

Last week we looked at the Death of Life. We read of Jesus' holy behavior in the face of agony and mocking. It was so unique that it convinced one of the crucified thieves and the Roman centurion that Jesus was truly the Son of God. We read of the promise Jesus gave the thief of being with him that day in paradise. Two of the religious leaders declared their allegiance to Jesus by burying Him in one of their stone tombs before sunset on Friday. Then everyone went to their homes for the Sabbath rest.

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, Luke 24:1,2 Not a single soul was waiting to see the words of Jesus fulfilled, that He would rise on the third day. Not one person took hold of His words and expected them to come to pass even though He told them three times (Matthew 16:21ⁱ; 17:23ⁱⁱ; 20:19ⁱⁱⁱ). Today we look at the wonderful promises of Scripture regarding our current state in Christ and our glorious future (Ephesians 2:5,6^{iv}; 1 John 3:2^v), and I wonder how many of us are like the apostles in unbelief. We hear the words, but do our hearts take hold of them and believe they are the absolute truth. In our passage the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out, so we should cut them some slack. But on the other hand, they watched Jesus call Lazarus from his tomb after being dead for three days (John 11:43,44^{vi}). They knew He declared Himself to be the resurrection and the life (John 11:25^{vii}). They had seen two other resurrections at Jesus' command (Mark 5:41,42^{viii}; Luke 7:14,15^{ix}). Why would they think the One who calls the dead to life would not fulfill His prediction to rise on the third day? And why should we not live daily anticipating His return?

The women had rested on the Sabbath according to the Law. Then, on Sunday morning, the first day of the week, they were on their way in the early twilight of dawn to finish anointing Jesus' body. Jewish custom was to visit it over the next forty days, a long farewell. Their main concern was how to get into the grave to finish the work, as the stone that sealed the entrance was massive (Mark 16:3^x). But when they arrived, they saw to their surprise that the stone had been rolled away.

³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. Luke 23:3,4 The women entered the tomb only to find it empty. They were perplexed because they did not believe Jesus would rise. They were standing there wondering what could have happened when suddenly two men in dazzling apparel were standing by them. Glory is the dress of heaven. What would you think if you entered a dark mausoleum and suddenly two luminous beings appeared? It is not only their appearance, but the atmosphere of heaven they bring with them. Some of the prophets when in the presence of an angel needed physical help (Daniel 8:18^{xi}; 10:9^{xii}; Revelation 1:17^{xiii}). It is as if we become fish out of water.

⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" ^{6a} He is not here, but has risen. Luke 23:5,6a We'd probably react just as these women did. They were frightened and bowed

their faces to the ground. Maybe they did that to shield their eyes from the light, or maybe they were so moved by the angels' awesome presence.

Then the men said... not one but both of them in stereophonic unison! The message was somewhat of a rebuke. *"Why are you seeking the living among the dead? He arose from death. Remember what He told you?"*

Do we remember what Jesus declared to be the truth about us and about Himself? We might say, "But His speech was full of metaphors." Yes, but the details He predicted of His passion were literal. Why would we not think that rising after three days was literal as well? The prophecies of His first coming were literal, so why wouldn't we think the prophecies of His second coming are as well? Do we keep looking to the eastern sky expecting His return (Matthew 24:27^{xiv})? Do we live as though it could happen today? Or will we be like the women who were shocked to find the grave empty? Will we need angels to tell us in that day, "Remember how He told you this in the Gospels and the Revelation that He would come again in glory?"

I think angels are baffled by our lack of faith. They see His omnipotence and His work throughout history and know the words from His lips must come to pass in every detail (Ezekiel 12:25a^{xv}). Then they see us, recipients of such grace, forgetting what He said. I imagine the angels in awe of God who can take material like you and me and make us into masterpieces. They observe the process and must marvel at the patience and love of God.

Why would they seek the living among the dead? It is because they did not believe. They doubted the prediction. They walked by sight and not by faith. We should take heed. When Jesus comes again, will we look back like Lot's wife (Luke 17:32^{xvi}) at the sound of the last trumpet because we are missing something of this passing world that our hearts are fixed on, or will we be thrilled to go to our reward and the physical presence of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:51,52^{xvii}; Philippians 1:23^{xviii})? Is He our living present Lord and Savior or simply a nice man who was unjustly treated? How highly do we value the words He spoke?

^{6b} Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." Luke 23:6b,7 The angels reminded them of His words while He was in Galilee. He had told them, *²² saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."* Luke 9:22 And at the same time Jesus emphasized the point by saying, *⁴⁴ "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."* Luke 9:44 But they did not do as He had asked. We miss out on the wonder and comprehension of what is taking place when we ignore the words of Jesus.

The angels memorized His words. That is what disciples are supposed to do, memorize the words of their rabbi. How are we doing with that (Joshua 1:8^{xix})? If these women had memorized Jesus' words, maybe they would have come expecting Jesus to have risen. Instead, they needed the angels to remind them so they would realize it was all part of the plan from the beginning. Jesus came to put death to death for who would believe. He was planning to die in our place so we would not have to die the second death (Revelation 2:11^{xx}). He was proving His power over the curse which includes the natural

law of entropy. Decay will not only be reversed but transformed into something even better than the original (Philippians 3:21^{xxi}).

Before Jesus raised Lazarus, He asked Martha if she believed Him when He told her that He is resurrection and life (John 11:25,26^{xxii}). *27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."* John 11:27 She said, "Yes," but she didn't say He was indeed resurrection and life itself. She said she believed He was the Messiah. But Jesus went on to show her that He was indeed resurrection and life. Though on the cross the One who is Life died, death could not hold Him. Peter preached, *24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* Acts 2:24 The One who is Life itself could not be contained by death. God raised Him, which is the verification that His sacrifice on our behalf was accepted by God. He paid our sin debt in full.

8 And they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Luke 24:8,9 Then they remembered (Luke 9:22^{xxiii}; Matthew 16:21^{xxiv}), and in that day we will remember, and we will all be in awe of our amazing God. Not one of His words can fail.

They ran back to tell the disciples and others who were with them. Perhaps that included Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. The two who would later meet Jesus on the road to Emmaus were there and probably some of the other women who had been at the cross. The women had to let the others know hope had returned. The Messiah whom they so loved was not in the tomb, nor was He dead. **Life had conquered death!**

We often see death conquering life. Jesus reversed it. His death conquered death. The Apostle Paul argues that if that was true for Jesus, it will be true for all of us who are in Christ. *5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.* Romans 6:5-8 Joining with Jesus in His death and resurrection through faith and demonstrated in baptism means we are declaring we are free to serve God rather than our old sinful natures (Ephesians 1:19,20^{xxv}). We have eternal life now! The life that conquered death is in us!

10 Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, 11 but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. Luke 24:10,11 These were the women who were at the crucifixion (Luke 23:27^{xxvi}). Luke had recorded earlier that they supported Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:1-3^{xxvii}). That women were the first to proclaim the resurrection, and a woman was first to see the resurrected Lord (John 20:15,16^{xxviii}), is something Jewish males would never have invented. Notice how the men are blockheads here, not accepting the women's joint testimony. Women were thought to be emotional and easily misled. They were not allowed to testify in court (Mishnah Yavamot 15:8,10). The Greek word translated here as "idle tale" is something akin to "silly talk" or "babbling." It speaks to the authenticity of the record, and of Jesus love for us all. Though all the apostles are males, and Jesus assigns leadership roles to men, women are just as loved and valued. They have just as important roles in the church. We are all made in the

image of God, though we have different roles according to how God has designed us. We all need one another and are incomplete without one another (1 Corinthians 12:12-14^{xxix}).

¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened. Luke 24:12 Peter and John decided to run to the tomb and find out for themselves if Jesus' body was really gone. John tells us that he got there first and stood outside, but Peter ran right in. Again, there is a sound of authenticity. John would not have told of his hesitation unless he wanted the facts recorded just as they happened.

They found the grave cloths just as they had put them on Jesus, but the body was not in them. The head covering was folded and set by itself (John 20:3-8^{xxx}). Peter went back marveling. Did he believe? He was probably struggling to believe. Wouldn't you if you had seen the way Jesus' body looked after the crucifixion and then found the grave empty? It is just too big a stretch of faith. You wouldn't want to believe and be disappointed to find out it wasn't true, to go through the heartache of separation all over again. He would have to see Jesus to truly be convinced.

Faith does not need to see, but places total trust in the Word of God (Hebrews 11:6^{xxxi}; John 20:29^{xxxii}). Peter was learning to have such faith, as are most of us. John tells us that their lack of faith was a matter of not understanding the Scriptures (John 20:9^{xxxiii}). Faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17^{xxxiv}). That means more than just having the sound fall on our ears. It is accepting it so that we act on it. It is to let the Word renew our minds (Romans 12:2^{xxxv}) and clinging to it as the Words of Life.

The resurrection was the seal of proof that Jesus' message was from God and His sacrifice accepted by God (Romans 4:25^{xxxvi}). When religious leaders asked Jesus for a sign to prove He was the Messiah, Jesus told them that the only sign He would give was the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:39,40^{xxxvii}). In other words, the main proof that Jesus' message was from God would be His death, burial, and resurrection. We can see why Paul hung the Christian faith from this one nail (1 Corinthians 15:17^{xxxviii}).

Professor Gary Habermas has dedicated his professional life to the examination of the relevant historical, philosophical, and theological issues surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus. He has read every one of approximately 3500 articles on the resurrection in English, French, and German. His conclusion is that the vast majority of scholars agree with three statements regarding resurrection: **1. Jesus' crucifixion is a fact. 2. The disciples of Jesus truly believed that Jesus rose from death. 3. Jesus' enemies believed He rose from death.** The best explanation for those facts is the resurrection!

There are those who believe that Jesus was never crucified. However, a number of non-Christian sources from the first century mention Jesus' crucifixion. The disciples would certainly not make up a story in which their leader died a shameful death by a means that was considered a curse by their own culture (Deuteronomy 21:23^{xxxix}). The apostle Paul recognized that a crucified Messiah was a stumbling block to Jews and

foolishness to Greeks (1 Corinthians 1:23^{xl}). They told of the accounts at the cost of their lives because it is true!

Ultimately you and I will have to decide by faith whether Jesus rose from death. I have put some of the evidence before you, and there is much more, but evidence alone cannot change a heart. Each of us must decide if we will honestly invite God to show us the truth. If you come to God with an open heart and ask if Jesus is God's provision for eternal life, Jesus promised you would find the answer. He taught that if you seek, you will find. If you knock, the door will be opened to you (Matthew 7:7,8^{xli}).

If we conclude that Jesus died and rose from death 2000 years ago, what does it matter now? Well, it means that what He taught was the truth and we should most highly value His recorded words. The resurrection was the sign that He said would verify His message was directly from God. As someone has said, "If Jesus didn't rise from death then nothing else matters, but if He did rise then nothing else matters."

Here is the message: God loves you! He loves us so much that He sent His Son, one with Him in essence, but different in person, to take the punishment we deserve for our rebellion against Him (John 3:16,17^{xlii}). We know we have all done wrong. We know we are by nature selfish. A just and holy God could not have us in His presence; but God provided a way, Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6^{xliii}).

Jesus said again and again that we are invited to come to Him to have life everlasting (John 5:40^{xliv}; 7:37,38^{xlv}). He promised that if we come to Him, we will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life (John 8:12^{xlvi}).

This is another reason I believe. He made claims that could only come from God or someone who was psychotic. I have never met anyone that thought Jesus was psychotic. His teaching changed the world. He taught us to love one another (John 15:12^{xlvii}), to love our enemies, and to do good to those who spitefully abuse us (Matthew 5:44^{xlviii}). He said if we forgive, then we will be forgiven (Matthew 6:14^{xlix}). I could go on and on. His words are still changing lives today around the world today.

What will you do with these facts? You can do what the majority are doing, put it off or say you just don't know. Despite the evidence you can refuse to come to Jesus. Or you can come to Him and see. The Scripture invites us to taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8^l). Jesus conquered death for us, and that changes everything (Revelation 21:5^{li})! Doesn't everyone need to know?

Questions:

- 1 How does believing Jesus' words affect our daily lives?
- 2 What did the angels tell the women?
- 3 What is important about the women knowing first?
- 4 How do we participate in this death and resurrection?
- 5 Why is everyone in the body of Christ of equal importance?
- 6 What caused Peter to wonder?
- 7 What three facts of the resurrection do scholars agree on?
- 8 What difference should it make to us that Jesus rose?
- 9 Who is Jesus to you?
- 10 What will you do with the facts presented?

ⁱ **Matthew 16:21 (ESV)**

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

ⁱⁱ **Matthew 17:23 (ESV)**

²³ and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” And they were greatly distressed.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Matthew 20:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”

^{iv} **Ephesians 2:5-6 (ESV)**

⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

^v **1 John 3:2 (ESV)**

² Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

^{vi} **John 11:43-44 (ESV)**

⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”

⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

^{vii} **John 11:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

^{viii} **Mark 5:41-42 (ESV)**

⁴¹ Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”

⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.

^{ix} **Luke 7:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.”

¹⁵ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

^x **Mark 16:3 (ESV)**

³ And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

^{xi} **Daniel 8:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up.

^{xii} **Daniel 10:9 (ESV)**

⁹ Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground.

^{xiii} **Revelation 1:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last,

^{xiv} **Matthew 24:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

^{xv} **Ezekiel 12:25a (ESV)**

²⁵ For I am the LORD; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed.

^{xvi} **Luke 17:32 (ESV)**

³² Remember Lot’s wife.

^{xvii} **1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (ESV)**

⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

^{xviii} **Philippians 1:23 (ESV)**

²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

^{xix} **Joshua 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you

may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

xx Revelation 2:11 (ESV)

¹¹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

xxi Philippians 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

xxii John 11:25-26 (ESV)

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

xxiii Luke 9:22 (ESV)

²² saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

xxiv Matthew 16:21 (ESV)

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

xxv Ephesians 1:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

xxvi Luke 23:27 (ESV)

²⁷ And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him.

xxvii Luke 8:1-3 (ESV)

¹ Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

xxviii John 20:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

xxix 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (ESV)

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

xxx John 20:3-8 (ESV)

³ So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴ Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;

xxxi Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

xxxii John 20:29 (ESV)

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

xxxiii John 20:9 (ESV)

⁹ for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

xxxiv Romans 10:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

^{xxxv} **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

^{xxxvi} **Romans 4:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

^{xxxvii} **Matthew 12:39-40 (ESV)**

³⁹ But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

^{xxxviii} **1 Corinthians 15:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

^{xxxix} **Matthew 12:39-40 (ESV)**

³⁹ But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

^{xl} **1 Corinthians 1:23 (ESV)**

²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

^{xli} **Matthew 7:7-8 (ESV)**

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

^{xlii} **John 3:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

^{xliii} **John 14:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

^{xliv} **John 5:40 (ESV)**

⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

^{xlv} **John 7:37-38 (ESV)**

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

^{xlvi} **John 8:12 (ESV)**

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

^{xlvii} **John 15:12 (ESV)**

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

^{xlviii} **Matthew 5:44 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

^{xlix} **Matthew 6:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

^l **Psalms 34:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

^{li} **Revelation 21:5 (ESV)**

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."