

John 20:1-29 “A Resurrection of Hope”

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor
Michael Gunn on September 23rd, 2007

*“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. **And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins”**
1 Corinthians 15:12-17*

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”

Romans 6:4-10

“The original accounts of Buddha never ascribe to him any such thing as a resurrection; in fact, in the earliest accounts of his death, namely the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, we read that when Buddha died it was ‘with that utter passing away in which nothing whatever remains behind.’”

Wilbur M. Smith

“Part of the validation of faith, is the truthfulness of faith’s object”

D.A. Carson

Intro

We have seen that Christ’s death and burial was purposed by God to kill our sins, and bring forth justice in His cross, and because of that we are free to live for God, and live with Him eternally! Today we will take a look at the importance of the resurrection, without which there would be no power in the promises that God makes to us in His Son, and we’d be dead in our sins, still working our way to a god that is impotent. I think we need to believe that the resurrection is historically true, so that we can apply its powerful reality in the living of our life here on earth. Did you know that you are empowered with the same source to live your life as God wills? Let’s reconstruct the resurrection, and let its truth set us free!

From the Head...

The Importance of the Resurrection

As 1 Corinthians 15:12-17 teaches us the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of our faith! It is not an after thought of the fledgling church; it is the key doctrine that the church preached (**1Corinthians 1:23; Acts 1:22; 4:2, 33; 17:18**).

The Reconstruction of the Resurrection

For 2000 years (Especially in the past 300 years) the major attack on the reliability and viability of the Christian faith has been against the historical reliability of the resurrection. No other religious leader in history has claimed for themselves that they would be killed and raised from the dead, and actually rose from the dead. Even stories of risen gods like Osiris (Egyptian god) are dated much later, are not rooted in historical reality, and are so fanciful that they are truly mythological. It is also important to see that Osiris’ alleged resurrection is attached to fertility and agricultural seasons, and has nothing to do with salvation and hope. The story of Jesus is steeped in historically verified facts (Men like Pilate are historically accounted for; crucifixion and burial rites have been corroborated through archaeology, etc.), as well as. Eyewitness accounts from hundreds that are hard to dismiss out of hand. There is also no religion that has had any prophecies by prophets, or their founder in regards to their own death and resurrection (**Psalm 22; Matthew 16:21; 17:9, 22, 23; 20:18,19; 26:32; Mark 9:10; Luke 9:22-37; John 2:18-22; 12:34, etc.**). Though there are numerous theories that attack the resurrection there is one persistent one that attacks the internal testimony of the scriptures, especially in the seemingly contradictory accounts of John’s gospel in light of the synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke). I would like to reconstruct a biblical harmony that strengthens the eyewitness account of resurrection event with credibility. Some of the main contradictions are discrepancies in how many women went to the tomb? (**Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1**), and who was at the tomb? (**Matthew 28:2; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:11, 12**). There also seems to be sequence problems like Matthew reporting that the women departed with “*great joy*,” (**Matthew 28:8**) while John reports that Mary left the tomb and cried (**John 20:11**). The eyewitness accounts report what they saw and remembered, not that

they were placing the events in perfect sequenced events, but I do think as you look at the evidence in the gospels fairly, you begin to see an outline of the events as they were. It's pretty cool!

The Resurrection; A Reconstruction

After the Sabbath¹ early in the morning² Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome³ walked to the tomb wondering who would move the huge stone over the grave (**Mark 16:3**), but when they got to the tomb they found that the stone had been rolled away (**Luke 24:2**), because of an earthquake that morning (**Matthew 28:2**). When they went inside they only saw one young man dressed in white and they were alarmed (**Mark 16:6**).⁴ The angel/man said, "*Don't be afraid, you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. Go tell His disciples and Peter that He has risen from the dead, and He is going before you into Galilee*" (**Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:6**).

*"While they were wondering about this⁵, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " Then they remembered his words" (**Luke 24:4-8**).*

So the women departed in fear and Joy. They didn't quite know what to make of it (**Matthew 28:8; Mark 16:8**).

They then came running to do what they were told, which was find and tell Peter and the disciples (**John 20:2**). As would have been the case, they did not believe the women (**Luke 24:11**) and ran to the tomb themselves (**Luke 24:12; John 20: 3-4**). "*So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen⁶. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed (**They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead**)⁷. Then the disciples went back to their homes" (**John 20:3-10**).*

After this Mary was distraught until Jesus appeared to her.⁸ This, I suspect would be a normal reaction to the morning's event. She is confused and hurt. Where joy and fear once was, she now was depressed. So she sat outside the tomb (Her second time there) and wept, looking one last time in the tomb, hoping to see her messiah again (John 20:11). Right when she did this, "*two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"*

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him. At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary."

*She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Raboni!" (Which means Teacher). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (**John 20:12-17**).*

And then Jesus appeared to the other women (**Matthew 28:8-10**), before He appeared to any of the disciples (**Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-29**).⁹

¹ That would be Sunday morning

² Some reflect that it was dawn; some say it was dark, while others say it was just after sunrise. This is the state of dawning that they were in. There is both a dark moment on the way and a light moment in a matter of seconds

³ Some just say women, others have 1, 2, or 3 women in attendance

⁴ According to Matthew 28:5 it was an angel

⁵ The time lapse here is unknown, but the two events are dissimilar

⁶ This, along with its severe improbability, indicates that they were not at the wrong tomb, as some have claimed.

⁷ This is not fully understood until Jesus proves it to them (**Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-29**)

⁸ Note that Mary was the first one that Jesus appeared to (**Luke 16:9**).

⁹ The fact that the women are the first eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection is in of itself a reason to believe that this story isn't fabricated since women's testimonies were not considered valid in a court room at that time. The bible is merely recording the facts, and if one wanted to fabricate the truth, they would use prominent men as the first eyewitnesses.

So Mary and the women did what Jesus said, and told the disciples that He is risen (**Matthew 28: 10; John 20: 17**).

The Significance of the Resurrection

Last week we saw the importance of the death and burial of our Lord Jesus, and how we are symbolically buried with Christ (Romans 6:4) reminding us that our "Old Self/Sin" has been killed off. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so also in His resurrection we are raised with Him in the newness of life and will live forever (**Romans 6:5,9**). It is the thing that gives us great hope. It is the foundation of our faith, and the reason I believe it has been under so much attack over the years. It is a demonstration of God's power over death and authenticates the divine ministry of Jesus Christ (**see Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:55**).

The fact is, the disciple's lives were transformed, the church was created with the story of the resurrection, and millions of people for 2000 years have been changed with the power and the hope of the resurrection in their lives! None of this would even be possible if Christ wasn't physically risen from the dead. It is God's power displayed in the resurrection that gives us power to live the life God has called us and transformed us to live. It is His resurrection to eternal life that gives us great hope as we toil here on earth.

The Mission of the Resurrection

In John 19-23, we see the purpose and result of the resurrection in God's people's lives. We are called to be sent like Him (**John 20:21**), and to forgive like Him. It is because of Christ that we have peace with God (**Romans 5:1**), which begins with Him forgiving our sins debt in Christ and His cross, and we are to live in light of this event before others.

...To the Heart

Christ's resurrection is an historically true event, but its significance is beyond the physical. Christ is raised to demonstrate His sonship and show us His power. The Holy Spirit that is given us a result is the same power that rose Him from the dead (**Romans 1:4**). It is His power that exists in us so that we could live the life that God calls us to (**2 Peter 1:3**). Do we believe that? Or are we like Thomas in need of rational proof of everything about God before we believe, because we believe that our reason is the main arbiter of any truth?

For Further Reading: *"The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John"* William Barclay; *"The Gospel of John,"* F.F. Bruce; *"The New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of John,"* William Hendriksen; *"Preaching the Word; John: That You May Believe,"* R. Kent Hughes; *"The NIV Application Commentary: John,"* Gary M. Burge; *"The Pillar NT Commentary: The Gospel According to John,"* D.A. Carson; *"The Word Biblical Commentary on John"* George R. Beasley-Murray; *"Evidence That Demands a Verdict,"* Josh McDowell; *"Did Jesus Rise From the Dead (A Debate),"* Habermas and Flew; *"The Son Rises,"* William Lane Craig.

Next Weeks Verses: John 20:30–21:25

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