

200. The Gospel of John 20:1-10

The King is Risen-Part 2

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(11-20-22)

Find this weeks' sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

John 19:38–42 (NKJV)

³⁸ After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave *him* permission. So he 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. ⁴¹ Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.

John 19 ends with the death and burial of Jesus Christ and everyone present that day—the Pharisees, the Roman soldiers, and even Jesus' own disciples believed that the story of Jesus' life and ministry ended there.

Of course, death is where most people believe the story ends for all of us.

They say death is inevitable and final—and I have to admit the statistics on death are pretty impressive—the last time I checked 10 out of 10 people die! But seriously, we all know that death is inevitable.

We don't like to talk about it—we try to push it from our minds, we try to deny it, we even try to cheat it—but inevitably death will claim all of us someday.

I read a story about a little girl whose daddy tearfully said to her one summer day,

"Honey mommy is dying. She has cancer. There's nothing more the doctors can do. By the time the leaves fall off the trees, mommy will be gone.

As the weeks passed the leaves began to turn colors and fall, and one day the father looked out the window and saw his precious little daughter in the front yard with a ball of string in her hand trying to tie the leaves back onto the trees—she was trying to stop the inevitable from happening."

Death is inevitable—but is it really final?

Some years ago, the Canadian author, G.B. Hardy wrote a book about life, philosophy, and destiny entitled, Countdown: A Time to Choose.

In his book he noted that there are really only two questions to ask with regard to death:

1. *Has anyone ever defeated it?*
2. *If so, did he make a way for us to do it also?*

Hardy goes on to explain that he found the answer to both questions in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You see Jesus died and was buried—but the story didn't end there.

When Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who then betrayed Jesus to the chief priests, who then turned Him over to Pilate who had Him crucified.

As they laid the body of Jesus in the Garden Tomb and rolled that large stone over the opening, everyone thought that was the end of Jesus, the story was over, and the message went out from the councils of hell—

“Jesus Defeated!”

This reminds me of a story that comes out of history.

June 18th, 1815, was a very important day in the history of the world—Napoleon had just left the island of Elba, where he had been rebuilding his army after his exile.

Sailing back to the mainland of Europe with him were 75,000 soldiers, including the Old Guard—perhaps the finest fighting men in the world.

Although Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, commander and chief of the British forces, pledged to do his best to stop Napoleon—the prospect for victory seemed bleak.

At Waterloo, with only 67,000 Allied troops, Wellesley engaged Napoleon in battle—if Napoleon, who was heavily favored to win, was indeed victorious, there would have been no stopping him in his drive to reconquer all of Europe.

The people in England waited for hours as the battle raged. Eager for news, they had a ship waiting in the English Channel, which would signal the outcome of this historic battle to watchmen stationed in towers along the shores of Dover.

Finally, word of the epic battle reached the signal ship, and they began to flag a message to the watchmen in the towers—the message, agonizingly slow, took shape letter by letter and finally read:

“Wellington Defeated”

By then a fog bank had rolled in and had completely enshrouded the towers cutting off all visibility.

The hearts of the watchmen sank but they quickly relayed the message to the waiting messengers on horseback and the word spread like wildfire throughout England—“*Wellington Defeated!*”

Hopelessness and despair set in as the British knew it would only be a matter of time before Napoleon would sail across the Channel and lay claim to their country. However, by this time the fog had lifted, and after firing a cannon to get the attention of those in the tower, semaphore flags began to wave again to signal the third and final word of the message—the word “*Napoleon.*”

And what a difference that third word made! The full message—

“Wellington Defeated Napoleon”

So, to when Jesus died and was buried, a fog seemed to enshroud humanity, darkness fell upon the land and the earth quaked—as all of creation seemed to cry out—

“Jesus Defeated”

Hopelessness and despair filled the disciple’s hearts; heaven held its breath as it now seemed that nothing would stop the enemy. **But on the third day the “fog” lifted, as Jesus stepped from that tomb and the full message was broadcast to all the world—**

“Jesus Defeated Death”

Satan had been stopped and death had been forever defeated as the angels announced to the women who had come to the tomb early to finish preparing Jesus’ body for burial—*“Why do you seek the living among the dead, He is not here, He is risen!”*

The death of Jesus wasn’t the end of the story—it was just the beginning!

Through His death and resurrection a whole new chapter in the history of mankind had begun as Jesus promised—*“Because I live you will live also.”*

Many centuries ago, Job asked the question, *“If a man dies will he live again?”*

That is a question that has burned in the heart of man ever since the beginning of time.

Since the very first-time man was made to taste death, the question that has hounded man has been, *“What happens after I die? Is death the end or is it merely the doorway into another life?”*

But Jesus answered that question once and for all time when He said, *“Because I live you will live also.”*

Jesus was saying that through His resurrection He was going to conquer death so that death would no longer be able to hold us!

And if we believe in Him, because He rose from the dead—so would we!

“If a man dies will he live again?”—because of what Jesus did early one Sunday morning just outside of Jerusalem 2000 years ago—the answer is a resounding **“YES!”**

C.H. Spurgeon—

“The massive door, you will observe, was taken away from the grave—not merely opened but flung aside, rolled away; and henceforth death’s ancient prison-house is without a door. The saints shall pass in, but they shall not be shut in. They shall tarry there as in an open cavern, but there is nothing to prevent their coming forth from it in due time.”

There are those who study the Christian doctrine of the resurrection and still don’t understand what happened that Sunday morning 2000-years ago. They know that history records that the tomb was *empty* (something the enemies of Christianity never deny)—but because they refuse to believe the obvious conclusion (that He rose from the dead)—they come up with all kinds of ridiculous explanations as to *why* the tomb was empty.

A. The women went to the wrong tomb—an empty tomb!

This would mean that John and Peter also went to the wrong tomb—as well as the Jews, and the Romans!

B. **Jesus didn't really die on that cross, He merely passed out from loss of blood, and after He was placed in the tomb—He revived.**

The idea that Jesus really didn't die on the cross but simply passed out from loss of blood and then later was revived by the cool air in the tomb so that He only *appeared* to be resurrected—is ludicrous!

And yet there are many proponents of this theory—known as the “*Swoon Theory*.”

A humorous letter to the editor to a Christian magazine years ago accurately evaluated the “Swoon Theory”:

Dear Sir:

“Our preacher said, on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?” Sincerely, Bewildered

Dear Bewildered:

“Beat your preacher with a scourge whip consisting of nine leather straps each containing jagged pieces of glass, bone and/or metal until his back is reduced to hamburger and his organs are exposed. Nail him to a cross. Hang him in the sun for 6 hours. Run a spear through his heart. Put him in an airless tomb for 72 hours and see what happens”.

C. **The disciples stole the body.**

Mary Magdalene thought that someone had stolen the body of Jesus (John 20:13-15)—but she never stopped to think how impossible that would be. And yet, this theory got its start right after Jesus rose from the dead—

Matthew 28:11–15 (NKJV)

¹¹ Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. ¹² When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³ saying, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept.’” ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

There were three obstacles or safeguards that secured the tomb and would have prohibited the disciples from getting in *and* Jesus from getting out if He was just a mere man who had not really died on the cross but simply passed out.

1. **The Stone**—weighing between 3 & 4 thousand pounds, placed in a channel and rolled down a slight incline over the mouth of the tomb.
2. **The Roman Seal**—broken under the penalty of death.
3. **The Roman Guard**—each shift or *watch* was manned by four Roman soldiers called a *quaternion*.

There were 18 separate things a Roman guard could be executed for and one of them was falling asleep on duty. Even if only one of the four fell asleep all four would be put to death—so there was some serious motivation to make sure no one dozed off.

In his book, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*, author George Ladd argues that in verifying the resurrection of Jesus we should start with what most people agree on and work our way out from there.

So, let's start with the "givens"—the things we know for sure.

1. Jesus Predicted His Resurrection

On four different occasions in the gospels Jesus predicted that He was going to be crucified and on the third day rise again.

Skeptics try to claim that those predictions were written *after* the resurrection by the gospel writers—but the fact is that those predictions were well known—even by the enemies of Jesus *before* His death.

This was proven by what they did on Saturday—the day before Jesus rose from the dead:

Matthew 27:62-66 (NKJV)

⁶² 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. The Disciples Weren't Mentally Prepared For The Resurrection

Their mindset was one of *conquest* not *crucifixion*—so that when Jesus was crucified, their hopes and dreams were dashed, and they all fled and hid themselves for fear they were next.

They were not thinking *resurrection* at all, so that when it actually happened—it took them all by *surprise*!

We see this clearly in the reaction of the disciples to the report of the women that Sunday morning when they came to tell them the tomb was empty and an angel told them Jesus had risen from the dead—"And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them." (Luke 24:11)

3. Jesus Was Dead And Buried

Rome knew how to execute people—some estimate that by the time Jesus was crucified, close to 70,000 people had been crucified by the Roman government.

Four executioners had to sign Jesus' death certificate—to sign a death certificate when the person condemned to die was not really dead was to bring the death sentence upon yourself! Consequently, they made sure the person was really dead before signing their name to the certificate.

Jesus had died so soon (He dismissed His spirit at the time of His choosing) that to make sure He was really dead, the Roman guard on duty thrust a spear into Jesus' side administering what was called—the '*death-stroke*.'

4. The Tomb Was Empty; The Body Of Jesus Was Gone

If the body of Jesus was never in the tomb—if the Roman authorities had simply dumped Jesus' body in a shallow grave and not allowed it to be buried in Joseph's tomb—they would have produced the body of Jesus immediately (no doubt at the demand of the Jewish leadership) as soon as the disciples began to go around preaching that He had risen from the dead.

Now it's true that an empty tomb doesn't necessarily prove the resurrection—but the tomb *was* empty that's a fact!

The question becomes—*“Who moved the stone and took the body of Jesus—and why?”*

There are only four plausible possibilities—

- a. *The Romans.*
- b. *The Jewish leadership.*
- c. *The disciples.*
- d. *Local grave robbers.*

None of those are probable—of course, the fifth possibility is that no one took the body of Jesus—He rose from the dead which was why the tomb was empty!

5. Over 500 Disciples Saw The Risen Christ At One Time

The noted French philosopher, Renan, tried to discredit the resurrection by foolishly claiming the whole idea was based on the hysterical delusions of Mary Magdalene. But Mary was only one out of more than 500 witnesses who saw the risen Christ all at the same time. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

This was something that the disciples began to publicly testify to even though they were put to violent deaths.

Keep in mind that at any time they could have been spared had they recanted and claimed it was all a hoax—this is to me the most powerful evidence for the validity of the resurrection (Lucifer—*“Skin for skin, all that a man has he will give for us life!”*)

6. These Same Disciples Began Preaching And Testifying Of The Resurrection In Jerusalem

If the disciples were trying to spread a lie about Jesus rising from the dead—they wouldn't start spreading that lie 50 days after His crucifixion in the very place (Jerusalem) where it happened.

You'd only do something like that if you were testifying to the truth. (Use the death of JFK as an example)

7. We Have 27 Separate NT Documents All Written Affirming The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ

Not to mention how you can account for the sudden change in the disciples—they went from *cowards* to *conquerors* overnight who were suddenly willing to die for what they believed. *Something had to happen to change these men—I believe it was seeing the risen Christ!*

This is especially powerful when it comes to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus to the Apostle Paul—what caused such a sudden, dramatic and lifelong change? He, himself said that it was seeing the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

Oxford University professors, Lord Littleton and Benjamin Gilbert West, set out to deliver what they believed would be the fatal blow to Christianity and wipe it out once and for all.

The two main issues they felt they needed to dispute were:

1. *The conversion of Saul of Tarsus to Paul the Apostle*
2. *The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*

Lord Littleton chose the conversion of Saul and Benjamin West chose the resurrection of Christ. Both took a leave of absence from the university and went their separate ways to do their research. They each wound up becoming believers and ended up writing a book called, *“Observations of the History and the Evidences for the Resurrection.”*

They said that if a person rejects Jesus as the Son of God and the resurrection, they do so not on the basis of evidence but on the basis of ignorance and/or stubborn willful unbelief.

The Guinness Book’s record-holder for most successful trial lawyer, Sir Lionel Luckhoo, examined the evidence for Christ’s resurrection and wound up giving his life to Jesus Christ.

Dr. Simon Greenleaf, the famous 19th century professor of law at Harvard University, was a very verbal skeptic of Christianity. He had written a set of books called *“The Laws of Legal Evidence”* and was challenged by his students to apply those laws to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He accepted the challenge, and in the process—he became a Christian.

His conclusion was—*“The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best-established events of history, according to the laws of legal evidence administered in the courts of justice.”*

He went on to say, *“All that Christianity asks of men...is that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things...”* (as in a human court of law)

And yet the sad reality is that many people, many intelligent people, go on denying or ignoring the resurrection of Jesus Christ—to their own eternal peril.

How about you? Why do you think the tomb was empty?

**And if you believe Jesus rose from the dead—
how has the belief in Jesus’ resurrection affected (changed) your life?**

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#). Want to know more? Click [here](#).