

Resurrection



“You can live it, you can embody it. As Gandhi used to say, ‘Embody the change you seek.’ Embody it.”

– Helen Prejean, LtQ’s Questioning Capital Punishment

1st break:

What evidence points to the physical resurrection of Jesus being a legendary, late-developing tradition?

What does Borg refer to as the “Post-Easter Jesus of Christian Experience”?

Borg sees the “truth of Easter as that continuing experience of Jesus as a figure of the present.” What are your thoughts on that?

2nd break:

What does Crossan mean when he says “Emmaus never happened and Emmaus always happens”?

3rd break:

The disciples have to 1) put together the message of the kingdom with 2) the experiences of Jesus' appearances before what could happen?

4th break:

How is "the expenditure of our life for the community" a form of the resurrected life?

When considering Jesus' death and resurrection, how does the notion of the spirit of Jesus dwelling in us strengthen us for new life in the here and now?

General Reflection:

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

Words of Wisdom

Paul, author of our earliest New Testament writings, tells us little of the third day's events jumbled together later by the gospel writers. Instead, he opts for mentions of appearances and trying to explain the "idea" of resurrection to the Corinthians with a tortured discourse on its importance. Evidently having been asked *how* a body is raised, Paul bursts out in response with "You fool!" before explaining that "It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body."

Read 1 Corinthians 15

As Dom Crossan notes in the DVD, Luke 24 recounts a story of two people making their way to Emmaus on Easter morning: "In one sense I think that's where I first began to see that not only were there parables by Jesus, parables told by Jesus like the Good Samaritan, but that there were also parables *about* Jesus -- that you could make up a story about Jesus intending to teach."

Read Luke 24

Try it

Starting with our earliest gospel, Mark, the Risen Christ fails to make an appearance. Mark's abrupt and unexpected ending verges on the anti-climactic: the women find the tomb empty, are instructed by a young man to tell the disciples to go to Galilee to meet Jesus, but instead scatter in fear and tell no one anything. That's it. The end. No angels, no soldiers and no Jesus appearances. Such a cliffhanger was simply too much for later writers, so over the years a variety of new endings were written to "flesh out" Mark's unsatisfactory finish. Several of these now appear in most Bibles as footnotes or as the "shorter" and "longer" endings of Mark. So we're left with the account written closest to the action being woefully short on any of the details we've come to associate with Easter.

As Matthew and Luke wrote their gospels some fifteen to twenty years later, they each had a copy of Mark in front of them. We know this because they copy much of Mark almost verbatim. What is interesting is what they choose to change about the stories to reflect other information they might have had or to fit into their own theological agendas. The moving account in John enhances the story even further. As we become familiar with the texts themselves, it's obvious that stories developed over time and that none of the accounts can be claimed as definitive – or historical.

Starting with the women's visit to the tomb (Mark's 16.1, Matthew 28.1, Luke 24.1, John 20.1), read each Gospel through to the end. While reading each, make note of:

- 1) the order of events
- 2) the characters
- 3) the actions and/or teachings of Jesus
- 4) the responses of the disciples

When finished, compare and contrast the four versions and discuss the following:

- 1) How does this exercise effect your understanding of resurrection?
- 2) What are the priorities of each of the Gospel writers?
- 3) How does a metaphorical resurrection synch with your beliefs?
- 4) What are the implications of a non-historical resurrection for Christianity as you understand it?

Spirit Practice

The secret to practicing resurrection is in giving who we are and what we have completely, wholly away to something greater than ourselves – in escaping from the circumstances and choices that entomb us and entering into new life here and now. In life and in death, Jesus modeled this generosity and transformation for followers then and now. As we embrace resurrection as a credible and meaningful principle for living, we, like Jesus, may become more than anyone around us – or even we ourselves – could have imagined.

So, give the gift of yourself – for the gift of who we are was given to us in order to be given away. Help someone who's hurting. Open the eyes of love for someone who is blind. Free a captive. Heal a wound. Feed someone who is hungry.

“Practice resurrection.

Part of who you are is who you will be.”

– Wendell Berry, Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front