

Then, in an inseparable respect, it would only have been natural for Moses and Elijah to have appeared at the empty tomb in this same manner, for Christ was raised on the third day, as He will be raised on the third day yet future (the third 1,000-year period). And Moses and Elijah will be with Him in that coming day.

(For additional information on Matt. 17:1-5, refer to the author’s four pamphlets, “The Son of Man Coming in His Kingdom.”)

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