

Sermon Guide

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Sermon Series: The Drama of Redemption

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20

The Book of Acts was written by Luke as a sequel to his gospel account. Both books were written by Luke for a man named Theophilus so that Theophilus would have certainty regarding the truths he had been taught about Jesus. Luke 1:4 "that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught". Luke's accounts were written in such a fashion to establish the evidence surrounding the story of who Jesus was. The historical claims of Jesus' life, death and resurrection have been called into question from the very beginning. Is Jesus who He says He is? Are the Biblical accounts credible? If Jesus truly rose from the dead then where is the proof? Moreover, given the seemingly endless number of denominations, if there is proof *which* version of Christianity does it support? Given the significant confusion present in Christendom, how is it possible to really know what Christianity is about and the expectations Jesus has of His followers today?

Acts 1:1-3 "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

During the forty (40) day period between Jesus' resurrection and his return trip to heaven, Jesus did two significant things: He "presented himself alive to [his disciples] by many proofs" (1:3) and He gave his apostles "commands through the Holy Spirit" (1:2). The commands He gave are summarized in Matthew 28:16-20 and have become known as "The Great Commission". It is Christ's actions and words during His last 40 days on earth by which all men have evidence of His story and can know what His expectations are of those who would claim to be His disciples.

Forty Days

Evidence

It is very popular to say that there is no evidence to support the idea that Jesus rose from the dead, but is this the case? There is a significant difference between the scenario wherein there is no evidence and the scenario wherein the available evidence is rejected as inadmissible (i.e. evidence that is dismissed as proof for any number of reasons).

An analogy that can be used to illustrate the point is as follows:

A homicide takes place in Richmond, VA. Detectives and other investigators are at the scene of the crime looking for fingerprints and any other relevant information which can be entered into evidence. After analysis of all the data, a suspect is identified whose fingerprints are at the crime scene, his DNA is found in the fingernails of the victim, and his extensive rap sheet includes armed robbery. Search of the suspect's domicile reveals the presence of a weapon and ammunition that, according to ballistics testing, is consistent with that which is believed to have been used to commit the murder. However, when the data is presented to the court, the judge rules all of it inadmissible because it was obtained without a search warrant.

Given this scenario, it clearly would be more accurate to say that “evidence exists which has been disregarded for a particular reason” rather than “no evidence exists connecting the suspect to the crime”.

Eyewitness Testimony

The most relevant evidence to attest to the facts of any situation under dispute is always eyewitness testimony. To reconstruct the events of the past, the testimony of multiple witnesses who agree to the facts is typically universally regarded irrespective of age, sex, culture or worldview.

Reconsidering the earlier analogy:

If there were 3 eyewitnesses willing to testify to the events they had observed, regardless of the validity and admission of any other physical evidence, the affirmative testimony of the witnesses would be sufficient to proceed with a conviction of the suspect.

Shouldn't the same rules apply concerning the resurrection of Jesus? Matthew, Peter and John were just a few of the eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection. The historical evidence and eyewitness testimony does exist. The legitimacy and credibility of both can be debated but it would never be accurate to say that none exists. To maintain that there is no evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, one must accept such on "blind faith," because, thanks to Jesus and His last 40 days on earth, the evidence is there.

Application Questions

Are you rejecting the available historical evidence as inadmissible, and if so, what are your reasons for doing so?

Do you reject the modern Bible as giving an accurate rendering of the apostle's testimony? If so, what are your reasons for believing that the biblical accounts are less than reliable?

A Great Commission

Irrespective of the abundance of denominations or the present state of the church, The Great Commission is clear and should eliminate the confusion concerning what Jesus wants from his people.

Matthew 28:16-20 “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Application

If you are a Christian, Jesus wants and expects for you to obey what he says here. He wants his Church to remember that he has all authority in heaven and earth, and, with that in mind, he wants his Church to make disciples of all nations; he wants you to be a part of that effort.

Sermon Link : [The Great Commission](#)

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