

Sunday, April 12, 2020

Bible Study Resurrection Sunday

The Text: READ Luke 24:1-8; Matthew 28:8-10; and John 20:6-7

The Gospels and book of Acts contain many reports of appearances of the resurrected Jesus. Also, Paul gives a detailed account (though he omits Jesus' appearance to the women just outside the tomb) of many such appearances in his letter to the Corinthians (*1 Corinthians 15:3-8*). Even so, how do we know the truth of the resurrection?

Scientific proof is achieved by putting forth a hypothesis, observing the event in a controlled environment, and gathering data to be studied in the light of the hypothesis. Results are then considered accurate if, when the experiment is repeated, the same results are achieved. The resurrection of Jesus cannot be proved from a scientific perspective. Instead, it requires a historical perspective, through the record of eye-witness accounts. As with any historical event, eye-witness testimony is paramount to establishing its validity.

The first to give testimony to the resurrection were women who found the tomb empty. Then, the two on the road to Emmaus had their own encounter with the risen Jesus. Then the disciples in the upper room. In 1 Corinthians Paul tells us that Jesus appeared to more than 500 believers at one time. And while he does not walk among us in flesh and blood any more, he is still with us. Each of us, I hope, has had an encounter with the risen Lord.

Each of us, just as those who first followed Jesus, are the living proof of the resurrection. In Paul's case, an encounter with the risen Lord turned the most vigorous persecutor of the early Church into its most fervent evangelist. Paul's very life gave testimony to the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The reason for this is that resurrection brings New Life. It doesn't dust off or hose down the old life. The old life must die in order for the new life to begin. There can be no resurrection unless there has been a death. Jesus' death brought new life. And Jesus' new life, became Paul's new life. Dead to self, alive in Christ! That new life is ours also.

If those around us are going to believe our claim that we worship a living God, Jesus the Christ...they will have to see the resurrection in us. If we possess it, that new life in Christ will be visible in our lives. Is there "new life" in your life?

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I think the Upper Room (*Mark 14:12-17*) can give us an illustration of how we can allow the light and the life of the Resurrection to penetrate even into the ordinariness of our lives, helping us to live the resurrection every day of the year. That room became a very special place for the first believers. It was not only the place that Jesus and his disciples celebrated passover that last night. It became something of a sanctuary in those early days.

The disciples returned to that room immediately after the crucifixion and it was to that room the women ran on Resurrection morning. It was in that room where the two from Emmaus reported seeing Jesus and where Jesus himself appeared to his disciples. It was in this room that the church was born and the scriptures were opened up to them to understand. It was in this room that they were given the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prior to their first gathering in the Upper Room, when Jesus' disciples asked the master of the house about the room, the owner didn't hem and haw and make excuses for it not being ready. He could have, like so many of us, made the appropriate excuses about how he had meant for it to be ready, to give Jesus even the best room. Maybe come back tomorrow, it will be ready tomorrow. Well, tomorrow would have been too late. Tomorrow Jesus was on the cross!! What foolishness on his part had his room not been ready when it was requested.

How about your room? Is it ready...TODAY? Oh listen, a furnished room is best, but trust me, if there is anything in there that doesn't suit Jesus' decorating taste (that is, his values and the culture of the kingdom of God), he will help you to carry it out and put it on the curb with the rest of the trash.

When Jesus' disciples went to town on an errand from him, they found that the master of the house had prepared a large, upper room, furnished and ready (*Mark 14:15*). It was waiting for them, whenever they needed it. And it appears that they returned to it often. It was the place where they were able to make sense of the resurrection, and allow its power to imbue their lives with newness and strength.

How about you? Have you given Jesus a large, upper room furnished and ready? If not, why not? The power of the resurrection and your ability to give testimony to its reality can be found in such a space, if you would give it to him.

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Questions for Further Reflection

Read Luke 24:1-8

Given everything that has happened in the last few days (*see Luke 19:28-48; 22:47-58; 23:26-56*), what might the women be feeling as they go to the tomb? If you had experienced all that they have, what might you be feeling? What would be your immediate thought at finding the tomb empty? Would you be awestruck, amazed, or absolutely frightened at the sight of two men dressed in ‘lightning suits’? The two messengers remind the women that Jesus had already told them of his resurrection. Verse 8 tells us, “Then they remembered his (Jesus’) words.” As you remember Jesus’ words, which bring you hope, comfort, and peace during sorrowful and dark times?

Read Matthew 28:8-10

Verse 8 tells us that the women left the tomb “afraid yet filled with joy” when “suddenly” Jesus met them. How do you think you would have reacted if you had been there? Why do you think Jesus appeared to the women before he appeared to his own disciples? In light of scripture passages like Deuteronomy 6:13-15 what is the significance of the fact that the women worshiped Jesus?

Read John 20:6-7

Is the empty tomb evidence of the resurrection, or are the many appearances of the resurrected Jesus (*1 Corinthians 15:3-8*) evidence that the tomb was indeed empty? Is there a difference? What other explanations might there be for an “empty tomb” (*see Matthew 27:62-66, 28:11-15*)? Is it significant to us that Peter especially observed that the burial cloth and strips of linen were lying folded and apart from one another in the empty tomb (v. 7)? If someone had stolen Jesus’ body, is it likely that they would have unwrapped it and folded the burial cloths? What conclusion might Peter have had if the tomb had been **completely** empty?

Jesus’ Resurrection

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you? Does it make a difference to you? Where would you say that your spiritual life is currently focussed: The gloom of Good Friday? The joy of Easter Sunday? Or somewhere in between? What hope (and perhaps joy) does the resurrection of Jesus offer those of us who mourn the loss of a loved one (*see 1 Corinthians 15:12-23*)? What is your proof that Jesus rose from the dead? Where can evidence of Jesus’ resurrection be found today? Is there evidence of Jesus’ resurrection in your own life?