

WEEK EIGHTEEN

Yes, He Arose

William Edward Biederwolf

I always feel when I approach the subject of the resurrection as though God were saying, "Take off thy shoes from thy feet, for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground," and I bow with uncovered head in the presence of a subject wrapped round about with such divine glory, awful majesty and solemn, soul-moving awe as this one.

there are interesting subjects connected with the Christian religion, but there are none more interesting than the resurrection. There are

other important subjects, but hardly any so important as this one, for, "If Christ be not risen, there is our preaching in vain," and, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," and this Gospel I preach is fake and it isn't worth a half a hallelujah more than Buddhism or Theosophy or Unitarianism or Christian Science or any other system of ethics as a religion to save your soul and keep it out of Hell.

They laid Him in the tomb and said, "We'll seal it

and put a roman guard about it because He said He would rise. We will fix Him and show the world He was a faker." That's what they said, and that's what they did.

But do you remember about old King Chanute's going down to the beach and commanding the tide not to roll in? Well, that was a dead easy thing to expect compared with expecting that Jesus would stay in the grave when He had said He would rise! For the bars of death could not hold Him.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST:
THE RESURRECTION

LADIES FIRST

The resurrection is the exclamation point of the gospel! It is the resurrection that separates our faith from the false religions of the world. Every claim of Christ hinges upon the resurrection of Jesus. A dead Savior signifies a dead religion. A living Savior is the emblem of a living faith.

I am struck by the fact that Mary Magdalene was the first to find Christ. It wasn't Peter, James or John. The first to lay eyes upon the resurrected Savior was not among the twelve. It was a godly lady who appeared even to them as a simple babbling woman.

What was so spectacular about Mary? What separated her from the rest? How did she find herself in such a unique position?

When we investigate her past we find Mary to be a woman of ill-repute. Her name first appears in Luke chapter eight. There we discover that she had been possessed with seven devils. While there is no proof, many suggest that she is the same woman found in the previous chapter. This is the woman that Simon the Pharisee labels as "a sinner."

Jesus says something different about her. He pronounces her forgiven of much and filled with much love.

Search for Mary Magdalene in the Scriptures and you will always find her in the company of other believers. She loved to be around God's people. That was her crowd.

While Peter was denying Christ she was weeping at the foot of the cross. She was among the last to leave His side, following Him all the way to the tomb (Mark 15:47).

She arose early to seek Him after the Sabbath. "Those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17b). Because of her continuing commitment and compassion for the Savior, she was the first to fall at His feet after the resurrection.

Like many modern Christian ladies, Mary was committed. Nothing, not even death, could come between her and her Savior. I believe she was first because Christ was first in her heart. He had a place of pre-eminence that she would not surrender. There is great reward for such passion!

DAILY READING: Mark 16:1-8, Matthew 28:1-10,
Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-18

DAY
1

Cities/Places

1. Who brought sweet spices to anoint Jesus?
2. On what day of the week did they go?
3. What surprise did they find in the sepulchre?
4. Who was the first to see the risen Jesus?
5. Describe the angel.
6. Where were the disciples told to meet Jesus?
7. What mixed emotions did the ladies have?
8. How did the disciples receive the news?
9. Who ran to the sepulchre?
10. What does Rabboni mean?

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

BE A BUMBLEBEE



I can't recall a passage filled with more irony than this. Imagine yourself being Cleopas or his companion. By the time you realized just Who it was you were speaking to, He is gone! Then you begin to think about the things you have said.

Recall their manner of speech when Jesus approached. They were sad. They were disappointed. They were faithless.

There is one word I'm certain they would have retracted if that had known it was Jesus. In fact, they would have been satisfied with simply eliminating a two letter suffix. They would have felt so much better if they had said "We trust" rather than "We trusted."

They had allowed contemporary events to daunt their faith. The evidence seemed to

have contradicted their once held beliefs. It was scientifically impossible to raise from the dead and His death was a factual event. It was indisputable.

Facts, however, are funny things. What people consider to be facts are quite often fiction. Their conclusions are based on perceptions and probabilities derived from limited knowledge and experience.

While the evidence may seem strong, there is always something missing from the equation that human reasoning cannot account for.

A common myth is that the flight of a bumble bee is scientifically impossible. But we all know that a bumble bee does fly. The early origins of this myth are based upon premature and hasty scientific

calculations. However, other scientists have proven that it is indeed possible for the bumble bee to fly.

In the meantime, the bumble bee never paid any attention to the arguments of the scientists and just kept on flying! He never lost faith. In fact, he was unaware that doubt ever existed.

Christians should heed this example. At one time the scientists told us the earth was flat while the Scriptures told us differently (Isaiah 40:22). Any "evidence" that contradicts the Scriptures is incomplete.

Cleopas and his companion learned to maintain their faith no matter what the evidence suggests. Doubting the Scriptures has never been a rewarding experience.

DAILY READING:

Matthew 28:11-15, Mark 16:12-13
Luke 24:13-35

1. What did the council bribe the soldiers to say?
2. How did He appear to two others?
3. Who did not believe?
4. To which village were these two disciples headed?
5. Give one of their names.
6. What did Jesus notice about their manner of speech?
7. What one word indicates that they had lost their faith (it was a thing of the past)?
8. Why did Jesus call them fools?
9. What did Jesus expound?
10. What effect did God's Word have upon them?

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

DAY
2

Cities/Places

BELIEVING IS SEEING

People tend to fear that which they have difficulty comprehending. Apprehension takes over when reason fails. It was impossible for this to be the "real" Jesus, they reasoned. Therefore, it must be some apparition.

Seeing isn't believing after all. They saw Him, yet they still feared in unbelief.

The crucifixion had been brutal. There was no surviving that. His visage was so marred that He was unrecognizable (Isaiah 52:14). Deep lacerations and enormous bruises had marked His corpse. But a recognizable image of Jesus appeared before them. The only explanation was an apparition.

Even today, some rumor that it was a spiritual resurrection rather than a bodily one. They diminish the miraculous power of the resurrection. They then carry this fallacy on to limit our resurrection to a spiritual, allegorical, nonsensical

resurrection rather than the real deal Jesus promised. The resurrection is both spiritual and physical. A spiritual resurrection would only fit half of the equation. It is in a spiritual body! (1 Corinthians 15:44)

The resurrected Jesus retained those wounds that were most precious to Him. Wounded warriors are never ashamed of their scars. They are emblems of courage. They are marks of manliness. They are lifelong declarations of bravery and courage. They symbolize the sacrifices that they were not afraid to make.

The nail pierced hands and feet along with His sword pierced side mark the Man Who is God in the flesh. He would not relinquish these wounds. They were retained as eternal tokens of God's love for the world. They are reminders of His sufficient sacrifice. They are the wounds of the ultimate Warrior Who has conquered death and the grave. (1 Corinthians 15:26,

54-58)

These the wounds eased the doubts of the disciples and smote the conscience of Thomas. What's the difference? While some were ready to believe, he was ready to doubt. Their faith was weak while his disbelief was strong. Thomas needed proof while the others simply needed assurance.

Broken, Thomas receives the truth regretting that he ever doubted. He was angry and and ashamed of his unbelief. Yet, I believe, he was grateful that Christ would still reveal Himself to him.

Then Jesus pronounces a marvelous blessing on those whose faith needs no proof.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1

DAILY READING: Luke 24:36-43, Mark 16:14, John 20:19-31

1. What was the first word of Jesus to His disciples?
2. What evidence did Jesus offer to demonstrate that He was not a spirit?
3. What three portions of Scripture did Jesus say prophesied of this event?
4. Why did Jesus upbraid His disciples?
5. Which day of the week did Jesus first appear to the disciples?
6. In what manner did Jesus say He sends His disciples?
7. As He breathed on them, what did they receive?
8. Who was missing?
9. How many days later did He appear again?
10. Who is more blessed than Thomas?
11. Why did John write this gospel?

APPLICATION

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DAY
3

Cities/Places

FOLLOW ME

The Apostle John closes his gospel with all attention on Peter and Jesus. This is a story of hope and renewal.

Ironically, Mark's gospel, which relies heavily on Peter's account, doesn't share this incident. Perhaps Peter was not so prone to sharing this event. Perhaps it was too personal.

Can you see Peter as he tries to share this with John Mark's listening ears. As he begins to speak "And Jesus asked me... 'Pe..Peter...'", his lips would begin to tremble and tears would stream down his cheeks. He would swallow hard and take a deep breath. After a long pause, Mark would look into his watery eyes and say "Maybe later, Peter. You can tell me later."

By the time Mark wrote his gospel, he may have never heard this account in full. Some twenty-five years later, John is filling in the blanks. He is shedding light on details not found in the synoptic gospels and he tells us of Peter's final discourse with Christ.

The English language falls short in

conveying the nuance in this dialog. We use the same word to describe our romantic affection for our spouse, our brotherly love for family and friends and our fascination with our favorite meal. In every instance, we could use the word "love."

The Greek language, however, makes a distinction between *agape* and *phileo*: two words translated as love. *Agape* would describe the highest form of love. It is selfless and sacrificial. *Phileo* describes a fondness or strong liking.

Jesus begins by asking Peter "Do you *agape* me?"

Peter is humble now. He does not want to make any claims he can't back up. He has done that already. Denying Christ revealed to Peter his own weakness. He wants to say "Yes! Of course, I *agape* You!" But he remembers his last such boasting. So in humility he replies, "I *phileo* you."

Jesus asks again with the same response. Then the third time, Jesus asks, "Do you *phileo* me? This is when Peter loses it. He is grieved

because Jesus had to lower the standard.

Now that Peter is broken, Jesus reveals to Peter that he will indeed reveal his *agape* love for Christ in his death. Then he says "Follow Me."

I believe Peter's heart was revived by those words. Jesus had to break him, so He could remake him. Those were the same words Jesus used when He first called Peter. I'm sure that he feared that he had lost his calling. He was sure that Jesus would not use one who denied Him three times during His most crucial hour. Those words, "follow me," renewed Peter's aspirations. He was thrilled to know that he would glorify God in his death.

Then we see a little more of his competitive spirit when he asks about John. The response He gives reminds Peter that his calling is individual. It doesn't matter what anyone else does. "Follow THOU Me!"

Regardless of what anyone else does be sure that YOU follow Jesus!

DAILY READING: John 21

1. How many disciples did what for how long with what result?
2. Which disciple was first to recognize the Lord?
3. What was Peter's response?
4. How many fish did they catch?
5. What question did Jesus ask Peter three times?
6. How did Peter respond?
7. What did Jesus reveal to Peter?
8. What rumor started?
9. What calling did Christ renew with Peter?

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

DAY
4

Cites/Places

COMMENCEMENT

The world was His classroom. The storm-tossed Sea of Galilee, a graveyard in Gadara, the shade of a fig tree, a pharisee's home, the tomb of Lazarus, the baptismal waters of Jordan, upper rooms, mountain tops and desert places all were part of the Savior's Seminary. He wrote with a finger in the sand rather than upon a chalkboard. He preferred the power of prayer over PowerPoint. He gave a hand up rather than a handout.

For three and a half years they learned from the heart of God, Himself. Their Master Instructor then took the stage as the commencement Speaker.

Commencement. Every student looks forward to graduation as a completion of their education. They are ready to sing "It is finished! The Battle is over!"

Yet as they prepare to transfer their

tassel from left to right they listen to a wise-hearted speaker who delivers a news flash: "This is just the beginning! Everything prior to this point was to prepare you for what you are about to do."

There was no valedictorian speech. There were no awards given. Pomp and Circumstance had not even been written. But this was the most significant commencement address ever delivered! We call it the Great Commission.

Too frequently we omit the most important part of the Great Commission. It begins "All power is given unto me."

Exousia, translated as power, implies privilege, mastery, jurisdiction, authority, liberty and strength. All power belongs to Jesus. It is only by His power that we can accomplish His commission. With His power, we cannot fail.

His command is three-fold. Our first priority is to preach/teach the gospel. This is the foundational work of the church. Next, we are commanded to publicly identify them with Christ and the church through baptism. (Acts 2:41, 47) Finally, we are to instruct them in the Scriptures, teaching them to duplicate themselves in the church (2 Timothy 2:2).

Are you ready for commencement? Jesus Christ has a commission for you. In fact, this is not just their commission it is yours. This commencement speech is just as much for you as it was for them.

The second chapter of Acts reveals that they took this charge seriously. Their time is past. Our time is now.

Let us commence.

DAILY READING:

Mark 16:15-20, Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 24:44-53, Acts 1-2

DAY
5

Cities/Places

1. Which part of the world are we commanded to go to?
2. What happens to those who do not believe?
3. Does Jesus say what happens to those who are not baptized? Does this tell us anything about baptismal regeneration (salvation through baptism)?
4. What did the disciples do?
5. How were they commanded to baptize?
6. For how long does Jesus promise to be with us?
7. What word does Luke tie with the remission of sins?
8. How far did Jesus go with the disciples?
9. How did Jesus show Himself alive?
10. How does Acts 2 demonstrate their obedience to the Great Commission?

APPLICATION

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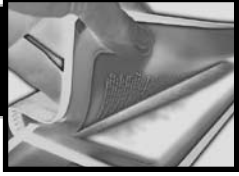


TABLE TALK



PASTOR'S MESSAGE