

116. The Ultimate Victory

April 1, 2018

June 18, 1815 was one of the decisive days in world history. Napoleon had left the island of Elba four months ago, where he had been rebuilding his army in his first 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 the Duke of Wellington, Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, offered to do his best to stop Napoleon, it seemed like a futile assignment. At Waterloo, with only 67,000 allied troops, Wellington engaged Napoleon in battle. If Napoleon was indeed victorious, there would have been no stopping him in his drive to reclaim all of Europe. The people in England waited for hours as the battle raged. Eager for news, they positioned a ship in the Channel that would signal the outcome of the battle to watchmen stationed in towers along the shores of Dover.

Finally, before it became enshrouded in fog, the signal ship signaled this message to the towers: “Wellington defeated.” Although the hearts of the watchmen sank, they relayed the word quickly to the waiting messengers. And word spread like wildfire throughout England that Wellington had been 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, when the fog lifted, the ship fired a cannon to get the attention of those in the tower and the third and final word of the message was relayed. The word was “Napoleon.” What a difference the third word made, for the completed message read: “Wellington defeated Napoleon.” Suddenly, the hearts of the British people rejoiced. Napoleon had been stopped. They would remain a free people. The third word filled their hearts with great joy.

But the followers of Jesus experienced far greater joy, liberty, and victory on the third day when the rest of His message came through. On the third day, the fog lifted and three words came forth: “He is risen!”

A. COME AND SEE, THEN GO AND TELL

Matt 28:1-7 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 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. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 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.”

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to finish the preparation of Jesus’ body, which was cut short by the Sabbath. Doctrinally, they had missed the point entirely by assuming He would still be in the tomb. But devotionally, they were right on the mark in wanting to minister to Him.

What did they see in the tomb? The grave clothes lying on the stone shelf, still wrapped in the shape of the body. Jesus had passed through the grave clothes and left them behind as evidence that He was alive. They lay there like an empty cocoon.

When General Gordon, a godly man, discovered this tomb in 1885, he did a very wise thing. He took a jar of soil gathered from the floor of the tomb to some chemists and asked if there was any trace of decomposition of the dead body in the soil. The analysis found that there was no trace of decay in the tomb. Indeed, there never was.

We must understand the meaning of the resurrection. Simply, Jesus' resurrection proved that His death was an actual atonement for sin and that the Father had accepted it as such. The cross was the payment, the resurrection was the receipt, proving that the payment was fully accepted. The comment made by Jesus, "It is finished" on the cross was a declaration of the ransom paid for the sin of mankind. The torn veil of the temple is a resounding "Amen" from the Father to the sacrifice of Jesus.

Notice the wording. First: "Come and see." Then: "Go and tell." Not until we get a clear vision of the "place where He lay" – of His work on the Cross and His resurrection from the grave – then, we have a message to "go and tell."

B. HE AIN'T HERE

Luke 24:4-8 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, 7 saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" 8 And they remembered His words.

These women thought somebody took His body away. But how could anyone take the body of Jesus only without disturbing the mummylike grave clothes?

The question that was asked by an angel in v5 was a gentle rebuke for their bad memories. Many times, Jesus had told them about His suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. But they were too busy thinking about Jesus as a conqueror against the Roman army, not the suffering Savior.

These women have proved themselves to be the most devoted followers of Jesus, and were the first to witness His resurrection. There was a stone in front of the tomb that would weigh about 1 ton – about 2,200 pounds. These ladies could not have rolled the stone away, because they were not strong enough, nor by the disciples, because they were not brave enough.

C. BELIEVING IS SEEING

John 20:3-10 Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. 4 The other disciple outran Peter and got there first. 5 He stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. 6 Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, 7 while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying to the side. 8 Then the other disciple also went in, and he saw and believed – 9 for until then they hadn't realized that the Scriptures said he would rise from the dead. 10 Then they went home.

Can you say that there was a little bit of rivalry between the apostle John and Peter? John made sure that we understand that he was a better and faster runner than Peter. Though Peter got there later than John, he impulsively went inside of the tomb only to find that it was empty as Mary reported.

They saw the neat and orderly arrangement of the grave clothes which showed that this was not a typical grave robbery and that something absolutely unique had happened in that now-empty tomb.

What kind of faith did Peter and John have at that stage in their spiritual experience? They had faith based on evidence. They could see the grave clothes; they knew that the body of Jesus was not there. However, though good evidence can convince the mind, it can never change the life. Those of us who live in the 21st Century cannot examine the evidences, because the material evidences, such as the tomb, the grave clothes, and other stuff are no longer there for us to examine.

But we have the record in the Word of God, the Bible. And the Bible is unshakably true. In fact, it is faith in the Word that the Lord really wanted to cultivate in His disciples. It is not seeing is believing; rather believing is seeing in the spiritual world.

If any of you are skeptical about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I challenge you to disprove it. Many have tried it. As a matter of fact, those who seriously challenged the fact of Jesus' resurrection became great believers of God. They even wrote books about their research:

"Resurrection Factor" was written by Josh McDowell and "Who moved the stone?" by Frank Morison.

The people who do not believe the deity of Jesus Christ or His resurrection snort and talk down to Christians, "Do you actually believe that unscientific and ancient book, the Bible?" But they are more than willing to believe the evolution theory even though it is totally hoax and illogical. They cannot even come up with enough numbers to make the possible probability of evolution that supposedly goes from a single molecule with one simple DNA to a modern complex human body which has about 10 trillion cells and each cell has 3 billion DNA base pairs.

It is easier for them to ignore the Creator than accepting the fact that they have to be accountable to Him for their ungodly and carnal life. They somehow wish that if they continuously ignore God, He would go away. They forget that God is immortal, but they themselves are a mere mortal. One day, every single unbeliever who is not a born-again Christian must face the Ultimate Judge.

There will be only one question from the Risen Savior Jesus who will be that Ultimate Judge to them: "Did you receive Me into your heart as your Savior and Lord?" There will not be any loop-hole to dodge or technicality to hide behind. Christening, baptism, attending church, or any religious work, or being a good person will not be counted.

D. THE NEW MERCY SEAT

John 20:12 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.

Their first surprise was finding the stone already rolled away from the door by an angel, so that they were able to enter into the tomb. The second surprise was meeting these two angels in the tomb.

Please note what she saw in v12 – two white-robed angels sitting at the head and foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. Mary didn't even notice that they were angels. Their position on either end of the place where Jesus' body had been lying makes us think of the cherubim on the Mercy Seat from the Book of

Exodus. As if the Lord was saying, "There is now a new Mercy Seat! My Son has paid the price of sin and His blood was sprinkled on here. This is where I meet you."

Exodus 25:18-20 And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. 20 And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat.

The Mercy Seat, a.k.a. the Ark, was located in the Holy of Holies inside of the Tabernacle they had in the wilderness. The high priest would come in once a year and sprinkle the blood of the sacrificed animal on the top of the Mercy Seat that signifies the atonement has been made.

The actual event of Jesus' resurrection is nowhere described in the Bible. However, we must realize what Jesus' resurrection means to us?

- 1) The resurrection means that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.
- 2) The resurrection means that we have assurance of our own resurrection.
- 3) The resurrection means that God has an eternal plan for these physical bodies of ours.
- 4) The resurrection means that Christianity and its God are unique and completely different among world religions.

E. THE INVITATION THAT IS FILLED WITH GOD'S GRACE

Mark 16:6-7 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. 7 But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

The invitations of Jesus to Mary and His disciples are filled with grace. The disciples had completely failed Jesus, especially Peter. Jesus had every right to dump them, but in His grace He extended this kind invitation to them.

Jesus distinguished Peter because He had special hope, special forgiveness, special restoration just for the one who denied Him the worst.

This shows us that the invitations of Jesus are always filled with His grace which is quick to forgive and slow to anger. Yes, we foul up, we mess up, and we sin against God. But in His wonderful grace, He picks us up from our mess and strengthens us to go on as long as we come to Him with sincere and repented hearts.

Did you notice Jesus used two women as the first messenger of the Gospel? I see three reasons:

- 1) In general, women have greater spiritual sensitivity than men. If you don't believe me, look around to the church. There are more women who seek God than men.
- 2) These two women were there available to be used by God. While the hot shot disciples were scared and worried to be seen, these women came to the tomb to minister to the body of Jesus.
- 3) Jesus knew that if He said to the women, the words would spread faster and better than telling it to the disciples: Telegraph, telephone, and tell-a-woman.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands regardless of individual belief. We will be the ones who get benefits by believing in Him.

- 2) Whatever comes our way, we must test all of them against the Word of God which had the final authority.
- 3) The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the evidence of our eternal life and hope in Him.