

The Fear of the Resurrection

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – the fear of the women after the resurrection of Jesus and its implications to us
2. aim – to cause us to rightly fear the implications of the resurrection of Jesus over our lives
3. passage – Mark 16:1-8

b. outline

1. The Discovery of the Resurrection
2. The Encounter of the Resurrection
3. The Fear of the Resurrection

c. opening

1. the resurrection of Jesus is the **seminal event** of Christianity
 - a. if Jesus was not raised, then all of his works and teachings would be lost to the fog of history
 - b. if Jesus was not raised, then there is no N.T., no church, no history, and no W civilization
 - c. if Jesus was not raised, then there is *nothing* supporting our faith in him as our redemption
 1. **i.e.** the Resurrection is the exclamation point on his statement “*it is finished!*”
 - d. **seminal** = a work, event, moment, or figure strongly influencing later developments
 1. **i.e.** someone who or something that becomes the *foundation* from which future realities flow; the *starting point* of a set of realities to come (**e.g.** Abraham as the *seminal* patriarch of Israel)
 2. the Resurrection *starts* all of what flows *out of* God’s character to his people
2. the resurrection of Jesus has a certain **emotional** character
 - a. **question:** what should be our *emotional* response to this reality? how should it make us *feel*?
 1. a particularly *relevant* question, given that the *primary* message in so much of Christianity is how we “feel” about things related to God (**i.e.** emotionalism at the core of modern “faith”)
 2. is it possible that our feelings about the Resurrection may be *misplaced* – that the *intention* of the Resurrection is to produce an *additional, completely different feeling than that which normally surrounds this particular Sunday of the year?*
 3. **IOW:** is it possible that the *typical* emotion re: Easter (**i.e.** a now-defunct cultural lightness characterized by pastel colors [?]) should be *tempered* by another emotion, one that is very *ancient and immediate*?
 - b. **advance: although it is good and right to be consciously joyful at news of the Resurrection (given that it is the completion of our redemption), it is also good and right to feel something else, an emotion that appears regularly in the gospel accounts of the event**
 1. **start:** a *harmony* of the accounts of the *immediate discovery* of the open tomb by the women will lead to us seeing a *reaction in them*, which should **give us pause to ask why?**

I. The Discovery of the Resurrection

Content

a. the discovery of the resurrection (read Mark 16:1-8)

1. all of the accounts note that this occurs on *Sunday* (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1)
2. all of the accounts note the *names* of the women who went to the tomb
 - a. Mary Magdalene (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:10; Jn. 20:1)
 - b. Mary the mother of James (Mk. 16:1; Lk 24:10), or “*the other Mary*” (Mt. 28:1)
 - c. Salome (Mk. 16:1) and/or Joanna (Lk. 24:10) – same woman or different women?
 - d. other women (Lk. 24:10) – leading to a total of **at least four (4), possibly five (5)**
3. two of the accounts note that the women *went to the tomb* to “*prepare*” the body (Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1)
 - a. since they had no time on Friday before sundown to complete the burial process
 - b. Mark indicates that the women bought the spices on Sunday; Luke only says they brought what they prepared; John notes some already brought by Nicodemus on Friday (Jn. 19:39)
 - c. Matthew and John simply note that Mary went to the tomb to “*see it*” (Mt. 28:1; Jn. 20:1)
4. Mark notes that the women were *concerned about getting into the tomb* (Mk. 16:3)
 - a. three accounts note the stone already having been moved away (Mk. 16:4; Lk. 24:2; Jn. 20:1)
 - b. Matthew records the (preceding?) event of an angel rolling the stone away (Mt. 28:2-4)

5. the Synoptics note that the women *enter the open tomb* (Mt. 28:5; Mk. 16:5; Lk. 24:3)
 - a. Luke and John note there are two angels inside (Lk. 24:4; Jn. 20:12)
6. the Synoptics record the *announcement* of the angels inside (in summary)
 - a. you seek Jesus who was crucified (Mt. 28:5; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:5-6)
 1. **i.e.** you have come to the right tomb; this is where he was buried
 - b. he is not here, for he has risen (Mt. 28:6; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:6)
 1. **i.e.** he has not been “moved” to another tomb or stolen; he has risen from the dead
 - c. remember how he told you that this must all happen (Lk. 24:7)
 1. **i.e.** this is to fulfill all that he foretold about himself during his public ministry
 - d. go, tell his disciples that he will meet them in Galilee (Mt. 28:7; Mk 16:7)
 1. **i.e.** this will be to confirm his bodily resurrection before many witnesses
7. the Synoptics record the *report* by the women to the disciples (Mt. 28:8; Mk. 16:8; Lk. 24:10f)
 - a. all of the women go back to the disciples, *initially* inclined not to say anything, but eventually report what they had seen and heard (**i.e.** Mark’s account of their muteness)
 - b. Peter (Lk. 24:12) and John (Jn. 20:2) then run to the tomb, see it empty and leave (Jn. 20:10)
8. the Synoptics record the *reactions* of the women to their *initial* discovery and the angelic message
 - a. Matthew records their reaction as one of fear mixed with joy (Mt. 28:8)

“So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.”
 - b. Mark records their reaction as one of fear with trembling and astonishment (Mk. 16:8)

“And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”
 - c. Luke records their reaction as one of remembering what Jesus had predicted (Lk. 24:8-9)

“And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.”
 - d. **i.e.** after the women discover the tomb open and hear the message of the angels, they run back to tell the disciples, and the Synoptic writers tell us what they were *feeling* and *thinking* at the time

II. The Encounter of the Resurrection

Content

a. the encounter as the *last* statement of Mark’s narrative

1. **assumption:** the “longer ending” of the Second Gospel (**i.e.** 16:9-20) is *probably not original*
 - a. the verses are not found in some of the oldest and best manuscript copies of the gospel
 - b. there are early church fathers who admit to the inauthenticity of these verses
 - c. there are serious differences within the passage amongst the various manuscripts that do have it
 - d. the explanation for it being added by a later scribe is simple: the gospel ends rather strangely, so it seems reasonable for someone to add an “epilogue” that would clear up the ambiguity left behind
2. **therefore:** what if there is some *significance* in the fact that Mark chose to end his gospel in this way?
 - a. **i.e.** with the last thought being the women running from the open tomb
 - b. **question:** is this not where all of us are when we first encounter the concept of the Resurrection?
 1. not later, when we have more to “go on” – **i.e.** the appearances of Jesus, the witnesses (**e.g.** Thomas), Pentecost, the conversion of Paul, the epistolary overview, church history, etc.
 2. at this point: our *first* encounter with the idea that Jesus has risen from the dead – **i.e.** like the women, having “some” information (**e.g.** basically, a message), and having to “go away” from the empty tomb to decide what to do with it
 - c. ironically, this gospel account was written by someone who had a history of “running away” from things (**i.e.** from Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey; Acts 15:37f)
 1. **IMO:** Mark *purposely* ended his gospel on this note because he was sending a message
 - d. **LOW:** is it possible that we have lost that *visceral* reaction the discovery of the empty tomb should produce in us, the true sense that should accompany such a revelation?

III. The Fear of the Resurrection

Content

a. the reaction of *fear* in discovering the empty tomb

1. **question:** why would the women have a response of *fear and trembling* in seeing the empty tomb?
 - a. **i.e. v. 8** leaves the clear impression that *fear* was their *primary* feeling at that moment
 - b. true, Matthew’s account says they also had “*great joy*,” but that seems to be *tempered* in the account by the fact that they were *reticent* to tell the story
 - c. **their initial reaction is puzzling, given the message of the angel inside, the implications of what has happened, and the fact that they “remembered” Jesus’ own words**

2. some possible reasons they may have felt fear:
 - a. maybe they were scared in having met *angels* in the tomb – the common response to angels
 1. but, their fear continues even after they leave the tomb and are “safely” away from these beings
 - b. possibly they were frightened simply by the “unknown” – they don’t “get” what has happened
 1. but, the message and their own memory of Jesus’ words suggests they *did understand*
 2. the fear they were feeling was mixed with joy, implying that this was not a fear of the unknown
 - c. most likely, they recognized the **implications** of what this meant – their world was now turned completely upside down, and the realities of what this might mean later had begun to set in
 1. true, not *perfectly* – much was yet to be revealed, their *initial* understanding was limited, but ...
 2. if Jesus *really was alive*, then this would mean *radical changes* in everything around them – ***their lives were never going to be the same again!!***
 3. **IOW:** their fear was a *healthy reaction* to the realization that Jesus had *predicted* this
3. **principle: given that Jesus had based his entire ministry on his conviction that he would rise from the dead, his actual resurrection verifies everything he ever said**
 - a. **e.g.** that he *alone* was the way to God (**Jn. 14:6**)
 - b. **e.g.** that those who wished to follow him to God must go with him *through the cross* (**Mt. 16:24**)
 - c. **e.g.** that true discipleship was found in *self-denial* and *obedience* to his Lordship (**Mk. 10:21**)
 - d. or, as Paul put it, to be saved from the wrath of God that is coming upon all who are in rebellion against God is to possess an *existential belief* in this resurrection (**Rom. 10:9**)
4. **application: we need to have a *healthy fear* of the implications of the resurrection of Jesus – we need to *tremble* at the fact that the tomb was empty – we must never stop being in awe that this man who claimed he would rise *actually did***
 - a. the Resurrection “undoes” everything about Jesus that we have “conjured” up in our own minds
5. **we must never lose sight of the central event of the Christian faith, and all of its implications for how we understand him, and how we understand ourselves**