

Sermon outline notes: John 20

Introduction

John's gospel account is not a straightforward biography of the life of Jesus. The events and conversations that he describes have all been carefully selected and edited to make sure that we don't focus just on the events but on the meaning behind them. Nowhere is this more evident than in chapter 20 as John lays before us his account of the day the world changed forever.

A new sort of resurrection?

John carefully and subtly draws a comparison with the earlier resurrection of Lazarus (chapt.11) – how?

John leaves out many details mentioned by the other gospel writers – which?

John includes additional details and thus provides a different focus – why?

John describes four encounters with the newly risen Jesus and uses these to give us new insights into the meaning of resurrection – how?

The 3 aspects of resurrection

- Part 1: Spiritually Powered (verses 1-9)
- Part 2: Physical Reality (verses 10-18)
- Part 3: Practical Purpose (verses 19-23)

John came to understand that what happened to Jesus would also happen to his followers (1 John 3:2) both individually and collectively.

- The spiritually powered body – walking through walls
- The physically recognisable body – an authentic voice
- The multiplied and unrestricted body – forgiveness for the world

Further Points to Ponder

1. In chapter 20 John provides a variety of evidence to demonstrate that Jesus' resurrection was a physical event (not purely spiritual). Does it really matter how we interpret this event today? Is our understanding of the Christian teaching on eternal life sufficiently shaped by our interpretation of what happened to Jesus on the first resurrection morning? (see 1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

2. Jesus told Thomas 'blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed'. What factors have been most influential in helping us to come to faith in the risen Lord? What evidence have you found most compelling?

3. The New Testament writers (particularly Peter and Paul) used the fact of the resurrection as the ultimate proof that Jesus was the Christ (e.g. Acts 2:36) Are we too reticent about advocating the historical truth of the resurrection? Why is this?

John carefully framed his account of resurrection day to emphasise that Jesus' resurrection was not an end in itself but a beginning. From now on Jesus' work would know no physical limits. As we are now his resurrected body in the world (individually and collectively) what should we be doing to continue this work?

NOTES