

Flesh, Bones & Fish
Luke 24:36-43

³⁶As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" ³⁷But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish ⁴³and he took it and ate before them.

This text is written for the average Tennessean. We all think Christianity is okay if it doesn't claim exclusivity and it doesn't bother my world today.

But, if, on the other hand, we saw someone rise from the dead we would be 'startled, frightened, troubled and doubting.'

1 - This text anticipates people saying, "*Of course it was easy to convince the disciples, the disciples expected Jesus to rise from the dead.*" No they didn't. These guys weren't easily duped. To believe in Jesus' resurrection cost these people their lives. Jesus had to take other steps to convince them.

41-42 - And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish ⁴³and he took it and ate before them.

An individual resurrection is not part of Jewish eschatology nor did the disciples ever see or believe in Jesus' resurrection before it happened. If you read the Gospels, you see that the disciples, from Peter to John to Mary, had to be convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead.

2 - The text also anticipates people spiritualizing the resurrection. Luke acknowledges, "*they thought they saw a Spirit*" but Jesus refused to let them live in that delusion. That's why he said, "*Touch me, and see. For a Spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.*" If you spiritualize the text, you might have comfort, but it will be false comfort because you won't have the truth.

The point of this passage is to confront our lack of thinking on the issue.

V 39 - For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

First: Consider How It Changes Your Thinking

If Jesus has his flesh and bones, it means he is Lord of death.

When Paul preached in Athens, the people initially loved it. Why? Because they agreed; everybody is searching, everybody is looking, and we all agree that everyone is searching and looking through various schemes: Atheism, Communism, the American dream.

But Paul got to one point in the sermon at which the Athenians refused to listen anymore. What did Paul say?

Acts 17:30-32 - "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, "because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked...."

What is Paul saying? *"The search is over. Jesus is the answer. It's time for a decision."*

The Athenian philosophers knew that if Jesus was raised from the dead then Paul was claiming something for the founder of Christianity that no other religion claimed.

Why is Christianity unique? Didn't other people in the Bible rise from the dead?

Think about Lazarus. Someone had to roll away the stone. Someone had to call him from the dead. Even then, someone had to untangle him from his grave clothes.

But Jesus didn't require any help. His grave clothes are still lying in the grave just like he was wrapped. The stone wasn't rolled away, so Jesus could get out. It was so we could get in.

Death lost its grip on Lazarus but death never had a grip on Jesus. Lazarus lived to die again but Jesus lives forever in a realm beyond decay and death, even time and space.

Jesus is the Son of God and the firstborn from the dead.

Revelation 1:17-18 - When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, "and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

Jesus destroyed death.

What does that mean for the philosophers? What does that mean for the searchers? Everyone else pointed to the life. Jesus pointed to himself. "I am not a clue. I am the destination."

John 11:21-25 - Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." "But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." "Jesus said to

her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

“I am not a teacher pointing to the resurrecting, I am the resurrection to which all teachers point.”

This is what makes the resurrection such an outrage. This is why it “startled, frightened, troubled and [caused] doubting.”

The people who most hate pat answers, live in the most pat answer, that says, “*I’m a spiritual seeker, but I can still live any way I want.*” That’s just an attempt to get out making a decision.

What’s the big deal about the fish? The only possible reason for this story is its lack of ambiguity. It’s not just fish, it’s broiled fish. As with the rest of the Bible, there is too much specificity to be a tale that can’t be disproved because it is so general in its telling.

What can we do about this, John says?

1 John 1:b-3a - we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you,

After the resurrection, you just can’t honestly say that Christianity is just one religion among the masses of stories about dying and rising gods. The resurrection claims that Jesus is the one and the only God, come in flesh, to die for our sins.

Second: Consider How It Changes Your Life

The eating of the fish means that your future is a physical future. Christianity is not about never-never land. It’s about the here and now and the here and now being there and then.

Jesus’ physicality after the resurrection tells us everything about the future world.

If you believe in Easter, you believe in future world in which you will live, breathe, walk, talk, eat, enjoy, etc.

Whatever you are afraid you are going to miss out if you become a Christian is, in fact, guaranteed to you by Christianity.

Easter says, “*Whatever you don’t get here, you are guaranteed there. You can sacrifice here, you can serve here because eternity guarantees you the life of your dreams.*”

Every sense will be an inlet of delight
- Jonathan Edwards

Nothing in this life can be compared to the wonder of what we will eternally experience.

When we get to heaven, we will never look back and say, “Oh, I wish I was young again, could run again, had energy again...” Our future is a physical future, not a disembodied intelligence. Your feet are going to touch ground. You will eat, you will drink, you will love.

There is nothing to be afraid of. Relax. This world means this is not all there is and what is coming is far better.

Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.

Now, if we are made for heaven, the desire for our proper place will be already in us, but not yet attached to the true object, and will even appear as the rival of that object. And this, I think, is just what we find... If a transtemporal, transfinite good is our real destiny, then any other good on which our desire fixes must be in some degree fallacious, must bear at best only a symbolical relation to what will truly satisfy.

The faint, far-off results of those energies which God's creative rapture implanted in matter when He made the worlds are what we now call physical pleasures; and even thus filtered, they are too much for our present management. What would it be to taste at the fountainhead that stream of which even these lower reaches prove so intoxicating? Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy.

It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

C.S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory*

At the same time, Jesus' physicality means this physical world means something. Jesus did not die and escape to heaven. He returned in a physical body to tell us that the physical world means something.

When Christians see prejudice, hunger, poverty, injustice, racism, we stand against it because we know that Jesus didn't escape our world, he entered into it, suffered under it, re-entered it and then promised to return to restore it all to himself. In response, we strive to work with Christ in his global redemption of all things.

Take away Easter and Karl Marx is right to accuse Christianity of ignoring the problems of the world.

Take away Easter and Freud is right to say Christianity is wish-fulfillment.

Take away Easter and Nietzsche is right it is for wimps.

Christianity is good news for all hearts because this world matters and we refuse to let the heart settle on the world as it is but find its only rest in the world as it will be.

Third: Consider How It Changes Your Relationship with Jesus

V 39 - Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

Do you remember reading a book that made you long to enter into its world? I remember the Hardy Boys like that. Do you remember your first crush? Have you ever imagined having everything you want to be the happiest you can be?

Jesus' resurrection tells us that he is not just a figment of our imagination. He is not just a made-up character to help us get through hard times or make us feel better about our lives.

Jesus said to the disciples, *"Touch me. I'm real. You can have me and everything I promise."*

When we visit Jerusalem, we will have two options for Jesus' tomb. Why? We don't really know which site the tomb of Jesus is, if it is actually either. How did the church lose the tomb?

- a) It was borrowed and used by the owner after Jesus
- b) Jesus was alive. He wasn't there.

Why would they hang around the tomb when Jesus was somewhere else? It's just another proof of a real and physical resurrection.

Jesus doesn't live as a spirit or in our minds like other religious teachers. He isn't just an inspiration or a great teacher. He's a Savior, it's proven by the resurrection. And you can have him.

Conclusion:

How do I do that? You have to change your mind about Jesus. Make him your Lord and the center of your universe. That will change your life. And then you will have him.

I know this may be a lot to take in. We'd like to discuss it further and here's how you can keep the conversation going -

The band is going to come, and we are going to celebrate the resurrection in song. Then the majority of our congregation is going to Community Groups where we will discuss this sermon. You're invited.

Make sure to exchange your guest card for our gift bag at the coffee bar.

Community Groups:

- 1 – What kind of questions or philosophies is Luke pre-empting by detailing the physicality of Jesus' resurrection?
- 2 – What evidence is there in the text that proves the disciples were not easily duped?
- 3 – Look at Paul's sermon in Athens (Acts 17). What part of the sermon caused anxiety for his listeners?
- 4 – Why is the resurrection such an objectionable doctrine?
- 5 – How is Jesus' resurrection different from that of Lazarus or any other resurrection in the Bible?
- 6 – How does 'broiled fish' add credence to Luke's story about Jesus' resurrection?
- 7 – What does Jesus' physical resurrection say about the world now?
- 8 – What does his physical resurrection say about the world to come?
- 9 – Look at Lewis' quote:
 - a) What do you think about Lewis' thought about desire and unmet satisfaction in this world?
 - b) What about his comments concerning heaven as the "fountainhead" of all desire and satisfaction?
 - c) How are our desires too weak? How are we "far too easily pleased?"
- 10 – Why didn't early disciples make a shrine out of Jesus' tomb?
- 11 – How can I 'touch' Jesus as my Savior?