

Know Why You Believe

by Erlo Stegen

We must be ready to answer those who ask us why we believe, as our faith is not based on blind faith but on innumerable, undeniable proofs.

Scripture: Mark 16:1

Topics: "Resurrection", "Understanding Faith"

Description

Erlo Stegen emphasizes the importance of understanding the reasons behind our faith, particularly focusing on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He explains how the stone was rolled away not for Jesus to escape, but to provide evidence of His resurrection for believers. Stegen addresses common misconceptions about the resurrection and encourages Christians to be prepared to answer questions about their faith, highlighting the overwhelming evidence of Jesus' victory over death and sin. He warns against giving Satan authority in our lives through unconfessed sin, reminding us that Jesus has already defeated him. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper understanding of our beliefs and the power of Christ's resurrection.

Transcript

Summary of sermon by Erlo Stegen, 31 March 2013

Mark 16

1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

People ask many questions about the Bible and it is good to be ready with an answer and know why you believe. Some say they don't understand the Bible when they read it and things don't make sense to them.

For example, we read that there was a huge stone in front of the grave. What type of grave was this, for we are used to graves in the ground, covered with soil.

The custom was for the rich that they dug out a tomb in the hill side, large enough that a person can walk in.

That's why the women asked, "who will roll away the stone for us", for Jesus was buried in such a tomb, the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea.

Outside the tomb they would roll a huge round stone, up to 3 tons!

This huge stone was rolled away by God when he rose Jesus from the dead, not that Jesus could get out but so that we may believe and the disciples could see that the tomb was empty and that He was risen from the dead.

It was the custom to embalm the corpse to preserve it. Joseph of Arimathea embalmed Jesus' body and the women wanted to add more spices.

When a child breaks its arm they place a wet bandage around the arm, put on a liquid and a cast which hardens to protect the arm. After a few weeks it's cut and removed.

Embalming was a similar process, but done from the neck down covering the entire body. It weighed about 45 kg.

That is why when Peter and John entered the sepulchre they immediately recognised that indeed He was risen, because you can't remove a corpse from the embalming without actually cutting it off. But the pieces were intact and the only explanation was that He had risen indeed!

The evidence of Jesus' resurrection is so overwhelming and convincing that there should not be a single unbeliever! But satan has blinded people's eyes and mind that they've become dumb and cannot see what is obvious, because they don't want to believe.

Jesus arose from the dead!

When the rich man asked Lazarus to be sent back to earth from the dead to warn his brothers, Abraham answered him that, "they have Moses and the prophets and should heed what they wrote, for if they don't neither will they listen even if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

The Muslim scholar, Ahmed Dedat gave speeches saying Jesus never died and never claimed that he would die, but he forgot that Jesus Himself said in Revelations, "I am He that was dead and am alive forever more" (Rev 1:18).

Another problem some have is that Jesus died on Friday and arose on Sunday yet we say He was in the grave for three days. Well it's obvious we must understand the Jewish custom which counts any part of a day as a whole day during a time that covers a number of days.

We as Christians need to be able to answer those who ask of us why we believe, for our faith is not based on blind faith but on innumerable, undeniable proofs (1Pet 3:15).

On the third day Jesus arose with the glory of the Father, with His glorified body, having broken the chains of death and the prison bars of hell and He opened the lock closing the grave.

He was despised and rejected and humiliated, yet He opened not His mouth (Isaiah 53:3-10). Yet God exalted Him and gave Him all authority in heaven and on earth, a Name above all other names (Phil 2:8-11).

While His body was in the grave He went into hell. The wages of our sins should take us to hell, that's why He went there so that we can be taken out of hell and delivered. He went there to show even in hell that He has conquered!

The Bible also says that He ascended into heaven. He overcame hell and the grave and satan. In defeating him He poured shame openly on satan.

Some also ask what does it mean when it says that Jesus made an open shame of satan.

The Romans were in power then. They wanted to show their power, and punished rebels and those they have conquered in the most shameful and painful way possible.

If someone had murdered, they would bind the corpse of the one he killed to him, mouth to mouth, hand to hand and feet to feet. He would walk through the streets crying, "who would delivery me from this body of death!" Maggots would enter him from the corpse and that's the way he would die eventually. They said that there was no death as terrible as that.

The one who sins is a slave of sin. Sin consumes you. You are being eaten by this body of death. Drugs, sexual immorality, smoking etc. are all consuming you and you are bound to it and enslaved by it.

Paul also cried, "who will set me free from this body of death" (Rom 7:24), but then he gives the answer that he was delivered by Jesus Christ who sets us free (Rom 8:1).

When there would be a rebellion somewhere in the Roman Empire, Caesar would send one of his generals to put down the rebellion. Once the main rebel was caught, one would run back to Caesar to bring the good tidings that the rebel leader was caught. They would enter Rome with fragrance and everyone would smell it and know that Rome had conquered again. The rebel leader would then be tied to a central pole in Rome and everyone would come and mock him, even the children would pinch him and mock him and he won't be able to do anything.

And so the Bible says that Jesus overcame satan on the Cross and put him to open shame. And yet you are afraid of satan?

Satan has no strength, he is defeated. The only power he has is the power you allow him in your life through unconfessed sin.

There was a girl who used to lead the singing. One day we received a message that she was captured by her old boyfriend because she never demanded back the tokens, her handkerchief, she had given him when she broke the relationship.

The boy had no authority over her but she had given him her handkerchief and that gave him authority over her.

You say satan has no power over you but are his tokens still found with you, anger, sexual immorality, slander etc.?

Until you confess and forsake his works in your life you give him authority over you even though he has no power.

Jesus has risen and defeated satan but you must not give any room to the devil.

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