

Title: WISH FULFILLMENT OR WITNESS, JOHN 20:1 – 18
(Chatham, NJ; 03/27/16, AM) [Pc – Character Analysis]

Theme: Three of the witnesses to the resurrection could not have been merely acting out some wish fulfillment—as Freud supposed—since they never expected such a thing to begin with.

Purpose: To demonstrate how Mary, Peter, and John moved from surprise and confusion to belief in Christ's Resurrection.

Introduction:

1. The Resurrection took all the disciples by complete surprise.
2. Jesus predicted it several times, and none of them understood it at the time.
3. They were perplexed and confused when the body went missing.
4. Consider the difficulty of three early witnesses to accept it.

I. Mary Magdalene

- A. Her life as a disciple (part of the back story that fills out their character?)
 1. Luke 8:2, seven demons cast out of her
 2. Why do the Gospels record the casting out of the “legion of demons” but not her healing? Hers may have been just as dramatic even though the other is accompanied by the loss of an entire herd of pigs
 3. We cannot underestimate her gratitude
 4. Accompanied Jesus with the twelve as they traveled the countryside, 1
 5. Helped support the ministry, 3, along with other women
 6. She is not the sinful woman of Luke 7
- B. The first witness
 1. Accompanied to the tomb by several other women, Mt. 28:1, Mk. 16:1
 2. Luke 24:10 mentions her, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, the less, and others
 3. She appears to be the first to see him, John 20:16
 4. However, she presumes him to be the gardener, thinking that he has taken the body away, not at all assuming a resurrection from the dead
 5. This is crucial to understand her and the others
 6. The other disciples don't believe her
 7. Her words “seemed to them an idle tale” (Luke 24:11)

II. Peter

- A. His life as a disciple
 1. A fisherman who knew the value of hard, dangerous work: had he ever confronted the dangers of the sin within his own heart?
 2. John provides some revealing facts about him
 3. Recruited by his brother, Andrew, 1:41-42 (anticipated the Messiah?)
 4. “You have the words of life,” 6:68
 5. He cut off the servant's ear, 18:10
 6. At first he refuses Jesus' foot washing, 13:8-9
 7. He denies Christ, 18:25-27, though John leaves out the part about him going out and weeping bitterly
 8. Reinstated by Jesus, 22:15-19
 9. Questions the role of John, 25:20ff.
- B. Christ appeared to him, Luke 24:34
 1. John 20:9 notes that failed to grasp the significance of the Scriptures
 2. Luke 24:12 says that he marveled at what had happened

3. I think Peter is at the very beginning stage of belief
4. His head must have been swimming with lots of conflicting information
5. Was seeing the empty tomb enough, Luke 24:24?
6. If he had really wanted and expected a resurrection, I don't think we'd see him doubt the testimony of the women or simply walk away "marveling"

III. John

A. His life as a disciple

1. His back story: an entrepreneur who left the family business, Mk. 1:20 (fisherman who died in "The Perfect Storm" had done well financially)
2. He didn't follow because he wanted to break out of a life of severe poverty
3. Zealous and hot-headed, Mark 3:17 (sons of thunder), Luke 9:54 (fire from heaven)
4. In his account, he tends to put himself in the background, not naming himself
5. Elsewhere named as one of three of Jesus' close associates
6. He doesn't record his own comments but remembers much of the discussion about Jesus by others: a good listener and observer

B. At the empty tomb

1. He could run faster than Peter yet hesitated to go in
2. Like Peter he didn't understand the Scriptures about the resurrection
3. It sounds like he didn't just project a resurrected Messiah as if it were exactly what he wanted or could have even predicted
4. He tells us that he wants us also to believe, but that belief is based on his testimony, one that took more evidence to convince him, evidence he provides for us to believe

Conclusion:

1. Nothing but the Resurrection explains why the disciples changed their lives so radically.
2. Nothing else explains why they turned the world upside down with their preaching.
3. Sigmund Freud asserted that faith was a mere illusion, a wish-fulfillment based on what a person wanted. (Note: Freud was an atheist.)
4. After looking at the difficulty in believing in the Resurrection, his theory falls flat, a mere wish-fulfillment on his part that he could never prove, only assert.
5. The faith of the disciples came about because they really encountered the resurrected Jesus.
6. Let us rejoice today! Christ is risen!