

WHAT A MORNING!

1 Corinthians 15:1-20

Introduction: Ever hear the expression "I just can't believe what has just happened!?" You may have uttered that same phrase or one similar to it when you experienced something that was unexpected or totally shocking. Easter is all about a morning that had such an event happen and had people uttering phrases of disbelief, shock and surprise. It was that wonderful morning when Jesus came out of the tomb He had been buried in two days before. Jesus had risen from the dead! Had He, really? Did He?

I. THROUGH THE CENTURIES CHRISTIANS HAVE STAKED EVERYTHING ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

1. Those who reject the resurrection tend to picture the disciples as being gullible and that they would believe anything or that they made up the whole story.
2. Looking at it though, the disciples were the last ones to believe such a story. They were not "gullible" or easily misled.
 - None of them showed faith, none believed the report, all were like Thomas, doubting.
3. To make up such a story would be almost an impossibility.
 - Nobody could agree on anything. The disciples hid behind locked doors.
 - It was the women who tended to the burial.
 - The details told of the resurrection were all mixed up, different stories were given.
 - Mainly, nobody would have thought of such a story in the first place.
4. The resurrection was a shock and challenged what everyone thought and believed.
 - The disciples reacted as we would if a dead relative suddenly showed up at our front door.
 - Happily though, the shock and fear of the disciples was eventually replaced with belief, joy and much excitement.
5. However there was a "cover-up" story told. It was by the authorities who had heard the news by the ONLY eye witnesses, the soldiers.
 - Alibi's had to be made up.
 - Soldiers had to be bribed and transferred to areas away from there.
6. Those who did believe the resurrection were transformed. Those who did not found ways to ignore the evidence.
 - Jesus once said, *"...If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead..."*

II. IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT FOR THE DISCIPLES TO BELIEVE

1. We can look back through history and read what happened. The disciples were THERE and they just could not bring themselves to believe such a thing was possible.

2. Jesus' appearance was quiet, without any prior announcement unlike at His birth.
3. Jesus appeared suddenly, disappeared as suddenly on a dusty road, in a garden, in a locked room, at a lake. "Jesus is alive - out there somewhere" for six weeks this went on.
4. Note one thing: JESUS NEVER APPEARED TO A SINGLE UNBELIEVER!

III. NO DISCIPLE EVER DOUBTED JESUS' RESURRECTION AGAIN

1. Everyone who saw Jesus was overwhelmed. They could choose to believe or not to believe.
2. *"...because you have seen me, you have believed..."* said Jesus. Those who had seen Jesus could now persuade the others who had not seen Him and they had only six weeks to do so.
3. Did Jesus succeed in convincing them? Cowards to street preachers, the world turned upside down. Jesus' Church established and still going today. Yes Jesus succeeded.

IV. WHY DO WE BELIEVE TODAY?

1. *"...blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed..."* said Jesus to doubting Thomas.
 - Only those 500 or so ever saw the resurrected Jesus.
 - Ever since Jesus' ascension Christians have believed in His resurrection without ever having seen Jesus, including us.
2. Why do we believe? Why do many not believe? What in Easter causes faith?
 - We want the story to be true. We want life after death.
 - Easter reinforces our hope, yes, there is something after death!
3. The crowd shouted for Jesus to come down off the cross. What if He had? Instead Jesus rose from the dead, VICTORIOUS over death and the grave.
4. Jesus kept His scars from the cross. Perhaps to remind Him, perhaps to remind us.

CONCLUSION:

1. After looking through history at the wars, pain, disease, deaths, troubles, Easter is a stunning contradiction. God does love us. There really is life after death. There is reason to hope.
2. World conditions have not changed since that morning, but something happened that morning that has changed mankind. God's Son was raised from the dead, resurrected, the first of all the others who would believe in that resurrection and be called Christians, the Church.
3. If the disciples were changed so much, how much can Easter change you?