

Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2015 4:21 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study

Men--Last nite we talked about John 20, recording John's account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ--one of the greatest events in the history of the world, next to God's creation of the world itself, His incarnation, and something still to come! His "imminent" return!

It's interesting--and revealing--to trace and compare the sequence of the key events and encounters of the resurrection story as documented not only by John but also by the synoptic writers as well, all of which are inspired by God! In doing so, as we did last nite, we see the whole story coming together! But John's writing, I think, is particularly inspiring because of its focus on four particularly needy characters: Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus--giving this passage, consistent with all the rest of John's writings, an unmistakably "evangelistic" tone!

John makes the case for Jesus loving and caring for people regardless of their past--or where they're at when they encounter Him. And could there be a better statement for the "equality" and fair treatment of women, so far ahead of its time, or for the message of redemption for all--including hope for people who need to "see" before believing, or for those steeped in "religiosity" or "legalism," or those blinded by wealth or position, or pride, etc. etc. All of whom are legitimate candidates for becoming followers of Jesus, with a calling to bear witness to His "majesty"--and proclaim His name!

I particularly like the story of Thomas, who has and will, doubtless, always be remembered as "Doubting Thomas," and a kind of "loser." And yet John (and only John) chose to give him top billing, because Jesus singled him out and, when He did, the most skeptical and unbelieving of all the disciples "saw" and correctly identified Jesus as no other disciple to that point had done it, calling Him, "My Lord my God!" This has been called a "glorious affirmation of faith"--by the once doubting Thomas--the "ultimate Christological pronouncement," and one of paramount importance in understanding, and in accepting, the resurrection of Christ "as an event verifiable through sight, and hearing, and touching"!

All of which gives special meaning to the words John writes in his first epistle: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life--and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us! What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ!"

But John's account takes on even greater meaning and significance for us when we see Jesus's gracious response to Thomas: "Because you have seen Me, you believe! Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed!" Which raises the age-old question of which comes first, seeing or believing? Unlike Thomas, and with the commendation of Jesus Himself, we have come to believe in Him, and receive Him, by faith, based on the proclamation of the inspired words of Scripture, including by those of the apostolic writers, who like John, gave their eye-

witness accounts. This includes the overwhelming evidence of Jesus's resurrection as offered by the many witnesses, as we discussed last nite--but also other evidence such as the dramatic, life-changing impact that the message of the gospel had on the once inapt disciples--and of countless numbers of believers and followers of Jesus down through the ages, many of whom were willing to give up their lives for their faith! And last but not least, to get personal, the impact that it has had on our own lives!

But we can't stop there! Because our text doesn't! John ends with his "purpose statement"--which we have cited every week, for 33 weeks! And here it is in its most significant context! John writes that Jesus performed "many signs" in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book, but that these--how about "this one in particular!"--is written "so that you may believe that is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name! The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been, and remains, the central truth of the Christian faith--and we saw it all portrayed, and proclaimed, in our lesson last nite!

Well, we've just about completed our journey through the book of John--and what a great trip it's been! Next week we finish with chapter 21, which is a kind of "epilogue" to the book, with Jesus appearing again to His disciples--and with a special encounter with Peter--back at the Sea of Galilee where it all started, just before His ascension back to heaven! You don't want to miss it!

Have a great week, men!

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