

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **WHAT** we are to think of Josephus his Testimony of our Saviour, whether genuine or no?

Ans. We ne're yet could see any convincing reason to believe it otherwise. 'Tis found in his 18th Lib. Cap. 6. "About this time, says he, there was one Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, who wrought Miracles, and taught them who embraced the Truth with gladness. — He had many followers, both Jews and Gentiles; the same was Christ. — And tho' Pilate by the Judgment of our Elders delivered him to be Crucified, yet he had those which from the beginning loved him. He appeared unto them alive the third day after his suffering, as was fore-told by the holy Prophets. Not only these, but innumerable more wondrous things are reported of him; and even to this day the Christians encrease who took their name from him. — Thus far he, and let never any more ask the Question — why Josephus took no notice of our Saviours Appearance, Resurrection and Miracles, (*Vid. Qu.*) when he actually does take notice of 'em, and that in so noble and august a manner as we have recited. Nor wants there the most probable Arguments to prove this passage genuine. Josephus was a curious and careful Historian, he omits not the least passages, much less was he likely to do what wou'd make so much noise as this. He takes notice of John the Baptist, who was but our Saviours fore-runner, and bore witness of him — giving an account of his Birth, Preaching, Baptism, Enemies, Imprisonment, Death, and even the ends of his Persecutors. Besides, had he not been at least well-affected to the Christian Religion, and therefore likely to write at that rate; how comes he not once to speak ill of it thro'out all his Works, which the Jews were seldom very sparing of doing? Again, Eusebius quotes at large this very passage in his first Book and 12 Chap. (according to Haumers division) and after mentioning it, glories in it. — "What shift or refuge, says he, have those impudent persons who have forged Writings out of their own Brains contrary to these passages? Is it likely he wou'd talk of others Forgery, had he not been secure that what he himself produced was sincere and genuine? Besides, tho' we deny not that some forged Pieces might even by this time be spread about the Church, or at least such as were attributed to those who were none of their Authors; and tho' some things might be struck out of the Fathers, which might not please those who succeeded 'em; yet there cannot Instances be so easily given of things added unto 'em so early — at least this seems not feasible in

the Writings of Josephus, who had given so many Copies abroad, as he himself tells us; and whose Book it self was placed among the Emperors in the Publick Library. — Besides, had any such thing been done, wou'd not the Jews or Heathens have loudly re-claim'd against the Christians for such a Forgery, or at least against Eusebius for making use on't, especially when he gives them so fair an occasion, and which in a manner defies 'em all to do it?

Quest. 2. Our Saviour ascended corporally into Heaven. 'Tis said no flesh shall see God — How do these agree?

Ans. This is so frivolous a doubt, that were it not for the Querists importunity, we shou'd not think it worth an Answer. It's no where said, no flesh shall see God — But no man shall see my Face and live — yet we hope after Death the Just shall see the Face of God, and their Bodies as well as Souls shall be in Heaven. There's a place indeed somewhat like what the Querist alleges, which we are apt to believe he indeed intended — 'Tis that 1 Cor. 15. Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God — That is, the Body of man, in such a state as 'tis now, cannot enter into Glory — but 'tis added — we shall be changed into Angelicam substantiam, as Tertullian calls it — we shall be made like to Angels — nay, our vile Bodies shall be like the glorious Body of Christ.

Quest. 3. What's the meaning of that Text, Matth. 26. 29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the Vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Fathers Kingdom?

Ans. We dare not, tho' some have been of that mind, interpret this of the Time of the Millennium, lest the conceit shou'd seem too gross, tho' we are sure that Angels have eat and drunk with men, nay our Saviour did as much after his Resurrection. And indeed to that eating and drinking of his we are more inclin'd to refer this Resolution, than to any other; namely, either that with the Travellers at Emmaus, which some of the Fathers understand to have been a Sacramental Feast; however, it's probable enough they had the Fruit of the Vine, or Wine there, which was the ordinary drink of the Country. Now the time after our Saviours Resurrection, when the great work of mans Redemption was accomplisht, is sometimes call'd in the Scriptures the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven. Repent ye, says St. John Bapt. for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, namely, the Times of the Messiah, and Joseph is said to be one that waited for the Kingdom of God. Now that this is the sense thereof, and that our Saviour here refers to his future eating and drinking with his Disciples

ciples after his Resurrection, we think is pretty plain, from what we find in the same History as related by *St. Luke, chap. 22.* from *v. 16. to 18.* "I say unto you, I will not eat any more thereof (of this Passover) until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God; which seems to bear the same sense with what follows— "I will not drink of the Fruit of the Vine until the Kingdom of God shall come. He would not eat the Passover until 'twas fulfilled, that is, compleated, the Prophetical Type in the great Antitype, Christ our Passover, who being once offered for us, fulfilled that and other parts of the Typical Ceremonial Law— after which he eat the Passover again, that is, the *Ld's* Supper instituted in its room, which we ought not to believe he tarried so long as forty days with the Disciples without once celebrating; and accordingly did partake of the *Wine* as well as the *Bread*, and thus drink it anew with them in his *Fathers Kingdom*— which he refus'd to do at his last Supper, because he was approaching to the lowest Degree of his Exinanition, his Agonies in the Garden, when his Soul was exceeding sorrowful even to Death, as well as his Passion, which soon after succeeded — And here at least we may have room for a Query, tho' we lay not much stress upon't — Whether when the Souldiers gave him upon the Cross Wine mingled with Myrrh, which when he had tasted thereof, he refused to drink, whether the reason of such his refusal was not this Promise? — "That he would not drink of the Fruit of the Vine, till he drunk it in his Fathers Kingdom. We are not ignorant that several other reasons are alledged for it; but this may appear as probable as any.

Quest. 4. *Whether it were a sin in Jacob to defraud his Brother of the Blessing?*

Ans. Had he only desired old *Isaac's* Blessing, or had he got it by fair means, without repeated Lies, we think he had done nothing but what was lawful, nay commendable. Further had he desired the Blessing of the First born, this we also think he might lawfully have done, and obtained it too, because he had sometime before fairly purchased the Birth-right of his Brother *Esau*. So that he did not so properly defraud *Esau*, as *Esau* would have defrauded him, had he enjoyed the Blessing, which was a sort of a perquisite to the Birth-right, and was therefore by *Esau* formally renounced together with it, and sold for a Mess of Potrage to *Jacob*. Our Judgment then is, That *Jacob* sinned not in getting the Blessing it self, tho' he did in the manner of his getting it, and making use of Lies to obtain it.

Quest. 5. *Jeſſe is said to have eight Sons, in Sam. 16. and but seven, in 1 Chron. 2. How do you make this agree &c.*

Ans. Very easily; tho' he had not only eight, but in all eleven Sons mentioned in *Samuel*, and but seven in the *Chronicles*, it's plain he had eleven when *Samuel* came to view 'em; for he made *Eliab*, *Abinadab* and

Shamma first to pass before him. Again, he made seven of his Sons pass before him, *v. 10.* and after all the youngest, *David*, was fetched from the Field, who made up their number *Eleven*. — But if he had never so many more, they might all die, as some of 'em, no doubt, did before their Father; and therefore Four of 'em being deceas'd, and that probably without Name or Issue, the other surviving, seven are only enrolled in the *Chronicles*, and their names transmitted to Posterity.

Quest. 6. *Wherein consisted David's sin, in numbring the People?*

Ans. Some think 'twas in that he thereby seemed to attempt the falsifying or contradiction of God's Promise, who had said, they should be as the Sea shore innumerable. — But that seems but a figurative expression; and besides, they were actually number'd both when they came out of *Egypt*, and at the forty years end, as well as at their return from the Captivity, and other times besides, as we shall anon prove. Another reason which is given for't is — that his sin was Pride, and that being now with his People in a flourishing condition, his mind was too much elated, and thereupon to feed that humour more, he was resolved to have the number of his People. But it might be as well from a Political Reason, to know the strength of his People; or if a little vanity might be mixt with it, it hardly seems to deserve so severe a punishment; or if it had, how could the People be justly punished for *David's* sin? — It must then consist in somewhat wherein the People might be partakers with him, and this the Devil knew, who therefore stood up against *Israel*, and provoked *David* to number 'em, *1 Chron. 21. 1.* And this *Joab* plainly intimates, *v. 3.* "Why doth my Lord require this thing? — Why will he be a Cause of Trespass in *Israel*? Now what this Trespass was which *David* caus'd 'em to commit, we may have a fair guess from the 30th of *Exodus v. 12.* "When thou takest the sum of the Children of *Israel* after their number, then shall they give every man a Ransom for his Soul unto the Lord when thou numbrest them, — that there be no Plague amongst them when thou numbrest them. Hence we learn evidently — that if the Children of *Israel* were number'd without paying this Ransom, a Plague would follow. We are sure now that they were number'd, and that a Plague did follow; therefore we may very strongly infer, that it was for want of this Ransom, which either *David* did not require 'em to pay, the Priests being rich, and the Temple not yet built, or the haste of the work would not permit 'em to do it, which seems to be a sudden motion rais'd in his mind by the Adversary, and as suddenly imparted to *Joab*, who with the Rulers of the People only was commanded to number *Israel*, no mention being made of the High-Priest, who was present when they were first number'd by *Moses* in the Wilderness.