



abcLinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on April 11-12, 2009

this week's coreverse

...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, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also..."

1 Corinthians 15.5-8a NIV

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Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies that explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage of scripture. Other days you will be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying, answering questions.

Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions act as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members to get more information on ABC Small Groups or go to adabible.org>smallgroups.

See adabible.org>message recaps & Links for *ABCLinks* archives.



Part Four of a Four Part Sermon Series

"The Resurrection of Christ"

My dream job is to be a sports photographer. Don't get me wrong, I love my pastor's job but I often wonder what it would be like to travel to big games capturing shots of athletes doing their thing. What a thrill it would be to see one of my photos in *Sports Illustrated* telling the story of an event. Great photos capture a moment in time and leave the viewer wondering what's happening and what's going to happen next.

A couple of weeks ago, I came across a SI photo that intrigued me to the point where I couldn't take my eyes off it for several minutes. It was a shot taken at an NCAA basketball game where two players were fighting for a loose ball. One player had landed on the floor but was still clamoring for the ball with his hands and feet. The other player was sailing in the air above the player on the floor. The ball appears to be hovering in mid-air between them. To the right of the conflict is the referee, whistle in his mouth, ready to make a call within a second or two. But it wasn't the action on the floor that caught my attention in the picture. It was what was happening in the stands that got me staring at this full spread photo like it was a *Where's Waldo* book.

The photographer had not only captured the moment, he also captured the expression of the crowd watching the play in clear resolution. In the frame, there must have been over 500 people caught in crystal clear focus. It was as if the lens had focused on each person and then someone put them all together. Every person was fully engaged in what was happening in front of them and they all had the same expression of anticipation hanging from their face. It was the look of, "How is this going to end up? Who's going to get the ball? What will the referee call?" They were all witnesses to a moment in time, a slice of basketball history. As a viewer of their expressions, I was left wondering what would happen next. Would they erupt in cheers because their player won the battle? Would they jeer at the referee because he made a disagreeable call? Would their expression of anticipation turn to disgust at the outcome if the ball landed in the wrong hands? I love studying pictures like that.

I'd love to possess some still shots of the people around Jesus during the moments of His death, burial and resurrection. What stories would their expressions tell us? Imagine Peter's face when he heard the rooster crow. Contemplate John's face as he stands with Mary at the foot of the cross. Think of the countenances of the women who placed spices on Jesus' wrapped body in the tomb. What was Mary Magdalene's expression when she encountered the risen Jesus? And then Thomas, when he placed his fingers into Jesus' healed scars. The faces of these witnesses would tell us the heart of the story.

As we conclude this Easter series, this week's study will focus on the people who surrounded Jesus in the moments of history that changed everything. Paul declares that the witnesses of these events are highly important to us.



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personal bible studies

Our anchoring text for this series is 1 Corinthians 15.1-5. This is in the heart of the letter Paul wrote to a troubled church that he loved dearly; he wanted the people to understand how Jesus' death, burial and resurrection should impact their way of life. Paul visited Corinth around 50 AD (about 20 years after Jesus' crucifixion). He spent 18 months building this congregation.

These verses were written within a greater context of Paul's discussion of the whole concept of resurrection. Later in chapter 15, Paul would drive home the reality of *our* resurrection that will take place someday. Because Jesus was raised, so will we be raised as believers.

But, let's begin with the actual resurrection story and the people who witnessed the risen Jesus.

He's Alive

Read Luke 24.36-43

This is just one account of the resurrected Jesus appearing to people. How did the disciples respond to seeing Jesus? What was their first reaction?

How did Jesus prove to them that He was flesh and blood and not a ghost? Why was this significant?

Paul places himself on the list of witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (see Acts 9 for his story of transformation). He recalls his place on the list in 1 Corinthians 15.

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, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.

1 Corinthians 15.3-10

What was the historical importance of the these witness that Paul, including himself, mentions?

The Importance of the Resurrection

Read these verses from I Corinthians 15

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 1 Corinthians 15.12-14

If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." 1 Corinthians 15.32b

In Paul's day, there were many religious people who did not believe in the concept of resurrection. In contrast, Paul hinges his entire theology around this truth. What are the implications, according to Paul, if Jesus had not been raised from the dead and there hadn't been a resurrection?

We often skate through life without thinking of what God has in store for us in the future. He will, one day, raise His followers from the dead, wiping tears from their eyes and making all things new. How does having a compelling image of the next life, increase your faithfulness in this life?

Paul concludes his chapter on the importance of the resurrection with this final thought.

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15.58

How should the resurrection of Jesus and the hope of our resurrection keep us motivated to serve? What motivation is given in this verse?

Have you ever caught yourself limiting your service and sacrifice to God because you have forgotten what God has in store for you in eternity?

What thoughts, emotions or impressions has God placed on you this Easter season? What have you learned though this series? What is God asking you to do differently as a result of wrestling with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection? Are you a witness to His work in your life?



small group discussion



leanin

What was Easter like for you growing up? Were there traditions you observed? Was Easter an important time of year for you and your family?

lookdown

Have someone read Luke 24.36-43. Discuss what occurred to Jesus' friends and family when Jesus appeared in front of them. Are you surprised at their responses? How do you think you would have reacted?

Why were these witnesses important to the story of the resurrection?

Have someone read I Corinthians 15:1-5. Paul declares himself an eyewitness of the risen Jesus. How did this happen (Acts 9) and why was this significant to Paul and his teaching?

lookout

Have someone read 1 Corinthians 15.32b.

What is the way of living for those who don't acknowledge the coming resurrection?

Do you think people today view the eyewitness accounts of the resurrected Jesus as real and authentic? Why or why not?

Do you think Jesus followers of today forget about the coming of the next world? What are the implications of living life without often thinking about what our resurrection will unveil to us?

lookin

Have someone read Paul's concluding thought in 1 Corinthians 15.58.

Why would Paul conclude a long discussion on the importance of the resurrection with these lines of encouragement? How is our work, service and sacrifice affected by our hope of the future?

Discuss this statement: "A compelling image of the next life should increase our faithfulness in this life." Do you agree or disagree? If you agree, tell how this works.

Discuss how God has moved you this Easter season. What have you learned or how have you been touched?