

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning

Week 14 (March 27-April 2, 2016)

The cross and the empty tomb separate Christianity from all other religions. We will continue to use miscellaneous scriptures as we celebrate His resurrection.

Sunday, March 27 (read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8)

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. (1 Corinthians 15:1)

We who are in Christ have believed the gospel, received Jesus into our hearts, and taken a stand for Him (v. 1). The Lord has promised to hold onto us (see Philippians 1:5-6), so we do not need to feel insecurity based on verse 2. The death and resurrection of Jesus form the foundation of the Christian faith; therefore, they are of utmost importance (v. 3-4). Today is the **third day**, the day of His resurrection. I pray that, in church, you are celebrating His marvelous sacrifice, wherever you may be. Jesus appeared to many witnesses before appearing to Paul on the road to Damascus (v. 5-8; see also Acts 9:1-5). I cherish the day when He offered to trade places with a sinner like me. He took all my sins and I inherited His righteousness. That still remains the greatest transaction I have ever made. Happy Easter!

Monday, March 28 (read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. (1 Corinthians 15:19)

Be sure you read the entire text for today to see what difference it would make if Christ had **not** risen from the dead. My preaching and your faith would be useless (v. 14). All of us who testify of His resurrection would be liars (v. 15), we would all still be lost in our sins (v. 17), and those loved ones who have gone on before us would be lost for eternity. We love the **present** benefits of living for Jesus, but Scripture declares that, "If only for **this life** we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (v. 19, emphasis mine). This is because persecutions are already happening in many places to true Christians who live by the standards of the Bible. Soon, the rest of the world will experience them as well. The great news is this: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (v. 20). He has risen! He is alive! "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (v. 55)

Tuesday, March 29 (read Acts 2:22-24)

But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him, . . . (Acts 2:24).

Following the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (v. 1-13), Peter stands up to address the crowd that has gathered (v. 14). To begin his sermon, he quotes from the prophet Joel to explain the events of the day (v. 14-21), thus tying the Old Testament prophet to New Testament truths. He reminds his listeners that Jesus was "accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him" (v. 22b). God's sovereignty decreed and God's foreknowledge allowed them to put Him to death on a cross (v. 23). Thank God that the story does not end there! The printed verse above proclaims the victory of the empty tomb, "because it (is) impossible for death to keep its hold on Him" (v. 24). The resurrection of Jesus separates Christianity from all other religions! Don't be ashamed to take a stand for the One who took a fall for you!

Wednesday, March 30 (read Acts 2:25-33)

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. (Acts 2:32)

Once again, Peter quotes from the Old Testament (Psalm 16:8-11) to explain the events of this day (v. 25-28). He recognizes from the text that David was prophesying about the **resurrection of Jesus**, because **his own grave** is visible to them all. This time, however, Peter not only proclaims the truth of the resurrection (v. 32), he also goes a step further to announce that Jesus now sits on the right hand of God. Having conquered death, He receives the Holy Spirit from His Father and pours Him out on His followers in the upper room (v. 33). Can you see the close connection to the cross, the empty tomb and the Holy Spirit? Are you allowing the Spirit to work in every area of your life?

Thursday, March 31 (read Acts 2:34-41)

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

What happened to the spineless disciple who denied Jesus three times to a servant girl? He has now been filled with the Holy Spirit, so he is able to stand against his critics with boldness (v. 36). Instead of getting furious with him, his listeners are deeply convicted and ask (v. 37), "Brothers, what shall we do?" The only answer is printed above for you to memorize and live by. Baptism is often **not** accompanied by repentance, so it is doomed to fall short. Only when we realize that it is **our** sins that crucified Jesus will we truly repent and turn to Him. As long as we think we are not as bad as some other sinner, we will continue to compromise His Word while continuing in our ungodly lifestyle. Are you sure that you came to Jesus by the way of the cross? If so, have you allowed Him be the Lord of your life?

Friday, April 1 (read Acts 2:42-47)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The printed verse contains the four ingredients that a Spirit-filled church needs to have. Bible study (**apostles' teaching**) is imperative if new believers are to grow in Christ after they have come to the point of applying Acts 2:38 to themselves. **Fellowship** is also extremely important, because the new decision for Christ often separates the new convert from his/her family and co-workers. The **breaking of bread** is the communion service. The Bible does not specifically tell us to take communion every Sunday, but it does imply that His early disciples did. How often do you think we should remember the Lord's death and resurrection? Is once a month enough? How about once a quarter? I am glad to be among the folks who celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday! The fourth component of worship is **prayer**. I'm afraid that it is sadly absent from many of today's church services. I'm not talking about saying a prayer, but rather, I'm calling for real believing prayer, a time that brings heaven down to our church. Is the church you attend characterized by these four ingredients? If not, begin to lead them into real worship in the weeks ahead!

Saturday, April 2 (reread Acts 2:42-47)

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. (Acts 2:44-45)

You may think the verses above sound like communism. Won't the lazy members take advantage of the generosity of their fellow believers? The answer is a firm "no," because they had a standard rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10b). The handicapped were provided for as well as the widows and orphans, but all others were expected to contribute to the overall welfare of the church. When this happens in today's church, the needs of all the members are fully met. The church can also be helpful in meeting other known needs in the community and around the world. This will result in great fellowship as well as evangelism to the lost, with all the praise going to the Lord (v. 46-47)!