TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Bobby Rader /Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#300 Praise Him! Praise Him!
#286 Wonderful Story of Love

Scripture Reading by: Joseph Girard
#344 Low in the Grave He Lay
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#346 He Lives
Sermon: "He Has Risen"
Mark 16:1-8

#353 One Day
#414 Anywhere with Jesus

Closing Prayer by: Don Lynn

Welcome by: Bobby Rader

Evening Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#742 When Upon Life's Billows
#538 My Hope is Built

Opening Prayer: Phillip Strickhausen
#886 On Jordan's Stormy Banks

Sermon: "The Problem of Survival"
Romans 1:16

#852 When the Roll is Called Up Yonder
#716 Sing to Me of Heaven

Closing Prayer: Wayne Noonkester

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

October 3, 2021

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Jesus Rose Again

This morning, we will conclude our study of the Gospel of Mark by looking at the resurrection narrative in **Mark 16:1-8.** Our focus will be on the meaning of the resurrection in the story rather than on the historical reality of the event. But its significance assumes as a given that it really did occur; the way that Mark and other writers speak about the resurrection will not let us get off the hook with metaphorical explanations that are popular in some modern circles. They treat his bodily resurrection as a fact. Can we believe it?

"Absolutely not!" the skeptic says. We all know that dead people do not just get up and live again! Of course, ancient people knew that too. That is precisely the point. For most pagans, there was a belief in some sort of continued existence, but it was not anything like the Christian hope. Life after death was a shadowy, disembodied existence in Hades. They did not believe in resurrection at all, because, by definition, that meant a new body. For Jews, there was a diversity of first-century beliefs, some of which essentially agreed with the pagan worldview. But many in the first century did believe in an eventual resurrection at the last day, when God would give his people new bodies and judge the world. Martha is a good example of this **(Jn 11).**

No one was looking for anything like the resurrection of Jesus. Pagans were obviously shocked by the concept, as Paul's sermon on Mars Hill demonstrates **(Acts 17).** Even for those Jews who believed in it generally, resurrection was a peripheral doctrine, a one-time event at the end of time. No one expected God to raise one man in the middle of history in anticipation of that. The point is, we cannot simply attribute this to uneducated superstition, as if ancient people thought folks just got up and bodily walked out of their graves all the time. This was a radical departure from both Jewish hopes and any pagan worldview. That alone suggests that *something* happened that we must account for. What was it?

There are two big pieces of evidence that help answer that question. One is the empty tomb. We spoke about how that must be accounted for in our sermon last week, and I would encourage you to watch that if you missed it for a more complete discussion. In short, suggestions that Jesus did not die or that the women went to the wrong tomb are ludicrous, given the details we find in Mark: Pilate was certain to verify his death with the centurion **(Mk 15:44-45),** and the two Marys saw where Jesus was buried **(15:47).** The only really plausible alternative explanation is that the body was stolen. Of course, that runs into problems of its own when we consider the security measures of the seal and detachment of soldiers noted in **Matt 27:62-66**, not to mention the folded grave clothes. But, by itself, the empty tomb does not really prove anything.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Monica Leal is recovering from gall bladder surgery.

Oscar Cantu will have a bone marrow biopsy on Wednesday, Oct. 6th.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Gwen Pettit, Gary Nielsen, Harold & Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Frank & Tina Garcia, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Winston Leifester, Caitlin Smith, Jo Ann Modisette, Ka'Leisha Jones, Mike Little, Jackie David

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Mwanza, Africa, Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister, Deacons meeting Monday, Oct. 4th at 6:30 p.m.

Bridal Shower for Hailey Noel bride elect of River Lucy, Sunday, Oct. 3rd from 2-4 p.m. She is registered at Amazon and Walmart.

We will have a blood drive on Monday, October 4th from 4-8 pm in the fellowship room.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Oct. 5th at 8:00 a.m.

Primetimers will be going to Tookies Seafood in Kemah on Thursday, Oct. 14th at 5:00 p.m. A signup sheet is on the bulletin board and a driver is needed.

Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to Daisy Cary on the death of her father, Gerald Lucy.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor	Phillip Strickhausen	
Robert Ward		

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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It becomes more powerful with the second piece of evidence: people claimed to see Jesus alive again. We have a number of resurrection appearances noted in the gospel accounts. Beyond that, we have a handy summary of them offered by Paul: *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me* **(1 Cor 15:4-6)**

Paul does not merely claim that Christ was raised. He claims that skeptics could find almost 500 eyewitnesses that were still alive 20 years later. Modern science is insistent upon empirical evidence for the sake of validity. That is just the kind of evidence presented in Scripture for Jesus' resurrection: things seen with the human eye, touched with human hand, heard by human ear.

So what this comes down to is whether or not we find these witnesses to be reliable. The skeptic says the accounts are biased and cannot be trusted. But that is the case with all history; there is no neutral, objective ground on which to stand. Consider here, as a by the way point, what we noted in our sermon, that the principal witnesses were women, who would not have been regarded as credible in the ancient world. Nobody would have invented that; it thus has the ring of truth. Furthermore, far from appearing to people who believed in him—biased observers—the accounts make clear that Thomas and especially Paul did NOT believe. More to the point, NONE of Jesus' followers believed after his death that he was the Messiah. The encounter on the Emmaus road is illustrative, where Cleopas relates what happened and laments, *But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel* **(Lk 24:21).** The hopes of the disciples were dashed, because Jesus had, in their minds, proved to be one more would-be Messiah killed by the Romans; his movement would die too, just like those of other pretenders, as the apostles were ready to go back to fishing, hiding in a secluded room, afraid they were next to be executed.

But in a few weeks, these same men were overflowing with joy and courage. They were ready to die for Christ. What happened? Their own explanation was that they had seen the Lord alive.

When we put this together with the empty tomb, we have compelling evidence. Psychological explanations—that this was a metaphor for a new experience of grace, or they felt Jesus in their hearts, or even a mass hallucination—might be plausible in themselves, *if* we could point to the body. Then it would be evident this talk of resurrection was not literal. But the empty tomb indicates that Jesus is alive again. And the appearances indicate that it was the same Jesus who died. Both of those combined explain the faith of the early church and why the disciples willingly died.

Does this prove that Jesus was raised from the dead? Not in the sense of mathematical proof; that is simply not how history works. But it does prove that these are not simply later legends tacked on to the story of Jesus. His earliest followers clearly believed not only that he died, but *something* happened to cause them to believe he was raised from the dead! What happened? The empty tomb and the meetings with Jesus are well-established facts. They are the only possible explanations for the central place that resurrection held in early Christian preaching. In any other historical inquiry, the answer to "What happened?" is obvious. If the only counter to that is, "That's impossible!"—then who is really biased here?

Bryant Perkins