

The United Benefice of Peasedown St John with Wellow
The Parish of Peasedown St John

“ I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!
And I hold the keys of death and Hades.” Revelation 1:18
Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Sermon Passage

Revelation 1:18

18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

2. Sermon Notes

2.1 Introduction

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

With these words Jesus affirms the central truth of Easter:

- i. “He was dead”.
- ii. He is “alive for ever and ever”.
- iii. “That he holds the keys of death and Hades”.

The truths nestled in this one verse are central to our faith which is why many over the centuries have disputed whether Jesus did in fact die and secondly whether he was in fact raised from the dead.

2.2 Major objections to Christ’s death and resurrection

2.2.1 Objection 1 - Jesus was not really dead when he was taken down from the cross.

- The Romans bodged the job these objectors speculate and the Romans couldn’t tell the difference between a dead body and one still breathing!
- Can we take this suggestion seriously especially if we are taking our verse in Revelation at face value where Jesus states that “he was dead?”
- The reason the Romans did not break Jesus’ legs was because he was clearly dead already.
- Is it likely that Jesus, having being lying around unattended for 36 hours on a cold damp slab in a dark sealed tomb, with open and bleeding wounds, would then somehow have managed to push away the entrance stone to his tomb and then convince people he was the Lord of life?
- He would certainly not have been in a state to be worshipped; more likely in need of a stretcher to the local A+E department!

2.2.2 Objection 2 - The women went to the wrong tomb

- The women just got confused in the early dawn mist and Jesus’ body was in some other grave just a few yards away.
- How would this be possible given that those same women had seen where Jesus was buried just 36 hours before and some of them had helped bury him.

2.2.3 Objection 3 - The Roman or Jewish authorities removed the body

- The Roman or Jewish authorities nicked the body.
- This too seems unlikely given that 7 weeks later Peter is proclaiming that Jesus has been raised from the dead.
- Surely at that point the authorities would have produced the body? or, at least, explained what they done with it?
- It would have suited them far better to find the body and squash the embarrassing claims of Peter and the other early Christians.

2.2.4 Objection 4 - The Disciples removed the body

- Jesus' followers couldn't bear to leave things alone. They nicked the body, buried it somewhere else, and then started these silly stories about Jesus being alive again.
- To disturb a grave was in itself a capital offence. That's why the authorities would not have dared to remove the body.
- The disciples would not have dared to remove Jesus' body either. Why risk it? What would they gain except trouble?
- Nothing suggests that they were in the mood for such a courageous gamble, or for playing silly games. After all their hopes were in tatters, buried in that grave with Jesus.
- Just supposing they had played this little charade, how come they managed to live out this hoax until their dying day? Lots of them died because of what they claimed for Jesus. Why didn't any of them give way under pressure?
- No, the disciples did not nick the body; instead they were convinced that Jesus was indeed alive having risen from the dead.. No, they knew the tomb was empty and they knew they hadn't nicked the body.

2.2.5 Other supporting evidence for Christ's death and resurrection

- Jesus was seen by many different people, indeed by over 500 on one occasion.
- The change in the disciples from cowardice to conviction.
- The rapid spread of the Christian message during that first century.
- Putting everything together we begin to sense that the missing part of the jigsaw is the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- It explains both what went before, the brilliance of Jesus' life and what happened next.
- Be in no doubt that Jesus' words in Revelation are true that "he was dead", but is "alive for ever and ever"

2.3 "That Jesus holds the keys of death and Hades".

- Jesus went into the enemy's camp, stole the keys, and came back.
- In Revelation Jesus makes the proclamation of victory: "I have got the keys!"
- He declares the prisoners are freed. The grave is no longer a prison-house to which death holds the key. We need fear death no more.

3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 Someone suggests to you one day: 'that the body of Jesus on the cross was a mere shell—the spiritual being we call "the Christ" descended on Jesus at His baptism and left at His crucifixion.' How would you respond?

3.2 A really good friend of yours challenges you one day and asks why you believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. How would you respond?

3.3 How do you view death? Should Christ's claim that he 'holds the keys of death and Hades' change your view of death in any way?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293