

### **2023.4.9. Views from the Pews: Easter Sunday**

Our belief that God “raised him up on the third day and made him manifest” (Acts 10:40) is a glorious mystery, a gift, a joy way beyond human reason. But in this materialistic age, we struggle to answer the sceptics all around us. Here is a modern analogy that might help.

Water is a definable substance that can be found in three interchangeable states. It can switch between visible, hard ice, through a visible, liquid state, to an invisible gas and back, depending on the ambient temperature. Ice and liquid water are confined to particular locations by gravity, but water vapour surrounds us everywhere humans can live.

Suppose that the Resurrection gave Jesus the same capability of switching between visible physical and invisible spiritual states at will. From the Incarnation to the tomb, Jesus’ visible body could be only in one place as a time. But after dawn on Easter morning, he could leap from a cold, dead material body to a living spirit that could be everywhere. The angel who rolled the stone away did not need to let him out but to let people in, to see the grave clothes lying there as if he had simply vanished from within them. The cloths had not been unwound and stripped off his body, as those of Lazarus had been.

The locked door of the upper room was no barrier, because Jesus was inside all along, invisible until he chose to show his old familiar form to his astonished disciples. Likewise, he could vanish back into his invisible form with no warning, as he did at the dinner table at Emmaus (Luke 24:31). At the Ascension, he appeared in his material form for one last time, to give the disciples his commission and his blessing. They reported that he was then carried out of their sight and up to heaven, but maybe he simply switched states in front of them, leaving them in no doubt that he was still with them in spirit.

If God is all around us, as is water vapour in the air, then we breathe in God’s spirit, day and night, awake or asleep. I find this idea a helpful interpretation of the idea of God’s love as “nearer than hands and feet”. Like all analogies, it may not be literally true. But it could be a myth in the proper sense, a non-literal story containing a real, comforting truth.

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