

Synopsis & Context – Session #27: The Resurrection

Ashamed. Afraid. Absent. Mere hours after they pledged never to leave Jesus—even to die with Jesus—the disciples are seemingly nowhere near the cross as the sun begins to set. The Roman soldiers were still there though and pierced His side to prove Jesus was dead. According to John's account, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, an unlikely duo, show up at the cross. These two members of the Sanhedrin take responsibility for burying Jesus' body and lay him in a nearby tomb. In Matthew, the Jewish authorities remember Jesus' words about resurrection and gain permission from Pilate to secure the tomb and post a guard there to keep the three-day resurrection story from gaining any traction.

In each Gospel account, a small band of faithful women approach the tomb early Sunday morning wondering who could remove the rock that sealed the entrance. Imagine their shock as an angel (or angels) announces to them that Jesus is not here, *"He is risen, just as He said!"* In Hearing the news, two of the Gospels speak of Peter (and "the other disciple whom Jesus loves" in John) sprint to the tomb. They, too, found it empty. In John's account, as Mary Magdalene remains weeping, Jesus appears to her. In Luke's telling, later the same day, an unrecognized Jesus approaches two downcast followers on the road to Emmaus. Evidently all of Jerusalem is abuzz with the events of the last three days. "The One whom they had trusted to redeem all of Israel" has been crucified and they were disappointed. Some of the women with us even had an unbelievable angelic vision and the tomb was empty. Jesus admonishes the two for their unbelief. Then beginning with Moses and the Prophets, Jesus teaches them about the Messiah. When their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, He disappeared from their sight, but they finally got it! So they headed back to Jerusalem at full speed and full of joy to report their experience to the Eleven. They were interrupted there by yet another Jesus appearance. An empty tomb and two appearance reports later, the disciples still cowered and mistook Jesus for a ghost when the resurrected Jesus speaks to them. *"Touch me and see,"* he says as he shows them his hands and feet. When Jesus re-explained the Old Testament in light of all that had happened, He opened their minds so they might finally understand. *"They worshipped him, but some doubted."*

Thomas was not about to believe these second-hand stories. He wouldn't believe it until he saw the nail marks for himself. A week later, Jesus appears to Thomas and the others just so Thomas could touch the scars for himself. Thomas confesses, *"My Lord and My God!"* Yes, now he believed that Jesus was the God-man and that Christ has risen indeed.

In John's telling, sometime later, Jesus appears to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Having caught nothing all night, Jesus told these fishermen to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. The miraculous catch was so great that they could hardly get the fish into the boat. It prompts Peter to bail out and head to the Lord. Over breakfast there on the shore, Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him three times. Then Jesus directs Peter three times to care for His sheep. In Matthew, the Eleven meet Jesus on a Galilean mountain where Jesus commissions them to continue to carry out His mission by saying, *"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*

As God, Jesus has all authority to now commission His disciples to carry out the building up of the Kingdom, the new community of. They in turn could accomplish their mission because, as Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23), He would be with them to do so. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ confirms Jesus as the Son of God. It is the cornerstone of the Christian faith and the climax of God's great story of redemption. The redemptive work was finished, but now there was more work to do to spread the good news, and this ragtag group of disciples were just the ones to do it, equipped with the divine power heading their way.



Chapter #27: *The Resurrection* is ‘woven’ from selections from all four Canonical Gospels: *Matthew* (Chs.27—28), *Mark* (Ch.16), *Luke* (Ch.24) and *John* (Chs.19—21).

Plot Points for Chapter #27: The Resurrection

Death is defeated by the resurrection: “Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed!” The gospel writers took great pains to demonstrate the historical reality of the resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection is the beginning of the fulfillment of God’s promised restoration of all things and the start of a new work of creation.

The evangelists are careful to point that Jesus really died. Roman soldiers, skilled at determining the time of death by sight, also confirmed Jesus was dead by piercing his side with a spear, penetrating his heart. John emphasized in his gospel account that “he tells the truth” about Jesus’ death, and he repeatedly uses the word “body” to emphasize that Jesus was dead: Joseph asked “for the body”; they took “the body”; they wrapped “the body” with spices; the Pharisees feared the disciples might “steal the body.” Just as each one of us will die someday (unless the Lord first returns), Jesus experienced death and was buried in a tomb where his body lay for several days.

Cf. Barr, Adam Exploring the Story: A Reference Companion (Story, The). Zondervan.

God’s Story – YOUR story!

- What parallels can you find between Peter’s denial story (John 18:17-27) and his restoration story (p. 387-388, John 21:15-23)? What does Peter’s restoration reveal about Jesus’ heart and how does it apply to you personally?
- To you What does Jesus’ Great Commission require of all His disciples (p. 388)?
- Discuss what you feel is involved in with “making disciples?”
- What do you make of “When they saw him, they worshiped him but some doubted?”
- So what does Jesus’ resurrection mean for you personally?