

04-01-18 Easter Sunday – The Resurrection

Matt. 27:50-53

SKIT GUYS – VIDEO

He did it – He is risen and alive forevermore.

Chuck Swindoll writes... *“When I was a boy, I played sandlot football on a lot next door to a Methodist church at the end of our block in Houston. There was always a marshy puddle and lots of mud around it because of an outside leaky faucet. It was a place where locusts would come to find water. And once a year they would shed their skin.*

If you’ve ever seen this sight, it’s incredible. It looks exactly like a locust about an inch and a half long, but it’s empty. You pick it up and it’s light as a feather. It has its legs and it has its carcass, at least the shell about it, but if you squeeze it, there’s nothing but air on the inside. Somehow, in that amazing way God has made insects, they have the ability to slip out of the shell.”

The resurrection is God’s “Amen!” to Christ’s statement, “It is finished.” – S. Lewis Johnson

Before we get to our text for today, let’s backtrack a little to the scene at the empty tomb of Jesus. You know the story... Mary (probably Magdeline) gets there early and finds the stone rolled away and an angel of God there guarding the entrance. He speaks to Mary and asks her, **“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen.”**

She goes to tell the disciples what she learned and saw. They don’t really believe her, but Peter and John run to the tomb to check for themselves. It says they ran, but John being younger, arrived first. He looked into the tomb but did not enter. He waited for Peter to arrive and enter before him. Peter arrived, went into the tomb, saw no body there and the grave clothes. That was it for him. He didn’t understand what had happened or what to do about it.

John entered after Peter. It was the same scene, but something was different for John. So much had just taken place in the last couple of days. Jesus was crucified. When He died, there was a great earthquake, and the temple veil was torn in two from top to bottom. He was taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb in grave clothes. A large stone was put in place to block the entrance to the tomb, and a Roman guard was placed at the tomb to make sure nothing would take place because of the rumors about His resurrection.

However, there must have been something very special about the scene in that tomb that Easter morning. When John entered and saw the grave clothes and their placement and position, it says, **“He saw and believed.”** What was it that caught John’s attention to the point that He saw and believed – believed what?

It's difficult for us to get the picture of that scene when we read this text.

Jn. 20:6-8 – Simon Peter, who was behind him (John), arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

What did John see that caused him to believe once he saw?

It says that John arrived, went in and saw the grave clothes and believed. What did he see that would be so impactful to make him believe?

What about Peter? He went in first. Didn't he see the same thing?

Lk. 24:12 - But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened. ESV

How can the same scene have different meanings to two people at the same time? Luke doesn't distinguish between the linens and the head piece, but John does. This may be key.

Peter did a cursory glance at the grave clothes, but he was pre-occupied with other ideas as to what happened. Peter always jumps to conclusions. John, however, took in the scene. There was something special, miraculous, about the grave clothes that drew his attention and made him consider these things to the point of belief that Jesus is who He said He was.

So what was the scene? Let's look back at the opening story from Chuck Swindoll...

He mentioned how the locusts shed their skin. Their carcass looked just like they did before they escaped. This is kind of the same thing that happened in the tomb. The grave clothes fell exactly as they were when Jesus' body was in them. And the cloth from around His head collapsed and landed in place just as it was around His head. This was a miracle. The only explanation was that Jesus' body escaped from the grave clothes and left them collapsed behind just as they were when He was in them. This was the cause for John's belief.

If anyone had stolen the body of Jesus, they would not have been so meticulous to return the grave clothes in exactly the position they were in when John noticed them in the tomb. It would have been impossible to do so. This was a miracle of God, and it was effective. Jesus rose from the dead, out from clothes, out from the grave, Alive Forevermore.

He is risen – He is risen indeed.

Now let's shift to another miracle of resurrection day...

Matt. 27:50-53 - Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart, ⁵² and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead. ⁵³ They left the cemetery after Jesus' resurrection, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people.

So many symbolic events took place when Jesus died for us and rose from the dead. Here is a summary of a few of those events.

The moment Jesus gave up His spirit (died) the curtain in the temple tore from top to bottom. This was a 20 foot long woven fabric divider that separated the Holy of holies or the Most Holy Place from the outer area called the Holy place. This was the dividing wall between people and God's presence. Only a High Priest could enter through this veil, and then only once a year. The tearing of this veil symbolized the presence of God was now accessible through the blood of Jesus on the cross. He made the way for us to be in the presence of God through faith in Him. It's a mystery; it's a miracle.

An earthquake took place and rocks split apart. Another miracle of sorts.

Then, the moment Jesus rose from the dead, we are told that many deceased Godly people rose out of their graves and went into the city (Jerusalem) and were seen by many. This was another resurrection miracle. These people proved that there is life after death. They were resurrected from death to life – temporarily – as a demonstration of the resurrection that would await all those who are in Christ. This life is not the end. God proved it with this miracle. All these people died again, but are awaiting another resurrection in God's perfect timing.

Today, we focus our attention on Jesus' resurrection, and rightfully so, but there is even more to this resurrection thing. We will all be raised to receive a glorified body that will not decay. Jesus paved the way for us and offered additional proof so we might have hope in God's plan.

Not only that, but we must believe this resurrection of Jesus. He conquered death and defeated the devil's work. There is no reason to fear death if we are in Christ. We have His promised demonstrated by His own resurrection, the resurrection of many earthly people, and the documented Word of God. He didn't rise from the dead to die again. He rose and ascended into Heaven with the Father. Then He sent His Holy Spirit to come and dwell within all who believe in Him. The Spirit also bears witness for us that these things are so. We will also rise in Him and be together with Him and in the presence of God forever. Thank God.

Phil. 3:21 - He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

The resurrection was not some fable or even a historical story of old. It actually happened and Jesus rose from the dead. He appeared over many days to people in the city and beyond. The others who also rose, showed themselves as living proof. There was a great divide in these days among the Jewish religious leaders. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection and fought strongly against this teaching. But, Jesus told his disciples ahead of time that this is exactly what would happen to Him, and it did. Paul had to defend this doctrine to the gentile churches he established. What is our purpose in the faith if Jesus did not rise from the dead?

1 Cor. 15:13-15 - If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is worthless, and so is your faith. In that case, we are also exposed as false witnesses about God. For we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead, but He did not raise Him if in fact the dead are not raised....

But the dead do rise, and Jesus proved it with His own life. He is alive today at the right hand of God making intercession for you and me constantly. Do you believe that? Does your life show it? He defeated death that first resurrection morning that we commemorate today, Easter.

Jesus said these words to Martha, before He raised Lazarus from the dead, before He entered Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday, before He was arrested, tried, sentenced to death, before He was crucified, died and was buried, and before He rose from the dead Himself...

John 11:21-26 - Martha said, "Master, if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died. Even now, I know that whatever you ask God he will give you."

²³ Jesus said, "Your brother will be raised up."

²⁴ Martha replied, "I know that he will be raised up in the resurrection at the end of time."

²⁵⁻²⁶ "You don't have to wait for the End. I am, right now, Resurrection and Life. The one who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live. And everyone who lives believing in me does not ultimately die at all. Do you believe this?"

He asks us the same question today. We celebrate His resurrection, but do we believe He IS the Resurrection and the Life. If we believe in Him we will never die, even if our bodies expire. He will raise us up at some point in the future, and our bodies will be resurrected like His.

Do you believe this?