

Exalting Jesus Christ

"The Resurrection – Part 1"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. We have been taking a long journey together through the gospel of John in a series of lessons I've titled "Exalting Jesus Christ."
 - A. The purpose of this study has been to examine the evidence provided by John that proves beyond any doubt that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
 1. We've just spent two lessons looking at the cross of Christ, and the significance of what happened there.
 2. Beginning this morning we're going to spend some time together examining the very foundation of our faith – "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ" from the dead.
 - B. Without a doubt, the message of a risen Savior was that golden thread that wove its way through every part of the ancient first-century world.
 1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the theme of every gospel sermon preached beginning with the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.
 2. It was a message repeated over and over in the inspired writings of men like John, Peter and Paul.

3. Every persecuted, suffering Christian clung to the hope of the resurrection as they boldly faced death for preaching and teaching Jesus Christ.
 4. And the resurrection of Jesus is the basis of our assurance and hope today – knowing that we will also be resurrected from the dead someday.
- C. But why is the resurrection of Jesus so important?
1. The answer is really very simple. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves beyond any doubt that He truly is the Son of God.
 2. The apostle Paul put it this way in the opening comments of his letter to the church at Rome:
 - a. **Romans 1:1-4** – *Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*
 - b. Paul said Jesus Christ is "declared to be the Son of God. . . by the resurrection from the dead."

- c. In other words, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is God's way of declaring the deity of Jesus Christ, and His oneness and equality with the Father.
3. But here is another reason why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so important to us. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he wrote this:
 - a. **1 Corinthians 15:13-18** – *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*
 - b. Paul essentially says belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the foundation of our faith as Christians – without it our faith is empty.
 - c. But more than that, if Jesus has not been resurrected from the dead then we are still in our sins.
 - d. If Jesus had not been resurrected from the dead then His death on the cross would have done absolutely nothing to cleanse us of our sins.

- D. Therefore, since the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so important to us as Christians, let's spend some time over the next few lessons examining this incredible event.
1. First, we need to get a general overview of the resurrection to put the events in chronological order.
 2. Then, in future lessons we will examine the evidence proving the resurrection really did happen just as the Bible says – because there are many who claim the resurrection of Jesus Christ is nothing more than a myth.

BODY:

- I. According to the gospel of Mark (**Mark 15:34-37**), it was the ninth hour of the day when Jesus finally died on the cross. That would be around 3 o'clock in the afternoon according to our time.
 - A. The next day was the Sabbath which would begin at approximately 6:00 pm – less than three hours away.
 1. Since Jewish law prohibited a body to remain on the cross over the Sabbath, the body of Jesus had to be taken down and prepared for immediate burial.
 2. **Mark 15:42-47** – *Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting*

for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time.

45 So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. 47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph observed where He was laid.

3. Mark said it was Joseph of Arimathea who went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. What do we actually know about this man Joseph of Arimathea?
 - a. First, we know he was an honest man of wealth. Matthew describes him as "*a rich man*" (**Matthew 27:57**), and Luke says he was "*good and just,*" (**Luke 23:50**).
 - b. We also know he was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin (the Council) but, according to Luke, "*had not consented to their decision and deed*" to condemn Jesus to death, (**Luke 23:51**).
 - c. And John also tells us he was, "*a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews,*" (**John 19:38**).

4. But perhaps the most significant thing we know about Joseph of Arimathea is that he gave up his own tomb as a burial place for Jesus.
 - a. Matthew says it was a, "*new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock.*" (**Matthew 27:60**)
 5. In those days, tombs of wealthy families were not graves in the ground, but rather caves or caverns – some were natural caves, while others were actually hewn out of the sandstone so common to that area of Israel.
 - a. Inside these tombs, we would find a bench – or in larger tombs, cubicles – where the dead were carefully laid.
 6. Later we will learn that the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was located in a garden, not far from where Jesus was crucified on Calvary.
- B. John's account tells us there was another prominent member of the Sanhedrin who joined Joseph of Arimathea to assist in preparing the body of Jesus.
1. Speaking of Joseph of Arimathea, John says:
 - a. **John 19:38-40** – "*... he [Joseph of Arimathea] came and took the body of Jesus. 39 And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. 40 Then they took the body of*

Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury."

2. And so Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both of whom were members of the Great Sanhedrin, prepared the body of Jesus for burial.
- C. According to the customs of the day, the body would have first been thoroughly washed, and then wrapped in grave-cloths.
1. The grave-cloths were long strips of fine linen that would first be saturated in a wet paste-like mixture of fragrant spices of myrrh and aloes – in this instance, about a hundred pounds of spices.
 2. The face of the deceased would be covered with a separate cloth, and then the head would then be wrapped mummy-style with long linen cloths until they reached the neck.
 3. The rest of the body would also be tightly wrapped mummy-style with these same cloths, beginning with the neck and continuing all the way to the feet until the body was completely wrapped.
 4. Finally, the body of Jesus would have been laid carefully on one of the benches in the rock tomb.
- D. The last act in the burial of Jesus was to close the tomb.
1. Tombs like this did not have regular doors.
 2. Rather, a large circular stone, resembled a huge stone wheel, would be rolled over the entrance.

- a. These huge stone doors would be rolled down a slight incline until the tomb was closed.
 - b. According to Biblical scholars and historians, the average weight of these stone doors were between 1 ½ - to - 2 tons.
 - c. Since these stones rolled down a slight incline, tombs were relatively easy to close, but extremely difficult to open.
 - d. However, to open the tomb, you would have to roll a 1 ½ - to - 2 ton circular stone back up the incline.
 - e. In fact, there is a very interesting manuscript (the Codex Bezae) in which a copyist made a marginal note in a manuscript of the gospel of John saying the stone was so large that 20 men could not move it.
 - f. So, these stone doors were massive.
- E. While Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were preparing the body of Jesus, we're told that a group of women, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses and others, sat nearby watching the entire process and took special note of the tomb's location.
1. The reason why they watched the tomb where Jesus was being buried is because they planned to returned to the tomb the day after the Sabbath – or Sunday as we know it.

2. Why? Joseph and Nicodemus only had enough time to start the burial process before the Sabbath began. You cannot do any work on the Sabbath – including burying the dead.
 3. Therefore the women planned to return the day after the Sabbath to finish anointing the body of Jesus with additional spices.
- II. Meanwhile, the Scriptures tell us the Jewish religious authorities were still troubled over Jesus' claim that He would be resurrected from the dead in three days.
- A. Matthew tells us:
1. **Matthew 27:62-66** – *On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, 63 saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' 64 Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."*

65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

2. These men obviously feared the disciples of Jesus would actually steal the body of Jesus and then claim He had been resurrected from the dead.
 3. As for Pilate, the last thing he needed at this point in his troubled career was an uprising caused by the theft of the body of Jesus.
 - a. So he could certainly see the wisdom of guarding the tomb until the three days had passed.
 - b. Therefore, Pilate ordered that the tomb be sealed and that a guard be posted to secure the tomb from potential grave robbers.
- B. There has been a lot of debate over the years as to whether these guards were Roman soldiers or merely Jewish temple police.
1. We'll talk more about this later, but to settle the question all we need to do is look at the word Matthew used to describe this guard.
 - a. The word in Latin is, "koustoodia," which, according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, means a "Roman sentry."
 - b. Typically this detachment of Roman soldiers would have consisted of anywhere from 4 to 12 or more fully armed, highly trained, combat-ready soldiers, who would defend to the death whatever they had been commanded to guard.

2. Also we're told the tomb was "sealed." This means cords would have been stretched across the entrance of the tomb, secured at each end with sealing clay, and finally embossed with the seal of the Emperor of Rome.
 - a. In essence, these soldiers were guarding property that had now come under the protection of the Roman Empire.
- C. All during the Sabbath (Saturday) the body of Jesus lay in the tomb.
 1. There were no visitors to the tomb that day because it was the Sabbath.
 2. Not only was this a day of rest for the Jews, it was also a day in which no Jew could travel more than a Sabbath day's journey – about seven-tenths of a mile.
 3. The only ones present at the tomb were the detachment of Roman Soldiers.
- III. Finally, as the first day of the week began to dawn, a whole series of events took place that would change the course of human history for all eternity.
 - A. In the early morning twilight, while the sky was still mostly dark, a few faithful women arose, gathered the spices they would need to finish anointing the body of Jesus, and slowly made their way to the tomb.
 1. They were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Joanna, and perhaps others whose names we don't have.

- a. As we've already said, these women were returning to the tomb to finish applying spices and perfumes to the body of Jesus.
2. However, there was a problem. Who would roll the large stone away from the entrance of the tomb?
 - a. Even if they could find a group of strong men to roll away the stone, there was another problem.
 - b. Most likely they didn't know the tomb had been sealed by the authority of Pilate, and was now being guarded by a detachment of Roman soldiers who would have refused to break the seal until ordered to do so.
- B. However, at the same time these women were making their way to the garden tomb, something else was happening.
 1. The Scriptures say, as the first day of the week began to dawn, before the women arrived at the tomb:
 - a. **Matthew 28:2-4** – *And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.*

2. I find it interesting to see how simple and straightforward the gospel accounts tell the story of the resurrection.
 - a. Matthew's account provides the most detail, including an angel that rolled away the stone.
 - b. Mark, Luke and John's account don't mention this because their accounts begin when the women arrived at the tomb; where they found the stone had already rolled away, and the body of Jesus gone.
 - c. And, while Matthew's account says the angel removed the stone from the tomb in the presence of the soldiers, and that they all became like dead men (meaning they either fainted or perhaps froze with fear), Matthew doesn't provide any more detail than that.
 3. None of the gospel accounts attempt to sensationalize or embellish the story of the resurrection.
- C. According to the gospel of John, Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb before the others, found it empty then left to tell the news of the empty tomb to the Lord's apostles.
1. **John 20:1-2** – *Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and*

said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

2. Mary Magdalene apparently was stunned at finding the tomb empty and thought perhaps someone had moved the body of Jesus.
 - a. And so, deeply troubled over the disappearance of the body of Jesus, Mary Magdalene rushed back to bring news to Peter and John, and the other disciples gathered there.
3. Shortly after Mary Magdalene ran back to the city, the other women arrived at the tomb to also find it open.
 - a. **Matthew 28:5-7** – *But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."*
4. But as these women returned to the city Jesus appeared to them on the way and told them the same thing the angel had said.
 - c. **Matthew 28:9-10** – *And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. 10 Then Jesus said*

to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

5. After Mary Magdalene arrived back in the city and told the disciples about the empty tomb, it suddenly dawned on Peter and John what this meant.
 6. So, these two disciples race to the tomb, while Mary Magdalene followed along some distance behind.
 - a. **John 20:4-8** – *So they both ran together [Peter and John], and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.*
 - b. What Peter and John saw in the tomb that day convinced them that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead.
- D. Mary Magdalene finally reached the tomb – probably only moments after Peter and John left.
1. However, John's account says she was terribly distraught, still thinking someone had taken the body.

- a. **John 20:11-18** – *But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." 14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.*

- E. The Bible tells us Jesus also appeared to others that same day.
1. Jesus personally appeared to Peter, to comfort and console the disciple who had denied Him. **(Luke 24:34; Mark 16:7)**
 2. Jesus also revealed Himself to two men after walking with them on the road leading to the small village of Emmaus. **(Luke 24:13-35)**
 3. In the days that followed, there were a number of other appearances of Jesus.
 - a. He appeared to His disciples in the upper room, once when Thomas was absent, and the second time when Thomas was present. **(Luke 24:44-49; John 20:24-29)**
 - b. He also appeared to the disciples as they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. **(John 21)**
 - c. Then, some forty days after His resurrection and just before He ascended into heaven, Jesus also appeared to His disciples for the last time on a hilltop in Galilee where He commissioned them to go preach the gospel. **(Matthew 28:16-20)**
 - d. And finally there's the list given by the apostle Paul of those to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection, including more than 500 people at one time. **(1 Corinthians 15:5-8)**

CONCLUSION:

- I. That first day of the week, some two thousand years ago, began in heaviness and deep sorrow, but ended in inexpressible joy and thanksgiving.
 - A. Any doubts the disciples might have had about Jesus were completely erased on that day.
 1. They knew beyond any doubt that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
 - B. The victory was now complete. Through His resurrection, Jesus gained absolute victory over death; and now He promises to give us the same victory.
 1. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 15:51-58** – *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written:*

"Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

2. Paul's message to first century saints was simple.
 - a. Keep on laboring in the Lord.
 - b. Stay faithful – don't lose heart and fall back from the confidence you have in Jesus Christ.
 3. But did you catch those final words – the words, *"knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord?"*
 - a. Your labor – your struggles and hardships, all those difficult trials and tribulations you endured to remain faithful will not be in vain in the Lord.
 - b. Paul says everything you endure in life will someday have meaning and purpose as long as you are in the Lord.
- C. Are you in the Lord?
1. Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ by being baptized into Christ? And if you have, are you still faithfully walking in the Lord?

2. If you are not in the Lord, or if you haven't remained faithful to the Lord, then sadly you have no hope.
3. Death for you will mean being forever separated from God, and spending eternity in a terrible place of suffering and anguish.
4. Jesus died on the cross, was buried in a tomb, and was resurrected from the dead to free you from your sins and give you hope of an eternity in heaven.
5. If you need to come to Christ, or if you need to come back to Christ, do that today – right now!