

Text: John 19:38 – 20:10

Title: Believe because He was buried and rose again

Time: 4/5/2026 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: I am told that 30 billion tons of concrete are poured worldwide each year. Much of that material is critical to the foundations of our buildings. Over time concrete can become brittle, prone to cracking, shrinkage, and water damage. This can cause foundation problems making the buildings resting on them unsafe.

Recently, technology has been developed using *Bacillus* bacteria in concrete to keep small fissures from becoming larger cracks that are structural problems. Evidently, when the microbes are exposed to air caused by a crack, they produce a super strong calcium carbonate chemical compound that heals the crack. Our great Creator created little concrete repair engineers that we are only beginning to learn to use.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, the Apostle Paul clarifies for the troubled Corinthian church the foundation of the gospel of their salvation: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

In the rest of that chapter, Paul emphasizes for this local church that the truth of the gospel must include the burial and resurrection of Christ. He explains, “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he

raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (vv. 14-19).

Paul writes these things to this church because he had found some cracks in the foundation of their faith related to the burial and resurrection of Christ: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (v. 12). These fissures in the foundation of the faith of this local church threatened their faith in the saving gospel itself. Paul wants them to be saved, so Paul wants these fissures healed before they become large cracks and structural problems for these church members.

Of course, we live in a world like Corinth, a place that has concluded that Christ did not really rise from the dead because the dead do not rise. That may be your honest understanding this morning. If that is so, it is not because you are more modern or better informed than the Corinthians. It is because you have the same cracks in your faith they had.

The first thing that Paul says to fill those cracks is "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received." Paul's doctrine of the gospel, including the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, was a teaching that he had first received from others before delivering it to Corinth so that they could receive it. He had received it first on the road to Damascus, where he had seen the risen Christ. He had also received it during a visit to Jerusalem in an interview with Peter, James, and John, which he tells us about in Galatians 2:7-9.

And now this morning, you and I have the privilege of opening the writings of this very same Apostle John to hear what Paul heard about the burial and resurrection from the dead of

the Lord Jesus. John tells us what he told Paul that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name. John tells us about the burial of the dead body of Jesus in 19:38-42 and about the resurrection in 20:1-10. First, Joseph and Nicodemus help us believe as those who buried the Lord's body. In the second, Peter and John help us believe as those who discovered the empty tomb.

I. Joseph and Nicodemus help us believe as those who buried the body of Jesus (19:38-42).

Illustration: A couple of weeks ago, I had ministry duties in Mentor, OH, and on the way home while sitting in the food court of the Cleveland airport, a young family sat next to me. Mom and dad had two young boys, and mom had the their third on the way. They had made their purchase at Chic-fil-a, and before they began eating, dad had everyone bow their heads to thank the Lord for their food. I engaged them in conversation afterwards and came to learn that they were a brother and sister in the Lord, fellow Christians.

Application: It is a wonderful blessing to find fellow believers in unexpected places and unexpected ways. That seems to happen to these two members of the Jewish Sanhedrin that had forced Pilate to crucify Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, whom we first met in John 3. John reminds us that Nicodemus had come to Jesus by night, fearful of discovery, and he describes Joseph here as someone who was a secret disciple of Christ for fear of the Jews. These details tell me that they likely did not know each other were believers until they both came to help bury the body of their Lord.

I am glad that the dad of the young family who sat next to me was more concerned with leading his family in prayer for a meal than he was remaining undiscovered and hidden as a disciple of Christ. For Joseph and Nicodemus, I think it may have been the shock of their Council's declaration to Pilate,

“We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15), that was the bridge too far for their silent compromise with evil.

We have all felt the temptation to which these men had succumbed. My first day working for the corporate staff of a plastic bottle company included lunch with my new colleagues at a round table in the company cafeteria. In spite of the fact that I always had bowed my head to thank the Lord for my food, in part because I had a dad like the one I met in Cleveland, I was this time tempted to just skip the prayer this once. The Lord gave victory, but there were other tests and temptations to become a secret disciple in that world.

Joseph and Nicodemus both have victory this time. In fact, they are very generous in their care for the body of Jesus. The myrrh and aloes that Nicodemus brought were very costly, and they fulfilled ancient prophecy about the burial of Christ in Psalm 45:6-8, where God the Father says to the Son, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.” Those royal garments were the burial cloths of our passage. Jesus came out of the tomb like a royal king coming out of His ivory palace.

So, we must believe because Joseph and Nicodemus buried the dead body of Jesus. Jesus truly did die, and His body lay in the tomb for three days and three nights before the first day of the week begins in the next chapter.

II. Peter and John help us believe as those who discovered the empty tomb (20:1-10).

Illustration: There were 334,270 people living in Chicago in October 1871, when the city burned for the three days that we

remember as “The Great Chicago Fire.” Seventy years later, H.A. Musham authored the first carefully researched account of the fire. One key source for his research was the two hundred or so eyewitness accounts of the fire that the Chicago Historical Society had collected. After examining this eyewitness evidence and much else like it, Musham admitted that they were difficult to put together in a coherent way: “The accounts disagree almost unanimously as to details.”

This feature, of course, is to be expected of true and credible eyewitness accounts of historical facts. In spite of their variety of detail, no one surmises from this variety that the fire never happened. In fact, if every one of the two hundred accounts collected by the Chicago Historical Society agreed in every detail, we would be correct to suspect that someone witnesses were actually not eye witnesses, but rather depended on others for their account, or else that the two hundred had conspired together to come up with a coordinated story they wanted others to believe.

Application: When it comes to the historical fact of the resurrection of the same body of Jesus Christ that was buried dead three days earlier, we have four eyewitness Gospel accounts. Like all true and credible eyewitness accounts, they are not the same in every detail, but because these accounts are also inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are not contradictory nor very difficult to put together.

Our account in John begins with Mary Magdalene (vv. 1-2). We know from Matthew (28:1-5) and Mark (16:1-5) that she was accompanied by other women who are not mentioned here by John. John is focused on Mary Magdalene as the first to see Jesus. She first sees the stone rolled from the tomb, immediately assuming the grave has been breached and the body stolen. She leaves her companions behind and runs to tell Peter and John that the Lord’s body had been taken and that she and her companions did not know to where.

The ladies who remain eventually come to the tomb, see two angels, receive the explanation that Jesus is risen, and accept the instruction to go inform the apostles (Luke 24:1-8). They leave, at first hesitant about completing their task (Mark 16:8), but eventually they report to the apostles what they had seen.

The apostles did not at first believe them (Luke 24:11). At the time, the testimony of women was not admissible as reliable testimony in court. Surely, no fake first century account of these events, if designed to get people to falsely believe that Jesus was risen, would have given the women the prominent role these eyewitness accounts of what really happened do.

Peter and John ran to see the empty tomb. John outran Peter, but when it came to the discovery of the evidence that Jesus had left behind for them, Peter outdid John. John merely peered into the tomb and saw the remaining grave cloths. Peter entered in altogether and saw the head cloth neatly folded as well. John followed Peter's example, and for the first time he believed that Jesus had risen from the dead (v. 8).

Looking back, John admits that this is something they could have understood already because of the Scripture (v. 9). Peter would later preach the resurrection of Christ with Psalm 16:10 as his text: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Peter would tell the Jerusalem that had crucified Christ that the man who wrote those ancient words, King David, had been left in his grave and had decomposed. For this reason, this Scripture prophesied that David's Son, the Messiah, would rise from the dead avoiding decomposition (Acts 2:25-36).

I think we do well to look to the Book of Isaiah to find the Scripture that John had in mind when he looked back in verse 9. In 1:29 John says that John the Baptist is the voice of Isaiah 40:3, announcing the coming of Yahweh, who is Jesus. In 6:45 John says that Christ quoted Isa. 54:13 to claim that only God

can bring a sinner to the Savior, whom He rightly claimed to be. In 12:38 John explained from Isa. 53:1 why it was that so many failed to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And in 12:40 John reinforced his explanation from Isa. 6:10. In verse 41, John tells us that Isaiah saw Jesus's glory when he saw Yahweh's glory in that chapter.

And now, I believe his mind returns to Isaiah's chapter 53. After that chapter's detailed prophecy of the vicarious atoning death of Jesus Christ for sinners, it says this in verses 10-12, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Isaiah prophesies that, after His death, the Messiah would arise and have this great future. John reflects that these are Scriptures that could have informed their faith in the resurrection before it happened. Many others could be added from the Old Testament (Luke 24:25, 45).

Conclusion: You and I live many centuries after the resurrection of Christ has happened. We have not only the Scriptures John had, but also those of the New Testament, like these two chapters in John's Gospel, which look back on these historical events as eyewitness testimony. We must allow these Scriptures to act as the calcium carbonate to heal whatever cracks we find in our ability to believe that Jesus was truly buried and then truly arose from the dead.

What has been declared here this morning has been received from David, from Isaiah, from John, from Peter, and from Paul: Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; He was buried, and He rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures.

If that did not happen, our faith is in vain, we are yet in our sins, those fallen asleep in Christ are perished, and this book of Scripture is a total lie (albeit a miraculously consistent one). But since it did happen, our faith is a sure hope, as we believe our sins are forgiven, we shall see our brothers and sisters who have gone on before us, and this book is the true Word of God. Truth, not lies, is miraculously consistent.

With the rest of Scripture, John writes that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name because He was buried and He rose again. Do you believe? If so, tell the Lord you do, and then someone you love.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*