

Study Guide for the Week of March 27, 2005, Easter

Who Was Jesus? The Victor Over Death!

This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Sermon manuscripts are available at www.saintpauls-umc.com.

Note: This week you will be reading the description of the resurrection from Matthew, Mark and John. As you read take note of the subtle differences in each. While some of the details vary, the core of these accounts is the same: Jesus was crucified and placed in a borrowed tomb that was sealed by a stone. On Sunday morning the tomb was found empty and Jesus began appearing to various people. He was dead and then was found to be very much alive!

Monday. Read Matthew chapter 28 in the New Testament. Matthew's gospel is the only one that describes an earthquake caused by angels opening up Jesus' tomb. In each gospel there is some sort of heavenly figure or angel present at the resurrection. Each conveys a message that they do not need to be afraid. Matthew's gospel is the only one that describes a conspiracy to explain the resurrection away. They wanted to accuse Jesus' disciples of stealing his body. But this could not have been. If the disciples had Jesus' body they knew that they were living a lie. If they knew the resurrection was a lie, they have gone back to their old jobs. Instead they were willing to lose their lives proclaiming that Jesus was resurrected. 10 of the 11 remaining disciples died teaching about Jesus. Does this affect your beliefs about the resurrection? Why or why not?

Tuesday. Read Mark chapter 16 in the New Testament. All of the gospels are consistent in telling us that the first people to the tomb were the women. They followed Jesus even to the very end and showed great courage—they were there during the crucifixion and prepared his body for burial. In doing these things they risked the same death that Jesus did, but nothing got in the way of their love for him. Mark's gospel has two different endings to the resurrection that, together, present a picture consistent with the other gospels. Notice that verses 14-18 are very similar to the last verses of Matthew 28. Why is the role of the women so carefully noted and so important in the accounts of the resurrection?

Wednesday. Read John chapter 20 in the New Testament. Notice that Mary's first reaction is to think that Jesus' body had been stolen. She runs and says this to the disciples. Peter and John (the other disciple) run to the tomb and the text says that John "saw and believed." But at this point he did not believe that Jesus had risen, he believed that Jesus body had been stolen! (see verse 9). Notice Jesus first words to the gathered disciples in verse 19. Why is peace the first thing that Jesus conveys to them?

Thursday. Read John chapter 21 in the New Testament. This chapter depicts Jesus' last appearance to the disciples. The reference to 153 fish may represent the number of known species of fish. John may have been saying that the good news of Jesus was to go to every nation in the world. Verses 15-19 depict a beautiful scene. Remember that Peter was one who denied knowing Jesus three times. Here, Peter proclaims his love for Jesus three times. There is great reassurance in this. We can know that even when we deny Jesus, he is ready and willing to restore us. Have you ever denied Jesus? Have you felt his restoration?

Friday. Read Acts 2:1-13 in the New Testament. This passage occurs after Jesus has ascended into heaven. As he promised, he sends the Holy Spirit to his disciples and fills them with power. Instead of hiding behind locked doors, the disciples spill out into the streets teaching about Jesus to any who would listen. The disciples' encounter with the resurrected Jesus is what shaped the rest of their lives and their deaths. They died proclaiming a message of life, hope, joy and truth. What does this passage mean to you today?