

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 9TH, 2023 // RESURRECTION WEEKEND

THE EMPTY TOMB (JOHN 20:1-10) WE CAN TRUST IN CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

The historical evidence for Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is overwhelming.

- Several **non-Christian historians and writers** (Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Maimonides, and the Jewish Sanhedrin) all **wrote about Jesus, His claims, and eventual crucifixion** in Judea during the first century A.D. under Pontius Pilate.

WE CAN TRUST THE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

"...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then **he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive**, but some have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15: 3-6).

THE STOLEN BODY HYPOTHESIS

The disciples "**did not yet understand the scripture that He must rise from the dead**" (v.9), so when they approached the tomb, **they assumed someone had stolen the body of Jesus.**

- The soldiers who guarded the tomb were bribed to claim that **the disciples came during the night and stole His body** (Matthew 28:13-14).

THE STOLEN BODY HYPOTHESIS DEBUNKED

If the disciples were the ones who removed Jesus' body as the soldiers claimed, then **they would have been complicit in the hoax of faking a resurrection and would have never suffered the way they did for a lie.**

- If His body was removed, it would have **eventually been found or been used to expose a hoax** to fake the resurrection.

JESUS IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS!

The miracle of the resurrection proves that Jesus is unlike any other man.

- The resurrection validates all claims about who Jesus is. Jesus is the **Son of God and the Messiah**, and the resurrection was the "**sign from Heaven**" (Matthew 16:1-4). He is the **perfect and sinless "Holy One"** (Psalm 16:10; Acts 13:38-39).

HE LIVES!

Those who resurrected previously eventually died a second time.

- We can go to Him in our time of need because He lives and is active today. Because He was born and lived as a man, **we have an accessible Savior who can empathize with our weaknesses and temptations** (Hebrews 4:15).

THE CURSE OF SIN IS DEFEATED!

Since Jesus was raised from the dead, we know His sacrifice was sufficient (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).

- The Fall in the Garden of Eden sealed our fate of certain death (Genesis 2:17), but Jesus paid the balance that is due for our sins (Romans 6:23). **The cross was the payment, and the resurrection is the proof of payment** (1 Peter 2:24).

WE CAN EXPERIENCE THE RESURRECTION!

Since Jesus was raised from the dead, Believers will be raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12-15).

- We will be raised to eternal life with Him (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Jesus told Martha, the sister of Lazarus, "**I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die**" (John 11:25-26).
- We will experience a future resurrection, where we receive glorified bodies, but we can be permanently changed here and now.
- How do you explain the sudden and dramatic change in people like Paul and James? **The resurrection of Jesus brings us from spiritual death to a new life in Him** (2 Corinthians 5:17).

MARY WAS FAR FROM HIM (JOHN 20:11-18) MARY OF MAGDALENE

The city of Magdalene was known for rampant prostitution. This, coupled with Luke mentioning Mary immediately after the account of a sinful woman (Luke 7:37), led people to assume that Mary was a prostitute.

- We do know that Mary was demon-possessed. "**He appeared to Mary first, from whom He did cast out seven demons**" (Mark 16:9).

JESUS APPEARED TO WOMEN FIRST

At least three women were the first to witness an empty tomb, and they were sent to tell the others.

- Culturally, a woman's testimony would not have been considered valid. If a hoax was planned, a woman would not have been chosen to testify to the claims of resurrection.

"YOU ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS."

Jesus shattered cultural barriers and created equality between all people regardless of gender (Galatians 3:28). It was no mistake that the resurrected Jesus revealed Himself to Mary first.

- Jesus reveals himself to the heartbroken and hurting, and He offers hope in hopeless situations.

THOMAS DOUBTS HIM (JOHN 20:19-29) AN INCOMPLETE MEMORIAL

Thomas is forever memorialized by his moment of doubting and questioning, yet **his loyalty and commitment** to Christ are all but forgotten.

- When Jesus returned to Bethany to see Lazarus, the disciples tried to talk Jesus out of going because of death threats, but it was Thomas who said, "**Let's go too so that we may die with Him**" (John 11:16).

HE DOUBTED BUT IS NOT A DOUBTER

Thomas was committed yet had doubts and questions, as we all occasionally do.

- Instead of rebuking Thomas for his questions, **He knew and provided what Thomas needed to believe.** Jesus has never asked anyone to follow Him blindly because He has proven who He is. To have **genuine faith does not keep us from genuine questions.**

PETER DENIES HIM (JOHN 21:1-19) TURNED FROM RASH REACTIONS INTO A LEADER

Peter would become a "pillar" of the early Church, though His life was full of failures and mistakes.

- Peter sank in water when he took his eyes off Jesus (Matthew 14:28-30), he rebuked Jesus for speaking about His death (Matthew 16:22), he wanted to build tabernacles when Jesus transfigured (Matthew 17:4-6), and he cut a soldier's ear off for trying to arrest Jesus (John 18:10-11).

RESTORED AND FORGIVEN

Peter boasted that he would never forsake Jesus even if everyone else did (Matthew 26:33), only to deny Him three times (Matthew 26:70-74).

- We see Jesus rebuild and restore Peter to the man He was making him into all along. **Jesus offers us the same redemption from our past failures and forgives our unfaithfulness** (2 Timothy 2:13).

RECEIVE HIM

- He reveals Himself to those with checkered pasts, those who are full of doubt, and those ashamed of past mistakes.
- Do we see ourselves in those Christ revealed Himself to at the resurrection?
- Once we see the necessity of a risen Savior, then we can choose to receive Him.

TRUST HIM

- The evidence is all around us if we choose to see it. There is nothing wrong with a genuine quest for truth.
- The resurrection proves that He is who He says He is.
- Because He has resurrected as He said He would, we can trust that He will do what He says He will do.

WALK IN HIM

- Romans 6:4 tells us, "**...just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a newness of life.**"
- We have been set free from every sin. (Acts 13:38-39).
- "...I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).