

Session 5

April 4, 2021

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

John 20:3-9, 19-23, 27-29

A church historian once said, “If Christ is risen, nothing else matters. And if Christ is *not* risen, nothing else matters.” That’s how important the resurrection really is.

We Monday morning quarterbacks often belittle the Lord’s disciples for their lack of support on Good Friday and their lack of belief on Easter Sunday. But I often wonder where I would have been in all of that. Would I have slipped into the shadows when Jesus was arrested? Would I have denied I knew Him when He was on trial? Would I have laid low while His cross was being raised? Would I have cowered in the corner when He arose from the dead? I guess I will never know. But this I *do* know: Jesus Christ is alive, and He appeared physically and bodily to His disciples.

There were those who were seeking (vv. 3-9). In contrast to the solemn tranquility looming over the garden all day Saturday, Sunday morning arrived with a burst of activity. In verse 1, Mary Magdalene arrived early to find the stone rolled away from Christ’s tomb. In verse 2, she *ran* back to tell the disciples. Even the verb tense is active; literally “*she runs*.” Can’t you picture her hiking up her skirt and sprinting back into town? At the news that His body was gone, Peter and John took off, again, *running* to the tomb (v. 4). John was a bit faster and *outran* Peter. He stopped abruptly at the tomb and peeked in, but Peter hustled on past him and entered the tomb, where he found the burial shroud and headpiece. The description is significant for two reasons. First, this indicated the body had not been stolen. If it had, the linens would have been gone as well. Second, the headpiece was separate and folded, indicating the deliberate care and control of the One who removed it. Up till this point, there were still some misunderstandings (v. 9). But now, John (the author of the account) confesses the evidence is enough...and he believes (v. 8). For reflection: *Some say the famous Shroud of Turin is the burial cloth of Christ. What evidence from this passage might refute that claim?*

There were those who were hiding (vv. 19-23). In contrast to the anxious activity of the morning sprint to the garden tomb, is the quiet fear that came in the evening. While John and Peter had at least gone to check things out, the rest of the disciples (except for Thomas, v. 24) apparently remained in fearful hiding with the doors locked (v. 19). Suddenly, Jesus appeared in their midst. In this scene, Jesus brought about four significant changes. First, He replaced their fear with rejoicing (v. 20). Second, He replaced their complacency with a commission (v. 21). Third, He replaced His physical presence with the promise of His spiritual presence (v. 22). Just as God breathed into Adam the breath of life giving him physical vitality (Gen. 2:7), Jesus breathed on them—in a foreshadowing of Pentecost (see Acts 1:8 and its fulfillment in Acts 2:1-4)—promising them spiritual vitality. Finally, Jesus replaced their passive acceptance of the message with the responsibility of actively proclaiming it (v. 23). For reflection: *The Catholic church suggests that verse 23 gives the modern-day disciples (their priests) the authority to forgive sins. How would you answer such a claim?*

There were those who were doubting (vv. 24-29). From this episode, poor Thomas will forever be known as “Doubting Thomas.” But in reality, all of the disciples were doubters (see Luke

24:36-43). By the time Thomas asked to see the nail prints, the remainder of the disciples already had! What is most important is not the doubt of Thomas, but the faith of Thomas. In the end, he had no need to touch the Lord. For him, seeing was believing (v. 29). And his acclamation, “My Lord and my God” remains a bold and definitive declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ. For reflection: *Verse 29 indicates that those who believe without seeing Him (people like us!) are especially blessed. Do you think we have more faith than the disciples had? Why?*