

## **That You May Believe in the Resurrection**

John 20

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 9, 2018

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of John. That's the book we're in this morning. Please open up with me to the Gospel of John. And as you're doing that this morning, we're coming to the end of a book or close to the end of a book that we started six months ago. We started looking at the Gospel of John in the early part of June of this year. So, we've been in it for a while (about half a year) and we're bringing it to a close next week. So these are our final sermons in this, which is always a little sad for me because there's always more to say. You can never say enough about a book like John. We could study this for the rest of our lives and never get to the bottom of it.

But, all good things must come to an end, and we're going to wrap it up this week and the next by looking at a subject that really is the end of the Christian life. This is what it's all about. And I want to introduce it this way. The afterlife is a subject that has interested human beings since the beginning of time. It's fascinated people from the beginning, from the tombs of ancient Egypt (those were built for the afterlife) to the modern interest with angels and things like that. We've always been fascinated with what happens to us after we die. It's always caught our attention.

So, there's a lot of theories on this subject, and let me just mention a few of them to you. A few theories about the afterlife. One is reincarnation. Reincarnation means that when you die, you come again in the flesh of someone else. "Reincarnate", that's what it means, "to come again in the flesh." This is the theory that once you die, you come back to life as another person, as another life form. If you're good, you come back as a higher life form, as a king or a ruler. If you're bad, you come back as a lower life form, as a stinkbug. I was thinking, boy, that would be the worst, right? To come back, try it again as a stinkbug because you really messed up your life. But at death, your soul migrates to another body to live. This is a theory that is taught by the Hindus and the Buddhists. It's very popular. There's about a billion people on the planet that hold to this idea of reincarnation. That's one theory about the afterlife.

Another one is the theory of purgatory. Purgatory is a teaching that after you die, you go to an intermediate place to prepare for heaven and you get purged there. You get cleaned off. The word "purgatory" comes from the Latin word meaning "to cleanse or to purge something", and that's the idea. When you die, you get cleansed before going into God's presence. You guys remember last week, we talked about what Jesus said on the cross. He said, "It is finished!" You remember that? Purgatory says, "It is not finished. You have to go and finish it some yourself." The wicked go to hell. The righteous go to purgatory and they get a long bath there. Some say it lasts thousands of years. Some say millions depending on how bad you were. But this is a teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, which professes to have about a billion people on the planet. So, that's another billion people theory, the idea of purgatory.

Another one is the idea of annihilationism. This is another theory of life after death. It says that when you die, you are annihilated. You're simply wiped away like chalk on a chalkboard or dust in the wind. The universe hits "delete" and you disappear. It says its good byes and you're never

heard from again. It's a very bleak one. But the idea is that there is no soul, there is no God, there is no hidden part of man, so that when you die, you just vanish. This idea is taught by atheist groups and by some Christian cults as well.

We could look at other ideas of life after death. You've got one of the most intriguing ones to me, is the alternative worlds theory of the Mormons. Where you die and you go live on another world, on another planet with the aliens, I guess. We could talk about universalism, which says everybody goes to heaven when they die.

But I bring all this up to ask the question, what does the Bible say about this? What does the Scriptures teach about life after death? I'd say that's a very important question, wouldn't you? Can you think of a more important question than that? What happens to us when we die? I think we all understand there's more to life than the here and now. There's more to life than this world, but what is it? What are we going to see on the other side?

Just to answer that question and get us started this morning, the Bible says that when we die, we are resurrected. That's another theory of life after death, and it's the Biblical theory. When we die, we are resurrected. Not in someone else's body, but in our own body. Not in the flesh of another person, in the flesh of a stinkbug or something like that, we're resurrected in our own flesh. We don't get purged, we don't get wiped away, we don't go live on another planet. We live on this one in a brand new body formed by the hand of God.

The word "resurrect" comes from a Latin word *resurge*, which means "to rise again." And the idea is that at death, you go down into the grave, down into the dirt, and on Judgment Day, on the last day, you get a resurgence. You rise again.

One author says that a fish would not be happy for all eternity without water, and a person would not be happy for all eternity without his body. So, you get your body back. Some of you have seen those cartoons when a person dies and they go float on a white, fluffy cloud for all eternity. You know what I'm talking about, strumming a harp and eating grapes? That sounds horrible. I mean, how many grapes can you eat? I don't even know how to play a harp. What am I going to do for all eternity, right? That's not what the Bible says. The Bible says you will get a new body.

When he was a young man, D. L. Moody was asked to do a funeral service for someone, and he'd never done one before. So, he opened up the Gospels looking for a time when Jesus preached at someone's funeral. He was going to learn from the Lord. And he found something interesting, and that is that every time Jesus went to a funeral in the Bible, He broke it up. He raised the person from the dead. That's what the resurrection means. It means you break up the funeral, you raise someone from the dead. I've had the privilege of preaching at a few funerals and I'll tell you, there's nothing much more sobering than preaching a sermon with a dead body in front of you. Jesus came to abolish death.

To say it another way, and this is important, of all the four major religions in the world, Christianity is the only one that says that its leader came back from the dead. Nobody else even said that. Nobody else made that claim. I mean, what a claim to make, right? In Judaism, they said some wonderful things about Abraham. He was a great man, but nobody said he came back.

He died and he stayed dead. Same thing goes for Buddha. Buddha turned the world upside down in many ways with His teachings. He had a tremendous impact on people, but he's dead, stayed dead. Same thing goes for Muhammad. In fact, you can go see Muhammad's bones today. You can't see the bones of Jesus because they're not there. He's been resurrected.

This is exciting stuff to talk about. I mean, come on, this world isn't that nice, is it? Don't you guys want to go live in another one? That's what we're talking about this morning. And what I want to do is to show you what it looked like when it first happened. I want to talk about what it looked like when Jesus came back from the grave. And to do that, we're going to look at John chapter 20. So, if you haven't already turned there with me, that's the chapter we're in this morning. We're in John chapter 20.

As you're flipping there, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're in a series called the "That You May Believe" series. Because John says he wrote this book so that you may believe. In John 20, the end of this chapter verses 30 through 31, we've read this many times in this series. But this is why John wrote the book, he tells you at the end. And he says in verse 30, he says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." John says, "This is why I wrote this book. This is why it's in Bible, so that you may believe and be saved. So that you may believe and have life."

The one thing we've talked about these last several weeks that John wants you to believe in more than anything else, is the cross. That's the one thing he goes back to or spends more time on than anything else in the book, is the death of our Lord. But the thing that he ties directly to that in chapter 20, is the resurrection. Tied directly to the cross is the fact that Jesus didn't stay on the cross. He came back to life. That's where our salvation lies. This is where our hope is. It's one thing to hope in a dead man, it's another thing to hope in a dead man who came back to life. Amen? It's one thing to trust in a man on a cross, it's another thing to trust in a man who defeated the cross, and that's what Jesus did.

You can look at it this way, if it were not for John chapter 20, Christianity would not have survived the first century. You wouldn't be reading this Gospel. Because at this point in history, the disciples had given up hope. They thought it was over, because Jesus was over. We talked about this in the previous weeks, but you don't come back from a crucifixion. There's a lot of ways to kill somebody, but if you really, really, really, really, really want to kill them, you put them on a cross. You don't survive a thing like that. Nobody comes back from that.

There's a theory floating around today called the "swoon theory" which says, Jesus just swooned on the cross. But that's nonsense because nobody believed that. I mean, in the first century, everybody knew He was dead. The Roman soldiers knew it, the Jewish leaders knew it, Pontius Pilate knew it, and the disciples knew it completely, to the point that they'd given up hope. But if you read the book of Acts after the resurrection, the disciples turned the world upside down with their preaching because everything changed for them, because Jesus came back from the dead.

We could add to this, that there were several things He said that would indicate that He would do this. Let me just read a few of these to you. There are several statements Jesus made that would not have made sense if there was no resurrection. For instance, in John 11, if you remember just one week before the cross, in His last public miracle, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. And He told Martha, He said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in Me will live even if he dies." That wouldn't have made any sense if He didn't rise from the dead. Does that make sense? That would make any sense if He was still dead. He had to rise from the dead.

In John 14:6, He told Thomas, He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." And the same thing applies there. You can't be the life if you are dead. And this is why the Christian religion is so unique, because not only did Jesus say, "You can go to heaven, but He went there first for you." Not only does He say, "You can rise," but He rose from the dead to show you and to prove it.

That's what I want to talk to you about this morning. What did the resurrection look like when it first happened? That's what John talks about here. John was one of the first eye witnesses to the resurrection. He saw the cross and he saw the resurrection. So, what did it look like for Jesus to come back from the dead? Today, we're living a long time after this happened. We're talking about a 2,000-year old event. But what was it like for those who saw it for the first time?

To answer that, if you're taking notes this morning, in John 20, we're going to look at four reports of the resurrection in the Gospel of John. That's our outline for today. It's pretty simple; four reports of the resurrection in the Gospel of John. There are several reports of the resurrection in the Gospels. It's one of the things that they all wrote about. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they all talked about Jesus rising from the dead. They all talked about the cross and they all talked about this. But we can't look at all of the books for the sake of time. So, let's just look at what John says about this - four reports.

And the first report of the resurrection is this, John says that the tomb was empty. That's a good place to start, isn't it? The tomb was empty. You can't have a resurrection without an empty tomb, it only makes sense. You can't have a resurrection if the body was still there.

I had the interesting experience - I don't know if the Lord used this to precipitate my call to the ministry, but I grew up beside to graveyards. Literally, they bordered my house on the side and on the back. One was a monument to the unknown confederate dead. They didn't know who these confederate soldiers were. So, they buried them in a kind of a big semi-circle right next to my house. And then behind our house, there was a cemetery that dated back into the 18, 1700's. It was so old that you actually saw families ... have you guys seen those tombs where it has a headstone and a foot stone, and you see how big everybody is? Whole families were buried behind my house because of plagues and disease that came through the town, wiped all the family out.

But I'll tell you something, I never saw an empty tomb in those gravesites. I mean, I never saw one where the body wasn't in there. If I went back there and saw a shovel and somebody digging up ... I would have passed out. If I saw a confederate soldier standing there, I would have passed out.

John starts off this whole story by saying that the tomb was empty. Sometimes we forget the significance of that. You don't see empty tombs, right? If you remember in John 19:41, it says Jesus was buried in a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid, which means that nobody else was in there. Jesus' body was the only one, which means ... and this is the important part ... it means that if it was empty, if the tomb was empty, there was only one body that could have been missing. And that's the body of Jesus Christ. There's only one body that could have disappeared, and it was His body, which is what makes these first couple of verses very interesting.

If you read John 20:1 with me, John starts off this way. He says, "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb." Just a couple of things to point out here, verse 1 says that this occurs on the first day of the week. That's Sunday. That's today. The Jews didn't name their days like we do. They numbered them. Saturday was the seventh day, Sunday was the first day. The reason the church meets on Sunday is because the resurrection happened on this day. So, the timeline is Jesus was crucified on Friday, He stayed in the tomb all day Saturday. And then on Sunday, verse 1 says, "On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early ... while it was still dark."

That's the name, if you remember from chapter 19. John 19 says there were four women at the cross: Mary Jesus' mother, His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas. And this lady, Mary Magdalene. In other words, this woman saw Jesus die. She saw all the horrors of the cross, she saw the terrors of it. She saw Him perish, and she knew He was dead. There was no doubt in her mind about that. Mark 15:47 also says that she saw where they buried Him. So, she knew where the tomb was. And so, the first chance she gets ... you can really see her heart in this ... the first chance she gets on Sunday morning, while it's still dark, she comes to see Him. Saturday was the day of rest. You're not supposed to work on Saturday or we even walk a long distance. So, the first opportunity she has on Sunday morning, very, very early, she comes to the tomb.

It's kind of an interesting detail here. Some of the Gospels say it was light, some say it was dark. But in this part of Israel, kind of like it is in certain parts of a Chilliwack, there's mountains. And so, the sunlight comes at different angles through the hills, right? And sometimes it does look dark and sometimes it looks light. And that's what's going on at this time of day.

It says that when she gets there, the end of the verse says, she saw the stone already taken from the tomb. Jewish tombs were typically small caves cut into the side of a hill and protected by a large stone. It was four-feet high or so, very heavy, weighed an extraordinary amount. They did this because grave robbers were a problem in those days, and so were wild animals like jackals that would get in and eat the bodies. And so, to protect it from that, the Jews would cut grooves into the side of this hill that they could roll the stone back and forth. It would take a lot of men to do this. They might've even used some levers or different things to help them.

When Mary sees that the stone was taken away, if you look in verse 2, this is her reaction. It says, "So she ran ..." Now, I don't know about you, but that seems very logical to me. If I showed up early in the morning and the stone was rolled away, I probably would run. "... and [she] came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and she said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.'" Now let

me just stop right here and point out, it's safe to say that she is not expecting a resurrection, right? She's not expecting Jesus to come back from the dead. That's not on her mind. She thought, it says, "they had stolen the body." We don't know who "they" are, but this is probably a reference to Jesus' enemies. Not only did they nail Jesus to a cross, but Mary thought they've come back for more. Not only have they humiliated Him in front of the nation, but now she thinks they're going to desecrate His body. So, she runs the tell Peter and John that. She doesn't even go in the tomb. The others do later, and they see that it's empty.

But all this is to say, is we need to be patient with people when we talk about things like the resurrection, amen? We need to be patient with people when we talk about Jesus coming back from the dead, because it takes time to believe things like that. It takes time to understand. Mary didn't understand here. She didn't get it. She comes to the tomb, resurrection is the last thing on her mind. And a lot of people are like that today. I remember talking to a lady in the dentist office years ago, and she told me that her husband was an undertaker. And I asked her, "Well, does your husband ever think about death?" And she just stared at me like that was the dumbest question she had ever heard. Well then, what does he think about all day? But people are like that. So, you need to be patient with them. You need to give them time to understand this.

In her defense, in Mary's defense, it's early in the morning. It's still dark. She hasn't had her second cup of coffee yet, or third or fourth, depending on your spiritual condition in the morning. Some of your hearts are convicted as I'm ... But one hand though, she doesn't have an excuse because Jesus told His followers that He was coming back. He said that over and over again. In Matthew 16:21, He said He would be raised on the third day. In John 2:19, He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He said in John 10:17, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down my life so that I might take it up again." He said that sort of thing over and over again. He was very consistent, especially toward the end of His life, that He was coming back. And when it happens, what do they do? Marry runs. She heads for the door.

As a matter of fact, as you're going to read this account, you're going to see there was a lot of running on this day. Mary Magdalene runs, Peter and John run. The other women ran. They were like chickens with their heads cut off not knowing what to do. They were in a panic because they didn't get it. We need to be patient with people today when they respond that way. It was said that John Wesley's father once asked his mother, why she told one of her children the same thing 20 times. And she said, "Because if I only told him 19 times, he wouldn't get it." We have to be willing to tell people the same thing 20 times, 30 times if necessary. God didn't respond this way to Mary. He didn't say, "You know what? You had one opportunity and you blew it. You had one opportunity to see the risen Christ and you just ran out like a coward." He doesn't say that. You're going to see her again here in just a moment. We're going to see Mary come back, because God is the God of second chances. He's the God of all hopes. We see that right here at the empty tomb.

It leads to the next report of the resurrection in the Gospel of John. And the first one is that the tomb was empty. The stone had been rolled away. Mary doesn't know the tomb is empty, but other Gospels tell us that at this point it was empty. It's interesting, the stone was not rolled away so Jesus could get out, the stone was rolled away so everybody else could get in. If you remember His body, He could pass through walls. He didn't need the stone rolled away. It wasn't

for Him. It was so everybody else could get in. But Mary doesn't go in. Like a lot of us, like I said, if I saw somebody digging in a grave next to my house growing up, I would run. And that's what she does. But a second report of the resurrection is this, not only was the tomb empty, but it says that the grave clothes were undisturbed. Now, this is another important point. The grave clothes were undisturbed,

Mary doesn't go into the tomb. But if she had, she would see what Peter and John are about to see. She would see that the grave clothes were exactly like they were when Jesus was in them. They were undisturbed, which is very bizarre. Because grave robbers take the clothes with them. They don't take the time to undress the body and then put everything back the way they left it. They just bolt. But if you read in verses 1 through 5 - actually we'll start in verse 2. It says,

2 So Mary ran came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." 3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. 4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in."

I'll go ahead and read verse 6. "And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself." And I'm going to tell you about that here in just a moment.

This is an interesting account here because verse 2 says that Mary ran to Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved, which is another way of saying John. John doesn't give us his name in the Gospel. He is just the disciple whom Jesus loved. And if you remember, the last time we saw Peter, he was doing what? Do you remember? He was denying the Lord. The last time we saw him was back in chapter 18 at the high priest's house, when he said, "I am not one of Jesus' disciples, I don't know the Man." And now here he is, two days after that with John, which means John forgave him. John is the one who let him enter the high priest's house. John had access to the high priest. He lets Peter in, Peter denies the Lord. John must've either seen it or heard about it or known about it, and here he is forgiving him. I told you God is the God of second chances. We could say the Apostle John was the apostle of second chances for Peter. And you think about it, two days after that, how would you respond to that? It's a very gracious thing to see the two of them together. And Mary talks to them. Mary must have forgiven Peter as well.

And verse 4 says they run to the tomb. Again, there was a lot of running going on this day. It is interesting that John says in verse 8 that he got there ahead of Peter. A little bragging going on. You guys aren't tracking with me. John wrote this, so he's saying he got there ahead of Peter - a little bragging going on. He says it again later in the same chapter as well. That verse 8, "So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb ..." It's like, "Hey, if you didn't get it before, I was the first one there, actually." Peter is old and slow.

He says in verse 7 that the face-cloth which had been on His head was not lying with the linen wrappings for His body, but was rolled up in a place by itself. And verse 8 says, so the other

disciple, so John, who had come first to the tomb, then also entered and he saw and believed. Now, why does it say that? What did John believe? Did he believe Jesus' body was stolen? Well, there's no sense in saying that because everybody believed that. Mary Magdalene believed that, Peter probably did. Did he believe Jesus had recovered from a swoon? Well, there's no point in saying that either because nobody believed that. You don't recover from a cross. He believed the Lord had come back to life. Verse 9 says, "For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." So, this was not because of the Scriptures, but John believed because of what he saw in the tomb.

And what did he see? Well, he saw the grave clothes. That's the point of all this. He saw the way the clothes were arranged in the tomb. Men and women were usually crucified naked back then, and their clothes were given to the soldiers as payment. But out of respect for His body, John 19:40 says Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea wrap Jesus in strips of linen and covered Him up. Let me show you why this is important: they were separate. Which means they looked just like they did when His body was in them. Face-cloth was where the face was, body-cloth was where the body was. As a matter of fact, if you look down in verse 12, it says that Mary goes in later and she sees two angels sitting, one at the head and one at the feet. Why were they sitting there in the tomb? They were sitting there to show you that the clothes looked just like they did while He was in them. The angels were sitting there to say, "Look at this body-cloth, look at the face-cloth. They are undisturbed as if Jesus just vanished." A typical gravesite that had been robbed would look like a tornado went through there; cloths, strips of linen lying everywhere. This one looked like Jesus had just disappeared.

This is a rather lengthy quote, but I want to read this to you. It's taken from John Stott's book, "Basic Christianity", because it explains what happened here. It says,

Let us try to reconstruct the story. John tells us (19:38-42) that while Joseph begged Pilate for the body of Jesus, Nicodemus "came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight." Then together they "took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen clothes with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews." That is to say, as they wound the linen "bandages" round His body, they sprinkled the powdered spices into the folds. A separate cloth would have been used for His head. They thus enswathed His body and head, leaving His face and neck bare like the oriental custom. And they then laid the body on a stone slab which had been hewn out of the side of a cave-tomb.

Now supposing we had been present in the sepulcher when the resurrection of Jesus actually took place, what should we have seen? Should we have seen Jesus begin to move, and then yawn and stretch and get up? [Some of you guys have seen movies like that.] No. We do not believe that He returned to this life. He did not recover from a swoon. He died, and rose again. His was a resurrection, not a resuscitation.

We believe that He miraculously passed from death into an altogether new sphere of existence. What then should we have seen, had we been there? We should suddenly have noticed that the body disappeared. It would have been "vaporized," being transmuted into something new and different and wonderful. It would have passed through the



graveclothes, as it was later to pass through closed doors, leaving them untouched and almost undisturbed.

For the body clothes, under the weight of one hundred pounds of spices, once the support of the body had been removed, would have subsided or collapsed, and would now be lying flat. A gap would have appeared between the body cloths and the head napkin, where His face and neck had been. And the napkin itself, because of the complicated crisscross pattern of the bandages, might well have retained its concave shape, a crumbled turban, but with no head inside it. ... They were like a discarded [cocoon] from which the butterfly had emerged.

Isn't that amazing? And there's a lot of things we could say about this, but just one simple thing I want to point out to you is this: God is merciful to let John see all of this. As a matter of fact, let's say it this way, God is merciful to let Peter see it. I mean, of all the people, to see this for the first time, who would you put at the bottom of the list? You'd put Peter there. I mean, of all the people to walk into the empty tomb and see this with the Apostle John, he would be the last person on the list. And yet God does this because He is a God of second chances. He is patient.

If you think about it, Peter did what Judas did. He rejected the Lord. He turned his back on Him. And the difference is that Peter came back. And as a result of that, the Lord let him see the evidence of the resurrection. You can say it another way, Peter might've walked away from Jesus, but he ran back to Him. You see that? Does that make sense? He walked away several days before he ran back.

That's what Christians do. We sin, we fail, we mess up, we blow it, and we run back to God. We fly back to Him. And the more you grow, the faster you run. The more you mature in Christ, the quicker you get there. Maturity in Christ doesn't mean you never sin, what it means, is you repent quickly. And the more you mature, the quicker you repent.

There are days when I feel like I'm saying sorry all day like a good Canadian. You guys are having an effect on me. I walk around like, "I did it again, okay, sorry." My one joke in Canada is one day, Canada will take over the world and then you'll all be sorry. That's the only one I've got. I've been looking out for some other ones. I'll let you know what I come up with.

When my sons were smaller, they used to run to me every time they saw me. Now there's too many distractions really, but when they were even littler than they are now, every time they saw me, they'd say, "Daddy," and come running, and they would trip and they would fall and it would just be a mess. But I didn't care because they were coming to me. I didn't care because I'm their daddy. It's the same way with God. He doesn't care if you trip, He doesn't care if you fall, He doesn't care if you're a mess. He just cares that you run to Him, like Peter did.

Mary comes with this wild report and Peter does ... I mean, they don't know what to think about this. But what do they do? They said, "That's the last place Jesus was, that's where we're going, and we're going to get there now." And that's the response of every believer.

It leads to a third report of the resurrection in the Gospel of John. And I'll go through these next two pretty quickly. And that is that Mary saw Jesus. We've looked at the empty tomb. We have talked about the grave clothes being undisturbed, and the effect that must have had on these people. But next, we talk about the fact that Mary saw Jesus. John goes back to Mary Magdalene for a moment. She's the first one to see the risen Lord. From what I could tell, there are 11 appearances of Jesus after the resurrection. There's 11 times that He shows Himself after His death, at least, that are recorded in the Bible. First Corinthians mentions one of those, where several hundred people were there. But five of them occurred on this one day. Five appearances of Christ occurred on the Sunday after the crucifixion. And this was the first. It all starts right here.

I've told you before that in the ancient world, women were not held in high regard. They weren't even allowed to testify in court. They weren't allowed to vote or hold office or those things. So, it's amazing that John would say the first person to see the resurrection would be a woman. That means that it's true. There's no reason to make that up. Nobody would have made that up in the first century. It's evidence that this actually happened. It's also evidence of the high regard the Lord has for women.

If you're reading verses 11 through 15, verse 11 says,

11 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; 12 and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. 13 And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" And she said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 And so Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you've carried Him away, tell me where you've laid Him, and I will take Him away."

John says that after running away from the tomb, Mary came back. Just like Peter, she couldn't stay away for long. And as she does, it kind of shows you how torn up she is because verse 13 says, two angels ask her, "Why are you weeping?" And she talks to them as if it's no big deal. I don't know about you, but talking to anybody first thing in the morning at a gravesite is creepy. Talking to two angels, first thing in the morning on a gravesite is really creepy. And she doesn't even pause. She just talks to them as if it's no big deal, because she's in such a state of shock. She's in such a state of panic. She's seen Jesus crucified and now His body's gone, and this is just a disaster in her mind. She even says to the gardener, she thinks Jesus is the gardener in verse 15, "Tell me where He is and I'll take Him away." Where's she going to take Him? Jesus is a full grown man. She can't carry Him anywhere. This is just the words of a broken lady. Verse 14, adds to this as well, when it says, when she had said this, she didn't recognize Jesus. She turned around and saw Him standing there and she did not know it was Him. We don't know why she didn't recognize Him other than the fact that she thought He was dead. She thought His body was kidnapped. He was the last person she would expect to see. She thinks He's the gardener, the person taking care of the grounds.

But when He says her name, verse 16 says, “Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’” Called her by name. “She turned and said to Him in Hebrew [or Aramaic], ‘Rabboni!’ (which means, Teacher).” She recognized Him instantly. This is an interesting point here, because verse 14 says that she turns, and then she turns again here in verse 16. Earlier, everybody's running. Now, everybody's turning. You just see the action going on there. They're all mixed up. She's all mixed up. She probably at this point, when He says her name “Mary” she probably snaps her head back in surprise.

He says something interesting to her in verse 17. He says, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.” That basically means, “Stop holding on so tight, Mary, I'm not going anywhere right now.” She sees Him, she recognizes Him and she holds on for dear life, as if she might lose Him again. And He calms her down and He goes on and He says, “Stop clinging to Me,” in verse 17, “for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, My God and your God.’”

It's a little mysterious, but apparently, Jesus had told the disciples where to meet Him after His death. Matthew 28:16 says that He told them to meet on a mountain in Galilee. We don't know where the mountain was. There's some ideas about that. But apparently, they knew, It was a prearranged place. And so, Jesus sends Mary with that message to remind them of that. And she goes to tell them what she saw.

That leads to a fourth report of the resurrection, which is really the final one, and that is that Jesus appeared to the disciples. We've talked about quite a bit here with this resurrection story. But it starts off with an empty tomb. Then it goes to some undisturbed grave clothes - a very strange way to look at a gravesite. Then Mary sees Jesus, which is important, but you can discount the eyewitness of one person, right? I mean, I've already shown you, Mary's not in a very good frame of mind right now. So, you would take her testimony with a grain of salt. “Look, Mary, you're kind of worked up. You didn't really see Jesus. You need to go lie down.” Right? So, what Jesus does here at the end of the chapter is, He appears to all the disciples. You can't discount the eyewitness of multiple people, right? You can't discount multiple sources who all saw the same thing. And that's the way this chapter ends. If you look in verses 19 through 20, it says,

19 So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. And the disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

This is very telling here about the disciples. But I mentioned to you earlier that they thought the movement was all over. They thought Jesus was finished, and you can tell that because they're hiding behind, it says, “shut doors”. Other Gospels talk about how the doors were locked for fear of the Jews. The Jews or the leaders of the Jews had just crucified Jesus. They'd just put Him on trial and killed Him. The disciples logically think that they're next. And so, they're hiding. The lights are probably out, they're probably lying low. And it says that Jesus came and stood in their midst.

Now, if you saw that, what would you think? You would think you had seen a ghost, right? You would think this was some kind of spirit or maybe something was going on in your head. Verse 20 says, because of that, Jesus shows them His hands and His side. He does it for a very simple reason - to show that He is not a ghost. He is real. His body is something out of this world. It can pass through walls, but it can be touched and felt. Later on in John 21, you're going to see Him eating with the disciples. Ghosts don't eat. They don't share a meal. So, He does this to show them that His body, His presence - this is a real resurrection. He sincerely came back from the dead.

Then the chapter goes on to say, not only does He show Himself to the disciples, but He shows Himself to the one disciple that seemed to be more skeptical than all the rest. It was the disciple, the Apostle Thomas. He shows Himself to Thomas. Apparently, Thomas was not with everybody else when this happened. And if you look down in verse 27, He shows Himself to Thomas and He says, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." He said that in response to what Thomas said earlier. Thomas said earlier, he would not believe unless he touched His hands and side. And Jesus shows up and says, "Here they are."

He's earned the nickname "Doubting Thomas" because of this. I would call him "Droopy Thomas". He was the apostle of the rain cloud. Everywhere he went, a raincloud kind of followed him around. The Eeyore of the disciples.

But the point John is making here, is that the resurrection was a real thing to these people. It really happened. Jesus is not asking them to believe in something He can't prove. He's not asking them to believe in something that He just made up. He came and stood in their midst and showed them His hands and side.

Verse 21 tells you why He did this. He says, "Peace be with you." He says that again in verse 26, "Peace be with you." There are several reasons He said that. One is because He just showed up in their midst, and they're probably freaking out. But He also did this to remind them that He came to bring us peace; peace in the next world, peace in death, peace in what this life has to offer. Matthew Henry says, when Jesus left this world, what did He leave us with? He didn't leave us with silver or gold for He had none of those. And He didn't leave us with fame or renown either, for He didn't have that. He left us with peace.

Which leads me to ask, do you have that this morning? Do you have the peace that He left behind for you? I think I asked you this last time, but it's so important, I want to ask it again. Are you afraid of dying? Does the idea of death make you tremble? They say that death is the number one killer of people on this planet. (You'll get that on your ride home. You'll think about that. That was really deep.) Everybody dies. I mean, unless the Lord's going to come back before then, we're all going to experience death. And when you think of that, what do you think about?

I just mentioned the different theories of the afterlife, but reincarnation, purgatory, annihilationism. Do you believe you have something better than that? Do you believe you're not going to come back to life as a stinkbug or be annihilated? And do you believe that this gift is

given to you at the hands of a patient, gracious, merciful God, a God of second chances? If you run to Him, He will receive you. If you come to Him, He will save you.

They say that if you visit heaven today, you would see a lot of interesting things. You would see the streets of gold and a crystal sea or the heaven in Revelation. You would see the throne of God. But one of the most interesting things you'll see is the body of Jesus. Resurrection hasn't happened for all believers yet. So, there's only one resurrected body, and it's in heaven. The interesting thing about it, is that if you go to heaven right now, you'll see it. And if you go to heaven a thousand years from now, you'll see it again. And if you go to heaven a thousand years from then, you'll see it again. It never grows old. It never fades away. It lives forever. And the amazing thing that should really blow your mind, is that if you believe in Him, one day, He will give you a body like that. If you trust in Him, one day, He will give you a body that has no cancer, it has no disease, it has no decay, no soreness. It's resurrected just like His. Will you come to Him today? Will you run to Him to receive that?

There's a story of a missionary who was once witnessing in Turkey, the country of Turkey. And he said to a group of people, he said, "If I was traveling and I came to a fork in the road that went in two directions, and in one direction was a dead man lying on the road dead, and the other direction was a live man, which road should I choose?" And the people said, "Well, you should choose the one with the live man." And the missionary said, "That's what Christianity offers you. That's what Jesus offers you. He offers you a live man, if you would believe in Him today." Will you do that? Will you trust in the Saviour? Let me close in a word of prayer, and pray that you would.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you Lord, for the gift of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection that He has given us. Your Scriptures tell us that one day we will receive a body like His, if we trust in Him. Lord, I pray for my friends here that they would trust in Christ for salvation; not just any salvation, not just a random salvation, but a resurrected salvation. They will have life again. They won't just die.

Lord, I pray for those who have trusted in that, they are following the road with the live man. I pray they would rejoice in the gift that Christ has given them and they would be encouraged this morning.

For those who have not trusted in Christ yet, they don't know what to make of the afterlife, Lord, I pray this would give them something to consider. I pray You would save them this morning. Give them a new life in their heart, so that one day they would have a new life in the body.

Thank you, Father, for what You have recorded here. Thank you that Your Scriptures are so descriptive and so explicit. May we go out this morning and live in light of them and give You glory for it. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.