

Resurrection Sunday Service, March 23rd, 2008 – John 20:1-18

- Easter is early this year. Easter is always the 1st Sunday after the 1st full moon after the Spring Equinox (which is March 20).
- This dating of Easter is based on the lunar calendar that Hebrew people used to identify Passover, which is why it's different every year.
- The earliest an Easter can fall on a Sunday is actually March 22nd, but that would be extremely rare, as is today the 23rd very rare.

- A March 23rd Easter is so rare that this will be the earliest Easter any of us will ever celebrate the rest of our lives regardless of age.
- Also, only the most elderly of our population have ever seen it this early before. You would have to be 95 years of age or older.
- In addition to that, none of us have ever, or will ever, see it a day earlier, on March 22nd, in our lifetime, again, regardless of age.

- The next time Easter will be this early, (March 23rd), will be the year 2228, that's in 220 years from now.
- The last time Easter was this yearly, (March 23rd), was in the year 1913, again, if you're 95 or older, you are the only ones alive then.

- The next time it will be a day earlier, (March 22nd), will be in the year 2285. That's in 277 years from now.
- The last time it was a day earlier (March 22nd) was in 1818. So, no one alive today has or will ever see it any earlier than this year!

- This resurrection day is a very special day because it will only be celebrated on this day once in a lifetime, or two or three.
- What makes this day infinitely more special is that we celebrate on this day, the One who is the "Life" for all of time, and eternity.

John 20:1-18 – (Put verse seven in your hip pocket for just a moment, I want to come back to it in a little bit.)

1. Don't the recent discoveries disprove the resurrection?

"Dr. Greenleaf, the Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University, believed the Resurrection was a hoax and was determined to expose the "myth." After thoroughly examining the evidence he came to the exact opposite conclusion and wrote a book entitled, *The Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence*. He concluded that according to the jurisdiction of legal evidence the resurrection was the best supported event in all of history and in the process committed his life to Jesus Christ!"

Charles Spurgeon - "... beyond a doubt it can be shown that there is as much evidence for the resurrection of Christ as for any fact in history. There is, probably, no fact in history which is so fully proven and corroborated as the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, who was nailed to the cross, and died, and was buried, did rise again."

Peter W. Stoner "...Any man who rejects Christ as the Son of God is rejecting a fact proved perhaps more absolutely than any other fact in the world."
http://www.geocities.com/stonerdon/science_speaks.html

Billy Graham - "There is more evidence that Jesus rose from the dead than there is that Julius Caesar ever lived or that Alexander the Great died at the age of 33."

- In 1842 Otto Thenius proposed that a location known as the "place of the skull" was the Calvary (Golgotha) where the crucifixion of Jesus occurred.
- In 1878 Captain Conder, stated his conviction that the real site of Calvary was to be found on a rocky knoll outside the northern wall and close to the cave known as "Jeremiah's Grotto."
- In 1894 a British General named Gordon visited this spot and had a very strong sense about it being the place, so much so that he had to research it further.
- Later he would come to believe with a certainty that this was the site where Jesus was buried and rose from the dead. He began raising money and established the Garden Tomb Association in London, which purchased the land and still manages the site and maintains the grounds to this day.
- Soil samples were taken from the floor of the tomb and given to expert chemists to determine if there had been any trace of decomposition. The analysis was completed, and it was concluded that absolutely no trace whatsoever of any decay or decomposition was found.
- Today, Sunday Services are held at this site, and visitors come from all over the world to see this tomb which had belonged to one Joseph of Arimathea, who was used of God to fulfill the prophecies related to the burial and subsequent resurrection of the Messiah.

Isaiah 53:9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. NIV

2. So why is it so important to believe the resurrection story?

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. NIV

- Levi, my seven year old, was asked by our Buddhist neighbor; "isn't Easter about Jesus dying on the cross?" My son replied; "no, Easter is not about Jesus dying on the cross, it's about Jesus rising from the dead three days later!"

- Maybe to you, Easter is about Jesus dying on the cross, and Christmas is about Jesus being born in a manger. That's what it's about.
- So, since that's what it's all about, you decide that on Christmas and Easter, you'll go to church and celebrate the holidays.
- Well, to tell you the truth, you can go to church on Christmas and Easter, and still go to hell!

"If I'm at your house and I began to move from room to room straightening pictures on your wall, that's commendable, but if your house is on fire, and I began to move from room to room straightening pictures, I've become evil, and wicked not choosing to use my time to save your life."

Corrie Ten Boom

Romans 3:10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 10:9-10 ...if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Romans 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

3. What if I don't believe in a literal and eternal hell?

Mark 9:43-44 43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. KJV

- One Bible commentator illustrates the deception of; "no heaven, no hell, or no hurry."

- May I trouble you to take verse seven, in John 20, out of your hip pocket now, as mentioned earlier? I would like to revisit it at this time.
- Why would John, by the Holy Spirit, deem it necessary to include the detail of how Jesus' burial cloth was folded and neatly set aside?

- It's interesting that the burial cloth placed over Jesus' face was not, like the other linen, thrown aside, but folded neatly and set aside.
- One has to conclude that there was both an importance in and significance for, Jesus folding this burial cloth after his resurrection.
- In order to understand the significance of this, one has to know a little bit about a well known Hebrew tradition of Jesus' day.

- According to this tradition, the servant would perfectly prepare the table for his master exactly the way the master wanted it.
- The servant would wait until the master had finished eating, and he wouldn't dare touch the table until the master was finished.
- When the master finished, he rose from the table, wiped his fingers mouth and beard, then wadded up that cloth and tossed it aside.

- The servant would then know to clear the table. For in those days, the wadded cloth meant, 'I'm done'.
- However, if the master got up from the table, folded his napkin, and laid it beside his plate, the servant wouldn't dare touch anything.
- The reason for this is because the folded cloth meant, 'I'm coming back!' Could Jesus have been saying; "I'm coming back?"

Revelation 22:20-21 20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. KJV

4. "So if I don't believe in Jesus before His return He sends me to hell?"

When Jesus died on the cross, He was essentially saying; "over my dead body you got to hell!"

2 Peter 3:9b He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. NIV

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 11:25-26 ..."I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"