

Intro: Doubts: We live in a world that embraces doubt. Doubting is the new truth. Today we're taught to embrace doubt more than to value the certainty of answers. And our Enemy knows that if he can get us to value doubt, then he can undermine God's Truth, who is Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. My ego doesn't want to submit to God. It doesn't want guilt, either, so it embraces doubt as the premiere act of humility. However, this is just an attempt to control God, to resist submitting to His Truth and His answers to my guilt. Embracing doubt is a false humility, because it will not believe the Truth that God has revealed. And this is what my self-centered ego sinfully wants: a Jesus that it can control and categorize in an attempt to throw off His rule and His "constraints" (Ps 2). But, the truth is that Jesus is completely unique in His person and in His authority and He cannot be either controlled or categorized.

The world wants to paint Jesus and His Word as just another teacher, prophet, or sage; One which they can relegate to "spiritual leader" but not complete Savior and Master. So, they have written off His claim to eternal deity as shown largely by His greatest victory: His atoning death and His subsequent power over death itself. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the keystone upon which our faith stands. If the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is not true, then the entire thing comes tumbling down, for He would be just another powerless martyr fell doomed to the greater power of death. I've heard people say that even if somebody did find Jesus' bones in an ossuary somewhere, that it wouldn't affect their faith. I say, if they do find Jesus' bones, then our faith is naught and void, and I'm out of here. Without the resurrection, our faith is futile, foolish, and without power.

1 Cor 15:12-23 – without the resurrection our faith is futile

"If the Resurrection is not historic fact, then the power of death remains unbroken, and with it the effect of sin; and the significance of Christ's death remains uncertified, and accordingly believers are yet in their sins, precisely where they were before they heard of Jesus' name." ~W.J. Sparrow-Simpson

The belief that Jesus physically rose again from the dead is not merely a myth made up by a deceptive group of His followers in order to gain power and prestige. Although our society tries to make them look, at best, like a bunch of country bumpkins, believers in superstitious foolery like resurrection from the dead, this simply is not plausible given the culture in which the early church was formed. You see, in the days of Jesus the resurrection of an individual was considered just as implausible, rather *impossible*, as His resurrection is viewed in our society today. For the followers of Jesus this story, with a resurrected and living leader, made them look like fools and crazy idiots to those of their time, too (Acts 26:24).

Jesus knew that they themselves would not believe it unless he met them in their unbelief and proved to them that He was truly alive. So, this is what He did. Today is the day to begin to doubt your doubts, and to place your confidence in the risen Jesus Christ, having been proven to be powerful enough to set us free from the slavery of sin and its eternal consequences. His resurrected life means life for those who depend upon Him and He meets us where we are in our doubt and proves to our spirits that He is the way of salvation, the destination of truth, and the joy of life. Let's look today to see how he argued with His disciples about their doubts (gently chiding them for not believing His words, v44), gave them joy in His presence, and sent them out powerfully to testify of His resurrection, hoping in this interaction that He will contend with our doubts, give us His joy, and send us out with His power to be witnesses of His glory.

1. Jesus Contends With Their Doubts

- a. First, Jesus never values doubt, rather He chides His followers for not believing His Words
 - i. v44 – These are my words that I spoke to you...

- ii. Matt 8:26 – “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?”
- iii. Matt 14:24-33, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Peter sinking in the sea)
- iv. Mark 12:10, “Have you not read this Scripture...” (chief priests and elders asked, “By what authority do you do these things?”)
- b. Bodily raised, not merely spiritual
 - i. “Look at me!” Not a ghost – ate food (spirits don’t do this)
 - ii. Historically True Resurrection
 - 1. Not merely a spiritual resurrection
- c. They had “good reason” to doubt
 - i. In the ancient Jewish world individual resurrection was unheard of
 - 1. N.T. Wright – “It cannot be stressed too strongly that 1st century Jews were not expecting people to rise from the dead as isolated individuals. Resurrection for them was something that might happen to all on that great future occasion when God brought history to an end and a whole new world was renewed. It will not do, therefore, to say that Jesus’s disciples were so stunned and shocked by His death, so unable to come to terms with it that they projected their shattered hopes onto the screen of fantasy and invented the idea of Jesus’ resurrection as a way of coping with their cruelly broken dream. That has an initial psychological plausibility to 20th century people, but it will not work as serious 1st century history. There were lots of other messianic and similar movements in the Jewish world roughly contemporary with Jesus. There were many situations in which a messianic leader died a violent death at the hands of authorities. In not one single case do we hear the slightest mention of the disappointed followers claiming that their hero had been raised from the dead. They knew better. In the Jewish world-view an individual could not be resurrected in the middle of history and history just continue going. It was not possible in their worldview. So, Jewish revolutionaries whose leader had been executed by the authorities had only two options: give up the revolution or find another leader. Claiming that your original leader had been resurrected was not an option...unless, of course, he was.” (N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*)
 - ii. Modern people don’t believe the Scriptures
 - 1. Myths written years later by Christians who wanted to deceive people
 - a. The only OT reference to resurrection is Daniel 12:2-3, where people are raised from the dead shining.
 - i. If you were going to make up a story to try and fool people, Jesus never would have entered the room quietly and with a simple greeting
 - ii. Maybe some luminescent Jesus bursting through the doors
 - iii. Not fantastic narrative. If you were making up a story, you don’t say mundane and uninspiring things like this.
 - iv. Legends and mythical narratives are not like this
 - “Thus did he stand and ponder, but Achilles came up to him as it were Mars himself, plumed lord of battle. From his right shoulder he brandished his terrible spear of Pelian ash, and the bronze gleamed around him like flashing fire or the rays of the rising sun. Fear fell upon Hector as he beheld him, and he dared not stay longer where he was but fled in dismay from before the gates, while Achilles darted after him at his utmost speed. As a mountain falcon, swiftest of all birds, swoops down upon some cowering dove- the dove flies before him but the falcon with a shrill scream follows close after, resolved to have her- even so did Achilles make straight for Hector with all his might, while Hector fled under the Trojan wall as fast as his limbs could take him.” (Homer’s Iliad, Book XXII)
 - v. It doesn’t make sense to see the disciples using this particular narrative to try and gain power, prestige, or a following. It would only lead to ridicule, disdain, and death.
 - 2. Resurrection just doesn’t happen
 - a. Primitive peoples believed in miracles, Modern people know better

- b. The disciples were completely unable to fit the concept of resurrection into their worldview
 - i. Matthew 17:22-23 (why did they grieve?)
 - ii. Mark 9:9-10; 31-32
- c. When Jesus appeared, did the disciples accept it?
 - i. Did they assume he had been resurrected?
 - 1. They thought he was a ghost, not a resurrected person
 - ii. They were startled and frightened
 - 1. Even though he had foretold of this, it was so preposterous to them that they still didn't comprehend it!
 - 2. Even after his first argument, they still don't believe (v41)
- d. You have a world-view that says resurrection is impossible, but 1st century Jews also believed that an individual resurrection in the middle of history was unthinkable. The Greco-Roman world said that resurrection of the body was utterly impossible, unnecessary, and foolish (Acts 17:32)
- e. Our society is now telling us that the disciples made up this part of the story in order to gain followers and power, but the resurrection of Jesus would have been a hindrance to gaining followers and power in the ancient near east.
- f. The only reason it would have been written down was because it actually happened.
 - i. 2 Tim 2:8 – “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead...” an integral part of the Gospel
 - ii. We have doubts about the authenticity of the resurrection (because it is seen as impossible); so did the disciples of Jesus.
 - iii. He speaks to their doubts and He speaks to our doubts as well. His Holy Spirit still works powerfully to testify to our spirits. The question is not whether you fully comprehend what He has said, the question is, “do you believe what He has said”?

2. Jesus Brings Them Joy With His Presence

- a. They “still” disbelieved in their joy and wonder
 - i. They were “shocked” in “terror” and “terrified” at His presence
 - 1. “startled” is better “terrified” (cf. Luke 21:9, “when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be *terrified*...”)
 - 2. “frightened” is the word used of powerful and imminent danger (cf. Rev 11:13 of great earthquakes and death; Luke 24:5 of the faithful women who fell to the ground when the angels appeared at the tomb)
 - ii. It was COMPLETELY unexpected, even though He had told them such in advance
- b. Jesus communed with them by eating
 - i. When people die you hear a lot “I can still feel him with me”
 - ii. Jesus made his presence very real, not vague, to them
 - iii. Completes their joy with the intimacy of a meal
 - 1. Eating together was an intimate expression of friendship together
 - 2. Not merely “Chicken soup of the soul” kind of intimacy
 - 3. Not merely “Jesus’ words inspire me”
 - 4. They had HIM and you can, too – the taste of His very living presence, His Spirit within you
- c. He promises His Holy Spirit (the promise of the Father, see John 14-16) to be with them.

3. Jesus Sends Them and Redirects Their Lives With His Presence

- a. You will be My witnesses of these things
 - i. They were, and we are, to be completely shaped by the fact that Jesus suffered, died, and has risen from the dead
 - ii. “repentance and forgiveness of sins in my name”
 1. The good news that God’s wrath is satisfied by the death of Jesus Christ and by repentantly trusting in Him (in His name) we are forgiven
 2. It is the living Jesus that holds us secure forever and forgives our sins completely, not us. Now THAT is good news!! We have a living Savior!
 - iii. “preached to all the peoples”
 1. Proclaim the answers, not the doubts! You have seen Me, now go tell others about my saving blood and powerful life...and I’m sending my Spirit to empower and transform you.
 - iv. Live in the world being completely shaped by the fact that Jesus has been raised from the dead and is ALIVE and POWERFULLY WORKING HIS GLORY
- b. He shows them His hands and His feet
 - i. His resurrection does not bring joy in spite of His suffering, it brings joy through His suffering
 - ii. All the bad things that tore their lives apart now become the greatness of joy when He reveals God’s master plan of redemption and beauty and restoration and hope.
 - iii. The joy and hope of the resurrection will not make you forget all the tragedies and struggles in your life, it will include them, it will explain them, it will redeem them as sources of joy because the blood of Jesus and His resurrected life shows us that God is redeeming this sinful broken world so that we have hope.
 - iv. God takes the worst and uses it to bring even more joy when He works the miracle of redemption.
- c. It was His presence with them that overwhelmed them with joy and encouraged them to witness boldly
 - i. They would later receive His Spirit within them, which emboldened and empowered them
 - ii. But it was being in His presence, knowing that He is alive and His promises are completely trustworthy, that their love, respect, and worship blossomed into the life-changing attitude of being “sold-out” for Him
 1. It wasn’t a procedure, or a learning of method, or a specific style that made them bold witnesses, it was being with Him, overjoyed in His presence, seeing Him, loving Him, worshipping Him as the risen and living Savior of their souls
 2. When we aren’t intent on gaining power over the world, but rather on being with Jesus, we can work for the benefit of the world in all things, primarily in proclaiming, witnessing to, the person of Jesus Christ: He died for our sins, He was raised again according to the Scriptures, He rules over all things right now as our King, He is coming again to complete His redemption.

Conclusion:

The truth is that our selfish and unchanged hearts have defied the rule and authority of God. Our ruined and stained attempts to dethrone God have come in order to appease our consciences, so that we can make the rules and not submit to anyone, having tried to “throw off the chains” of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Ps

2). This rebellion has placed us under the wrath of God that is coming to destroy sin and those who continue in it.

The answer for salvation from this mess that we've made is not to work harder, but to become weak; so weak that we are helpless; to submit to the point of brokenness before Him. We must become failures to succeed in salvation, become helpless to obtain hope, to die to building and defending our own reputation to become alive with the fresh cool breeze of the wind of redemption and freedom. For, it was in the apparent weakness of the cross, in the failure of a sealed tomb, and in the silence of His Father where Jesus Christ has won our victory for us where we could not. And we know that God accepted Him as a substitute payment for our sin because He was raised from the dead to continue and hold secure forever our redemption. His "weakness" was replaced with power, His "failure" was replaced with victory; His "helplessness" accomplished our hope; His death brought us life. Now He sits with His Father in heaven, insuring our new life, our innocence before Him, and giving us hope of that future day of restoration.

My fellow sinners, we all need a Savior today; a Redeemer who can guarantee our acceptance before God; One who can mediate *for us* and alight our hearts with the *newness of life* and joyful purity of worship; One who is capable of setting us free and making our lives right with God. This, O friends, is why we need Jesus and the power of His death and His resurrection.

His bodily resurrection is the promise of renewal and restoration, it is the promise of joy through the bad things, and it is the promise of His presence in our lives today with an intimacy and a beauty that pales all else in comparison. He is the only one who can fill your with joy in making much of Him, fill your emptiness with the joyful exuberance of His glorious Holy Spirit, the only one who can heal your wounds with the gentle loving hands of the self-sacrificial God, the only one who can redeem your life and set you on fire to serve Him completely...and He lives to do it powerfully today!

Ask Him to contend with your doubts, honestly and truthfully. He is alive to contend. Ask His Holy Spirit to overwhelm you with joy as He draws near to you in His power. His presence is the promise for those who trust in Him. So, let your self-rule go, and trust His rulership and His blood, His presence to powerfully push you to testify of His unique and incredible greatness that broke the power of sin and of death and removes God's wrath from upon you by His own blood. He is working mightily for His own glory through our joy in this resurrected Son of God!