

The Traveling Pulpit

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The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors where shut when the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus said unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.” (John 20:1,19,24-29)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an accepted historical fact. For a person to deny the literal bodily resurrection of Christ is to deny the clear teaching of Holy Scripture. Jesus proved that He was God incarnate by victoriously breaking the chains of death and conquering the grave. Eyewitnesses testified as to having seen the risen Lord. On one occasion, 500 people saw Him at the same time (I Cor. 15:6). Perhaps the very best evidence of Christ’s resurrection is a sinner’s conversion merely because if Christ were dead, then a dead man can do nothing for anyone.

One of the reasons why the Christian church observes Sunday as the day of spiritual rest is in celebration of Christ’s coming out of the grave on the first day of the week in victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave. Once a year, Christians give special

recognition to Christ's death and resurrection; however, every Sunday should be a day when believers are reminded of God's divine payment for our sin and triumph over death. In the 20th chapter of John we examine three post resurrection appearances of Christ.

Mary Magdalene Saw The Risen Lord

Mary Magdalene is so called to identify her as being a resident of Magdala. After being delivered of "seven demons" (Lk. 8:2), she had a special devotion to Christ. She was one of the women who were given the privilege of first discovering the empty tomb of Jesus. Let me call to your attention the fact that it was "dark." It wasn't normal for ladies to be roaming a cemetery in the "dark," but these women were there by God's divine decree to witness a miracle. "The stone" was "taken away from the sepulchre," not to let Christ out, but to let the disciples in.

Mary's first reaction to the rolled away "stone" was that the body of Jesus had been stolen. I cannot help but notice the thrill of excitement that pierced their hearts with the recorded words, "she runneth ... they ran" (Jh. 20:2-4). Peter had denied his Lord, but excitement over the empty tomb caused his spiritual temperature to shoot up. Today, we have many backslidden, sluggish, and indifferent Christians who need to be reminded and get excited over the empty tomb of Jesus. Any church or Christian who is excited about Jesus won't be standing still, but bearing evidence of growing in grace.

When the disciples arrived at the tomb, they discovered a resurrection and not a robbery (Jh. 20:5-10). "The linen clothes lying" in the empty tomb is a strong testimony of Christ's resurrection. In preparation for burial, a person's body was wrapped with cloths filled with aromatic spices. If the body had been stolen, then the thieves would have taken wrappings and all. The leaving behind of the graveclothes is the first proof that Christ had risen from the dead.

After the disciples returned home, Mary lingered in the garden (Jh. 20:11-16). The "two angels" cannot help, but remind us of the Old Testament "mercy seat" (Ex. 25:17-19) and how Christ rent the veil of the temple to become our New Testament mercy seat. If you were to read this passage closely, you might ask why didn't Mary notice Christ at first, thinking that he was the "gardener." Keep in mind that it was "dark" and she was not expecting an appearance of Christ. May I also suggest that her vision was blurred from her "weeping" since death brings sorrow and tears. However, at this point, let me remind you that as Christians, there will be crying in this life, but "joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). God promises that the "man of sorrows" (Isa. 53:3) will someday "wipe away all tears" (Rev. 21:4) from our eyes. It was not until after Christ spoke the name, "Mary", that she recognized her Master through her tears.

The words, "touch me not" spoken by Jesus (Jh. 20:17-18) is translated from the Greek to be "cease clinging to me." Jesus was simply telling Mary that she could not cling onto Him because He had to "ascend" in the near future to the "Father." Matthew records that Jesus permitted the women to hold his "feet" as they "worshipped him." (Matt. 28:9). However, their holding on to Jesus could not keep Him here on earth in

His glorified state. In keeping with His promise, He would depart, but not leave them “comfortless” by sending the “Holy Spirit” (Jh. 14:18) to indwell them.

The Disciples Saw the Risen Lord

Hiding behind locked doors “for fear of the Jews,” Christ appeared unto His disciples on the evening of His resurrection to give “peace” to their troubled hearts. The only One who can calm the raging storm within the soul is the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). We need to understand the difference between peace WITH God and the peace OF God. Peace with God is found in placing our faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ for our sin. Peace of God is discovered as we walk daily in the sanctifying will and presence of our Lord.

Jesus gave assurance of His resurrection by showing “unto them his hands and his side” (Jh. 20:20-23). In order to fulfill their task of representing Christ to the world, they would need supernatural power found only in the Holy Spirit. On that evening, the Bible says, “He (Christ) breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (Jh. 20:22). Some interpret that verse to mean that the disciples were indwelt by the Spirit at this time and later filled for service at Pentecost (Acts 2). Others view this utterance to be prophetic by pointing to what would happen at Pentecost. Either view needs to recognize that there is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit and many fillings. Today, a sinner is immersed into the body of Christ at the moment of conversion and experiences many fillings for service. It’s my personal position that on this night, the Holy Spirit took up His abode within the disciples and the empowerment for service was profoundly recognized on the day of Pentecost. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit was not for the purpose of forgiving sins, but to point others to Christ who alone can forgive sins.

Thomas Saw The Risen Lord

It’s important to be in the right place at the right time. Because Thomas missed gathering with the other disciples, he missed seeing the first appearance of the risen Lord. Failure to fellowship with God in the Word and with fellow believers will cause our souls to be barren and our faith to waver. Today, Many Christians are missing out on God’s blessings because they are not under the voice of God’s Word. It’s been said that a Christian needs the church like a hungry man needs a grocery store (Heb. 10:25).

The second time that Christ appeared to His disciples, Thomas forgets about wanting proof, but declares, “My Lord and my God.” From the episode of this appearance, we are reminded that Jesus still bears within His body the marks of our costly salvation. The testimony of Thomas affirms the deity of Jesus Christ and his nail prints prove His bodily resurrection.

Closing Thought

“Faith” in Jesus Christ does not come by the observance of a nail scarred body or some other physical evidence, but is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8) manifested through the believing of God’s Word (Jh. 20:30-31). Belief in Christ is not just intellectual understanding, but the trusting in Him as our Substitute for the saving of our soul. “Faith” in Christ does not depend upon physical, but spiritual eyesight. Christ alone can open our spiritually blind eyes. Only through the eyes of “faith” can we behold those wounds in the glorified risen body of our blessed Redeemer.

The same three Christian graces that are evidenced in this chapter should characterize the life of every believer. LOVE sent Mary to the garden to find the empty tomb. HOPE prompted the disciples to assemble together. FAITH was quickened by Jesus in the heart of doubting Thomas. The songwriters have penned it so beautifully in the words, “Love is the theme! Love is supreme ... My hope is built on nothing else than Jesus blood and righteousness ... Faith is the victory, Oh glorious victory that overcomes the world.”

Because there is an empty tomb outside the city walls of Jerusalem, we can sing with joy, “He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose ... He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today ... Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.”

A Word From COGM

It’s been a cold winter for us in our part of the country and the beginning of Spring felt anything but warm. Although the weather outside may be cold, I’m thankful for God’s provisions in sustaining us with the necessities of life. Most of all for the warmth of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the blessed hope that we have in Christ. Winter is past, Spring is here, and before we know it, we’ll be running the air conditioners. All of this is a reminder that life goes by so very fast. Let’s make the most of everyday and seek to live it for God’s glory. Thank each and every one of you whom God has used to keep this little ministry going. Pray that God will use the broadcast, printed Bible Studies, and website to call out His elect and to build up the body of Christ.

Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM

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