

What did Resurrection mean?

The earliest interpretation (Peter's sermons in Acts)

- It meant that Jesus's prophetic message and witness was vindicated; the priestly establishment was wrong.
- God exalted Jesus to heaven.

Atoning sacrifice in Hebrews

- This anonymous author develops Hebrew scripture around Jesus, especially the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*).
- Jesus as perfect exalted one, offering sacred rest to all.

Suffering servant (Isaiah)

- "Christ" as God's anointed one—now understood to suffer.
- Isaiah had seen the possibility of release from oppression for the world to be offered out of a community (Israel) that had experienced suffering; that God works through weakness rather than strength.
- The crucified (cursed) one now the exalted one.

The "Son of Man" (Daniel)

- From Ezekiel, Psalms, and Daniel: this "son of man."
- The expected messiah who would bring judgement, break the power of the cruel empires.

Resources used

- *New Testament History and Literature* by Dale B. Martin (Yale)
- *The New Testament* translation/notes by David Bentley Hart
- *Resurrection* by John Shelby Spong
- *The Resurrection* by Geza Vermes

*"And if the Anointed has not been raised
then our proclamation is vain,
and your faith vain;"*
(1 COR 15:14)

New Testament Accounts of the Resurrection

THE RESURRECTION: PART 4

In our second week examining the New Testament accounts we'll take a closer look at each story and discuss what we learn from having five different accounts. What do they tell us about how these early communities understood the resurrection and its significance?

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What elements are shared between the accounts, and what is different?
- What genre are Gospels: biographies, histories, theology?
- What purpose(s) seem to be behind each story? What is their intent?
- How should we understand them today?

Development of the New Testament Witness

1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 19-22; 35-50 (~55 CE)

...he was entombed, and that he was raised on the third day in accord with the scriptures...and last of all, as if by a miscarried baby, he was seen by me also.

- Paul's early written witness focuses on Jesus' exaltation to the right hand of God—no mention of an empty tomb.
- He describes his encounter with Jesus as a theophany: *ōphthē*, "seeing dimensions beyond the physical, the ultimately real."

Mark 16:1-8 (~70 CE)

And, going out, they fled from the tomb, for trembling and bewilderment had taken hold of them; and they said nothing to anyone; for they were afraid.

- First real details of Jesus' life (Paul didn't record much).
- An account of an early liturgy? "A young man dressed in white" is not a description of a supernatural encounter.
- No testimony that the empty tomb inspired faith—rather the reverse. They fled and said nothing!
- "He has been raised" (Paul) became "he is risen."

Matthew 28:1-20 (~85 CE)

And, quickly departing from the tomb with great fear and joy, they ran to announce it to his disciples...the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus appointed them, and seeing him they prostrated themselves; but some doubted.

- Writing to counter anti-resurrection accounts, partially.
- Parallels with Old Testament: Joshua/Jesus placing guard at cave with imprisoned kings; Daniel sealed in den; Elisha's feet held by woman whose son he raises.

- Jesus appears post-tomb for the first time, ending with mountain appearance (but no ascension).

Luke 24:1-53 (~85 CE)

And, returning from the tomb, they related all these things to the eleven and all the others. Now it was the Magdalene woman Mary, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, as well as the other women with them, who told these things to the Apostles. And in their eyes these reports seemed like nonsense, and they did not believe them.

- Witnesses enter the empty tomb for the first time.
- The apostles approach the tomb themselves.
- Jesus had to open their eyes to understand the Scriptures.
- In Jerusalem; with an ascension; and "Pentecost."

John 20:1-31 (~100 CE)

So [Mary the Magdalene] runs away and comes to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, him who Jesus loved, and says to them, "They took the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they put him."...So the other disciple, the one having come first to the tomb, also entered, and he saw and had faith...

- Appearances set in Jerusalem, not Galilee.
- Resurrection as exaltation to God, not returning to earth.
- The Spirit is given during an appearance, not later. No ascension recorded.
- Thomas incarnates disbelief/belief for the community.