

John 20:30-31

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

That You Might Believe''

This afternoon we are going to focus on the glory of the Resurrection!

On Friday night we contemplated the suffering of Jesus, extinguishing a candle with each of our reflections on the words He spoke from the cross & now this morning they again burn brightly because He is risen from the dead!

- **I do not normally tell a lot of stories here in the pulpit, but there is a haunting one from my past that I think is important for today...**

So to recap, we should be able to honestly answer any questions about whether Jesus lived or was resurrected from the dead, by saying it cannot be true because such would mean I am the most miserable of people!

- **And then to quickly point out that such is NOT the case because we know that not only did Jesus live & die, but He rose from the dead.**

To have such confidence we must understand the powerful witness the Bible gives us for the Resurrection. The Apostle Paul reviews that confidence in I Corinthians 15 where he speaks about the various eyewitness accounts where the risen Jesus was seen by ‘Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once!’”

- **God gave us many eyewitnesses to what one must believe to be saved.**

It is what we must accept in all its simplicity AND know it is what we can study and meditate upon to grow in our faith and understanding until Christ returns, and perhaps beyond!

- **The bottom-line is that good and sufficient evidence has been given for us to believe that Jesus has risen from the dead... As Dr. Schaeffer often reminded us, Christian faith is NOT a leap in the dark!**

Of course there are many skeptics who object to the evidence God has given & they do so in many different ways: Some simply reject all that the Bible has to offer, just as those soldiers, who were the first eye-witnesses to the resurrection, took bribes and lied about what they saw.

Others will say that IF the resurrection was such an important event then the evidence we have is not adequate or at least not how THEY would have given proof.

They might suggest ‘better’ alternatives:

- **Like Jesus showing Himself on a mountain top for all Jerusalem to see, rather than select witnesses.**
- **Or doing the resurrection in a more modern time when it could have been recorded on a video camera!**
- **Or having Jesus appear to each and every single person the Father has called into His Kingdom.**

Now God could have done any or all of these things, but that is NOT how He chose to do things.

- So it is foolish to enter into such speculations.
- IF you answer the fool who raises such objections, you will only in the end appear foolish like him.
- We are told who the witnesses were and we are to believe them!

With that in mind, I also want to focus on an overview, or big picture: of the resurrection: The Bible gives us four accounts and it can be helpful to consider how they work together.

Such a reconciliation helps us to see the excitement, and even confusion of that Day of Resurrection!

- It can be an important tool to help us be ready to give an answer for the faith that has saved us!

There is a worksheet in the back with the parallel accounts of the resurrection from all four Gospels which you can also find on our Church or Sermon Audio webpages.

There is also a fifth column which is a summary of the events that proposes how all of the various details can be reconciled.

- I did this a number of years ago, and some ask why I went to all this trouble?

Two reasons:

- As I will review today, it helps us to see the benefit and richness of having four witnesses, for this day & the rest of the work of Jesus.
- It also answers one of the great challenges that has been leveled against the faith:

That the various accounts of the resurrection cannot be reconciled with each other... claiming they are full of contradictions!

For example, Dan Barker issued the “Easter challenge” asking Christians to “tell me exactly what happened on the day that their most important doctrine was born.”

It is interesting to note that, Mr. Barker says we should be eager to take up the challenge because “without the resurrection, there is no Christianity.”

That is exactly Paul’s point in I Corinthians 15 where he says, “if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty...

16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”

So, the Bible and the skeptics agree on one point:

No resurrection – No Christianity!

No resurrection – No salvation!

- This is why things like the Easter challenge are made & why it is important to give an answer to these fools!

The challenge from Mr. Barker was simple: “without omitting a single detail from these separate accounts, write a simple, chronological narrative of the events...”

I and others have offered such summaries which meet his challenge, but we must remember that unbelief will often still have a hardened heart...

- The soldiers who WITNESSED the resurrection did not bow in faith, but ran off and accepted bribes to tell lies.

So I do not think, without the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit, that Mr. Barker is going to read my summary and fall to his knees in repentance before the Lord of Lords, -- NO, though he certainly will bow the knee one day!

This material can be used for further study and shared with others. My summary is not the only way all of the details can be accounted for but it confirms that we have been given a faithful account.

- **It gives an answer for our faith & Lord willing strengthens our faith!**
- **So let me walk you through some the summary I presented as a means of seeing an overview of the events that occurred on that glorious day of Resurrection!**

First, we see that a group of the women who had followed Jesus begin their trip to the tomb in the dark and arrive just after sunrise.

Here is the first example of how easy it is to bring the details together without contradiction...

However, this is where some skeptics sees nothing but contradictions because all of the accounts do not have the same list of women and one speaks of it being dark while the others talk of sunrise.

In a sense, what they are demanding is that God give us ONLY the summary rather than various accounts as He chose to do!

The various texts reminds us of the richness we have in the accounts God has chosen to give us...

- **In Matthew's account we see that resurrection of Jesus brings another great earthquake**
- **An angel rolls back the stone, sits upon it and terrifies the soldiers**

The women arrive and see the stone rolled away...

I believe it is at this point that Mary Magdalene runs to tell the disciples what has happened:

- **Not often how this is presented but I think it is the best way to reconcile the accounts, because we are told that Jesus appeared first to Mary, and such details are important.**

The other women enter the tomb and see two angels: The one who sat on the stone then speaks to the women:

- **Let me stress, there is also no problem with the varying descriptions or number of angels.**

Angels can be fearful, like they were to the soldiers or appear like men as they must when we entertain one of them without even knowing it was an angel. We see these variations in these Gospel accounts... There can be two or more but only one of them speaks, so it is not a contradiction for Mark to only mention the one who is speaking!

For example, let's say, 'Tom and his uncle go to the police department to give an account of an accident they both witnessed.

After the meeting, the police officers write up what happened & could begin the report with various openings:

- **One could say, Tom came and said...**
- **Another could say, Tom and his uncle came and said...**
- **And still another could say two men came and said...**
- **All these statements would be true!**

As an aside, this is an important principle of interpretation to remember with other seemingly difficult passages, especially in the Gospels.

Coming back to the summary, the women remember how Jesus spoke of His resurrection & go to tell the others, saying nothing along the way. Mary Magdalene returns to tell the disciples the body is missing and immediately Peter and John run to the tomb.

John & Peter arrive at the tomb after the women have left:

John comes to believe and Peter goes away marveling at what he has seen!

- Mary now returns alone to the tomb after the others have left.

Mary enters and see the two angels who ask her why she is weeping:

- John makes sure we notice the fact that each angel sat at each end of the stone, just as the two cherubim were placed on either side of the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies!

We have talked about the Scriptures being like fine jewels that can be viewed from various angles... These resurrection accounts are not just recounting facts, but reminding us about the Grand story of salvation!

The reminder of the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies is followed in John's account by Mary's encounter with Jesus in a garden which should remind us of many other Biblical images that runs from Genesis to Revelation...

From where we find God walking with Adam in Eve in the Garden of Eden to the garden City of Jerusalem coming down as the Bride of Christ!

Thus it is very fitting that Jesus makes His FIRST appearance to Mary Magdalene in the beautiful garden scene where the air would have been filled with the fragrance of all the spices used to wrap the body of Jesus on the day of His burial!

- Your homework: Review how this beautiful scene is foretold in the Song of Solomon

Mary now returns to tell the disciples the Good News!

Jesus then makes His 2nd appearance to the other women who are still on their way to the disciples... Jesus confirms what they heard from the angels:

- The women continue on to tell the disciples the Good News!
- Interesting to note that these women are not believed.

This is where having the four witnesses gives us a better feel for the excitement and confusion of that day.

Luke refers to Peter's trip to the tomb, and we know that Jesus makes an appearance to Peter at some point, but we are given no details.

Jesus meets the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, explaining to them that they should have known about all these events from the Law & the Prophets!

- A great reminder for all of us to study the Old Testament!

Those disciples return to Jerusalem after the women have returned as well as Peter:

- The other disciples are in turmoil proclaiming what happened BUT at the same time really not believing it!

Again, I would argue that the various accounts showing both belief and unbelief present the more accurate picture of confusion & excitement about the events that happened on that important day!

- Soon after this Jesus makes an appearance to those who are now gathered in Jerusalem.

Mark, Luke and John give the details of what Jesus said during this appearance.

- Jesus showed them His wounds and ate in their presence confirming His physical bodily resurrection!

And finally, Matthew tells us what happened with the soldiers who were at the tomb during the resurrection giving us a clear contrast of belief and unbelief...

The soldiers refuse to acknowledge the very event they witnessed...

Just like these modern skeptics who are paid to write books and give lectures intended to destroy the faith of many!

- This is contrasted with the faithful disciples who, though they had doubts, would go on to give their very lives defending the truth of the resurrection in the coming years as they took the Gospel to all the world!

John goes on to give the account of Jesus visiting the Disciples with Thomas a week later which we will review at the Table this afternoon.

Then we come to our text for this afternoon:

“30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Paul writing to the Corinthians confirmed what John said: We have life in His name IF we hold true to what was preached: “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures...”

As I pointed out earlier:

- The world’s skeptics and the Apostle Paul agree that the resurrection is the KEY!

Let us not be those who seek to tear this truth down, or even be those who would be silent in the presence of such attacks!

Let us be those who with Paul boldly proclaim the life-giving truth of the Gospel...

Christ is risen!

Communion Meditation: John 20

We do not know where Thomas was on that first Easter, but when he was told about the Resurrection he declared, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

Jesus returns the next week says to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.””