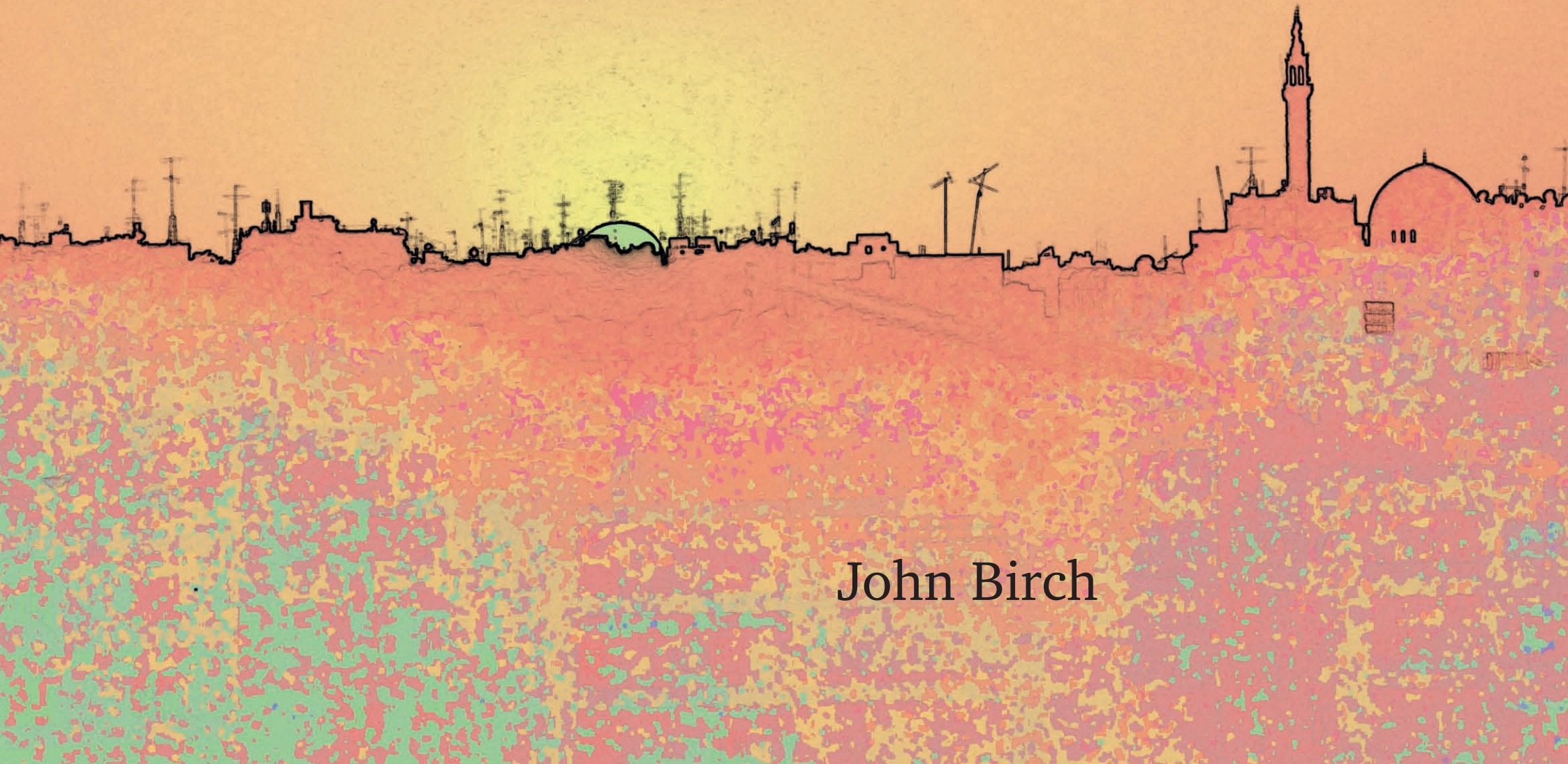


# Toward the Sunrise

A Lent Bible Study



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## 1. Getting started

- 1) When you are packing for a holiday, what are the 'must take' items and why?
- 2) Before you go, have you already planned the basic itinerary, or do you prefer to wait until you arrive?
- 3) Have you had any holiday disasters, and if so who was to blame, you or the tour operator?

## 3. Discussion

"He who never made a mistake never made a discovery."  
(Samuel Smiles)

### Question:

How true, or not, have we found that quote from Samuel Smiles in our lives?

### Question:

Is it sometimes fear of failure that stops us from doing something, or can it also be the fear of what we might discover?

## 2. The devil is in the detail

In 1910 two brave explorers began an adventure to become the first person to place a flag at the South Pole. Both prepared as best they could with the resources and knowledge available to them.

The two men were Captain Robert Falcon Scott and the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen. Scott combined some scientific work alongside his avowed aim of reaching the pole. Amundsen was arguably more focussed on the ultimate goal. After being beaten to the North Pole, he was determined to be the first to reach the South. Let's compare and contrast aspects of their preparation.

**Route:** Scott chose a route used in a previous unsuccessful attempt by Shackleton. Amundsen was convinced there were alternatives and chose one.

**Clothing:** Scott chose woollen and wind-proof clothing. Amundsen used his knowledge of the Inuit people and chose furs. Scott's team continually complained of the cold and

suffered from snow blindness.

**Transport:** Amundsen relied on experienced sled dog teams. Scott used tradition and cutting-edge technology with sled dogs, ponies and motorised sledges. The sleds broke down (he left the designer off the team) and 9 of his 19 ponies died before the expedition proper got going, with the result that they were unable to extend supply depots as far south as they would have liked.

**Food:** Amundsen followed the Inuit habit of eating fresh seal and penguin meat (which contains vitamin C) and a 'sledging' biscuit made with oatmeal and yeast (providing essential B vitamins) along with Pemmican (pounded dried beef and fat). Scott's biscuits were made with white flour, lacking vitamins. Their Pemmican was low in essential roughage. They also tended to overcook meat, destroying vitamin C. Scott's team almost certainly suffered from scurvy, sapping their energy.

**Fuel:** Scott's team suffered from a lack of cooking fuel. Washers



on fuel cans deteriorated and fuel evaporated. Amundsen knew of this problem and a team member devised a hermetically sealed can. Fuel was needed to melt ice for drinking, and Scott's team suffered badly with dehydration.

**The Outcome:** Individually each one of these points might not have unduly affected the outcome, but history affirms that Amundsen arrived at his goal 33 days quicker than Scott, whose incredibly brave and courageous team died just 11 miles from resources that might possibly have saved them. Amundsen's team returned home safely.

Interestingly it is Scott's detailed diary that has ensured his place in history books, along with that immortal quote from Captain Oates, 'I am just going outside, and may be some time...'

#### 4. Read the Story

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them;

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!

"Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' "

Then they remembered his words.

(Luke 24:1-8 NIV)

"Luke's medical training would have prejudiced him against a bodily resurrection. Yet... he was so convinced of its reality that he recorded one of the most beautiful and complete accounts of it..." - Herschel H. Hobbs

#### 5. Starting in the wrong place

It is a well established fact that when witnesses to an incident are questioned after the event, slight discrepancies in their accounts are often revealed.

Looking at the gospel accounts of the Easter story we find the same. Is it one angel or two, one young man or two in gleaming clothes who stand outside the grave (Matthew 28:2, Mark 16:5)?

We shouldn't be too concerned about these differences. One thing is certain. All witnesses agree that a grave once securely sealed with a large boulder was now empty.

That it was unexpected is shown by the fact that the

women were carrying embalming spices to anoint a body. They were not expecting a resurrection, despite Jesus' own predictions that this would happen (Matt 17:23; Luke 9:22; Luke 18:31-33; Luke 22:22)

*"Why are you looking for the living among the dead?"*

The message given by the angels is as relevant to us as it was to those friends of Jesus at the empty tomb. The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.

#### 6. A question

When we say we follow Jesus, who are we following? William Barclay has this to say, *"There are many who still look for Jesus among the dead. There are those who regard Jesus as the greatest man and the noblest hero who ever lived, who lived the loveliest life ever lived on earth and who then died. That will not do! Jesus is not dead; he is alive! He is not a hero of the past, but a living presence today!"*

As we begin this journey through Lent, what words would you use to describe Jesus as depicted in the gospels?

#### 7. A challenge

The season of Lent can be seen as a pilgrimage, with the destination a better understanding of the Easter message. Arthur Paul Boers says *"Pilgrimage is faith-motivated travel to experience God in ways that can shape and change us; it focuses explicitly on growth in discipleship."*

In which ways could the church better use the season of Lent for discipleship growth, rather than simply hoping for a few more in the pews for Easter Sunday celebrations?

#### 8. Debrief

For the women in Luke's story it was a rollercoaster of emotions. A missing body and then the possibility of a living Jesus. Resurrection was a stumbling block just as real as any of the hazards Scott & Amundsen faced in the Antarctic. St Paul said of Jesus *"we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles"* The risen Christ is still a stumbling block to many. One commentator adds, *"God is not surprised by Jesus' resurrection, and neither should we!"*