

Easter 2017

What Jesus left behind The ‘forensics’ of the resurrection

Text: John 20:1-9

I want us today to join Mary Magdalene, Peter and John and look at that empty tomb.

I want us today to examine the ‘forensics of His resurrection’ and look at whatever was left behind in that tomb.

Jesus could have left nothing behind, a completely empty tomb... but He didn’t. Isn’t that interesting? I believe that whatever Jesus left behind, He left it there for a purpose and to communicate something.

1. As Peter approached the entrance, he saw grave clothes without anyone inside them

v.5 – *“and he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there”*

The word ‘lying’ in the Greek means that these cloths were ‘lying precisely as the body had lain in them’ – undisturbed (not on the floor, or scattered around).

That is a miracle because John 19 describes how a hundred pounds of spices soaked those cloths around the body of Jesus. All these liquids would soon harden and the cloths would become a hardened cocoon for the body. The only way out would be to cut open the cloths.

That is why when John saw it he believed (V.8 *“he saw and believed”*). This was an undeniable miracle: those grave clothes were left behind, intact, but without a body in them.

Also, a handkerchief was neatly folded nearby– no sign of a hurried burglary either.

Jesus left behind ‘evidence’ of His resurrection.

2. Linen cloths

A forensic scientist would also look at the substance of that material, or the fabric in those cloths. What kind of cloth was that? Was it wool, was it linen, what sort was it?

- a) The cloths left behind were linen. In the scriptures, linen is always associated with purity.

In the book of Revelation 15, 19:8,14, we see that the angels of God, the saints and God’s armies appear dressed in linen. Linen always speaks of purity.

Matthew 5:8 says that *the pure in heart will see God.*

Jesus left evidence of His resurrection but also something that was symbolic of ‘purity’.

- b) Linen was also the only type of cloth allowed for priests to wear as they entered the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16:4,23).

Linen also speaks of access. Jesus came to provide us with access to the very presence of God.

¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

Ephesians 3:12

3. Blood-stained linen

A closer inspection would also reveal that the linen fabric found in that tomb was soaked in blood. That blood-stained linen was there as a reminder of the price paid for the purity and for that 'access' that we now enjoy in God.

Leviticus 17:11 says that *"it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul"* However, **Hebrews 10:4** says, *"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"*.

For that reason, Jesus came and shed His own blood. Only His blood could truly atone for our sins, impart purity to our lives and give us access to God:

Hebrews 10:19-22 - *¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and having a High Priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

The blood-stained linen contained a message: the message that we can come to God, the message that the gap between us and God has been bridged. There was a message in His blood. Did you know that the blood speaks?

Hebrews 12:24 - *to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

There was a message in that blood: purity, right standing with God and access to the presence of God!

4. Anointed linen

Inspecting the scene of the resurrection, one could easily see that this was a different kind of tomb. In it was not the stench of death but the aroma of spices and oils. The linen that Jesus left behind was soaked in fragrant oils.

Words like 'oil, unction and anointing' are always associated with the work of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures.

Jesus said in **John 16:7b** – *"..."* *It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.*

That linen left behind was ‘anointed linen’.

Elisha pleaded with Elijah to leave his mantle of anointing behind. We are to pick the mantle of Jesus and do His works. The mantle of Jesus’ anointing is greater than Elijah or any other prophet because God didn’t give him the Spirit by measure.

We can live anointed lives and be anointed at everything we do – anointed at our jobs, our studies, anointed as husbands or wives, as parents, anointed as students or when praying for someone.

Paul’s aprons and handkerchiefs carried that anointing (Acts 19:11).

That is why one of the last instructions of Jerusalem just before His ascension was to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Also, we read in **John 20:22** - *And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.*

Conclusion

The forensics of Jesus’ resurrection points to

- a) An undeniable miracle. The grave clothes left behind were undisturbed and Jesus was not in them. That miracle was confirmed by many witnesses (500 people over 40 days)
- b) To the believer, what was left behind speaks of those things God has done for us in Jesus. It speaks of the price Jesus paid
 - For our right standing with God
 - For access with boldness to the presence of God and
 - For a life of in the power of the Holy Spirit