

Resurrection

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[0 : 00] We're going to look at this passage in three parts. The first thing we'll do is just try to find the main point. What's it trying to say?

And then we'll look at two implications. So those will be both about the resurrection. So part one. It's early in the morning.

Mary gets up at dawn. She runs to the tomb. Mary Magdalene had a propensity for staying at things a long time and being there early.

She was the last person with John to leave the crucifixion. She was there all the way until his body was taken down. The other disciples had fled.

She had hung around Jesus for quite a number of years up to this point. In Luke chapter 8, Jesus had exercised seven demons out of her.

[0 : 56] And since then, she had been there. She had set at his feet. She had hurt his preaching. She had hurt all the times he rebuked the Pharisees.

She was there. And here she is. Again, she comes to the scene and she goes back and she reports to the disciples, he's gone. They've taken his body.

I don't know where they put him. That's what she thought. And so we have Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved. Probably John, probably the author of this Gospel.

He might not mention his name here because they both sprint into the tomb and the disciple whom Jesus loved wins. And so maybe he was trying to prevent some type of pride or something to well up.

So he doesn't say his name, but it's probably John. They get to the tomb. They look in and it says that John sees the cloth and he believes.

[1 : 56] If you look at verse nine, the main point of the text couldn't be any clearer. John literally puts it in parentheses for us so that we'll see it.

They still did not understand from the Scripture, from the writings that Jesus must rise from the dead. That's the main point. That's the point John's trying to get across to you.

Now what this brings up for us then is a question of why. If you look at the very next verse, the disciples go back to their homes, but Mary stands outside the tomb.

Then obviously it's crying. The sense of what she's doing there is not just crying. It's much stronger than that.

It's weeping. It's gut weeping. The weeping that you do when somebody in your family dies or you're 14 or 15 and some girl broke up with you, which don't downplay.

[3 : 03] That's some serious sorrow. Or she gets cancer. He's got cancer or whatever. You know what I'm talking about.

You've been there. That's the kind of weeping that she's doing here. The question is why. Why does Mary sit there weeping like that, saying things like they've taken his body while John simply looks down into the tomb, sees the cloth, and believes?

What John's presenting for us is this antithesis between belief and unbelief, responses. It's a principle of antithesis.

It's a principle between how you respond to the resurrection. The simple fact is none of us saw Jesus rise from the dead.

You aren't there. Even the oldest among us are far removed from the day that Jesus rose from the dead. We haven't seen Him. We haven't seen the resurrection. We haven't seen the tomb that was rolled away.

[4 : 11] What's going on here? This problem isn't new. It's been around since day one. You remember that Matthew records that it was Satan's lie to spread, that Jesus' body had been stolen.

Scotland is one of the great homes of the Enlightenment, the big movement that tried to make Christianity reasonable. You've got figures in England and Scotland like John Locke and John Toland and David Hume famously here.

Whatever we're trying to get at with that whole movement in the 17th, 18th century was that Christianity doesn't need all the supernatural stuff. You can throw all that out.

We've got a decent religion if we just cut out the parts of Scripture that talk about supernatural things and we keep the ethic. Live well, love neighbor.

That can form a good society. That's sufficient. This problem has been around for a long time, but it actually crept really deeply into churches and different theological circles throughout the 19th and especially the 20th century.

[5 : 22] It came to a head in the middle of the 20th century, this guy from Germany named Rudolf Boltmann, this is what he said about the resurrection. The resurrection is something merely here and now.

It's entering into a new dimension of existence. It's being set free from the past and from guilt and from the care of being made open to one's fellow man.

What Boltmann was saying is, look, we don't need the supernatural. We don't need a resurrection historically. All you need to have the Christian religion is a resurrection inside of you, an existential resurrection, a resurrection of your heart that says, I'm open to new, to fellow man and to society and to love.

Now, look, we want to affirm that, right? I think that's true. I think we do need a resurrection inside of us. I think we do need to be made aware of our love for fellow men and all these things.

The John's central point in this text is, without historical resurrection, there is no Christianity. That's the point he's trying to make.

[6 : 34] To say it to Boltmann, the resurrection is not merely something inside of ourselves. It's something that actually happened. And without it, we wouldn't have this religion.

Now, everybody needs to have a three-minute coffee shop, napkin presentation for talking to somebody about the center of the Christian religion.

What's it all about? And Paul puts it really clearly in 1 Corinthians 15. This is what he says, I deliver to you that which is of first importance, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the writings or the scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

Now, if you look back at verse 9 again, that's the same thing John says. He says, they did not understand from the scripture or literally the writings that Jesus must rise from the dead.

Now what writings is John talking about? What writings is Paul talking about in that passage? The New Testament hasn't been written yet. He's talking about the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament.

[7 : 45] And so John's looking back and saying, look, we didn't understand at this point that the whole Bible, Genesis to Chronicles, all of that is all about Christ's resurrection.

He's saying that this is the climax of all of history. This is what everything prior to and what everything after would be about. This is the center of history and the center of the Christian religion. And he nails it home a little while after that. Paul does. He says, if this is not a response to Boltman, which you read, I don't know what it is. If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain. And your faith is in vain. And then he goes on later and says, if Christ hasn't been raised from the dead, you are still in your sins. And so his point is this, look, if we don't believe historical resurrection, if historical resurrection didn't happen, then there's absolutely no point in me standing right here.

There's no point in this building existing. There's no point in any of it. It's futile. We're still guilty. We're still in our sins. All right.

[8 : 55] So that's the main point of the text. That's point one. Point two.

Let's look at the rest of the passage and flesh out this division between Mary and John that we saw, belief and unbelief, the Sanctihthesis. If you read the book of John much, you'll see that the book of John has a ton of misunderstanding in it.

If you think back, I think I've said this before here, John chapter three is the really principle example of this. Nicodemus is talking to Jesus. Jesus says, you want to see heaven, you must be born again.

You remember what Nicodemus says, how am I to be born again? Must I climb back into my mother's womb? He doesn't get it, right? He doesn't understand what Jesus is saying. And you see that all throughout the book of John. The disciples don't get it. The Pharisees don't get it. And now here it's happening again. Mary doesn't get it.

[9 : 55] She's heard Jesus preaching. She's heard what he said. He said things like this, just as Jonah went into the belly of the great fish for three days, so must I.

He said that in front of her. And what was he saying? He was saying, I will go down just like Jonah. I will go under the water. I will die and for three days I will be under the earth.

Tons of statements like that throughout the gospels and Mary doesn't see it. She doesn't get it. And so look with me starting in verse 12. The first thing that happens is she's weeping.

She's been over. She looks in the tomb. She's crying uncontrollably and she sees two angels in white. Look all of a sudden there are angels there in the tomb.

John's trying to say, wake up reader. There's two angels there. It's all these clues to Mary. Wake up.

[11 : 01] Look and see. Remember there's two angels sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where Jesus body had been. And they ask her woman, why are you weeping?

Why are you weeping? Do you not see? Do you not get why would you be crying?

This is the greatest day in history. And then it gets worse. She says they've taken away my lord. Grave robbery was such a bad problem at this point in history that just a few years after this the emperor Claudius would pronounce grave robbery to be a capital offense, to be dealt with by crucifixion.

So she's justified in her context. We can go there with her and say look, grave robbery. They've taken them. Somebody's taken them. I don't know where they put them. It makes total sense.

[12 : 04] But then the passage takes a turn and you don't, it's like reading Shakespeare. You don't know whether it's humor or tragedy. It says this, at this she turns around and she sees Jesus standing there.

But she doesn't realize that it was Jesus. And then if you look down one verse that says what, that she thought he was the gardener.

She thought he was the gardener. And so notice in verse 15 that Jesus repeats the exact same thing that the angels had said. Woman, why are you crying?

Why are you weeping? Whom is it that you are seeking? Who is it that you're looking for? Now the reason I think this is actually a rebuke from Christ.

He's actually rebuke her mildly here is because this phrase, not only is, why are you crying repeated, but he says who is it that you're looking for? Whom are you seeking?

[13 : 05] That phrase is repeated five or six times throughout the book of John. And every single time it's addressed towards unbelief.

He says it to the Pharisees. He says it to the disciples. In John chapter 18, when he's praying in Gethsemane and Judas brings the Romans there to capture him, they say this, Jesus knowing all that was going to happen to him went out and he asked them, who is it that you want?

I don't know why they translated it differently, but it's the same phrase. Whom is it that you are seeking? And look at what he says. He actually just says, I am.

That's it. He just says to them, I am. They say we're seeking Jesus of Nazareth. I am. And they fall down on their faces.

Right? Why? Because at the rebuke, when Jesus says, whom is it that you're seeking? They say Jesus. And he says, I am. He's identifying himself with Exodus chapter three.

[14 : 18] He's saying, I am Yahweh. I am the God of the Old Testament. I am the God that you've read about all your life. They fall down on their faces before him.

You see, he's rebuking them for unbelief. And he says the same thing again here to Mary. Look. Here's the point. It's impossible to believe the resurrection. We weren't there. Not even a woman that had seven demons removed from her by this very gardener could believe the resurrection.

You didn't see it and you can't believe it. When Christ came and became the God man, when the second person of the Trinity came and took on flesh and became like us in every way, what happened was is that all the sins for which he was to die were given to him.

Paul says that he became sin. And so the reason Jesus was crucified was for sin. You see, he was crucified because he became sinful.

[15 : 41] Not because he did anything sinful, but because he became that way. We talk about imputation or something like that, that our sins were given to him.

When Jesus at this point is resurrected from the dead, what is happening is that Jesus is actually being vindicated. What God is doing.

His Father is looking down and the triumphant God is raising Jesus, the second person from the dead and saying, the reason you are being raised is because you deserve it.

He earned it. Hebrews talks about him paying full obedience to the Father. He had earned this resurrection. He had obeyed the law absolutely perfectly because we couldn't.

Our sins were imputed to him and he defeated them by obeying. And so at this point what Jesus has done is he has earned his own justification.

[16 : 38] He's being justified before the Father from sin, not from any sin he did, but from the sin he became. Our sin.

But the interesting thing is that what happens after that is that Paul explains in Romans 29 that Christ's resurrection is our justification.

So not only is Jesus justified at the resurrection, vindicated, pronounced to be this obedient son, but it's also our justification, this very event.

Now come back with me here and see what happens in this passage with all that in mind. Mary says to Jesus, sir, if you've carried him away, says to the gardener about Jesus, sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've put him and I will go get him.

She thinks he's going to go find his body. That's what she's saying. In John chapter 10, Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees. He was speaking to the disciples. Mary was there and he says this.

[17 : 49] I am the good shepherd. My sheep hear my voice and when I call out their name, they come to me.

In John 20 in verse 16, when Mary looks at Jesus and says to his face, you're still dead. He says to her, Mary. He just calls out her name, you see, my sheep hear my voice and when I call to them, they come to me.

You see what's going on here is for the first time in all of history, the very first moment, the very first person is having the power of the resurrection applied to their justification.

All of a sudden, misunderstanding gone, unbelief gone, the scales removed from her eyes. This man is no longer the gardener. This is the Christ, resurrected in power and it happens for no other reason than simply that he says her name, Mary.

Now look, I would suspect that all of us, most of us could be termed in one of two ways with two problems, whether you're a Christian or not a Christian here tonight.

[19 : 20] One of those problems is the problem of self-sufficiency. A lot of us, including me, we think of ourselves as very self-sufficient people. I heard an illustration this week from Tim Keller who was preaching at my home church and he said this about self-sufficiency.

When you're 15 years old, you look back at your 10-year-old self and you think that guy was so dumb. He was pathetic.

He was a dumb 10-year-old. And then when you hit 20, you look back on your 15-year-old self and you say, I'm 20 now or I'm 21 maybe in America, that's especially important.

I'm 21. Man, I was dumb when I was 15. I did some really dumb stuff. And then it starts to slow down a little bit and then you hit 30 and you look back on your 20-year-old self and you say, man, was I dumb when I was 20.

And then maybe by the time you're 40 or 50 or 60 or 70, you finally realize I still am. It's never going to change. I'm always going to look back on myself and think that all the things I didn't know, all the ways I was totally inadequate, all the ways I failed constantly, all the ways that sin that I could never beat was always over my head.

[20 : 42] We're still there and we're not getting past it. We're not sufficient. But then a lot of us struggle with the absolute opposite problem and that's we despise self-sufficiency or we're so wired against self-sufficiency that we're always walking around in absolute despair with no self-worth whatsoever.

We don't think of ourselves as ever being good enough. I'm not good enough. I'm not good enough. I'm not good enough. And both of those problems actually lead to the same thing. One leads to absolute doubt and despair that I can't be saved.

I'm never going to be there. I'm never going to have it together to show up on Sunday nights or whatever. I mean, you're all here Sunday nights so it probably doesn't apply to you. But the other person, it leads to this confidence that you really live like you don't actually need any of this stuff. Pride and total lack of self-worth.

And that's for Christians and non-Christians alike. We do that. And so what often comes about is we get into our Christian life and we just don't really care most of the time. Right?

[21 : 58] We don't care. You don't care about reading the Bible. Like, you don't care about prayer. You work Trump's it, right?

Every morning. Work Trump's it. And all these things. You don't care. But listen, if you think about what this text is saying is this, both of those problems, self-sufficiency and a total debasement of self, both come from the fact of viewing this life and viewing your relationship with God as one of the acceptance.

Of worth and acceptance. How am I going to be accepted? Am I good enough or not? And here's what Jesus is saying to us through this passage.

You don't get accepted by God because of how many times you cry out to him or how many times you didn't cry out to him or how good or bad those cries happen to be.

How much worth was in that? How much you really meant it? But you get accepted because Jesus actually calls out to you. You don't call out to him. He calls out to you.

[23 : 09] He says your name. You see, you have a God like Derek was talking about this morning and last week that is unchanging, transcendent, triune.

He is Creator. He made you. He made the mountains and He calls you by name. He says to you, Colin, come sit at my table.

He says, Neil, come sit at my table. The only reason we have an invitation to the feast is because He speaks our name. He puts your place card down at your seat at the wedding banquet.

Look, this type, this is what we call the gospel. This type of gospel, the power of the resurrection applied to you through the personal God speaking your personal name.

That's a gospel that makes a whole lot of Jesus and not very much of us at all. This is really big in this gospel and we're quite small.

[24 : 20] But the amazing thing is that this passage isn't in there. It's a gospel that makes much of Christ, but it's also a gospel in a sense that makes much of us.

So, come back with me to the passage and this is our third part and we'll be brief and close here. The next thing Jesus says to her is, do not cling to me.

Now He says that because she gives him a bear hug. He says her name, she wakes up, she believes, and she clings to him.

Her arms are wrapped around him. And so He says, don't cling to me for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them I am returning to my Father and your Father to my God and your God.

And so Mary Magdalene goes with the news and she says I've seen the Lord and she tells them. Just stick this passage into your mind.

[25 : 22] In Leviticus chapter 23, Moses writes about a feast in the Old Testament, a harvest feast. It's a sacrifice and what you do is you bring the first fruits of your harvest to the temple, to be sacrificed to God, to be given to God.

And what is entailed is that is you're trusting God and saying, look, everything that's given to me is a gift from you. But what it also entails is it's a promise from God saying, you give me your first harvest and I will give you a second harvest.

I'll give you plenty. Now when Jesus says, don't cling to me, I have not yet ascended to my Father and your Father to my God and your God.

He's giving this language of solidarity there and saying, look, the things I have done, the resurrection, my life, my death, that has made, merited for you the ability for me to call you brother, sister.

The Father is now my God and your God. I'm going to our Father. That's what he says. I'm ascending to our Father. I mean, he says other things like this throughout the book of John.

[26 : 38] I'm going to prepare a place for you. Right? I have to leave to go to our God. That's what he says.

Now remember this first fruits feast idea I just raised. In 1 Corinthians 15, the same passage we were looking at earlier, which is the quintessential passage on the resurrection from Paul. He says this. Christ has been raised from the dead and not only that, he is the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep.

And then he goes on and says, in Adam all have died, so in Christ all will be made alive, but in order, the first fruits first and then when he comes, those who belong to Christ are the second fruits. Look, this is the point Paul's making. It's the same point Jesus is making to Mary. If you're a Christian tonight, if your eyes have been opened, if God has called you by name, everything that happens to Jesus is going to happen to you.

[27 : 42] You see? You're going to get this resurrection. It's going to be bodily. You are the second fruit. The Leviticus feast was all about this.

It was all about this event and it was all about you, someday rising up from the dead, bodily. There's none of this idea in the Christian religion that we're all going to be ephemeral, pie in the sky, float around with wings amongst the clouds.

That's not heaven. What we were made for is our bodies with God, dwelling with the God man, hand in hand in a garden, in a place where there's plenty of food and tons of water and it's beautiful and it's perfect and there's no tears and no death.

That's what we see in Revelation 20 and that's what's going to happen in Christ. Look, we could say it this way and this will be the last thing.

The resurrection historically is past, present and future for all of us. It's already happened.

[28 : 55] It is happening to you right now if you're a believer in Christ. He's changing you. You're going to have a resurrection and it will happen again to your body.

But your body aches tonight. It groans. Work is hard.

You're not very good at loving your wife. You don't really like your spouse sometimes.

You don't want to go to work tomorrow. Your wife has cancer. Your husband has cancer. We're going to die.

Let me just read for you and I'll close with this a paraphrase of Romans chapter 8, just a little piece that addresses this in line to the resurrection. Just hear this. I mean, most of the letters would have been heard originally, not read by most people.

[30 : 02] The suffering that you're experiencing in this present age is not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in you.

Both the creation and we were all subjected to futility and pain and we still groan every day inwardly while we wait in this earth.

But Paul says we have the first fruit of the Spirit, the first resurrection. And so we will be adopted as sons and daughters and our bodies will be restored.

Take that with hope as hope. Let's pray. Father, we ask now that you would make the resurrection our hope, our hope to live, our hope to get there today and also our hope to know that we are accepted, justified, not by our worth or merit, but by this event in history.

And so we thank you for the gift it is to be redeemed by a resurrection. We ask for belief for those who don't and we ask for a greater level of belief for those of us that do.

[31 : 23] And we ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen.