

April 21, 2019

Death Could Not Hold Him!

Mark 16:1-8

Four reasons why death could not keep Jesus in the grave.

LTS: John 19:38-20:31

- 19:38-42 (Matt)
- 20:1-10 (Russ)
- 20:11-18 (Jason)
- 20:19-23 (Rod)
- 20:24-31 (Keith)

Read Mark 16:1-8

Introduction:

I think it's safe to say that we have all heard the resurrection story read and preached many, many times. In fact, counting today, I think I have preached about it myself at least 19 times. But I still find it quite impossible to fully apprehend the glory of it all. I mean, this was the most stupendous event that has ever occurred in human history! And yet, no one expected it! No one expected it. Not that those closest to Jesus weren't explicitly told what was going to take place. Yet, when it happened, they were all astonished!

It was early Sunday morning, just before the crack of dawn. Several of the women who had been faithful to Jesus throughout the three years of His ministry were completely overcome with grief as they watched Jesus condemned, mocked, beaten within an inch of his life, and finally, horrifically, crucified.

The women, standing near the cross, heard His plea to the Father that He forgive the men who were nailing Him to that awful crucifixion stake. They listened to his agonizing cries as He spoke his final words to His mother and to John, whom He loved. They saw Him look into the heavens and cry out "My God, My God why have you forsaken Me?" Finally, after breathing His last, his body went limp upon the cross, and they were all forced to settle into the deep shadows of hopelessness.

All hope was gone now. The evil deed was done. The betrayal... complete. The shame and butchery had achieved their intended end. Truly, He would not come down from the cross to prove He was the Christ. It was over. He was dead. And things would never be the same.

That evening, some of the women observed Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus working together risking everything to give Jesus a proper burial. They wrapped Him in linen cloths just as His mother had done at the manger scene some 33 years earlier. Only this time, they smeared between the cloth wrappings about a hundred pounds of a syrupy mix of myrrh and aloes to anoint His body as if he were a king (Jn. 19:39).

Upon concluding their labor of love just before Sundown (the beginning of the Sabbath), the men rolled a large stone in front of the tomb and quietly walked home in time to participate in the Passover meal.

We shouldn't miss the timing on this. Jesus was the Lamb of God. The Lamb to whom all the sacrificial lambs in Israel's history had always pointed. They were the shadow. He is the substance. God sent him to be the Sacrifice that would bear and pay for the sins of all who would believe. And now, at the very hour thousands of Pascal lambs were sacrificed in the Temple, God was sacrificing His Son on a cross.

In the meantime (Mat. 29), the Sanhedrin were standing before Pontius Pilate pleading for a guard of soldiers to protect the tomb from anyone who might want to steal Jesus' body. They were afraid an empty tomb would deceive the people into believing He had risen from the dead. So, just as our little funeral party was leaving the tomb, a battalion of Roman soldiers was arriving. Upon affixing the official Roman seal to the stone (the breaking of which was punishable by death) they began standing guard. Jesus' body was safely and securely in the tomb... and no one was going to take it away.

Now, the Sabbath would have lasted from sundown on Friday evening until sundown on Saturday evening, during which time no one would have been permitted to make any more provision for Jesus' body - or do any kind of work for that matter. But at the crack of dawn Sunday morning these few faithful women were already up and on their way to the tomb. But they had not the slightest inclination that anything unusual had happened.

Oh, they might have been awakened by the rumbling of the earthquake that shook Jerusalem that morning when god's angels arrived at the tomb. But the women apparently had no suspicion that the shaking ground was a harbinger of something taking place at the tomb.

Notice what they talked about on the way (v. 3) "They were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?'" You see, they

had no expectation of resurrection. They fully expected to find the tomb just as they had left it the night before last! Imagine, then, their utter shock and amazement when they laid eyes on the scene of the resurrection!

There on the ground or perhaps running away in fear, was that guard of soldiers who, moments ago, had experienced a terrifying encounter with mighty angels of the Lord who were the cause of the earthquake! Now, one of those angels was rather casually sitting on the stone which had, until recently, been covering the entrance to the tomb. He was the one who greeted the little party of women as they arrived (Mat. 28). A few minutes later they discovered another angel sitting inside the tomb showing them the place where Jesus had been laid and the empty cocoon of perfumed wrappings that remained.

Clearly the women did not expect any of this. They were shocked, and frightened. But the angels had come with a message. (v. 6) "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen! He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him." The women gazed at the scene in utter amazement. In fact, Mark describes their shock with two words (v. 8).

- A. Trembling - describes what was happening to their bodies - uncontrolled, continuing tremors.
- B. Astonishment (Gk. *ekstasis*) indicating their ecstasy of mind. Mentally and emotionally they were swept away by the scene before them!

God had sent His messengers to tell them hope is NOT lost. In fact, despite all the emotional conclusions to the contrary, God's plan of redemption was moving forward without so much as a glitch. This is how it was planned from before the foundation of the world.

He who had not rescued Himself from the cross had done something infinitely better - He has rescued Himself from the grave! And so, they fled from the tomb unable to speak (v. 8), and ran straight to the disciples to share the good news!

What a day this must have been! What a day! It was a day that turned the world upside-down. All of redemptive history pivots on the undeniable events of this one blessed morning. And yet, just as many people in our day understand the events that brought about Jesus death but are ignorant as to why He had to die, so millions are familiar with the story of the resurrection but don't understand why He had to rise.

The question for the morning is: Why did Jesus rise from the dead? Or, more specifically, why is it that death could not hold him? Of course, the short answer is, because it was God's will that he should rise. But, why? Why did God deem it NECESSARY for His Son to not only die for our sins but afterwards to rise again from the dead?

I. Because Jesus (authority) had to be demonstrated:

1. Listen folks, Jesus made some extraordinary claims during the span of His ministry, but his most audacious claim was that he was more powerful than death.

A. (John 6:48-51) I am the bread of life... This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.
⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

B. (John 11 :25-26). Before raising Lazarus from the tomb Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die" What's he saying? He saying, the power I have is greater than the power of death.

2. Now it's one thing for an empty boaster to make such claims, but it's quite another to back it up with irrefutable evidence. How do we know that the power of Jesus is greater than the power of death? Here's how: Death could not hold him! Jesus rose from the dead.

3. After his resurrection this was blatantly obvious, but Peter, in His first sermon (Acts 2) explains it to the gathering crowds by saying:

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power "(Acts 2:22-24).

4. Jesus is mightier than death. He proved it temporally when he raised Lazarus from the grave. But he proved it ultimately when, after three days in the grave, he rose to life again.

5. Why couldn't death keep its grip upon Jesus? Because Jesus is stronger than death. In fact, not only did Jesus overpower the grip of death, he also used death to accomplish the saving purposes of God. In the sinner's case, death is God's penalty for sin. In Jesus' cases, death was God's means of salvation. As Peter would explain years later, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross... and "by his wounds you are healed."

6. The Son of God is so powerful, conquering death was child's play! In Paul's words, "It was impossible for Him to be held by [death's] power."

7. The apostle John describes it a little differently. In Revelation 1:17, he explains that when He met Jesus on the island of Patmos, he fell at His feet like a dead man. And John says, "He [Jesus] placed His right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore,'" Why? "Because "I have the keys of death and of Hades.

8. A person cannot be held captive long who owns the keys to the prison. And I'm here to tell you folks, that Jesus owns the keys. The reason we know he has the power to unlock the prison of the grave for us is because He did it for Himself. And that's the kind of Power every sinner needs.

9. So death could not hold Him because Jesus' power had to be demonstrated. Second, Death Could Not Hold Him...

II. Because Jesus deity had to be vindicated:

1. Not only did Jesus claim to have power over death, he also claimed to be God.

A. John 10:26-30, Jesus says he gives eternal life to His sheep "and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of His hand. He says, "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

B. John 8:56-58, Jesus argued with the Pharisees saying, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad. (Eternality Glad!) So the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you,

before Abraham was, I am. Therefore, they picked up stones to throw at Him."

2. Liberal theologians try to say that Jesus never claimed to be God. Well, 2,100 years of false teaching may have confused them about what Jesus claimed for himself, but the Pharisees understood him with perfect clarity.

3. God's didn't call Himself "I was," or "I will be." He said, "I Am." In three letters of the alphabet God reveals his nature. He is the eternal One. He is the first and the Last – the beginning and the end. So, when Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was, I AM," there was no ambiguity about what he was proposing.

4. In fact, at the end of his life, this was the final charge the Jewish court laid against him and which led to his conviction and death. In Matt.14:61 the frustrated and angry Sanhedrin backed Jesus into a corner and demanded "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? (in other words, Are you the Son of God?) And Jesus said, "I Am." And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garment and said, "What further witnesses do we need? And they all stood up and condemned Him.

5. When Jesus called himself "I Am" it was a clear claim to deity. But how can anyone be sure it was true? Paul answers that question in Rom. 1:4, where he explains that Jesus "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead."

6. How do we know that Jesus was God? Because the resurrection declares it to be true! So, death could not Hold Him because His Power had to be Demonstrated and his Deity had to be vindicated.

7. Third: Death could not hold him...

III. Because Jesus' glory had to be celebrated:

1. I think we spend so much time thinking about the passion of Christ in terms of what it says about God's love for us that we lose sight of the fact that God's greatest goal in the life and death of His Son was NOT to make much of us but rather to make much of Jesus.

2. Everything God did for us to bring about our salvation is ultimately aimed at exalting the glory of Christ.

- A. John 13:31-32 When JUDAS left the upper room to betray Jesus to his enemies, Jesus immediately said: When “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.
 - B. Moments later when Jesus was leading his men to the Garden of Gathsemene for Prayer before his arrest, Jesus stops in the dark on the Mt. of Olives, looks up at heaven and prays: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you... I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.
3. We should think of the glory of Christ in two ways. First, there is His intrinsic glory. He is glorious in His Person. On the MT. of Transfiguration his disciples got a glimpse of that glory when Jesus suddenly appeared to them in what can only be described as blinding light. That kind of glory leads to another, namely, the worship and honor by which His people rightly ascribe to Him as the highest ranking Being in the Cosmos.
4. The Psalmist said (Psa. 29): “Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the people. Ascribe to the Lord Glory and Strength. Ascribe to the Lord the Glory due His name.” This is nothing but a Celebration of the glory of God. And this is the kind of glory that we get a glimpse of in the book of Revelation.
5. When Jesus rose from the dead and forty days later ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, all the heavenly host rejoiced. I think it must have been a celebration that previewed the coming great day of exaltation that John foresaw in Revelation 5. Here’s how John describes it:

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. "And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.

6. That's why death could not hold Him. God had determined that His Son, who came to earth in utter humiliation, would be restored to his rightful place of glorification as King over all.

7. So, death could not hold Him because, His Power had to be Demonstrated and his Deity had to be vindicated, His Glory had to be Celebrated. And finally...

IV. God's Wrath had to be Propitiated:

1. Let's face it folks, if Jesus didn't rise again from the dead, what gives us the audacity to say our sins are forgiven? If Jesus didn't rise again proving that He was qualified to satisfy the wrath of God in our place, upon what basis do we say we have peace with God? The wages of sin is death. The wages of sin is eternal separation from God. The wages of sin is judgment. And we are all sinners

2. But Jesus did rise again from the dead, and hundreds of people were witnesses to that fact (1 Cor. 15).

3. Some, however, even in the first century were suggesting that there is no such thing as resurrection. When a person dies, that's it! Its over! Your body feeds the worms and pushes up daises! But Paul explains (1 Cor. 15) that...

...if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover, we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did NOT raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and [listen carefully] if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

4. O beloved, everything hinges on the resurrection. Jesus died to satisfy the holy and righteous wrath of God against sinners.

- A. Heb. 2:17 “Therefore he [the Son of God] had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”
- B. 1 John 4:10 “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

5. On the cross, redeeming love and holy justice joined hands for our salvation. The death of Jesus satisfied the wrath of God in our place. And the Father raised Him from the dead to announce that Christ’s sacrifice was accepted and sufficient to pay man’s debt. The resurrection is proof-positive that God the Father accepted the payment Jesus made for sinners when he offered his own life in our place. That’s propitiation. On the cross Jesus quenched the righteous wrath of God toward sinners so that all who believe might be saved... to the praise of the glory of His grace.

6. In the final analysis the equation goes like this: No resurrection - no salvation. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential for man’s salvation. If He was NOT raised, we will not be raised. The resurrection of Jesus is foundational to the gospel. This why Paul’s gospel appeal goes like this, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

7. Why is it that death could not hold him? Because, it was the sovereign intention of the Father that man’s salvation would come in such a way that

- A. Jesus’ Power would be demonstrated
- B. His deity would be vindicated,
- C. His glory would be celebrated,
- D. And God’s wrath would be shown as propitiated.

8. Gospel Invitation: