

Bible Studies for Life: March 31

The Resurrection of Jesus • Luke 24:1-8, 38-43

By Carl White



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A man told a pastor that his sermons made him think, but he took issue with what the Bible had to say about certain current issues, like abortion and homosexuality. The pastor asked the man if he believed what the Bible said about the resurrection of Christ.

The man replied that he took issue with that, too.

The pastor asked, "If the Bible is not believable at this point, then why do you care what the Bible has to say about anything else?"

In other words, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is everything!

All of salvation history, from creation, the Exodus event, the up and down history of Israel, the thundering of the prophets, the sweet harmonies of the Psalms, the reasoning of the wisdom books, the compelling stories of the Gospels and Acts, the admonitions of the epistles, even the deep symbolism of the Revelation – all the Biblical witness rests upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Any expression of faith that denies the resurrection is not Christianity.

If the Bible is telling the truth about the resurrection, then we should listen to what the Bible has to say about everything else. If it is not true, then other than historical curiosity, there is not much in the Bible worth listening to.

How Do We Know Christ was Raised from the Dead?

Because of eyewitness accounts. All four of the Gospels tell of the resurrection. Though they vary in perspective and in small details, the facts march in rhythm. The differences in the accounts are the kind of divergences you would expect from eyewitnesses. The similarities are far more numerous than the differences. It is four accounts of one reality, not four different realities.

In summation, the four Gospels tell the following:

- Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried.
- Several women left for the tomb early in the morning, including Mary Magdalene.
- They found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty of Jesus' body.
- An angel spoke to them.
- They fled from the tomb.
- The disciples were not prepared for his death and confused about his resurrection and what it meant.

That is the essence of the resurrection account from

scripture. Like most of the Bible, it is minimalistic, lacking in many details.

After this, three of the four Gospels tell different stories about his post-resurrection appearances. Mark's Gospel, which ends at 16:8, does not. Verses 9 and what follows are known to be later additions. (See James A. Brooks, Mark, "The New American Commentary" Volume 23, Broadman Press, 1991, page 272.)

The other three Gospels and the New Testament bear witness of at least nine post-resurrection appearances.

- To Simon Peter – Luke 24:34
- The men on the road to Emmaus – Luke 24:34-43
- Ten disciples and the two from Emmaus (Thomas is missing) – Luke 24:31-43
- Eleven disciples (Thomas is present) – John 20:26-29
- Seven disciples fishing – John 21:1-13
- Eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee – Matt 28:16-20
- To James, Jesus' brother – 1 Cor 15:7
- The multitude at his ascension – Luke 24:50-53 & Acts 1:4-11
- To Saul on the road to Damascus – Acts 9:1-6 & 1 Cor 15:8

Evidence that Demands a Verdict

The second focal text for this lesson (Luke 24:38-43) is his appearance to the ten disciples without Thomas, including the two men from the road to Emmaus.

Jesus' appearance on the road to Emmaus is one of the few appearances with details. Two men have a conversation with him, which is noted. Then, when Jesus breaks bread, they recognize him, and he is gone from their midst.

Though it is late, the two men hurriedly return to the disciples in Jerusalem. While recounting this story, Jesus was suddenly in their midst. He shows them his hands and his side. They touch him. He eats before them.

This becomes the key piece of evidence that Jesus is indeed resurrected. We have these other accounts, but in this account alone we are told what the resurrected Christ was like. He has a body, he bears the scars of the crucifixion, and he eats food. Thus, he is not a figment of their imaginations or of their shocked, grieving hearts. He is not a ghost, or a disembodied spirit.

He is Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ from God, who died on the cross for the sins of all, was buried, and who now lives. This evidence demands a verdict from you. Do you believe?

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