

The Power of Jesus' Resurrection¹



SABBATH—MARCH 20

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 20:1–21:25.

MEMORY VERSE: “But these [words] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ [Savior], the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his [Jesus'] name” (John 20:31, NIV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Jesus' resurrection gives us proof that Jesus' claims are true. Jesus' resurrection is also a living parable² of God's great power in our lives today.

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION IS REAL. John 20 brings us to a very important point in the book of John. We sense that the story is finished with Jesus' death on the cross (John 19:30).

But we also sense that the story is not finished. There would be no Christian church if Jesus had stayed in the tomb. His resurrection turns defeat into victory. His resurrection is a powerful act of God, equal to God's acts of the Creation and the Exodus.³

The New Testament tells us that eleven times Jesus appeared to His followers after His resurrection. Four of these times are in John 20 and 21. Three of these times are in John 20 (John 20:10-18; John 19–23; John 24–29). Perhaps the most important message here is one that we have seen all through the book of John: A true Christian experience comes not by seeing and touching but by believing Jesus' words. It does not matter whether Jesus has spoken these words directly to us or if the disciples have written Jesus' words for us to read.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 27.

¹resurrection—return to life.

²living parable—a story of things that really happened. We use a living parable to teach a truth.

³Exodus—the escape of the people of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 14:5-31).

SUNDAY—MARCH 21

AT THE TOMB (John 20:1-18).

The many people who saw Jesus' resurrection help us to believe that the stories about His resurrection were not "invented" by the disciples to cover up a big lie. As long as these people lived, their stories could be compared⁴ and checked out (Luke 1:1-4).

But for the second generation of Christians⁵ the greatest proof of Jesus' resurrection was the empty tomb. The empty tomb is a very important point of John's book. Why else would the tomb have been empty if Jesus had not risen from the dead? Did Jesus' enemies remove His body from the tomb? Did the disciples steal Jesus' body to fool people into thinking He had risen? We will see in tomorrow's lesson that Jesus' body was not stolen by anyone. The best explanation for the empty tomb is that Jesus really was raised from the dead.

Read John 20:3-10. Focus on John 20:9. How could these disciples fail to understand that Jesus had been resurrected after He had told them He would be? Matthew 12:40; Matthew 27:63; Mark 9:30-32; Mark 10:32-34; John 2:19.

How did Mary Magdalene understand the empty tomb at first? How

did she come to understand that Jesus was alive? John 20:10-16.



“ ‘Teacher!’ ”

Mary was with Jesus in person. But Mary's eyes were so blinded by tears that she had no idea Jesus was with her. Jesus being there as a person was of no use to Mary until she gave attention to His word. We too have that word, through the book of John.

Look at the first reaction of the people who found the empty tomb.

⁴compared—to have seen how things are the same.

⁵second generation of Christians—Christians who were not living before Jesus was crucified.

Jesus had taught these people everything. But they thought someone had taken away His body. With all the miracles they had seen Jesus do, their first reaction was to doubt Jesus' words about His resurrection. How do we sometimes doubt Jesus' words even though He blesses us so often?

MONDAY—MARCH 22

IN THE UPPER ROOM⁶
(John 20:19-29).

How did the rest of the disciples come to know Jesus was raised from the dead? John 20:19, 20. How did Thomas learn about the Resurrection? John 20:24-29. What do their actions tell us about their faith? Did they really have "faith" before seeing Him? How much faith does it take to believe in what you see, hear, tell, and touch?

The first Christians were very slow to believe. They had the proof of the empty tomb and the witness⁷ of Mary, but they wanted to see Jesus for themselves before they could forget other reasons why the tomb could be empty. Only the beloved disciple (John) believed without seeing Jesus first (John 20:8). He showed the kind

of faith the second generation of Christians would have to show. Believing without seeing is the kind of faith Jesus can bless.



“ ‘My Lord and my God!’ ”
(John 20:28, TEV).

What is Jesus saying in John 20:29? What do His words mean to us?

How did the tomb become empty? Certainly Jesus' enemies had no reason for stealing His body. If they had stolen His body, why did they not show it to prove He had not risen?

It is clear that the disciples could not have stolen Jesus' body. The dis-

⁶upper room—the place where Jesus spent a quiet time with His disciples before He was crucified. After Jesus' death, the disciples secretly met in the upper room.

⁷witness—what Mary saw and heard.

ciples did not believe Jesus would let Himself die. Jesus had warned them often that He would die. If the disciples had stolen Jesus' body, we cannot explain their later behavior. Who would want to suffer and die for Jesus later in their lives if He had not been raised from the tomb?

God and the Bible have given us reasonable and historical proof to help us believe in Jesus' resurrection. If Jesus rose from the dead, then there is no other miracle He can fail to do. Anything we could possibly ask Jesus to do can be done if it is according to His will. Our own resurrection is also made sure by His resurrection. It is God's power that raised Jesus from the dead. The same power can bring life and healing into even the most hopeless situations.

All of us have at some time experienced some struggle with faith. How can our faith be made stronger by focusing on the Cross and Jesus' resurrection?

TUESDAY—MARCH 23

THE POWER OF JESUS' RESURRECTION (John 2:22; John 7:37-39; John 12:16).

What were some other things that happened to the disciples after Jesus' resurrection? John 2:22; John 7:37-39; John 12:16.

Paul wrote, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10, NIV). Jesus' resurrection was the most powerful event⁸ of all time. With all our knowledge of science, we still have no way of bringing people to life after they have died. Anyone who has the power to raise a dead person would have the power to do anything else we might need to have done.

The story about Jesus' return to life is the cornerstone (basis) of Christian faith. The power of Jesus' resurrection is the basis for the powerful acts of God in the lives of Christians (2 Corinthians 5:14-17). The power of Jesus' resurrection is the basis for limitless power in the lives of Christians today. Why, then, do we not see these limitless powers in most churches? Why is it so hard to see the powerful hand of God in today's world?

One of the important themes of the Old Testament is connected with remembering and forgetting. Every time the Israelites forgot the powerful things God had done for them, they lost the sense of His power. When they remembered what He had done for them in the past, the power of the original action came back to their lives. In fact, the important part of Old Testament spiritual life was remembering the powerful acts of God in their past history.

How does Deuteronomy 26:1-12 show the importance of remember-

⁸event—thing that happens.

ing how God has acted in the past? Also read Psalm 66:1-6 and Psalm 78:1-55.

When the Israelites told of the powerful acts of God in their past history, they experienced the power of those acts once again in their lives (2 Chronicles 20:1-30).

What was true in the Old Testament was also true in the New Testament. The greatest, most powerful acts of God are the acts He did at the Cross and the resurrection of Jesus. There is power in remembering again and again. That is why sharing our faith is such an important part of the Christian experience. If we do not talk about God's powerful acts again and again, we will have no power. But telling what God has done brings renewed faith and change for the better. The power of Jesus' resurrection turns a person's faith into a living and powerful faith!

How has remembering God's actions in your past helped to make your faith stronger?



WEDNESDAY—MARCH 24

GONE FISHING (John 21:1-14).

Read John 21:1-11. What makes the event in John 21:1-11 so right for what Jesus would have the disciples do after He is gone? Compare this story to Luke 5:1-10.

John 21 tells the story of how the disciples met Jesus in Galilee after His resurrection. Jesus helped the disciples catch many fish (John 20:1-6). He fixed breakfast for the disciples (John 20:7-14). Then He had a serious conversation on the beach with Peter (John 20:15-23).

From the book of John, we get the impression that Jesus appeared several times to the disciples and other people rather unexpectedly. Mary, the ten disciples, Thomas, and these seven disciples were all surprised by Jesus' sudden appearances. The ministry (work) of Jesus to His disciples was really finished in the upper room (John 13-17). The Bible reports that Jesus said very little to them after His resurrection. The purpose of His resurrection was to teach them and us that His resurrection was real.

What had Jesus been doing on the shore? John 21:9-13. What spiritual meaning can you find in Jesus inviting the disciples to eat with Him?

Breakfast that morning was rather quiet. (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of*

Ages, p. 810.) The disciples did not seem to know what to do with Jesus since they had been with Him in the upper room. On that day, the disciples experienced the same uncertain (uncertain) feelings and thoughts the second generation of Christians would experience when John died. The disciples were with Jesus in person. But His being there seemed to give them no faith. Only the coming of the Holy Spirit would give them solid faith.

Try to imagine that Jesus is with you and that His being with you gives you no faith. What would that tell you about the kind of faith you had? How can you keep from having that kind of faith?

THURSDAY—MARCH 25

GETTING PETER BACK ON THE RIGHT PATH (John 21:15-23).

Read the conversation between Jesus and Peter in John 21:15-17. Compare their conversation with what happened in Luke 22:55-62. What was Jesus doing with Peter?

John 21:15-17 describes a question-and-answer conversation that is repeated three times. Jesus' method might seem rude. But the result was to make Peter look deeply into himself, even if it

cost him some pain. This conversation slowly removed Peter's faith in himself, until he was left with nothing. But Peter was certain of one thing: Jesus knew his heart and would be fair in His treatment of Peter.

There is something about pain, loss, poverty, and emotional suffering that helps people grow spiritually. Sometimes, as in Peter's case, Jesus Himself causes that pain. The same as a loving surgeon, Jesus hurts people so that He might help them heal. Jesus does not settle for quick and easy answers. He wants to get down to our true feelings and motives.⁹

Peter's experience shows that any relationship with Jesus will be an up-and-down experience. The four steps below will help you know that Jesus accepts you no matter what you have said, thought, or done.

1. *Know what kind of God you are dealing with.* God loves sinners! This does not mean that sin does not matter. But no matter what we have done in the past, we can start anew today. When you feel worst is when you have the greatest claim on God's mercy!¹⁰

2. *Tell the truth about yourself.* Telling the truth about yourself is called confession. Confession means accepting who you are and being honest with God about who you are. Confession can be hard, because our natures rebel against confessing who we are. But if we believe that the Cross gives us self-worth, we will experience

⁹motives—the reasons why we do things.

¹⁰mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

less suffering than if we were not to confess!

3. *Ask for forgiveness.* “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify [cleanse] us from all unrighteousness [sins]” (1 John 1:9, NIV). God does not require a whole list of conditions¹¹ before He is willing to forgive us. The conditions were already met in Jesus.

4. *Plan to stop that sin forever.* How can you do this when many sins seem tempting? List some of the results of continuing sin. Read the list to yourself every time you are tempted.

Think about these four steps. How well have you done with each step? What changes must you make in your own life to better do each step?

FRIDAY—MARCH 26

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “Several times, Jesus had tried to open the future to His disciples. But they did not care to think about what He said. So His death had come to them as a surprise (shock). Later, as they reviewed the past and saw the result of their unbelief, they were filled with sorrow. When Jesus was crucified, they did not believe He would be resurrected. Jesus had announced plainly He was to be resurrected on the third day. But they were puzzled by what

He meant. This lack of understanding left them very helpless when He died. They were very bitter and disappointed. Their faith did not go above the shadow Satan had thrown in their way. All seemed unclear and mysterious to them. If they had believed Jesus' words, they would have avoided (escaped) much sorrow!”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*,¹² pp. 25, 26.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Are there times when it is good to show doubt as Thomas did? How do we know when it is the right time to doubt something?
2. How do we know when God is letting pain happen in our lives to teach us something? Or do we need to know? Is it not enough to just ask God, If the pain does not go away, could You let me learn from the pain?
3. If someone asked you to give proof of Jesus' resurrection, what would you say?

SUMMARY: The power of Jesus' resurrection makes us believe that the story of Jesus is true. It also makes us aware of sin and gives us the reason for a strong, living relationship with Jesus. There is nothing like the peace

¹¹conditions—what we must do for something to happen.

¹²apostles—leaders of the Christian church after Jesus' return to heaven. Peter, James, and John were some of the apostles.

that comes from being totally faithful to His will. There is nothing like the joy that comes when your conscience¹³ is clean. Christianity has lasted 2,000 years. Why? Nothing can compare with the kind of life that comes when you have a strong living relationship with Jesus. It is not possible to become a Christian without experiencing a strong, living relationship with Jesus. He is the greatest and the best! Why accept less?



¹³conscience—a knowledge or sense of right and wrong with an urge to do what is right.