

A MATTER OF FAITH: Reflections on the Resurrection

No one saw the Resurrection. There were no witnesses. We don't know what happened in the tomb. What the disciples saw was not the Resurrection but the *Risen One*.

There is no proof that Jesus rose from the dead. It is a matter of faith. It could be claimed that the disciples stole the body (Matthew 28:13). It could be claimed that Jesus' body was still in the tomb even though one of the strongest arguments in favor of the Resurrection is that all the authorities had to do to snuff out the new movement was to produce Christ's corpse and discredit his followers, but they could not. It is even possible for someone to believe that Jesus came back to life but not believe that the Resurrection meant Christ's victory over the powers of evil and death. Resurrection is a matter of faith.



In a way, it's easier for us to believe in the Resurrection than the first disciples. After all, we've heard about it all our lives. But they were the ones who saw him crucified until death and stabbed in the side for insurance. They were the ones who carried him into the tomb. Moreover, they never expected any kind of resurrection. When the women and the disciples began to see him they were afraid, skeptical, and confused. Their own disbelief had to be overcome. Wishful thinking was not going to be enough.

Finally, their encounters with the risen Christ, whom they could touch, who ate with them, convinced them that he was not defeated but triumphant. Instead of going back to fishing with pleasant memories of a dead teacher, they went out to tell everyone amazing good news: "*He is alive!*" In the face of persecutions that eventually took the lives of most of those first followers, they continued to preach and love and serve throughout the inhabited world because they knew it was true: "*Jesus Christ is risen today!*"

On the cross, Jesus had given himself as God's suffering servant. In the Resurrection, the disciples learned that

Jesus was not only the Messiah (Christ), but Lord of all. That was, in fact, the first creed of the church: "Jesus is Lord." In the Resurrection, God raised Jesus, who had come announcing the dawning of the realm of God, to become the ruler of that realm. Jesus was given victory over evil and darkness and now is sovereign over all history and creation.

To believe in Jesus as Lord means to accept Jesus as our ruler, the one who defines our life, the center around which all aspects of our world are judged, the power who overcomes our brokenness and the world's injustice.

As in a war, where one decisive battle may determine the final outcome, though the war drags on to the bitter conclusion, so in the Resurrection Christ has won the decisive battle with sin and evil. In Christ's ministry, the realm of God began. At the end of history, the consummation of God's realm will finally be seen. We live in the inbetween times; there is much destruction in the world now, but we know what the outcome will be. The Risen One has defeated the powers of death. We can live with a faith that is certain: Love will have the last word.