

RESURRECTED

Luke 24:1-12

At every anniversary of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we repeat the declaration given by angels to the women who came to the tomb where Jesus had been buried. Some of these sayings have been incorporated in songs and hymns such as “He’s Alive!” One of the more commonly used expressions that we hear in churches on Resurrection Sunday is “He Is Risen” which is followed by a response of “He Is Risen, Indeed.” We do that almost automatically because we accept those statements as “truth.” If we paused and considered the implications of such statements we would be in awe because such an event really fits the description of “incredible.” In other words, someone coming back to life after dying is very difficult to believe.

It is difficult to know what ideas were prevalent some two thousand years ago and it is also difficult even today. Do you think that the idea of resurrection would be easier to accept in the first century or in today’s world? Think about the ideas the Egyptians had that led them to build pyramids for the pharaohs who had died. The idea of someone coming back from death was not totally foreign to those in what we would refer to as “the ancient world.” Nowadays, the idea of someone returning from death is the subject of horror stories as evidenced by movies about zombies. As far as we know, none of the dead pharaohs have ever come back from death. Also, we don’t know of any credible witnesses who have encountered a zombie.

Our faith in the fact of the Resurrection of Christ is important to us as Christians and should be a basis of boldness and hope. Many people will listen to the story of the life of Jesus, they will learn about His philosophies, his teachings, and marvel at the good works He did, they even believe He died on a Roman cross; however, they simply will not believe He rose from the dead.

Paul encountered this view among the Greeks in Athens. They were eager to hear what he had to say until he talked about Jesus being raised from the dead. They would not accept that possibility. When we honestly face up to the question of the resurrection, then we must face up to who Jesus is and having done so, then we must respond to Him and His requirements for our lives.

If we wanted to see a picture of the opposite of hope, then you could not find an example any clearer than the little band of followers of Jesus immediately after He was crucified. That hopelessness grew as the hours passed and they considered the last three and a half years of their lives and the expectations that they had. It all seemed to have resulted in failure. He had taught them to not go the way of the world and they would have victory. Yet, it seemed the world had won.

Return – 24:1-5a

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;

⁵ and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, Luke 24:1-5a (NASB95)

The women who went out early in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus would have done the same thing for any other friend and/or family member who had died or been killed. These were identified (in various other Scripture passages) as Mary Magdalene, Joanna (wife of Herod’s steward), Mary who was the mother of James and wife of Alpheus (who was likely the brother of Joseph the carpenter) and other women. One of the “other women” was identified by

Mark as Salome (the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John and probably a sister of Mary the mother of Jesus). This is what we would expect friends and family to do. However, this was not exactly business as usual. They were putting themselves at risk of being arrested by the Romans or the Jewish leaders. Their fears of arrest were quickly replaced with confusion and perhaps with panic borne out of the discovery that the stone covering the entrance to the grave was no longer there.

We know that Jesus did not live an ordinary life and He did not have an ordinary death. On Friday the followers of Jesus were primarily concerned with providing a proper burial for Jesus. Apparently, they had forgotten about what He said about His death and what would occur after that, but were relying only on what they saw. We find this type thing all the time. We have been taught that “seeing is believing” and sometimes what we see is not in accordance with what the word of God says on a particular subject. If they had really listened and believed what Jesus told them, then they would have been planning a celebration rather than an embalming. The women who were to take care of the spices for the body were treating this as an ordinary death, but what they found that Sunday morning when they arrived at the tomb was extraordinary.

The first situation out of the ordinary was that the stone that covered the entrance to the tomb was rolled away. As they approached the tomb, they first wondered how they would get the stone out of their way so that they could be about their business of embalming the body of Jesus, then when they saw that it was rolled away, they wondered why and who had done it.

The purpose of the removal of the stone was not to allow Jesus to leave the tomb but was to allow these witnesses to enter and see that Jesus was no longer there. When they discovered that the body of Jesus was missing, that added to their panic and confusion. They rightfully wondered “what does this mean.” Many possibilities ran through their mind but “resurrection” was apparently not on the list. To them this was tragic. All kinds of bad things ran through their minds about what might have happened. This “tragedy” turned out to be the greatest symbol of hope mankind has ever had. The empty tomb is a symbol of victory that even death will be conquered!

They didn't know what to do. Should they look for the body, go for help, wait or what? The confusion was supplanted with fear and awe when they saw the angels that suddenly appeared. Luke described them as “men in shining garments.” The women could tell that these two were not ordinary. They were struck with fear and immediately bowed down to the ground.

Remember – 24:5b-7

the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶ “He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” Luke 24:4-9 (NASB95)

The angels made themselves visible to the women to give them an important announcement. Angels are messengers from God and what they told the women was the finishing touch to the Good News of the Gospel. “He is not here, but is risen!” This was the fulfillment of the hope of salvation. This message confirmed what Jesus had told His disciples that on the third day He would arise. The events of the previous three days, beginning with His arrest and culminating in the resurrection, were exactly as Jesus had told them they would be.

The question that the angel asked is a pertinent question for today. “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” In a more general sense, we find people today who are looking for life in areas that are not capable of providing it. It may be in new philosophies, false religions, morality, social justice, technology, or even in some churches who are conformed to the world rather than being conformed to the Word. The angel gave sound advice: “Remember what Jesus

said.” We should always cling to the word of God. It is reliable and we can count on it.

We could even stretch the point and apply this looking for life in dead things to those who think that life was something that spontaneously developed from chemical elements and electrical currents. Life is found in the Creator Who is the Giver of life.

On many occasions during His earthly ministry, Jesus declared Who He is to the people. The Resurrection validated His ministry by providing evidence beyond what was humanly possible and beyond any element of coincidence that Jesus was God Incarnate. Paul concentrated on the implications of such evidence in many of his letters that make up a significant portion of the New Testament.

We find in this passage some ideas of how to evaluate “what we hear” or even “what we see” so that we can determine whether or not what we are being told or shown is true. What should we take into account in determining truth? The things the women had available to them were physical evidence (the body of Jesus was not there), the statements of messengers sent from God, the prediction (promise) of a trusted person, whether what happened was in keeping with the character of God, and what happened after the event in question. In this case, the significance of the empty tomb needed to be interpreted.

If we start with the physical evidence, we must be careful to not let our preconceived ideas cause us to misinterpret what we see and hear. Based on the comments in the Scriptures, the followers of Jesus were not hindered with a preconceived idea of resurrection. Their first thoughts were that someone had stolen or simply moved the body of Jesus. This reaction (in and of itself) should put to rest any idea that this was a plot of the disciples to fool people into believing that the resurrection had happened. Keep in mind that these women did not expect to see Jesus alive. They had forgotten His resurrection promises and went to the tomb only to finish anointing His body. The angels restated Christ’s prophecies of death and resurrection, which, like so many of His words to the disciples and to us, had been heard, and not heeded, being neglected or misinterpreted. They had questioned ‘what the rising from the dead should mean,’ never supposing that it meant exactly what it said.

The statement of the messengers – It is not often that we recognize statements as messages sent from God. In the situation that the women encountered at the tomb, namely, the appearance of two “other worldly” persons in shining clothes was meant to give credibility to the fact that the message they delivered did, in fact, come from God. It is very rare that angels appear to people so that they know they have encountered an angel. When it does happen, it is usually to give confirmation of the validity of the truth of the message. We often receive messages from God in the circumstances we encounter, in a word from another person or by reading a Scripture passage, but we don’t always realize that it is something very important that God is trying to tell us.

The promise of a trusted person – If someone told you that they would meet you at a particular place and time and you went there for the meeting and saw that person, then you would have little doubt that it was the person whom you went to meet. On the other hand, sometimes we may encounter someone whom we have not seen in several years and we think that the person “looks familiar” but we are not sure it is who we thought it was. Jesus had told His followers that He would be killed and that He would arise on the third day. They just did not remember that until they got a reminder from the angels.

Report – 24:8-12

⁸ And they remembered His words, ⁹ and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with

them were telling these things to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened. Luke 24:10-12 (NASB95)

The events of that Resurrection Morning were absolutely in keeping with the character of God and many promises were available in the Scriptures that confirmed what was happening that day. The final validations were found in the events that happened after that morning, when the risen Christ had multiple contacts with many of his followers.

The things of the Kingdom of God sometimes seem too good to be true. Down through the ages, God had intervened in the affairs of man with miracles that demonstrated His supernatural power. The birth of Isaac, the plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, manna in the wilderness, victories against overwhelming odds, and now Jesus has risen from the dead.

Apparently, past miracles do not prepare us for the miracles that come into our lives in the present. Not only do we have trouble believing that God will provide a miracle for us, we have trouble recognizing it when it does happen. In spite of the fact that Jesus had fed five thousand people, in spite of the fact that Lazarus had been called from the tomb, in spite of the fact that many were healed and that Jesus walked on the water; the disciples had trouble believing He was alive. Since then, people have continued to doubt. Heretical teaching denying the resurrection infiltrated the First Century Church. Paul addressed it in his letter to the church at Corinth.

Peter (and John) ran to examine the evidence, but this left them bewildered. What a difference it would have made had the believers only remembered and believed His promises! We today cannot see the evidence in the tomb, but we do have the testimony of the witnesses found in the inspired Word of God. For many people this testimony found in a book written nearly two thousand years ago is not sufficient. What other evidence could we present to a skeptic to provide validation that the Resurrection is real?

Our very lives that have been impacted by the indwelling presence of Christ in us has to be all that is left for us to use as we tell the good news to others that He Is Risen.