

Hanging Out with Jesus

Did Jesus Actually Rise From The Dead?

Unedited Transcript

John 20:11-18, Mark 16:9-11, Matthew 28:9-15, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

Good morning men. Please open your Bibles to John chapter 20. I think we'll probably start at verse 9. We'll do a shout-out here. We have a group called Men of Grace, Grace Presbyterian Church in East Peoria, Illinois. The leader is Mike Flinn. Mike Flinn is an area director for Man in the Mirror. Thank you Mike. Then, he has a group of 25 men at the meeting floor about 3 months on Wednesdays at 6:30AM at the church. I wonder if you would join me in welcoming Mike Flinn as an area director and Men of Grace to the Man in the Mirror men's Bible study. 1, 2, 3, hooah. Welcome. We're glad to have you guys here.

There was a pastor who thought would be smart to do a children sermon around Easter. He had all the children come up and as pastors often do, he asked the children questions. He said, "Children, what is the meaning of the resurrection?" One little boy raised his hand and he said, "Well, you're supposed to call a doctor if you have a resurrection that last 4 hours or more." Apparently, it took about 10 minutes to get the congregation back under control so that the service could proceed.

We're not quite to the meaning of the resurrection yet. Before we get there, we're going to talk about this question, did Jesus actually rise from the dead? Did it even really happened? It's natural for you to have doubts about the resurrection. Whatever your doubts or confusions or delusions are, there are probably mild compared to the doubts, the fears and even the disbelief of the disciples who actually lived with and, of course, deserted Jesus. This morning, we're going to ask the question, what changed their minds? Why do these cowering, fearful, mournful, sad disciples change their minds about Jesus? How can we change or affirm our minds and then finally how can this help us change the minds of the people that we love and really want to reach?

The first thing we find is that we find a very fragile group of people here. Let's take a look at a few of the texts. The starting point here is that the resurrection actually has taken place at this point but nobody has seen Jesus. No one has seen Him. The very first spottings of Jesus we're going to be take and look at ... Before we get to that, we want to see why these people are so fragile. We know that they had deserted from Matthew 26 that the disciples all fled when He was arrested in the garden. Verse 9 in chapter 20, they still did not understand, from the scripture, that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

We have a great advantage because we have 2,000 years of history. We understand what the scripture say about Jesus rising from the dead. They didn't even understand what the scriptures had met. Then, verse 10, then the disciples went back to their homes. Again, not exactly the desertion but they're just so discouraged. They're so disillusion, so disoriented. They don't even really know what to do when they go home. They go home. Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. Mary was weeping. There was so much sadness. The disciples were sad. There was mourning that was taking place.

Turn if you would to Mark chapter 16. Keep your finger there by the way. Mark chapter 16. This is the last chapter in Mark. Look at verse 10. Mark chapter 16 in verse 10. Of course, you don't have to turn around at these verses. You can just listen if you like. This is again about Mary Magdalene, the one from whom 7 demons have been cast by Jesus. She went and told those who had been mourning with him and who were mourning and weeping she had seen Jesus. She was the first person to see Jesus. We'll come back to that. She's the first person to see Jesus. It's quite a bit a symbolism that a woman who was filled with demons, a sinful woman, a woman was the first person, not a man, to see the resurrected Jesus. It was a person out of whom ... A person that struggled with all kinds of difficulties, mourning and weeping.

Verse 11, when the disciples heard that Jesus was alive, they heard that He was alive, they had to see themselves, when they heard that He was alive and that she had seen Him, they did not believe it. They didn't believe it. Then, over at Matthew chapter 28, we're done in Mark, Matthew chapter 28 which is the last chapter of Matthew, we're getting towards the end of this series. Matthew chapter 28 verse 8, the women and this ... These are the other women that had come out to the tomb, the women hurried away from the tomb afraid. Afraid but filled with joy because they had heard this pronouncement by the angel but they were afraid and they ran to tell the disciples.

You see, all of these different emotions running through here. That's not all. Also, working against believing that Jesus had raised from the dead was this conspiracy that we read by looking at verse 11 and following. While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city, reported it to the chief priest everything that had happen. What was it that had happen? What really had happen is in verses 2 to 4. There had been a violent earthquake. An angel that come rolled away the stone, sat on it, his appearance was like lightning, clothes like white snow, the guards were so afraid. They shook and became like dead men. They passed out. That's what actually happened. That's what they went and reported to the chief priest.

Verse 12, when the chief priest had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money. They paid them a bribe, telling them, "You are to say, His disciples came during the night and stole Him away while we were asleep." That's not even a good lie. All men either live by the truth or a good lie. This is not even a good lie. They're asleep but they knew that the disciples stole Him away. I'm sleeping but I know that this is happening while I'm asleep. It's not even really a good lie, you see.

Verse 14, if this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. You think about it, that the penalty for something like this happening for a Roman soldier was death. That must have been a lot of money, the bribe. It does says it's a large sum of money. The soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. This story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day whenever Matthew was written. You not only have the disciples not understanding from the scriptures what had happen, mourning, weeping, sadness, fear, even disbelief. You also did have working against them this conspiracy. What changed their minds? What was it that changed their minds?

Before we answer that question, let's put the big idea up here today. The big idea is this. **What changed their minds then is what will change our minds now.** Whatever it is that changed their minds then, it's the exact same thing that's going to change our minds now. Let's ask the question. What changed the minds of the disciples? There are some very specific concrete stories here in the scriptures. What changed the minds of the disciples is that Jesus, knowing that there was such confusion, even disbelief, He understood that He needed to give a convincing, irrefutable, indisputable reason for the disciples to believe.

Jesus, after He was resurrected, launched out on a 40-day, 10 stop tour, the post-resurrection tour. For the next 40 days, according to Acts chapter 1 verse 3, for the next 40 days, Jesus went on tour. He made 10 concerts all around Palestine, demonstrating that He was alive. Let's look at these specific stories. The first 2 of 10, not including this appears to Paul which will of course make it 11, John chapter 20 verse 11, we said the disciples had gone back to their homes in verse 11 but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw 2 angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "And I don't know where they have put Him". At this, she turned around and saw Jesus. She was the first person to see Jesus after the resurrection. She saw Him standing there but she did not realized it was Jesus. Was it still dark outside? Was she in such a stupor, mental stupor that she didn't recognized Him? Was His body looking so different? Jesus said, verse 15, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you're looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener. She still doesn't ... She hears His voice. She still doesn't recognized Him. She said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you put Him and I will get Him." Jesus said to her, "Mary," and it says here she turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni," which means teacher.

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers." Now, He's calling the disciples brothers. This is an amazing thing you don't want to miss. The men, the disciples who had deserted Jesus at His hour of greatest grief, He now calls for the very first time brothers. "And tell them I'm returning to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God." Mary of Magdala went to the disciples with the news, "I have seen the Lord. I have seen Jesus." Campus Crusade, the theme for the Jesus film project for many years, I don't know if it still is, is "I just saw Jesus." The Jesus film is in the Guinness World Book of Records. It's the most translated film in all of history. The Jesus film has been translated into over 1,200 different languages. The Jesus film has been seen by 6 billion people and there are 200 million documented decisions for Christ. Not to mention all the ones that aren't documented. 200 million people have become Christians because they saw the film of Jesus. They saw Jesus.

That's exactly what happened with Mary. She had seen the Lord. She told them that He had said these things to her, that we know from Mark 16, they didn't believe her. They didn't believe her, why? Because they hadn't seen Him. What changed her mind? It wasn't doctrine. It wasn't God's law. It wasn't wishful thinking. What changed her mind was that she saw Jesus. Let's look at the other example at Matthew chapter 28 verse 18 to 20, verses 8 to 10 rather 18 to 20. It's a great commission. I'm always on my mind that just came out wrong.

Matthew chapter 28 verses 8 to 10, the woman hurried away from the tomb afraid which we talked about before yet filled with joy and ran to tell His disciples. Watch this. Suddenly, Jesus met them. "Greetings," He said. They came up to Him, clasp His feet and worshipped Him. The word worship here literally means to kiss. The way a dog licks its master's hand. That, a beautiful word picture. They clasp His feet and worshipped Him and then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid," He knew they had been afraid, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers," here's that word again, brothers. They go to Galilee. "There, they will see me."

It's the personal encounters and we'll see in the other 8 in the weeks ahead, it's the personal encounters with Jesus, seeing Jesus, hearing His voice, touching Him. Perhaps, it doesn't say anywhere in the scripture but perhaps just the aroma of Christ. All of these things, the palpable, tangible things. These are the things that changed the minds of the disciples. Turn with me, we're done in all these texts, turn with me to 1st Corinthians chapter 15 verse 3. 1st Corinthians chapter 15 verse 3. What's going to be seen in this text is very interesting. This is Paul describing the things about the gospel of Jesus that are of first importance. There's a wonderful journal called First Things. No doubt taken from this text.

Chapter 15 verse 3, "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time." 500, an audience of 500 in one of His tour stops, "Most of whom who are still living though some have fallen asleep. Then, He appeared to James and then to the apostles. Last of all, He appeared to me as one though abnormally born." We're going to be looking in the weeks ahead of these stops. We looked at the two of the stops already, to the encounters. Sure I've said it here before because it's one of my favorite quotes on this whole conspiracy thing.

What are the possibilities? What are the possibilities of getting 500 people to agree to lie about what they've seen for 40 years until they died? What is realistically, what is the possibility of that happening? Chuck Colson has this great quote. Chuck Colson, most of you will remember, was the counsel to President Nixon in Watergate. This is what he says. He says, "I know the resurrection is a fact and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified that they had seen Jesus raise from the dead." Now the 500, just the 12. 12 men testified that they had seen Jesus raise from the dead then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years. Never once denied it.

Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it were not true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world and they couldn't keep a lie for 3 weeks. You're telling me, 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible. That's the history of conspiracies. They always fall apart. They had these 500 people all assembled who for the rest of their lives, not one of them changed their minds because they had actually seen Jesus. That's what changed their minds. What changed their minds then, guess what? That's what's going to change our minds now or has already changed our minds now. Let's look at what would change minds today.

I want you to turn with me if you would to Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12. Let's just review what a man stated is until he sees Jesus resurrected, he's going to be filled with fears. He's going to be filled with worldly ambitions. He's going to make shipwreck of his relationships. He's going to become addicted to idols. He's going to change the truth of God for a lie. If he is a religious man, he's going to become a cultural Christian. Meaning that he's going to be seeking the God he wants and not the God who is. He is going to be miserable. He's going to know about the resurrection but he's not going to have actually seen Jesus for himself, the resurrected Jesus for himself. He is going to be disbelieving. He's going to be filled with doubts. He's going to be filled with fears.

Every one of us has our own life as the shadow case behind this. You know that you've had moments, maybe now, hopefully not now but perhaps in the past, maybe now, hopefully not, but certainly in the past, you've had occasion where you're saying, "No, I just, I can't believe. I just don't believe. I want to but I just ... I find it too hard to accept." What changed for you or will change for you is that you saw Jesus or you're going to see Jesus resurrected. The resurrection is if not the certainly one of the central claims of Christianity, it's the hinge upon which Christianity turns. If Jesus be not resurrected, we have all believed in vain, says the Bible. Everything turns on the resurrection. You had Dan Odell, I just remember. Dan Odell stood right here one day and he's the one that said, that he said, "Everything turns on the resurrection." He was the secretary of what? The interior something for Reagan. He stood right here and he said that. Everything turns on the resurrection.

That's a man state before he sees Jesus resurrected. How does a man today change his mind? How does he see Jesus? The word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus Christ is the word of God. Men, one way, men can see Jesus is to see Him in His holy word. Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12, "For the word of God, Jesus, is living and active." This is a ... You can almost see it quiver up here. Can you see the Bible just quivering up here? It's alive. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joint and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." You know, this is true because you have gone into the word before and you have sense the presence of the Almighty come every transcendence and an affable, inarticulate, inexpressible feeling that comes over you. The sense of the presence of the holiness of Jesus Himself because He is the word.

I remember my first encounter with Jesus. I remember I was an acolyte in the Episcopal Church growing up. I remember yearning to experience God. I would read that comic prayer book. I would just sit there for hours and just yearning and begging to sense the presence of God. I never did. It was part of God's plan for my life. God is working out everything in conformity with a purpose of His will. It was not His will for me at that time to experience the presence of the resurrected Jesus, to see Jesus. I went through the army anguishing over the lack of meaning and purpose. Finally I said, "That's it. I give up. I'm just going to go make a lot of money," and came in to the business world at the time when, of course, I thought I was ... I did make a lot of money. I thought that was because I was so smart. It was just basically it was a good economy. Anybody could have made a lot money at that particular time.

I was so miserable. I got everything I ever wanted and I hated my life. I was sitting there in a Sunday school class because I just felt I needed to try religion again. I wasn't even thinking Jesus. I was just thinking religion. I just need to try religion again. I was sitting in a Sunday school class with my wife. It was a young married couple's class. It had a floor that look a lot like this but it was the terrazzo floor and have those old chocolate milk brown metal chairs in a circle. You all know what I'm talking about. I don't even remember what the teacher was really talking about because I was thinking about several things. I was thinking about my calendar for the coming week and all of the things that I wanted to get done. I was thinking about the beautiful new Hickey Freeman suit that I was wearing and hoping that all the other guys in the class observe what a great looking suit that I had. I was thinking about I wonder which of these guys can afford to invest in my real estate deals. That's what I was thinking about.

The teacher, Dan Stanley, was reading from the living word. He was reading from Jesus. He was reading about Jesus and he was reading from Ephesians chapter 5 and he read, I heard him say not one word until he got to this verse, "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ love the church." I sat there and I felt ... I felt like I had a million volts running through my body. Instantly, my undergarments, everything was completely soaked. I turned beat red and I was so embarrassed because I knew that somebody had talked and that everybody in the class knew what an absolutely jerk I was as a husband. They were all now looking at me. Their beady eyes focused just on me. I was so embarrassed. I could not ... I couldn't look up. I found a little spot on the terrazzo. I just stared at it. I'm looking down at that little spot in that terrazzo and I am just overwhelmed with shame and guilt and sorrow and ... That is the event that brought me to repentance.

Jesus came to me. He came to me as a whip. He came to me as a hammer to smash me. He came to me to grind me as though in a mortar with a pestle. I saw Jesus. I didn't know that's what was happening at the time but that's what happened. Through His word, I felt the presence, you see, of Jesus. The word of God for you, for me, for those you want to reach, this is where the power of the gospel is, I'm not even going to say most released but profoundly released. If you want to experience the resurrected Jesus and you have already I'm hoping, if you want to affirm that, the place to do that is in His word. It's right here now, listening to this message.

There is one more little thing. How are they, the people who you care about and want to reach, how are they going to see Jesus? They're going to see Jesus through your testimony, through the example of your life, through your faithful witness. This is how the Lord ... This is why ... This was the Lord's plan. This is why He reproduced Himself, get it? Into the lives of others, so that they follow in His example. They could then demonstrate the power of their changed life to others so that they might also change their lives. He changed our minds so that we could show other people what a changed mind looks like so they could change their minds too. By the way, repentance means to change your mind. That's what repentance, metanoia.

Metanoia, the Greek word, that's actually what it means. It literally means to change your mind. It's his story and it's our story about his story within our story. What changed their minds then is what's going to change our minds now. All those disciples, because of the 12, all those disciples are early disciples who chose to believe in the resurrected Jesus because of the example of what, how they live their lives then. Men, disciples not making disciples, I talked about this a couple of weeks ago, disciples not making disciples is an oxymoron. It's just not ... It's an incongruent term because intrinsic into the definition of the disciples making disciples. Disciples not making disciples is an oxymoron.

The mission for us is disciples making disciples starting at home. Let's go make disciples. Let's help people change their minds because what will change their minds then is now ... What will change their minds now is the exact same thing that changed their minds back then. Bringing people into the presence of Jesus through His word and through the example of our lives.

Let us pray. Our dearest Father, we thank You for Your word, for Jesus, for the living active word, Jesus, that we can see Jesus in the scriptures. We can see Jesus in the lives of our brothers here and elsewhere. Lord, for any of us who need to affirm our faith this morning, we do this because Jesus is alive. Lord, we pray that for those that we meet that are filled with disbelief and doubts and fears about what's going to happen in their lives. Lord help us to help them see Jesus, that Jesus is alive. The whole foundation of why we are here, Jesus, is that You are alive. We pray in Your loving and holy Name. Amen.