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The Resurrection of Jesus

John 20.1-10

Series: Signs of Life

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I. Introduction

- A. There is no more important event in the Christian faith than the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - 1. And there is no rival religion that can make anywhere near the same claims as Christianity
 - a. That the founder of the religion
 - b. Has died
 - c. And is raised from the dead
 - d. And lives today, reigning and ruling from heaven
 - 2. No other founder has died and then lived to tell about it (Brad Stephenson)
 - a. Only Jesus
- B. It is important, not only in making claims of superiority of one religion over another
 - 1. But everything about Christianity stands or falls on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus
- C. Paul's message to the Corinthians
 - 1. **1 Corinthians 15:14** (ESV) — 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.
 - a. Everything I'm doing this morning is useless – a royal waste of time – if Christ has not been raised
 - b. And everything I've been doing for the nearly 10 years I've been here has been a waste of time – and you've been listening to it all!
 - c. And even your faith in Jesus is nothing but wish-fulfillment, a vain attempt to conjure up reality when there is no reality
 - d. Your faith is vaporous, a mere figment of your imagination
 - e. If Christ has not been raised
 - 2. **1 Corinthians 15:15** (ESV) — 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.
 - a. Not only that – we are liars if Christ is not raised from the dead
 - b. And not liars about anything – liars about God
 - 3. **1 Corinthians 15:17** (ESV) — 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.
 - a. Your salvation is also vaporous – you are still guilty of your sin
 - b. And you will pay for your sin with eternal punishment, and endure the wrath of God for eternity – if Christ is not raised from the dead

4. **1 Corinthians 15:18** (ESV) — 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.
 - a. Fallen asleep – euphemism Christians who have died
 - b. They too are lost – already lost, perished for all eternity
 - c. If Christ has not been raised
- D. That makes the passage we're about to examine from the Gospel of John this morning one of the most critical passages to study in our Signs of Life series
 1. For in it we find every reason to regard the resurrection of Christ as genuine, true history
 - a. No figment of imagination
 - b. No evanescent vapor
 - c. No wish-fulfillment
 2. But objective reality
- E. **John 20:1–10** (ESV) —
 1. 1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.
 2. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”
 3. 3 So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb.
 4. 4 Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.
 5. 5 And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.
 6. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there,
 7. 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.
 8. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;
 9. 9 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.
 10. 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes.

II. **The Morning Events**

- A. The first thing we need to do is to sort out the description of the events of resurrection morning as the gospels record them
 1. For we get different accounts of the people and events in each of the different gospels
 - a. Differences which have been used against the Christian faith by critics
 - b. Arguing that the events described are not reconcilable
 2. That argument is not a viable one

- a. For while the accounts differ in detail
 - b. They are easily reconcilable
 - c. In fact, they complement one another
 - d. Each one providing evidence in its own way, from the author's own perspective
 - e. But together providing a coherent description of Easter morning
- B. The day of the crucifixion you'll recall that two Jewish leaders, secret disciples of Jesus, sought the body of Jesus and obtained it from Pilate
- 1. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus
 - a. They took the body of Jesus
 - b. Took the body to a family tomb of Joseph which had not been used not far from the site of the crucifixion
 - c. And buried the body of Jesus according to Jewish custom prior to the beginning of Sabbath at sunset
 - 2. Jesus then lay in the tomb until resurrection morning on the first day of the week
 - a. Which took place before dawn on that Sunday
 - 3. Women came to the tomb from Jerusalem bringing spices to add to the spices already placed by the men three nights earlier
 - 4. There were at least four women in the group – maybe more
 - a. Matthew says Mary Magdalene was there, along with the other Mary – the mother of James
 - b. Mark says Salome was also with them
 - c. And Luke says Joanna was present and perhaps some others
 - d. John only mentions Mary Magdalene; that is not a problem because John is describing Mary's role in telling the disciples about the empty tomb
 - e. John in no ways denies that other women went to the tomb; so there is no contradiction in accounts
 - 5. The women started to the tomb while it was dark and got to the tomb in the pre-dawn hour when it would have been difficult to see things well
- C. Once the women reached the tomb they were astonished to find the stone rolled away from the entrance
- 1. Imagine the conversation, the questions
 - a. Who moved the stone?
 - b. Had the body been stolen?
 - c. Should we look inside?
 - d. Had Joseph and Nicodemus taken the body someplace else?
 - e. What should we do?
 - 2. The first thing they do is dispatch Mary Magdalene to go and get the disciples and tell them what they found
 - a. John records that Mary ran to Peter and John and told them the stone had been removed and the body appeared to have been removed too
 - 3. While the Magdalene was gone, with the growing light, the other women

- began to go into the tomb
 - a. That's when they saw angels
 - b. According to Matthew the angels told the women that they were looking for Jesus, but that He was not here
 - c. They told them that He has risen, just as he said
 - d. Then the angels invited the women to come in and see for themselves where Jesus had been laid
 - 4. While the women had their encounter with the angels, Mary found Peter and John
 - a. The two disciples started for the tomb, running, and leaving Mary behind
 - b. After the encounter with the angels, the women then began to return to Jerusalem
 - c. And the angels left
 - 5. John, running faster than Peter, arrived at the tomb first
 - a. Stooped to look inside
 - b. Saw the graveclothes
 - 6. Then Peter arrived, brushed John aside (as you would imagine Peter doing)
 - a. And went immediately inside
 - b. And when he went in he saw the linen cloths lying there
 - c. And then the face cloth, which had been around Jesus' head, lying in a place by itself – separated from the rest of the linen cloths
 - 7. Then John came in and saw the same thing
 - D. It was after this that the appearances of Jesus began
 - 1. Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene who had been coming back to the garden tomb, but had fallen far behind the running disciples
 - 2. She arrived back at the tomb after Peter and John had returned to Jerusalem
 - 3. Then Jesus appeared to the other women
 - 4. Then to Peter alone
 - 5. Then to the disciples on the road to Emmaus
 - 6. Finally, to all the disciples in the upper room
 - E. All the disciples who saw the risen Lord believed
 - 1. But John is said to have believed before he saw Jesus
 - 2. What was it that John saw that led him to believe in Jesus based on the evidence in the tomb, without actually having seen the risen Lord?

III. The Nature of the Resurrection

A. Jewish Burial Practices

- 1. Every society has its customary burial practices
 - a. And usually those practices persist in those cultures for extended periods of history
- 2. Egypt – bodies were embalmed
- 3. Rome and Greece – usually cremated

4. Palestine – not embalmed nor cremated
 - a. Wrapped in linen bands
 - b. Bands enclosed spices
 - c. And the bodies were placed face up in tombs, without a coffin
 - d. Tombs were often cut from the rock in the Judean hills
 - e. Wonderful examples of such tombs at the Garden tomb in Jerusalem today
 5. Also in Palestine
 - a. Bodies were wrapped in linen cloths so that the face, neck and shoulders were left bare
 - b. And the upper part of the head was covered by a cloth that was twirled around it like a turban
 6. Example – Jesus raised the boy of the widow of Nain
 - a. Luke tells the story
 - b. Jesus encounters a funeral procession
 - c. The son of the widow was being carried face up on a bier
 - d. When Jesus raised him, two things happened
 - e. First, the boy sat up – he had been lying on his back on the bier; again, no coffin
 - f. Then he spoke! So the graveclothes did not cover his face
 - g. So there were separate coverings for his body and for his face
 - h. Which is exactly what John records in our account
 7. Assuming the Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus followed Jewish burial customs, the description John records exactly corresponds to what we would expect to find
 - a. Graveclothes lying in one place
 - b. Face and head covering in another
 8. Jesus would have been washed, then bound in linen bands
 - a. Into which were inserted the 75 pounds of spices brought by Nicodemus
 - b. His body would have been encased in this binding
 - c. His head, neck and upper shoulders would have been left bare
 - d. And another linen cloth would have been wrapped around his head like a turban
 - e. Then Jesus would have been placed in the platform in the tomb
 - f. And it would have remained there until early Sunday morning
- B. **The Resurrected Christ**
1. So what does all this mean for the resurrected Christ?
 - a. What would we expect to have seen from the resurrection?
 - b. And what does the evidence tell us about the nature of the resurrected Christ?
 2. First, what we wouldn't have seen is Jesus opening his eyes, and then wriggling out of the straightjacket of graveclothes like a first-century Houdini-like escape artist
 - a. That would have been a resuscitation, not a resurrection

- b. That would have been the case had Jesus not actually died
- c. But then woke up in His previous human form
- d. In that case we would have found evidence of a struggle to escape
- e. The linen clothes would have been displaced and fallen from the body's platform and onto the floor, even scattered around the tomb
- f. The spices too would have been scattered
- g. But that would have been the escape of a natural body
- h. Not the "spiritual body" that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15
- 3. Instead, for a real resurrection it would seem that the body of Jesus would have appeared to have disappeared from the bindings
 - a. Or more properly changed into a resurrection body
 - b. And passed through the graveclothes and out of the tomb
 - c. Just as He passed through the closed doors in the upper room when He went to see the disciples
 - d. John Stott: [the body was] vaporized, being transmuted into something new and different and wonderful.
 - e. Henry Latham: [passed] into a phase of being like that of Moses and Elijah on the Mount [of Transfiguration].
- 4. In that case, the linen cloths would have remained right where they were, but would have collapsed under the weight of the remaining spices
 - a. But they would essentially have been undisturbed
 - b. And the head covering cloth, without spices, might have retained its shape and been separate from the other graveclothes
- 5. This is exactly what John and Peter saw when they entered the tomb
 - a. First, the fact that the graveclothes were there at all was significant
 - b. In the Greek John stresses the point that the graveclothes were "lying there" using an emphatic expression indicating that the clothes were undisturbed
 - c. Second, the cloth covering the head was by itself – literally in the Greek, folded up, or wrapped together; one might say "twirled about itself" – like a turban
- 6. This is what John saw, and why he believed even before seeing the body of Jesus
 - a. He might have said to Peter, as Boice imagines, "Don't you see, Peter, that no one has moved the body or disturbed the graveclothes? They are exactly as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea left them on the eve of the Sabbath. Yet the body is gone. It has not been stolen. It has not been moved. Clearly it must have passed through the cloths, leaving them as we see them now. Jesus must be risen."
 - b. Stott: A glance at these grave clothes proved the reality, and indicated the nature, of the resurrection.

C. **The Critic's Objections**

- 1. This puts the lie to the objects of the critics of the resurrection
 - a. Some say that the body was stolen – that was the tale told to the

- Romans to explain the empty tomb (or we might say, the not quite empty tomb)
- b. That the disciples came and stole the body to concoct a resurrection story
 - c. But who could have removed the body without removing the graveclothes?
2. Others have claimed that Jesus was not really dead (just mostly dead), and that He revived in the cool of the tomb and escaped, like Houdini, wriggled out of the graveclothes
 - a. But then the graveclothes would have been left in disarray, spices scattered all over the place
 - b. You have to have a lot of faith to believe that account
 - c. A mercilessly beaten, crucified man – at least mostly dead – reviving enough, and strong enough, to escape from the binding, weighted down with 75 pounds of spices
 - d. Then after having escaped the bindings, having the strength to move a stone that probably weighed about a ton
 - e. And then overpowering the Roman guards
 3. No! Jesus was raised
 - a. Raised in newness of life
 - b. Raised a spiritual body
 - c. Raised in a transformed and unique form of existence
 4. That's why John believed
 - a. And that's why we should as well
 5. The gospel accounts cannot be explained in any other way
 - a. Jesus is alive!
 - b. He is risen!
 - c. He is risen indeed!

IV. **Believing in the Resurrected Christ**

A. **The Process of Believing**

1. Do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
2. Sometimes believing is a process
 - a. The normal human practice involves the gathering of evidence
 - b. The consideration of various hypotheses
 - c. The rejection of hypotheses which do not correspond with the evidence
 - d. And using what philosophers call our normal “epistemic faculties” – that is, the mental equipment designed by God to discover the truth about natural phenomena
 - e. And then coming to a conclusion based on the evidence
 - f. And that is sometimes a process
3. We see a bit of that process at work in Peter and John
4. There are three words for “saw” in the narrative
 - a. John got to the tomb first and looked in from the outside and “saw”

- the linen clothes lying in the tomb
 - b. The word there for “saw” is **blepo (Gk)** – which is just **ordinary visual observation** – the first step in coming to genuine true belief
 - c. Then Peter went into the tomb and he “saw” the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth separately
 - d. This word for “saw” is **theoreo (Gk)** – which is the word from which we get our word **“theory”**
 - e. Peter’s wheels are turning now; his seeing is generating possible explanations
 - f. Then the text says that John went in and “saw” and believed
 - g. This word for “saw” is **eidon (Gk)**, which means to **see with understanding**
 - 5. So Peter and John went through the normal processes of human epistemic analysis – epistemic meaning how we come to know something
 - a. And the process led John to conclude, Jesus is risen!
 - b. So John **“saw and believed”**
- B. **The Evidence for Believing**
 - 1. So there is ample evidence, just in the account of the Easter morning, for believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - 2. In addition, other evidences support the resurrection which we don’t begin to have the time to consider
 - a. **Appearances of Jesus to many** – according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, more than 500 – following the crucifixion, the empty tomb, and His ascension
 - b. **The changed character of the disciples** – going from cowardly, fearful, defeated puppies, hiding from the authorities, to bold preachers of the gospel throughout the Roman empire, even to the point of persecution and martyrdom – why would they all do that if they knew it all to be a figment of their imagination, indeed, a lie?
 - c. **The authenticity of the gospel** records themselves – which used to be challenged by 19th Century critics but having stood up to the criticism and have become increasingly verified
 - 3. All these things mean that it requires more blind, uninformed faith to disbelieve in the resurrection than it does to follow the evidence
 - a. And trust the biblical accounts
- C. But so what?
 - 1. What does it all mean?
 - 2. Why should be important to us?

V. **The Implications of the Resurrected Christ**

A. **Our Hope of Resurrection**

- 1. **1 Corinthians 15:20–23** (ESV) —
 - a. 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
 - b. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the

- resurrection of the dead.
 - c. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.
 - d. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.
 - 2. There is a resurrection for everyone
 - a. For the believer it is a transformed resurrection body – like that of Jesus
 - b. That why there will be no more pain, no more tears, no more death
 - c. No more struggle like we experience – especially at this time of life
 - 3. Our hope of resurrection relies on the resurrection of Jesus
- B. **Our New Life in Christ**
- 1. But even now, the resurrection of Christ gives us new life in Christ
 - a. Even as our bodies are wasting away, we experience the very life of Christ
 - 2. **2 Corinthians 4:16–18** (ESV) —
 - a. 16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.
 - b. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,
 - c. 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
 - 3. Even the process of sanctification is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - 4. **Romans 6:4** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
 - 5. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just something that is entirely in the future – pie in the sky, by and by kind of stuff
 - a. No!
 - b. The resurrection of Christ affects our living even today
 - 6. When we come to faith in Jesus something changes within us
 - a. By the Spirit of Christ, the resurrection life indwells us
 - b. And in spite of our physical limitations, we are set free from bondage to sin
 - c. And we are enabled to live a life we could never live
 - 7. **Romans 6:11** (ESV) — 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.
 - a. All because Jesus was raised from the dead