

“Sonrise” of Joy

Jesus died on a Friday. It was a black day. The sun and the stars could not be seen because the sky was black. The people shouted for Jesus’ death. They mocked Him while He hung on the cross. The soldiers crucified Jesus while the disciples ran away and hid in their homes.

FRIDAY WAS A DARK DAY. Scripture tells us that on the night Jesus was betrayed, Judas kissed Him on the cheek and the disciples fled. There were only two disciples who remained with Jesus. One was at a distance and one stayed closer. That night Peter denied Jesus, and the women were crying. It was Friday, a dark, black day. Blood dripped from His head, His hands, His feet, and His side. It dripped from His back, chest, legs, and arms. It was Friday, and now Jesus was dead.

A rich man came and placed Jesus in the grave. He wanted to place Him in a grave because he was a devout man, a Pharisee, a leader in Jerusalem. Eventually the grave was sealed by a stone that was rolled into place. Darkness filled the tomb. Jesus’ body was in a hollow place that was totally dark. It was a dark day.

Friday was a bad day as far as the disciples were concerned. All of their hopes and dreams, all of their wishes and all of their expectations had vanished. It was a tough, difficult day for them. Only John was bold enough to stand at the cross along with Mary, Jesus’ mother. The rest had fled away, and John was left. When the afternoon had ended,

John, Mary, and the other women left and went home. Eventually all of them were in hiding at home. It was a day they didn’t expect. They didn’t expect their Messiah, their Savior, to end up dead. You see, the disciples weren’t an “A Team.” They weren’t the “Mission Impossible” team, or the “Fantastic Eleven.” In fact, they were defeated and discouraged. They were disillusioned, full of doubt, and full of fear. In fact, it was a tough day for all of them, because Jesus was in the grave.

The future did not hold excitement for them. Instead,

they were at home contemplating the tragedy of the day. It was a day of disappointment. Saturday arrived and because it was the Sabbath Day, they couldn’t go anywhere. They stayed at home. It was not until Sunday morning that something exciting

occurred. They had rushed to put Jesus in the grave and to close the tomb. They did not have the time to finish the process of preparing the body for burial so on Sunday morning some women went to the tomb to complete that process.

THE WOMEN COME TO THE TOMB. Our study begins in Luke 24:1. It is now Sunday morning, and the events of

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Luke 24:3-4



the tragic weekend are behind them. But I am sure that as they walked towards the tomb, they were in anguish as they thought about their Messiah lying in a tomb on a cold slab. I am sure that there were tears. I am sure they were expressing their doubts and their disappointments over the crucifixion. It was a tough day. Verse 1 tells us,

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. Luke 24:1 (NASB)

The verse tells us that they had prepared the spices. This required special effort on their part. They prepared the spices themselves, and now they came in the early hours to the tomb. They came while the rays of the sun were just coming over the horizon. The light of the sky was just starting to turn from dark to something brilliant as they were coming to the tomb.

You may ask, “Who came?” I will tell you who did not come. None of the disciples came. Instead, some of the women came. Verse 10 gives some of their names.

Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. Luke 24:10 (NASB)

There were other women present also. We do not know who they were, but I am sure that they were talking with one another about the events of Friday, about their expectation of what they were going to find. Maybe they were planning what they were going to do when they got to the tomb if they were able to roll that stone away. Mark tells us that one of the questions they had was how would they roll the stone back? The spices the women were bringing were to be used to properly finish the job of preparing the body for burial.

In verse 2 we are told that they unexpectedly found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Verse 3,

... but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. Luke 24:3 (NASB)

This must have been a great surprise for them. The fact that they were bringing spices meant that they expected His body still to be there. They thought He was dead. They were not looking for a risen Savior; they did not believe Jesus was going to rise again. When they saw that there was no body in the tomb, they were stunned. Look at verse 4,

While they were perplexed about this . . . Luke 24:4a (NASB)

The Greek word for “perplexed” is *aporeo*. It has the idea of being perplexed with the implication of serious anxiety. They were really surprised that Jesus’ body was not there. They did not know what it meant, and they were anxious about it. I suspect that one of the things they were thinking about is where could they go to find His body. What happened to it? Who took it? They should have remembered that Jesus told them on multiple occasions that He was going to suffer, die, and rise again on the third day. He told them right after the feeding of the five thousand. He told them after the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus repeated the message to them after He cleansed the ten lepers. Jesus told them after He had a conversation with a rich young ruler. He even told them during the last Passover, sometimes called the Last Supper, but they did not understand His message. I am just surprised the women did not expect Him to be risen. So when they arrived at the tomb, they were expecting His body to be in the tomb. But verse 4 tells us instead they saw two men.

... two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing . . . Luke 24:4b (NASB)

WOMEN EXPECT JESUS TO BE DEAD. We often think about angels being feminine, or looking like little cherubs. But these angels looked like men, and they were dazzling in their clothing. Verse 5 explains that the women were terrified.

... and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead?” Luke 24:5 (NASB)

I find it interesting the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground. The angels responded, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead?” Notice the angels said, “living One among the dead.” The angels were talking about Jesus. They were not talking about just anybody. They were speaking of Jesus. Jesus is alive! He was dead, but He is now alive. “Why do you seek the living one among the dead?” Verses 6-7 tell us that the women were beginning to understand as they thought about what Jesus had said,

He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. Luke 24:6-7 (NASB)

And verse 8 adds,

And they remembered His words . . . Luke 24:8 (NASB)

They did not remember His words earlier. They were expecting Jesus to be dead. That is the message of the Resurrection story. The women did not expect a risen Savior, and neither did the disciples. The disciples did not even show up at the tomb with the women. If they had they expected Jesus to rise from the dead, they would have come rejoicing with excitement that their Savior had risen from the grave. But they did not do that. The women came to finish the burial job, and when they did not find a body, they could not understand what had happened at first. They were clueless until the angels reminded them.

DISCIPLES DO NOT BELIEVE JESUS IS ALIVE. Sometimes we need to be reminded ourselves, don't we? The fact that we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ on this day is a good reminder of what Jesus did. Jesus is not dead. He is risen! He is risen indeed! We are told in verses 9 through 11 that the women,

. . . returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. But these

words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. Luke 24:9-11 (NASB)

Think about what happened! The women returned and told the disciples that Jesus' body was not there. They told the disciples that Jesus is risen from the dead, and the disciples responded, “Great! This is really wonderful!” No, they did not do that at all. The disciples said in effect, “You're crazy.” The ancient Jews considered the testimony of women to be unreliable. So the women's report was discounted. These disciples were not looking for the Messiah to rise from the grave. They thought He was dead and gone. They thought their dream were gone. This was another sad and dark day for them. They were not looking for a future; they thought everything was over. Consequently, when the women came and reported what they had experienced, the disciples rejected their report immediately, “This is nonsense!”

JEWISH LITERATURE ABOUT CHRIST. In sharp contrast, Matthew's account tells us that the Jewish leaders believed the body was missing. The Roman soldiers came back and said, “The grave is empty. Nothing is there. The body is gone.” So these Jewish religious leaders, who were also politicians, concocted a story. Their story was that the disciples had stolen the body away. That can be read in Matthew 8:11-15.

But do you know what is interesting? Today you can read in Jewish literature the things they said about Jesus at that time. Jewish literature testifies to the fact that Jesus did miracles. In one particular passage, the writer states that Jewish priests were rebuked from doing miracles in Jesus' name. Jewish priests had been trying to cast out demons using the power of Jesus' name. The Jewish historical records tell us that their leaders rebuked the lower priests and told them to not do that. Now why would any priest try to heal the sick and cast out demons in Jesus' name? The answer is that they knew Jesus healed, He cast out demons, and really did the miracles recorded in the Bible. Jewish literature admits that He did these things.

It is also interesting that the Jewish Talmud records that Jesus was killed by crucifixion. Jewish literature also admits that his grave was empty. But their public lie at that time was

that the disciples stole the body. Isn't it interesting that they admit that Jesus did miracles, Jesus died on a Friday and the grave was empty. They did not mind if Jesus did miracles. They just do not want Jesus to be alive—and neither does our world today. Non-Christians want to leave Him in the grave—in the cemetery. They just do not want Him to be ... what? Alive!

If we read some of the Roman, Greek and Jewish writers of Jesus' day, we discover that they all agree Jesus died. No one has any problem saying that He died. They just could not admit that He returned to life. So what do you believe? The Jews said the Resurrection was fictitious. Secular writers agreed there was a rumor of an empty grave. I will tell you how we can discover the truth. We can read some of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

PROPHECIES ABOUT CHRIST. Daniel 9:25 prophesied that Jesus would die in the week A.D. 33 and on the day of Nissan 14. It is even more interesting that early Jewish writers actually said that Daniel 9:25 prophesied the time of the Messiah's death. Then two hundred years later they changed their position. They changed because it pointed to Jesus as being the Messiah.

Psalm 16:10 is another prophecy. Listen to this verse,

*For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.
Psalm 16:10 (NASB)*

In Acts 2:22-24, the Apostle Peter explains Psalm 16:10.

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know — this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. Acts 2:22-24 (NASB)

Peter said Jesus died and then returned to life. Then he explains that this is a fulfillment of prophecy.

*For David says of Him,
I saw the Lord always in my presence;
For he is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted;
Moreover my flesh also will live in hope;
Because you will not abandon my soul to hades,
Nor allow your holy one to undergo decay.
You have made known to me the ways of life;
You will make me full of gladness with your presence.
Acts 2:25-28 (NASB)*

Then Peter makes the point that when King David died, he was buried and is still in the tomb.

Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Acts 2:29 (NASB)

Did you know that when you die, you're dead? As my mother and I were driving to church this morning, she reminded me of an interesting statement. She said it is one hundred percent guaranteed that one out of one persons dies! Everyone dies. Someday you will be dead. That is a guaranteed fact, unless you are a Christian and Jesus raptures us and takes us to Heaven before we die. Short of that, someday you are going to die. In Acts 2:29 Peter reminds us that David died and is still dead.

Now notice verses 30-32,

And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Acts 2:30-32 (NASB)

What a great prophecy! It was written about one thousand years before Christ returned to life. We have discovered that there is a prophecy about the week in which Jesus would die,

and he did. There is a prophecy in Psalm 16:10 that says He would return to life, and He did! He did not suffer decay. "Suffer decay" means you start to rot. His body did not rot. Instead He rose on the third day.

THE DISCIPLES BELIEVED. Some people say the disciples created this hoax, that it is just fiction. I would like to ask you an interesting question. We know that Peter, John, and James owned a fishing business. Scripture tells us they had both servants and their own boats. They were men who were probably middle to upper middle class. Matthew was a wealthy tax collector. He was rich! Doubting Thomas would be called a scientist today because of his inquisitive mind. He wanted to have the exact details. The disciples were intelligent men and some of them had wealth. Now why would these men be willing to live in poverty and eventually die a cruel, horrible death all in defense of a lie? Some of them had their heads cut off. One of them was killed with a spear. It is believed that Peter died upside down on a cross. These men suffered extremely terrible deaths. Why would they be willing to suffer such horrible deaths for a lie? I can understand the terrorists of the day doing it for a cause, but why do it for a lie? And why would all eleven of them remain quiet about a lie?

One of the men who was involved in the Watergate scandal with Richard Nixon has made the statement that he just could not believe how these eleven men, the disciples, could keep such a fabrication a secret for so many years, when the men who were around Nixon could not keep quiet about the scandal for six months. It just does not make any sense. No, Jesus was not dead; Jesus was alive! Jesus is risen from the grave! He is risen! He is risen indeed!

THE GOOD NEWS. Why did He rise from the dead? There are primarily two reasons for the resurrection. Romans 1:3-4 tells us that He was resurrected so that we might know that He is the Son of God, indeed that we might know that He is God!

The second reason is that He is the perfect Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Romans 4:25). The Resurrection proved that He could take away your sin and my sin. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul the apostle summarizes Christ's death and resurrection. We will begin with verse 1.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand . . . 1
Corinthians 15:1 (NASB)

Paul says, "I preached the gospel to you." The gospel is Good News. You might ask, "Paul, what is the Good News?" It is coming in verse 2,

. . . by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:2 (NASB)

Now we are going to come back to this verse, but first we discover what the Gospel is. Verses 3-10 describe the gospel.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 1 Corinthians 15:3-10 (NASB)

The Good News or the Gospel is that Jesus died for our sins. He died so that He could forgive your sins and my sins. Forgiveness occurs when we believe in Jesus Christ. John 3:16 says,

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NASB)

If we believe in Him, trust Him and want Him to forgive us of our sins, He will forgive our sins. He is the perfect Lamb

of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Resurrection proves He is God and can forgive our sins (Romans 4:25).

Now back to verse 2. Notice what the verse says at the end,

... unless you believed in vain.

CONCLUSION. I would like to ask, “Have you ever believed in Jesus Christ?” Maybe your response is, “Yes, I believe He lived and died.” But do you believe that He came back alive? Do you believe that He is risen? Do you believe that He can forgive you of your sins? Did you know that God wants to forgive you of your sins and to empower you through the Holy Spirit to live a changed life? Maybe there are things in your life that aren’t the way they ought to be. Maybe there are issues in your life with which you struggle. Maybe there are relationships in which you struggle. Maybe you struggle in your relationship with God. Did you know

Jesus came to die and rise again to provide forgiveness for your sins, to make you right with God, and to change your life? That’s why Jesus came to earth - to make that possible.

The end of verse 2 tells us that it is possible for someone to believe in vain. There are some people who believe in Jesus, but what they believe is not going to take them to Heaven. Their sins really are not forgiven. They have vain faith. It is possible to believe some facts about Jesus and not really believe. Now you might say, “John, how do I know if I have real faith?” Real faith starts by believing these things about Jesus are true. There will be a response on your part that includes sorrowful repentance for your sins and you will want God to forgive your sins. You will desire to obey God. That is the response of real faith. The proof of your salvation will be evident in your life, in how you live. I encourage you to make that decision by speaking to God in prayer.

If you are a Christian, there is great reason for us to rejoice today and everyday, because He is risen! He is risen indeed!