

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Easter Day (Primary Service)

Acts 10.34-43

Psalm 118.1-2, 14-29

1 Corinthians 15.19-26

Luke 24.1-10

The celebration of the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord (Easter) comprises, actually, four distinct services:

1. The Great Vigil of Easter is celebrated after sundown on Saturday. Up to nine lessons are used, together with a psalm or canticle after each lesson. The lessons summarize the history of salvation as found in the Old Testament, and thus summarize revelation up to the advent of Jesus.
2. The early service (which may be a “sunrise” service) on Easter Day uses one of the Old Testament lessons from the Vigil, plus Psalm 114, Romans 6.3-11, and Matthew 28.1-10.
3. The lessons for the primary service are included in this Bible Study summary.
4. The evening service begins with Acts 5.29a, 30-32 *or* Daniel 12.1-3, includes Psalm 114, proceeds to 1 Corinthians 5.6b-8 *or* Acts 5.29a, 30-32, and concludes with Luke 24.13-35.

Acts 10.34-43

- 1) This selection from Acts includes a speech given by Peter at the conversion of St. Cornelius and his household.
 - a) Cornelius was a Roman soldier (a centurion) and thus a Gentile. Ch. 10 of Acts relates how Cornelius (in response to prayer) was instructed to summon Peter. Peter had a vision that all things are clean to God, *i.e.*, that the “kosher” restrictions of the Law did not obtain for Christians.
 - i) Following this vision, Peter was summoned to Cornelius.
 - ii) While Peter was meeting with Cornelius, Peter gave the speech contained in this lesson.
 - (1) The Good News is preached to Gentiles.
 - iii) Following this speech, the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his household, whereupon Peter baptized them.
 - (1) This is the only example in Scripture of the Baptism of the Spirit preceding baptism with water.
- 2) The whole sequence involving Cornelius and Peter is the very pivot of Luke’s argument in Acts: that the Gospel is for all people, and that the Gospel must be witnessed to “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1.8).
 - a) Peter’s sermon changes the proclamation typical throughout Acts, of a call to repentance, to a proclamation of universal forgiveness of the one appointed judge of the world (Jesus).
 - i) Compare Paul’s argument at Acts 17.30-31 and 1 Thess. 1.10.

Psalm 118.1-2, 14-29

- 1) An individual song of thanksgiving.
 - a) Vv. 15-19 are a “victory shout” and petition to enter the Temple; 20-25 and 26-28 being praise to God offered in the Temple’ with v. 29 being an exhortation to offer praise.
 - b) V. 14 is a citation from Exodus 15.2a, from Israel’s classical victory song, with Exodus 15.2b being paraphrased at the end of this praise section (at v. 28).

- 2) “The same stone which the builders rejected” (v. 22) represents, probably, an ancient proverb.
 - a) In the psalm this may refer either to the king’s rise to power (this is a Davidic hymn) or to his recent victory.
 - b) This saying appears at Matt. 21.42 and Acts 4.11. *See also* 1 Cor. 3.11; Eph. 2.20; 1 Pet. 2.7-8.
- 3) The cry “Hosannah” (v. 25) comes from the Hebrew verb *hōšî’a-nnā’*, which means “save us!”
 - a) Crying “hosannah” (as at Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem), is therefore an acclamation which acknowledges lordship and pleads for deliverance.

1 Corinthian 15.19-26

- 1) This section follows one (15.12-20) in which Paul has used logic to argue that the thesis propounded in Corinth (that there is no resurrection of the dead, *see* v. 12) is incorrect, for it would require that Jesus has *not* been raised and that the proclamation of the Good News has been in vain.
 - a) This logical argument now gives way to a passionate proclamation of an experience which transcended both reason and sensory experience.
- 2) *The first fruits* (v. 20): What was done for Jesus can be done for all, and God’s goodness indicates that it will be.
 - a) The general resurrection will take place at Jesus Christ’s second coming (*cf.* 1 Thess. 4.16).
 - b) Having been exalted as Lord in His resurrection, Jesus must triumph over the hostile powers which hold the living captive, and triumph over Death.
 - i) The references to triumph over “rule, authority, and power” (v. 24) use mythological terminology to describe powers hostile to humanity (*see* Rom. 8.38; *cf.* Col. 1.16; 2.10; Eph. 1.21).
- 3) At v. 25 Paul implicitly quotes Ps. 110.1b: Jesus must reign, as part of the divine plan revealed in the prophecy.
 - a) Jesus reigns in history (v. 28), but once history has ended (at the second coming), there will be no more struggle on earth (v. 24b), and so all authority will be remitted to the Father.

John 20.1-18

- 1) All four gospel accounts describe women coming to Jesus’ tomb and finding it empty. All accounts tell of Peter confirming that the tomb is empty, and also how Jesus appears to various disciples.
 - a) John, writing long after the event, incorporates narrative tradition.
 - i) Thus, Mary Magdalene is described as coming to the tomb alone, but in v. 2 she tells Peter “... *we* do not know where they have paid him.” This corroborates the other accounts which refer to *women* coming to the tomb.
 - b) John’s account is a brief report of Mary’s discovery, followed by a longer account of Peter and the Beloved Disciple at the tomb.
- 2) The Beloved Disciple does not enter the tomb. He relies on the report of Mary. Then Peter enters, and he follows.

- a) In Eastern Orthodox tradition, Mary is referred to as “apostle to the apostles,” since she is the first one to bring the news that Jesus is risen, saying “I have seen the Lord!” (v.18).
 - i) So much for the argument that the Church has always accorded a low status to women!

- 3) Jesus tells Mary to not hold onto Him, for He has not yet gone to the Father. Mary has first not known where Jesus is, and now she seeks to hold Him, although He has already told the disciples where He will be:
 - a) He returns to the Father (13.1-3; 14.12, 28; 17.21-26).
 - b) He abides with His disciples (14.3, 18, 20, 23, 28).