

Date:

The resurrection of Jesus

PRAY Father, thank you that ‘your word is truth’ (John 17:17). Open my eyes to see and understand that truth clearly today...

READ Luke 24:1–49

REFLECT

Some people enjoy looking for ‘inconsistencies’ in the Bible. For example, Matthew reports there was one angel at the empty tomb while Mark saw a young man. Luke says two men were present while John says there were two angels. Inconsistencies? Hardly. What’s clear from all the descriptions is that these were angelic beings. And it’s perfectly reasonable to think that at different times there were either one or two present. Hyperventilating over the details of the resurrection accounts can cause us to lose sight of the main point: Jesus was no longer in the tomb.

The unique feature of Luke’s account is the report of Jesus’ appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13–35). We can easily imagine the shock and discouragement these men were feeling. For the past three years they’d been on a wild ride with Jesus as he preached the good news, healed the sick and confronted the religious leaders. But they didn’t understand who Jesus really was; they thought he was a prophet destined to become Israel’s political saviour (24:19–21). So when he died, they concluded it was ‘game over’ for Jesus and for Israel.

We can also feel the frustration in Jesus’ response to these two followers: ‘Guys, you’ve missed the whole point!’ Jesus wasn’t the leader of a political movement; people still have that misconception today. He was ‘the Christ’, the one God had promised to send in order to save humankind from sin (24:26). And the way he would accomplish that is through suffering, death and resurrection.

Wouldn’t you love to have been part of this private Bible study with Jesus (24:27)? In a sense, you are! As you discover for yourself ‘what was said in all the Scriptures’ about the essential Jesus, it’s as if you are ‘the third disciple’ on the road to Emmaus. And my prayer is that you’ll come to the same conclusion as the others: ‘It is true!’ (24:34).

APPLY What misconceptions about Jesus do people have today? How does that inform how you share the truth about Jesus?

PRAY Pray for one person you know who is confused about who Jesus really is.

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PRAY Prayerfully think of the pressures and stresses you face today. Imagine that you are handing each one to Jesus...

READ John 20:1 – 21:25

REFLECT

There are many good ways to get a better understanding of the Bible’s message. One way is to develop a daily ‘quiet time’ – that is, to read a short Bible passage prayerfully each day and then reflect on how to live it out. Another is to read through the Bible in a year; another is to conduct an in-depth study of a single Bible book. Our reading today presents us with yet another option: studying the characters in the Bible. John reports on the resurrection of Jesus by describing how different people reacted to this significant event.

Mary Magdalene was a woman Jesus had cured of demon-possession (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). John and all the other Gospel writers report she was the first one to the tomb that morning. Often a person who has been forgiven much will become an especially committed follower of Jesus.

Thomas will forever be remembered for his doubts (20:19–31). But I believe he also deserves credit for his honesty. Others had questions about Jesus’ resurrection (20:9), but Thomas was the only one with the guts to admit them and to change his mind publicly when presented with the truth (20:28).

Peter – one of the disciples Jesus had groomed for leadership – had failed Jesus big time in his hour of need (Matthew 26:69–75). It’s significant that Peter must re-affirm his love for Jesus three times (21:15–19), matching his three denials. Once their relationship is restored, Jesus takes Peter back to the very first words he ever said to him, ‘Follow me’ (21:19; Matthew 4:19). It’s as if Jesus is saying, ‘If you want to be a leader, you must first understand what it means to be my follower.’

John himself is the fourth character in this passage. Although he tries not to attract attention, it’s clear he has developed a special relationship with Jesus (20:2; 21:7,20–24), and a firm belief in the truth of his resurrection (20:8). The two go hand in hand.

APPLY Which of the four characters in this passage do you identify with the most? Why?

PRAY Lord, I admit that I have doubts and failures. Even so, my greatest desire is to be your committed follower. Show me how to do that today.