

SMALL GROUP NOTES

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Key verses: Mark 16:1-16, Acts 1:3, Romans 8:11

Talk Summary

Introduction/Evidence:

No other event has impacted the world so much as the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Certain core facts are widely accepted as historically reliable.

Jesus was crucified and buried. Three days after His death, His body went missing. There were reported appearances of Jesus over the course of 40 days to both believers and unbelievers. These individuals were transformed by the appearances. They began to proclaim Christ's resurrection even to the point of being martyred for their proclamation.

The discussion centers on the explanation! Various lines of evidence support the claim of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Here are a few.

1. Eyewitness accounts: The gospel accounts were written within a generation of the events themselves. We encounter an honesty and authenticity in all the accounts which along with the early dating supports the idea of reliability, and accuracy. We're also told that Jesus appeared to over 515 people over a period of 40 days. (Acts 1:3)
2. The empty tomb: If the resurrection was a deception, the preaching of the Apostles wouldn't have lasted a week. The authorities could have settled that rumor by producing a body. They never did. Maybe he didn't die but fainted? There are compelling answers to all of the rather old objections.
3. The worship of Jesus as God: Jewish people were the last people on the face of the earth to be open to the idea that a human being could be God. They wouldn't even say the name of God out loud. Then literally overnight hundreds then thousands of Jews began worshipping God. Something shattered their paradigm. That monumental change requires an explanation. The resurrection makes sense of the evidence.

So what's the impact for us because of the resurrection?

1. Free from fear: Pope Benedict said "Jesus' victory over death transforms our lives; it frees them from fear, gives them firm hope, and infuses them with something that provides existence with full meaning: the love of God."

What does it mean to us that Jesus died and was raised from the dead? We are all going to experience death, but we can experience life after death by trusting in Jesus to be our Saviour. So death is no longer a prison, but a passage into God's presence

2. Strength in trials: The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation for a worldview that gives a new perspective to all of life.

"No matter how devastating our struggles, disappointments, and troubles are, they are only temporary. No matter what happens to you, no matter the depth of tragedy or pain you face, no matter how death stalks you and your loved ones, the resurrection promises you a future of immeasurable good." Josh McDowell

3. Hope for the future: “Hope is what you get when you realise a different worldview is possible. The message of Easter is that God’s new world has been unveiled in Jesus Christ and that you’re now invited to belong to it.” NT Wright.

Jesus is the prototype for a new kind of body and new kind of life. This is not a resuscitation but a resurrection. A new creation, recognisable but different.

Jesus resurrection is the first act of God’s new creation. This is a sign pointing to what is to come when we trust in Jesus. So Jesus is the prototype “God is going to do to the whole of creation what he did to Jesus”. In the fall, all of creation was infected by death destruction and decay. Jesus resurrection was a victory over those things. God also starts this work of new creation in us as we choose to trust Jesus. It’s a spiritual new creation first. We become children of God. This new creation work will be completed when Jesus returns.

4. Power to change: The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to you...by this same Spirit living within you. (Romans 8:11 - New Living Translation)

This power to change is available for everyone who trusts in Jesus. How people have described life when trusting Jesus.

5. Friendship with God. That main impact of the resurrection is that everything that’s ever blocked us from friendship with God has been dealt with by Jesus. The final words of Jesus on the cross were “it is finished” (John 19:30)

The Greek word translated “it is finished” is an accounting term that means “paid in full.” When Jesus said those words, He was declaring the debt owed to His Father was wiped away completely and forever. Not that Jesus wiped away any debt that He owed to the Father; rather, Jesus eliminated the debt owed by mankind, the debt of sin.

Jesus hands were pierced with nails so our names could be written in the palm of his hand. Jesus was stripped and beaten so we might be clothed in the righteousness of God. Jesus was given a crown of thorns and we get a crown of righteousness. Jesus was plunged into darkness so we could walk in the light of God. He was cut off so we could be brought home. He was rejected so we could be accepted by God. He faced death so we could come alive to God.

Group Discussion Questions

Welcome

If you don't eat together as a small group then you might want to start the group with some kind of ice breaker question. Remember to introduce yourselves when there are new people.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?

- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? (*Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it*)

Word

- Have you taken time to examine the evidence for the resurrection? What do you find most compelling? What are some of the ways you might answer a friend? (if they were skeptical) or are you still exploring faith in Jesus?
- What's available because of the resurrection?
 - Freedom from fear, strength in trials, hope for the future, power to change and friendship with God.
 - From your own experience what else might you add to this list (as it's not comprehensive!)
- Let's pray together that we get an opportunity this week to speak about or demonstrate the good news of Jesus. Pray if someone specific comes to mind right now.
- If you could ask Jesus or one of those early disciples one question about those 40 days after the resurrection, what would it be?

Witness

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?
 - Encounter Night – 23rd April