

## **He is risen!**

1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Mark 16:1-8

It says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 “If Christ has not been raised your faith is in vain and you remain in your sins.”

In other words if there was no resurrection then for two thousand years Christians have been fooling themselves, building their churches, worshipping God, evangelizing the world in vain.

Well that scenario does of course beggar belief. How could Christianity have had such far reaching culture shaping impact if it was based on a lie? How could it have possibly shaped the moral fabric of western civilization if Christ had not been raised from the dead?

However men do question the Bible, esteeming their own powers of reason above the truth of Scripture. From the starting point of the supremacy of human reason and the fallibility of the Bible many learned men deny the resurrection.

And so that challenges us to ask ourselves what is our starting point? What are our presuppositions when it comes to believing in the resurrection? Is it the circumstantial evidence such as the heavy stone which was moved from the grave entrance, the missing body and the many appearances of Christ after his resurrection? Or is it something else?

### **1. What is it that really authenticates the resurrection of Jesus Christ?**

According to Mark the same women who stood near the cross until Jesus died on the Friday, got up early on the Sunday and went to Jesus Tomb. If it was typical of other graves around Jerusalem than the tomb Jesus was buried in was probably a small cave dug out of a hillside with a large stone rolled in front of it. . They took some scented oils with them to wipe on Jesus body so as to offset the odor that comes with decomposition. Given that they went there with jars of embalming oil it is obvious that they had no expectation whatsoever of seeing Jesus alive. Neither did anyone else so it seems. The disciples were nowhere to be seen. Their Lord had died. They were afraid and wondered what would happen to them. It all seemed pretty hopeless.

And so for the women this was to be their last act of love and devotion for a great teacher and prophet whom they loved and admired but whom they didn't fully understand.

As they went on their way one of them asked, “Who will roll away the stone?” If the three of them couldn't manage to move it, would there be someone there to help them?

When they reached the tomb they were surprised to see that the stone had already been moved. They ventured through the entrance and into the chamber behind and were shocked to see an angel, dressed in a shining white robe sitting where Jesus body was meant to be.

The angel immediately reassured them, “Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid

him.” All that was left in the burial chamber according to Luke’s account was the linen shroud which Joseph of Arimathea had wrapped the body of Jesus in before placing him in the tomb.

Well as you would expect, the women were shocked and surprised. Then when the angel told the women that they were to tell the disciples and that they would see Jesus in the flesh, it was all too much. Unable to control their fear they ran out of the tomb.

Their reaction was typical.

Whenever sinful human beings like us are unexpectedly confronted with a direct visible representation from God the initial response is often one of *fear*.

But for the covenant child God’s response to our fear is always a word of comfort.

Let’s think about this for a moment. From what we’ve read in the gospel so far, what is it that authenticates the resurrection of Christ?

Is it the circumstantial evidence, such as the moved stone, empty grave, or eye witness accounts of those who saw Jesus afterwards?

That doesn’t appear to be the primary focus in Mark’s account.

Rather, the main focus of Mark’s account is the statement by the angel of God who said “He is risen!

Things like the removal of the stone and the emptiness of the tomb simply raises the question what happened to the body? Was it a miracle or did someone steal it? Who knows? One can really only speculate.

The reality is, God sent a messenger to reveal to the women and to the world the truth that the tomb was empty, not because someone stole the body, but because Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

To say this another way, the certainty of the church’s teaching about the resurrection rests solely on the word of Revelation. You see its revelation which God uses to work faith in us!

And the challenge to all who read this is “will you take God at His word that Jesus rose again from the dead?

You see, God knows that the unconverted mind is effected by sin and has a tendency to invent a range of arguments against the resurrection such as; “its scientifically unproven!”

Even so, according to the author Frank Morrison who wrote the book “Who moved the Stone” the circumstantial evidence and all these eyewitnesses accounts establishes the fact of the resurrection beyond any reasonable doubt.

However the Bible itself doesn’t appeals to circumstantial evidence but simply asks readers to accept the word of God as truth. In other words the Bible is not asking us to pin our faith in evidences but on the living word of God.

And, as John 20:29 says “Blessed those who do not see and yet believe!”

That’s why it also says in John’s gospel, chapter 20:30 & 31, “Jesus did many other miraculous signs which are not recorded in this book but these are written that you may believe that that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

And why should we believe God’s revelation to us in the Scriptures? 2 Peter 1:20 tells us why. It says “you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

The eye witness have long since passed on. The circumstantial evidence has too. Some claim to possess relics of the cross, the shroud, and other bits of trivia. So what!?

The Scriptures provide us with a word which is powerful and enduring!

It tells the truth.

He is risen!

Jesus rose from the grave.

Therefore, all we need for faith and life is right here in God’s very own word to us today!

Just before his death and resurrection Jesus prayed for that very thing!

In his high priestly prayer Christ asked the Father that his disciples might be sanctified by the truth “thy word is truth!” he said. He prayed that all the elect might believe in Jesus through the message of the gospel writers!

The point is; the focus of Christ’s high priestly prayer was not circumstantial evidence but that people might believe the word of truth which for us today is the Bible.

And that must be our focus too. If our focus is anywhere else, we’re bound to get discouraged! It’s only when we can lift our gaze from our own fallible feelings and experiences to God and His word that we can have a true perspective on reality which is;... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures... and was raised again on the third day according to the Scriptures,.... He rose as the first fruits of all who believe in Him.

So in answer to the question what is it that authenticates the resurrection for us? The answer is clearly the Word of God.

## **2. In the second place how must we respond to the truth of the resurrection?**

First be prepared to see Jesus in the flesh. In Verse 7 we find that the angel said to the women, “You will see Him.” And so they did. Matthew’s account tells us that as the women hurried away from the tomb, Jesus suddenly appeared to them. When they saw him they were overjoyed and fell at his feet. Yes he had real feet. The women didn’t fall at the feet of a ghost or a hologram! They held onto the physical feet of the resurrected Lord Jesus. The disciples saw him later that day as well. Thomas touched the wound marks on Jesus hands and side. Later on several hundred people saw Jesus in the flesh between his resurrection and ascension according to 1 Corinthians 15.

What was true for them, will also be true for us.

Just before his arrest, trial and crucifixion Jesus told his disciples that though he was returning to the Father to prepare a place for them and that they would one day be with him again.

This is explained further for us by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 20 which says, “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man the resurrection comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn. Christ, the first fruits then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”

And Matthew 25 says “When the son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another.”

That tells us that when he comes again he will come as judge. Those who reject Jesus now he will reject then. But those who believe, will see Him as a friend on that day. We will see the face of Jesus. We will live with Him on the new earth where there will be as Rev 21:1 says “no more death or mourning or crying or pain and where as Rev 22:3 says “the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city”. In other words the barrier that now separates us from God because of sin will be no more.

So that’s the first consequence of the resurrection which was told to the women by the angel and which also applies to us. We will see Jesus. We can be as sure of that as we can be of Christ’s resurrection because God has revealed it to us in his word!

The second way we are to respond to the resurrection is to do what the angel told the women to do, “Go and tell the disciples and Peter.”

Now the immediate impression we get from Mark’s gospel is because of fear, the women seemed at first to do nothing, apart from Mary Magdalene whom John tells us ran to tell the disciples.

Matthew sheds a bit more light on the matter. He records that the women were afraid but filled with joy and ran to tell the disciples. However, before they reached them they were met by Jesus who said “Don’t be afraid, go tell my brothers to go to Galilee where they will meet me.”

So the implication for the church today is to do likewise! Go and tell! Further on in Mark 16:15 Jesus gives that responsibility to all his disciples where he says “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Who ever believes and is baptized will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

So go and tell.

That remains an important task for the church today. We call it evangelism. It doesn't mean that everyone has to become an evangelist but collectively as churches we are called to faithfulness in sharing the gospel. It is far too important a message, far too precious a truth to keep to ourselves. It's the only message that can make a real and lasting difference in the world so until Christ returns the church must continue doing what it's been doing for the last 2,000 years, go and tell. Support missions, show your neighbors by both word and deed that Jesus is alive.

One more thing, you may have notice that the angel said go and tell the disciples and Peter. Why was Peter singled out? Wasn't it Peter who disgraced himself and his Lord by denying Jesus three times just before his crucifixion? Wouldn't that disqualify Peter as a disciple and prevent him from participating in Christ's victory over the grave?

Well, the angel said "go and tell the disciples, and Peter". Jesus would see Peter at Galilee and restore him because though Peter was a sinner who denied His master, he was nevertheless a child of God, who believed. We have the account of Peter's restoration in John's gospel, the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter.

That reminds us of the most beautiful promise that the resurrection guarantees our salvation! All of us are like the women, afraid and hesitant, or like Thomas doubting and like Peter failing our savior one way or another. But because of the resurrection; ...because Christ overcame death and hades, because Christ destroyed Satan's power of accusation against us, we are not condemned because of our sin but saved by grace through faith. We have been raised with Christ by faith. We are united with him by faith and when we are united with Christ, nothing can separate us from God's love.

How do we know? God's word tells us so  
He is risen.  
We will see Him.  
Therefore go and tell!  
Amen