

THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF THE KING OF KINGS

LUKE 23:50-24:12

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BURYING THE BODY OF JESUS (23:50-56)

Sin has been condemned in the body of Jesus for all of his people! The Bible specifically repeats that Jesus was buried; this is very significant (see Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 12:40; 27:59-60; Luke 11:29; 23:53; John 19:40-42; Acts 13:29; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Christ, after committing his spirit-soul into the hands of his loving Father, was then taken up to Paradise to be in the blissful presence of his Father (23:43, 46); Even though Jesus Christ was in the presence of the Father, His body spent three days in the state of death, or belonged to the realm of the dead, to bear fully the punishment of sin and the curse of the Fall (Gen. 3:19; cf. 1 Cor. 15:41ff):

***ESV Genesis 3:19** By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*

In that state of death or *Hades* (or *Sheol* in Hebrew) *Jesus was not abandoned by God and His body did not experience the corruption of a return to dust* (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27). Jesus' flesh saw no corruption for he was raised on the third day as he had told his disciples clearly throughout his ministry.

***ESV Matthew 12:40** 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.*

Thank God no Gnostics attended Jesus' body after death; thank God that no one who misunderstood or despised our "created-ness" and the goodness of our materiality was given charge of Jesus' body. Thank God that He loves materiality, and especially because he redeems and glorifies our flesh!

[Remember the Gnostics? They were those in Christian history who abhorred materiality, things that are made with flesh and blood and overemphasized spirituality (forsaking the world of material things such as the body)].

No, the Gnostics were apparently sleeping while Jesus' body was taken down off the cross by Pilate's men and cared for by Joseph and the women. Why did they care for his body in this special way? Because although the Christ had greatly suffered turmoil and devastating sinful manipulation in his flesh- -they believed that his body should be honored and given a proper burial.

Believers believed Jesus' real and true, flesh and blood, time and space body was important and should be honored!

As mentioned before in a previous sermon on Luke when we focused on Jesus' trial, the visible church in formal session (supposedly depending upon the Holy Spirit) did not pass Jesus' death sentence by "common consent" (it was not a unanimous decision of the Sanhedrin)- -there was one man named Joseph, from Arimathea who would not have consented to Jesus' death sentence – but rather, he believed in Jesus as a disciple-learner.

Joseph was not only anti-Gnostic, but more important he was a believer in Jesus Christ (23:50-51)! He is described by Luke:

Luke 23:50-51 ⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, ⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God.

Joseph lived in Jerusalem, but Arimathea was his native home town (Arimathea is probably the modern town of Rentis, north of Jerusalem). We know he lived in Jerusalem as his primary residence because he was on the Session of the Sanhedrin and owned a tomb near the city.

Matthew tells us in his Gospel account that Joseph was a rich or wealthy man (27:57); so again, we see in the Gospel of Luke that the rich do indeed or 'can' enter the Kingdom of God by faith alone, but as Jesus said earlier in Luke it is just most difficult considering their great wealth and self-reliance (Again, the camel slips through the eye of the needle by God's grace!).

Joseph is described specifically spiritually as one who was "*Looking for the Kingdom of God*" (23:51b). This means that he was a disciple of Jesus as Matthew more fully describes him, although he followed Jesus up to this point "privately" because of fear of the other Jewish teachers (Matt. 27:57).

Joseph sought not an earthly Kingdom and temporal city for Israel, but the eternal Kingdom of God found in Christ that had been made known to Him through His teaching and miracles. Joseph was a true son of Abraham who knew that he was a stranger and exile on earth and hoped for a city to come. As the author of the Hebrews speaks of other saints who lived in the Old Covenant era:

Hebrews 11:14-16 For people who speak thus [of themselves as exiles and strangers here] make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

In other words, Joseph's ultimate destination was to dwell with God in His Eternal Kingdom and was recipient by faith of the Grace of God found in Jesus' Kingdom-Gospel proclamation.

We should understand that Joseph of Arimathea (as well as Nicodemus and I might also remind you of the 11 apostles) was a fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy at Jesus' circumcision and dedication at the temple spoken of many years ago:

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed"³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Jesus' ministry, and especially His death, split Israel; Jesus came to bring division to Israel; a division between those who believed in him and those who rejected him. Jesus was appointed by God for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed. One's faith or rejection in Jesus Christ revealed one's true heart before God; Joseph's heart was trusting in God's promises to Abraham found in the Scriptures.

But many in Israel did indeed believe in Christ. Christ did not come to replace Israel with the Church, but to reform the Church in Israel. *Joseph of Arimathea was by God's grace a part of the reformation of the Old Covenant Church!* As Professor of New Testament, Darrell Bock wrote:

"In Luke's view, Joseph is a remnant saint, one who is faithful in the midst of disobedience of others and who participates in the fulfillment of promises made to the nation" (Bock, Vol. II, pg. 1873).

As Luke's Gospel began with many Israelite saints awaiting the Messiah (Elisabeth, Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna, etc.), so now at the end of Luke's Gospel, although the teachers of Israel have by majority rejected him, there are still believing Israelites in the Church!

In fact, Joseph of Arimathea is specifically described as a "righteous" man in Luke 23:50 just as Elisabeth, Zechariah, Simeon and Anna are described as believers in Messiah, and those looking for the Kingdom of God at the beginning of Dr. Luke's Gospel (cf. 1:5-6; 2:25, 37).

When does Luke tell us that Joseph laid Jesus' body in the tomb? *"It was the Day of Preparation"* (23:54a); It was the Day of Preparation, that means it was Friday (Good Friday) and the Sabbath was nearing or "dawning" (It was about sunset time; 23:54b).

The body was important to Joseph and the believing women (v. 52ff). In fact, Joseph sought under authority from Pilate to take care of Jesus' body (23:52). Joseph moves from the shadows as a disciple of Jesus and into the full light as he makes clearly his confession formally before God and man (along with Nicodemus who was also a believing disciple in the Sanhedrin, John 19:39).

Joseph goes to Pilate, regardless of what the Sanhedrin might think, in order to give the body of Jesus an honorable burial fit for a king! Mark's Gospel tells us that this was a courageous move on Joseph's part and Pilate allowed it:

ESV Mark 15:43-45: Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died.¹ And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. ⁴⁵ And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

In requesting Jesus' corpse, Joseph is showing forth his tangible righteousness and faith in God by being obedient to Moses as a righteous Law-Keeper when he requests Jesus' body:

ESV Deuteronomy 21:22-23: "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³ his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

Jesus' dead body that had undergone the pain of horrendous suffering, the pangs of death and had experienced the deep and eternal cup of God's wrath on the cross was taken down by caring hands; hands that dearly loved Jesus as Lord and King. This dead body had been laid down for the sins of His people, to give them life.

In His body, Christ had satisfied God's wrath for His own in his atonement and there was now final expiation of guilt from sin because of Jesus' laying down his body for his own.

Through Jesus' death, he had gone to paradise to be in the presence of His Father; his soul/spirit was with the Father safe and sound from the depths and darkness of Sheol (the place of the dead) and his body would not see corruption.

This body had been accursed and condemned under the Law of Moses: "***Cursed is He who hangs on a tree***" (see last sermon); Jesus was condemned in His body, but this was a precious body that would be reunited with his spirit-soul and raised from the dead gloriously!

The body needed to be cared for, and Joseph cares for it by faith, preparing it for resurrection-glory that will come (although he is not fully aware of this). To be refused burial in Jewish tradition was the fate of the cursed; denial of burial in Jewish tradition and Mosaic Law was part of the curse of sins against God's Law:

ESV Deuteronomy 28:26 And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away.

ESV Jeremiah 8:1-2: "At that time, declares the LORD, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its officials, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of their tombs. ² And they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and served, which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped. And they shall not be gathered or buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground.

ESV Jeremiah 16:1-4: The word of the LORD came to me: ² "You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place. ³ For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning the mothers who bore them and the fathers who fathered them in this land: ⁴ They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth.

Jesus' body would not be cursed after his suffering and death on the cross, but rather would be buried and honored as the Son of Man and Son of God. Jesus would suffer and be crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem where the dead bodies and cursed dung hill is located, but his body would not see that same corruption (Psalm 16) –and so Jesus would die outside the gates and the heinous place of the Skull.

Jesus would not however be tossed on the dung heap of unclean, reprobate unburied bodies that would become fodder for the beasts and the birds! Rather, because of God's promise to Him, Jesus would be buried with the rich.

Jesus fulfilling the Old Covenant story to the last, as he died with a wicked man (and a righteous one who joined him in paradise) and was buried with the rich:

ESV Isaiah 53:9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

After Jesus' suffering of humiliation and death when he was made completely poor for us, he is now in his burial partially receiving some of his richly inheritance!

Joseph of Arimathea and the women would go out weeping and sowing as they sowed the body of Jesus in the tomb, not fully understanding, but nevertheless preparing the seed of Jesus' body for the bursting forth of fullness and life, as the firstfruits of all those who have died would come forth out of the ground on the third day! As the Apostle Paul would later write as a reflection on the burial and resurrection of Jesus:

1 Corinthians 15:42-45 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being";¹ the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

Jesus' body was honored, clothed in a linen cloth and rested in a new tomb. This tomb would be the womb in which eternal life would burst forth for all those who believe; this tomb of Joseph's would become the way to the New Creation paradise-garden that formerly was guarded by two cherubim with flaming swords.

Jesus' tomb would become the womb of a New Creation and the way to the paradise-garden of God as one of the criminals or thieves on the cross has already realized (23:43).

Anointing the Body (23:55-56): The women who had followed Jesus from Galilee, who had been faithful to Jesus by faith in His promises, went to the tomb. Knowing the Sabbath was nearing or beginning, they went to prepare spices and ointments according to Jewish burial customs (24:56) in order to come back and minister to Jesus' body after the Sabbath Day rest.

The Jewish burial custom that included spices and perfumes and ointments were placed on the bodies of the dead to reduce stench and decomposition. The women plan to return after the Sabbath and treat Jesus' body further at that time. This reveals that the women were not at this point understanding Jesus' words about the third day, and did not expect a resurrection of the Messiah.

"On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment" (23:56b). This is beautiful language- -although Jesus, the fulfillment of the Old Covenant had been killed, the people of God still observed the creation ordinance of the Sabbath (v. 56b).

Dr. Luke records the Law of God being kept by the righteous believers at Jesus' birth:

ESV Luke 2:21-24: And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

And now the Law is being kept as well as fulfilled at Jesus' death and burial!

I guess I could ask how many modern evangelicals who given this same redemptive-historical, post-death-of-Jesus task would actually consider Jesus' body important, and would also seek to call the Sabbath a delight as they live by faith (Isaiah 58)?!

Now THIS seems to be a reason to break the Sabbath Day instituted by God at creation; THIS is an event where the Sabbath can be disregarded? Right?!

The text says: “*On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment*” (23:56b). They are not fully aware of it, but this would be the last Sabbath kept at the end of the week.

Dr. Luke records that another part of the Old Covenant epoch has ended; as the people of God go to bed that evening after saying their prayers- -a new creation will have dawned! As the people of God go to bed, the last Sabbath of the Old Covenant would be kept.

The fuller, more Christ-filled and Christ-focused, post-resurrection Sabbaths would be on the first day of the week (24:1)!

In the death of Jesus, and in his burial, we see the last Old Covenant works being *works of mercy* performed on behalf of God himself. These disciples have done more than entertain angels unawares (Heb. 13:2); they have served and aided God in his time of need.

On this last Sabbath-Saturday, the Old Covenant dispensation formally ends- -and in Jesus’ resurrection a new day will dawn- -a new eschatologically anticipated day will dawn.

Friday evening. Rest. *Tick Tock, Tick Tock.*

Saturday. Rest. *Tick Tock, Tick Tock.*

Sunday morning. The third day... a new dawn, a new creation has come- -but no one knows it yet!

These quiet yet faithful disciples of Jesus will find their future Sabbath rests realized more fully in the resurrected body of Jesus Christ- -and yet they do not know it yet!

Dr. Luke indicates another setting of time and place for the glorious recording of the resurrection and the discovery of the empty tomb; he wrote:

^{ESV} Luke 24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.

Luke says literally at “deep dawn” (o;rqrrou baqe,wj)...early on the first Sunday of the New Creation. The Sabbath has been kept by faith (Exodus 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15) and now it is time for the women to go back to their pre-Sabbath task of anointing Jesus’ body.

THE BODILY RESURRECTION (24:1-12)

The bodily resurrection of Jesus stands as a testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ was indeed the Divine Son of God, the long-anticipated Messiah! The Father has

accepted Jesus' perfect work of obedience and love for his own; the Father has accepted his death of condemnation in place (vicarious substitution) for his people; the Father raises him from the dead because he lifted the curse of death in the fall, and died as a curse for the disobedience to God's Word.

Let me make an important interpretive note (or reminder) about the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are not detailed biographies of Jesus and his life. If they were meant to be biographical then they would not have purposely omitted over 25 years of detail concerning Jesus' life.

The genre in which the Gospels are written, the Gospel form, is not a biography *per se*. Rather, Gospels are proclamations of the Kingdom, or good news of the Kingdom of God that has come in Jesus that point to certain events and sayings of Jesus for a theological purpose.

If we "harmonize" the Gospels for instance, we may get more biographical information about Jesus and His life, but we also run the risk of missing the specific theological point made by each Gospel writer. It is good to compare the Gospel accounts, but we should understand that we are specifically studying Luke's account, and remember that there will be no contradictions in the Word of God, but there will be differences of focus.

We should say that the Gospel accounts are *complimentary* rather than *contradictory* (Quoted in Bock, Vol. II, pg. 1880).

The Gospels in other words are like four photographers who go to the same scene and take four similar yet differently focused pictures- -because they have different purposes for presenting their photos to others.

For instance, Dr. Luke does not mention the earthquake that occurred; he does not focus on only one angel but two; he does not mention that the guards at Jesus' tomb who fled; but Luke focuses our attention on how the Kingdom of God dawned in the resurrection of Jesus specifically according to his God-inspired purposes.

What Luke does record for us is that at the crack of dawn, on the first day of the week, the women disciples went to anoint Jesus' body with additional expensive spices in death (because the Sabbath had prevented them from caring for the body as much as they would like to have).

The disciples will see the evidences of a New Creation; they will actually see the visible results of the firstfruits of a New Creation in that Jesus' body is not there!

The women come on the first day of the week to anoint Jesus' dead body with further spices and ointments to care for him (24:1). The women did not know that Jesus' body was now clothed beautifully with resurrection glory- -God had granted more

than mere spices and ointments- -but *rather had granted life to his lifeless body and it was clothed in resurrection glory!*

What does Luke specifically tell us about what the disciples of Jesus find at the tomb where Jesus' body had been laid?

First, they found that the stone was rolled away (24:2). This stone that was rolled away when the women arrived would have been a large and heavy stone that was placed in a channel cut out in front of the tomb; it could be rolled easily to cover the usually rectangular tomb entrance (see Bock, NIVAC, pg. 606; Vol. II, pg. 1888; Josephus *Jewish Wars*, 5.12.2; 5.3.2).

Secondly, they found 'nothing'- -that is, there was no body to be found! (24:3). We know from Matthew's account in 27-28 that the tomb was heavily guarded. No one could have stolen Jesus' body (and the authorities already were concerned that someone would do that in order to say that Christ had risen from the dead). Rather than finding Jesus' body, they found only the grave clothes (24:3).

Thirdly, they found "two men in dazzling apparel" (24:4); these were angels (there were two, but the other gospel writers only refer to the one representative speaking angel).

We should recall that in redemptive-history, in the Garden of Eden creation and humanity were cursed because of Adam's disobedience; here in the garden tomb creation and humanity is blessed because of Jesus' obedience and glorious resurrection.

As the two angels guarded the entrance to the garden because of sin in Genesis 3, two angels now welcome inquirers by faith to the entrance of life in the new creation in the person of Christ.

With the resurrection the old creation is coming to an end, and the new creation is beginning with the risen-reigning king!

As the angels declared Jesus' birth in the beginning of Luke's Gospel (chapter 2:9-14) so here they declare Jesus' resurrection and the birth of a New Creation in Him! The angels declare the gospel good tidings of how peace on earth and good will toward those upon God's favor rests is realized in Jesus Christ!

The sight of the angels causes the women to be terrified (evmfo,bwn); just as in the beginning of Luke's Gospel when the angels appear to the shepherds and cause terror and they say "Fear not..."

Dr. Luke's focus on the angels in dazzling clothing causes us to lean in and hear what they say to the disciples seeking merely Jesus' corpse:

Fourth, they are asked a mysterious and eternal question: “*Why do you seek the living among the dead?*” (24:5)

Let’s focus on this question for a moment. The angels gently rebuke the women. Their question is full of eternal and eschatological import. Jesus is among the living, why would you come to the place of the dead to find him? Why are you carrying spices and anointment for his body? Why are you looking around in tombs for Jesus- -He is risen!

His body did not see corruption; why would they look for him in the place of the dead!? As Jesus had clearly told the disciples before in Luke’s Gospel (see Luke 9:44; 13:3; 17:25; 22:37):

Luke 9:22: "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."

ESV Luke 18:31-33: And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. ³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

The Lord of Life would not be found among the dead- -He is risen! Why did the disciples NOT get this when Jesus had clearly told them many times before? How many times he must have interpreted to them the Old Covenant writings and they not understand (cf. Luke 24:25-27)?

The primary reason for their being perplexed was that their eschatological expectations of Jesus were *faulty and unbiblical*. The disciples thought Jesus was speaking of a mere future day of resurrection for him when he would rise from the dead; a mere future day that was long off and would come eventually and supernaturally –but Jesus had told them that HIS eschatological expectations were three days in length (cf. John 11:24)!

“On the third day” (Luke 9:22; 18:31ff) Jesus had told them “I would rise- -not some mere future glorious day, but on the third day, that is, as in “1-2-3”! But the disciples were slow to believe before the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Interestingly enough, the “third day” was regarded by many Jews during Jesus’ time as the day of salvation (cf. Gen. 22:4; 42:17; Esther 5:1; Hosea 6:2; Jonah 1:17).

“Remember how he told you...?” (23:6b). Forgetting Christ’s Words is the first step towards all of the sinful errors and problems that disciples experience in their lives. We are either ignorant or forgetful in our hearing and remember Christ’s Words to us- -by His powerful Spirit, Christ promises that the Spirit will take from what is his and make it known to us (John 16:13ff). We must be on guard against our tendency to forgetfulness of God’s Word.

Fifth, they find a sermon, or a proclamation of the Word of God (24:6-8); the angels declare the “first gospel” proclamation after Jesus’ resurrection! “...*The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise*” (24:7).

It is important to note here that the empty tomb in itself was not sufficient for belief (Peter saw the same empty tomb the first time and did not believe as well as we will consider further in our next sermon, D.V.).

What was necessary was the Word of God rightly taught *to interpret* the event of the empty tomb; in other words, their eyes saw the empty tomb, but that wasn’t enough to spark belief- *-seeing is not always believing (cf. John 20:20-29)-* -God must graciously intervene by communicating to His people through His Word. The women heard the angels declare God’s Word faithfully as Jesus had before them, *and through the Word they believe.*

This should remind us of the comment that Father Abraham made to the rich man in the story of *The Rich Man and Lazarus* in Luke 16. The rich man wanted a resurrection event to cause his unrepentant brothers to repent; Abraham said that an event seen right “before their eyes” would not convince them (“...even if someone were to rise from the dead...”).

BUT they *do have* Moses and the Prophets, let them listen to them. In other words, we all need God’s word and it is through God’s word that we repent and believe- *- even when confronted with an empty tomb with all five of our senses in real space and time.*

“*Then they remembered his words...*” (23:8). The disciples believed the Word of God that Christ had faithfully taught them; they remembered that it was necessary (*dei*) for Christ to suffer, die, then rise from the dead (thus the reason why the tomb is empty!).

God never wants us to ground our faith even in the resurrection upon experience alone, but rather ground our faith, our beliefs, and what we confess from God’s Word alone!

It is only by God’s grace that they “remembered his words”; only by a work of God’s Spirit did these truths “sink into their ears”:

ESV Luke 9:44 "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

Resurrection is not something that anyone believes immediately; it is not something that would be believable to those without faith in God and his promises. How people could believe in reincarnation and not resurrection is a mystery of sinful mankind- - but the resurrection is revealed in Scripture as the truth about life after death and we will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10ff).

Sixth, there is Gospel-Resurrection-Informed Proclamation (24:9-11)- -by women, no less! Then the women proclaim the gospel to the men (a paradoxical, ironic eschatological reversal that has no implications for ordained women, but is nonetheless an interesting biblical reversal as those human beings who were the *first* to proclaim the fullness of the gospel after the angels).

This is a defense of the historic resurrection in itself (as I will further develop in our next sermon, D.V.). Why would the words of the women be a testimony to the historicity and accuracy and credibility of the resurrection of Jesus? In that first century culture female witnesses would not be credible witnesses. The first-century Church would have never created a false resurrection story where the first resurrection witnesses were women!

If the resurrection was not true, they would have made the first witnesses men, perhaps angels, but never women! The fact that women are the first to declare the news reminds us of irony and emphasizes the veracity and credibility of the account that Dr. Luke and the other gospel writers record for all who have ears to hear- -to hear and believe!

Seventh, from unbelief to faith in God's Word (24:11-12); the other disciples think the women are conjuring up an "idle tale (or "nonsense"; Greek: *lh/roj*).

Dr. Luke uses *leros* (trans. "idle tale" in the ESV) which is only used one time in the Bible. It is a word that is translated "idle tale" or "nonsense" and was a term used in medical settings in the ancient world to describe the delirious talk of the very sick. What is important to note here is that the apostles are not looking for a reversal of Jesus' tragic situation. Their dreams about God's kingdom have been shattered (Bock, Vol. II, pg. 1898).

What is important to note here is that the apostles are not looking for a reversal of Jesus' tragic situation. Their dreams about God's kingdom have been shattered (Bock, Vol. II, pg. 1898).

The Apostle Peter "marvels" when he sees the empty tomb; he does not exactly show the strongest faith and understanding, but he will later. This is perhaps his first steps toward full understanding of Jesus' words (and Jesus will graciously and personally appear to Peter later to confirm what Peter is marveling about here, Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:1-11).

For many today the bodily resurrection of Jesus is still merely an "idle tale" or simply "nonsense"! How can a dead man rise from the dead? A dead man is dead.

It should be noted again that a resurrection was a great surprise even to Jesus' closest friends and disciples in his inner circle. The resurrection according to God's Word was that they did not believe at first; resurrections do not happen in our everyday

experiences; dead men are just that they are: *dead*. The resurrection was a surprising miracle, but it did indeed happen in real space and time history.

If the apostles had created this story, concocted it out of their own imaginations, knowing it had never happened, they would have never written the part in the gospels that reveals how slow the disciples were to understand it. This account of the resurrection and the disciples' incredulous and unbelieving responses to it initially reveal that what is said here is completely true and accurate historical writing that can be trusted.

But will you believe that the resurrection is true? Will you believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and find life eternal?

How can a dead man rise from the dead? You might say (you will say apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit): "I thought normally that a dead man is just that, a *dead* man (that is a man without life)?"! This is what is so wonderful about the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ *for His own*.

We want to realize by God's grace that what we see revealed in Jesus' death is the death of death itself; we may die, but we do not mourn as those without hope (1 Thess. 4:13ff), for we know that if we die with Christ through faith in his work for us, then we shall rise bodily again! As God was faithful to raise Jesus bodily from the dead, so God will show that same faithfulness in bodily resurrecting us who believe!

The hope of the Christian is not merely that Jesus' resurrection is a spiritual thing that happens to us merely within our hearts; it is true that we are spiritually raised from the dead when we believe in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:1-8), but the point of Jesus' bodily resurrection is that all who believe will one day experience resurrection-glorification *like our Lord Jesus before us* (Rom. 8:18ff).

If Jesus has not been bodily raised, then we are all the most to be pitied of men. Why? Because we proclaim that a dead man has risen and that in that hope we believe that we, though we die, will also be with him forever as God has promised: "I will be your God and your will be my people" (Rev. 21:1-8):

ESV 1 Corinthians 15:12-18: Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If Jesus has not been raised, then he has not been vindicated as a transgressor of God's law, and he was just another mere mortal man who happened to zealously believe that he was God- -but sadly, he was mistaken, weak, and poor- -He is to be

pitied- -we are to be pitied if that were true (he would also be a liar if he were not crazy because he claimed to be God- -so no room for that pitiful unbelieving claim that Jesus was a mere “good teacher”).

But Jesus has been raised, and this is a historical fact that occurred in space and time. Jesus Christ bodily rose from the dead by the power of God. The living God, the Author of Life itself, the Creator, redeemed his own through the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

The Apostle calls Jesus “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20). What does this mean for us as Christ’s people? What is the significance of the bodily resurrection of Jesus for we who believe the gospel good news?

Because as God’s people we have been seated with Christ in our own regeneration-resurrections (Eph. 2:4-10) and we have died to sin and to death. Christ is our First Fruits that guarantee the whole harvest of those who believe.

And we shall be with him- -glorified with resurrection bodies- -and God will be our God and we shall be His people forever throughout eternity in the New Heavens and the New Earth. As the prophets testify to and the New Testament confirms- -death will be swallowed up in glorious resurrection victory:

Isaiah 25:8-9: He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. ⁹ *It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*

ESV Revelation 21:1-7: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place¹ of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,² and God himself will be with them as their God.^{3 4} He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."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."⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

As Matthew Henry wrote beautifully: “[The grave] could not long keep Christ; it shall not always keep Christians. It was a loathsome prison before, it is a perfumed bed now! He whose head is in heaven need not fear to put his feet into the grave.

Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust, for the enmity of the grace is slain by Christ!" (*Commentary on the Holy Bible*), pg. 317.

Dr. Luke wrote his gospel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that we too might peer into the empty tomb and see the linen cloths lying by themselves (24:12) and realize that a transition in humanity has taken place. By God's sovereign will and power Jesus has made a transition from death to life- -the grave clothes testify to it!

The questions we should be prompted to ask as we gaze into the empty tomb with Peter and the women is: ***Isn't the resurrection what God's Word said would happen? Hasn't God carried out His plan for life through death in Jesus Christ? Hasn't their been a cosmic resurrection-transition in the Person of Jesus Christ?***

All mankind will also make this transition; those who believe in Christ and His resurrection will experience glorified bodies and eternal bliss in the presence of our Heavenly Father; those who reject the truth of Christ and His resurrection will be raised up bodily to receive their eternal judgment in hell.

May Jesus' grave clothes lying alone in the tomb with no body in it, remind you to seek the Lord while he may be found; seek the Lord not for the clothing of grave clothes, but the clothing-covering of his righteousness that heals your sinfulness and makes you righteous by faith before God!

The empty tomb of Jesus for those who reject Him is symbolic of the grave of death that awaits them; for those who believe in Christ the empty tomb is the living and eternal way to life everlasting in the Paradise of God.

As the Apostle Paul wrote in rejoicing:

ESV 1 Corinthians 15:54-57: When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't live life among the tombs; don't live as these disciples before they had revealed to them the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ; and definitely stop seeking the living among the dead! He is not there...

HE IS RISEN!

The apparent end in Jesus' death has become a new beginning of life for all who believe!

Let us worship our Risen King and Lord!

CRB

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Scripture Lesson

ESV 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, 45-58: Now I would remind you, brothers,¹ of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you- unless you believed in vain.³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures... Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being";¹ the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall¹ also bear the image of the man of heaven.⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.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.⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

ESV 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord,¹ that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Luke 9:22: "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."

^{ESV} **Luke 18:31-33:** And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. ³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

^{ESV} **Acts 13:29** And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

^{ESV} **Acts 2:27-33:** For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.' ²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Hebrews 10:4-10: For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ Consequently, when Christ¹ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" ⁸ When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.