

The
RESURRECTION
of the Christ



The Resurrection of the Christ

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Part One – Calvary

“And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him.”(Luke 23:33).

Arriving at the place of execution, the prisoners were bound to the instruments of torture. The two thieves wrestled in the hands of those who placed them on the cross, but Jesus made no resistance. The mother of Jesus, supported by John, the beloved disciple, had followed the steps of her Son to Calvary. She had seen Him fainting under the burden of the cross, and had longed to place a supporting hand beneath His wounded head, and to bathe that brow which had once been pillowed on her chest, but she was not permitted this mournful privilege. With the disciples, she still cherished the hope that Jesus would manifest His power, and deliver Himself from His enemies.

Again her heart would sink as she recalled the words in which He had foretold the very scenes that were then taking place. As the thieves were bound to the cross, she looked on with agonizing suspense. Would He who had given life to the dead allow Himself to be crucified? Would the Son of God allow Himself to be put to death in such a cruel way? Must she give up her faith that Jesus was the Messiah? Must she witness His shame and sorrow, without even having the privilege of ministering to Him in His distress? She saw His hands stretched upon the cross. As the hammer and the nails were brought, and as the spikes were driven through the tender flesh, the heart-stricken disciples took the mother of Jesus away from the cruel scene.

The Saviour did not complain or retaliate. His face remained calm and serene, but great drops of sweat rested on His forehead. There was no pitying hand to wipe the death dew from His face, or words of sympathy and undying loyalty to calm His human heart. While the soldiers were doing their fearful work, Jesus prayed for His enemies, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). His mind passed from His own suffering to the sin of His persecutors and the terrible retribution they would one day suffer. No curses were made against the soldiers who were handling Him so roughly. No revenge was invoked on the priests and rulers who were gloating over the accomplishment of their cruel plans. Christ pitied them in their ignorance and guilt. He breathed only a plea for their forgiveness – “for they do not know what they do.”

Had they known that they were torturing the very One who had come to save the sinful race from eternal ruin, they would have immediately been filled with remorse and horror, but their ignorance did not remove their guilt. It was their privilege to know and accept Jesus as their Savior. Some of them would eventually see their sin, repent, and be converted. Others, by their impenitence, would make it impossible for Christ’s prayer to be answered for them. Still, all the same, God’s purpose was reaching its fulfillment. Jesus was earning the right to become the advocate of men in the Father’s presence.

Finally, when Jesus was nailed to the cross, it was lifted by strong men, and thrust into the ground with great force. This caused the most intense agony to the Son of God. Now the Lord of glory was dying, a

ransom for the race. In yielding up His precious life, Christ was not upheld by triumphant joy. All was oppressive gloom, but it was not the dread of death that weighed on Him. It was not the pain and humiliation of the cross that caused His inexpressible agony. Christ was the prince of sufferers, but His suffering was from His hatred of sin and the knowledge that through familiarity with it, people had become blinded to its enormity. Christ saw how deep the hold of sin was on the human heart and how few would be willing to break away from its power. He knew that without help from God, humanity must perish, and He saw multitudes perishing who were within reach of help.

On Christ, as our substitute and surety, was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor so He could redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every offspring of Adam was pressing on His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life, Christ had been publishing the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love to a fallen world. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now, with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. This agony was so great that His physical pain was hardly felt.

Satan, with his fierce temptations, wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see beyond the portals of the grave. In this hour, He did not see the

hope of coming forth from the grave as a conqueror or feel the Father's acceptance for the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that the separation would be eternal. Christ felt the anguish that the sinner will feel when mercy no longer pleads for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, which made the cup He drank so agonizing, and finally broke the heart of the Son of God.

In amazement, the angels witnessed the Saviour's despairing agony. The heavenly hosts veiled their faces from the fearful sight. Inanimate nature expressed sympathy with its insulted and dying Author. The sun refused to look upon the awful scene. Its full, bright rays were illuminating the earth at midday when suddenly it seemed to be blotted out. Complete darkness, like a funeral pall, enveloped the cross. Now, "until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land" (Matt. 27:45). There was no eclipse or other natural cause for this darkness, which was as deep as midnight. It was a miraculous testimony given by God, so the faith of future generations might be confirmed.

In that thick darkness, God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son, but His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud at this time, everyone at the scene would have been instantly destroyed. And in that dreadful hour, Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. As Isaiah prophesied, He had "trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with" Him (Isa. 63:3).

God veiled the final agony of His Son in thick darkness. All who had seen Christ in His suffering had been convicted of His divinity. That face, once beheld by humanity, was never forgotten. As the face of Cain expressed his guilt as a murderer, the face of Christ revealed innocence, serenity, benevolence, and the image of God, but His accusers would not acknowledge their error. Through the long hours of agony, the jeering multitude gazed upon the dying body of Christ. Now He was mercifully hidden by the mantle of God.

As darkness covered Calvary, an unknown terror seemed to hold the crowd around the cross spellbound. The cursing and berating stopped in mid-sentence as men, women, and children fell face down on the ground. Brilliant lightning occasionally flashed from the clouds above, revealing the cross and the crucified Redeemer. Priests, rulers, scribes, executioners, and the mob all thought that their time of retribution had come. After a while, some began to whisper that Jesus would now come down from the cross. Some attempted to grope their way back to the city, beating their breasts and wailing in fear.

At the ninth hour, the darkness lifted from the people but still enveloped the Saviour. It was a symbol of the agony and horror that weighed upon His heart. No eye could pierce the gloom that surrounded the cross, and none could penetrate the deeper gloom that enshrouded the suffering soul of Christ. The angry lightnings seemed to be hurled at Him as He hung upon the cross. Then "Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" (Matt. 27:46). As the outer gloom settled over the Saviour, many

voices exclaimed, “The vengeance of heaven is on Him. The bolts of God’s wrath are hurled at Him because He claimed to be the Son of God.” Many, believing Him to be the Messiah, heard His despairing cry and lost hope. If God had forsaken Jesus, what were His followers to put their trust in?

When the darkness lifted, Christ revived to a sense of physical suffering and said, “I thirst” (John 19:28). One of the Roman soldiers, touched with pity as he looked at the parched lips, took a sponge on a stalk of hyssop, and dipping it in a vessel of vinegar, offered it to Jesus. The Savior refused it, as the priests mocked at His agony. When darkness covered the earth, they had been filled with fear. As their terror left, the fear returned that Jesus would somehow escape them. Misinterpreting His earlier words, they had ridiculed, “This Man is calling for Elijah” (Matt. 27:47)! Now, refusing the last opportunity to relieve His sufferings, they called out, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him” (Matt. 27:49).

The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured – the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father’s face – speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, “It is for you that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for you, He spoils the domain of death and opens the gates of

Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life, offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to you. He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for your sake, becomes sin itself.”

In silence, the onlookers waited for the fearful scene to end. The sun now broke through, but the cross was still enveloped in darkness. Priests and rulers looked toward Jerusalem and noticed that the dark cloud had settled over the city and the plains of Judea. The Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the world, was withdrawing His beams from the once favored city of Jerusalem. The fierce lightning of God’s wrath was directed against the doomed city.

Suddenly, the gloom lifted from the cross, and in clear, trumpet-like tones that seemed to resound throughout creation, Jesus cried out, “It is finished,” “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit”” (John 19:30; Luke 23:46; see Psalm 31:5). A light now encircled the cross. The Saviour’s face shone like the sun, then He bowed His head on His chest and died.

Amid the awful darkness, seemingly forsaken by God, Christ had drunk the last drops in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours, He had to rely on the previous evidence of His Father’s acceptance. He was acquainted with the character of His Father. He understood His justice, mercy, and great love. By faith, He rested in Him whom it had been His constant joy to obey. And as He committed Himself to God in submission, the sense of the loss of His Father’s favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was the victor.

Part Two – In Joseph’s Tomb

Finally, Jesus was at rest. The long day of shame and torture had come to an end. As the last rays of the setting sun ushered in the Sabbath, the Son of God quietly rested in Joseph’s tomb. His work completed, His hands folded in peace, He rested through the sacred hours of the Sabbath day.

In the beginning, the Father and the Son had rested upon the Sabbath after Their work of creation. When “the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished,” the Creator and all the heavenly beings rejoiced in contemplation of the glorious scene, as “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Gen. 2:1; Job 38:7). Now Jesus rested from the work of redemption, and though there was grief among those who loved Him on earth, there was joy in heaven. The heavenly beings could now see a glorious future: a restored creation and a redeemed race that, having conquered sin, could never again fall. This was the result of Christ’s completed work that God and the angels saw.

As evening drew on, a strange stillness hung over Calvary. The crowd dispersed, and many returned to Jerusalem greatly changed, different from who they were that morning. Many had flocked to the crucifixion from curiosity and not from hatred toward Christ. Still, they believed the accusations of the priests and considered Christ to be a criminal. Under an unnatural excitement, they had united with the mob in railing against Him, but when the earth was wrapped in darkness, they stood accused by their own consciences. They felt that they were guilty of a terrible injustice.

No jokes or mocking laughter was heard in the midst of that fearful darkness, and when it finally lifted, they made their way to their homes in solemn silence.

The Sabbath was now fast approaching, and it would be a violation of its sanctity for the bodies to hang on the cross. So, using this as a pretext, the leading Jews requested Pilate to speed up the death of the victims so that their bodies could be removed before sunset.

Pilate was as unwilling as they were for the body of Jesus to remain upon the cross. As soon as consent was obtained, the legs of the two thieves were broken to speed up their death, but Jesus was found to be already dead. The rough soldiers had been softened by what they had heard and seen of Christ, and they were restrained from breaking His limbs. So, in the offering of the Lamb of God, the law of the Passover was fulfilled, which said, "They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it" (Num. 9:12).

The priests and rulers were amazed to find that Christ was dead so soon. Death by the cross was a lingering process. It was difficult to determine when life came to an end, but it was unheard of for one to die within six hours of crucifixion. The priests wanted to make sure that Jesus was dead, so at their suggestion, a soldier thrust his spear into the Saviour's side. From the wound, there flowed two thick but distinct streams, one of blood and the other of water. This was noted by all the onlookers. But it was not the spear in the side, or the pain of the cross, that caused the death of Jesus. The loud cry uttered at the moment of death, along with

the flow of blood and water from His side, declared that He died of a broken heart. His heart was broken by mental anguish. He was killed by the sin of the world.

The hopes of the disciples perished with the death of Christ. As they looked upon His closed eyelids and drooping head, His hair matted with blood and His pierced hands and feet, their anguish was indescribable. Until the very end, they had not really believed He would die. Now, they could hardly believe He was really dead. Overwhelmed with sorrow, they did not recall His words foretelling this very scene. Nothing that He had said now gave them comfort. They saw only the cross and its bleeding Victim. The future seemed dark with despair. Their faith in Jesus had perished, but they never loved their Lord as dearly as they did now. Never before had they so felt His worth, and their need of His presence, as they did at this moment.

Even in death, Christ's body was very precious to His disciples. They longed to give Him an honored burial but did not know how to accomplish this. The crime Jesus had been condemned for was treason against the Roman government, and those put to death for this offense were assigned to a special burial ground. The disciple John, with the women from Galilee, had remained at the cross. They could not leave the body of their Lord to be handled by the unfeeling soldiers and buried in a dishonored grave, but they saw no way to prevent it. They could not obtain any favors from the Jewish authorities, and they had no influence with Pilate.

In this emergency, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus came to the help of the disciples. Both

these men were members of the Sanhedrin and were acquainted with Pilate. Both were men of wealth and influence. They were determined that the body of Jesus should have an honorable burial.

Joseph went boldly to Pilate and begged him for the body of Jesus. Now, Pilate learned for the first time that Jesus was really dead. Conflicting reports had reached him about the events surrounding the crucifixion, but the knowledge of Christ's death had been purposely kept from him. Pilate had been warned by the priests and rulers against deception by Christ's disciples in regard to His body. Upon hearing Joseph's request, he sent for the centurion who was in charge at the cross, affirming the certainty of Christ's death. He also received an account of the scenes at Calvary from him, confirming the testimony of Joseph.

The request of Joseph was granted. While John was troubled about the burial of his Master, Joseph returned with Pilate's order for the body of Christ, and Nicodemus came bringing a costly mixture of myrrh and aloes, of about a hundred pounds weight, for His embalming. The most honored in all Jerusalem could not have been shown more respect in death. The disciples were astonished to see these wealthy rulers as interested as they were in the burial of their Lord.

Neither Joseph nor Nicodemus had openly accepted the Saviour while He was living. They knew that such a step would exclude them from the Sanhedrin, and they hoped to protect Him by their influence in its councils. For a while, it seemed like they had succeeded, but the priests, seeing their approval of Christ, found a way to go around them. In their absence, Jesus had been condemned and delivered

to be crucified. Now that He was dead, they no longer concealed their attachment to Him. While the disciples feared to show themselves openly as His followers, Joseph and Nicodemus came boldly to their aid. The help of these rich and honored men was greatly needed at this time. They could do for their dead Master what it was impossible for the poor disciples to do, and their wealth and influence protected them, in a great measure, from the hatred of the priests and rulers.

With their own hands, they gently and reverently removed the body of Jesus from the cross. Their tears of sympathy fell as they looked upon His bruised and lacerated frame. Joseph owned a new tomb, cut out in a rock. He was reserving this for himself, but it was near Calvary, and he now prepared it for Jesus. The body, together with the spices brought by Nicodemus, was carefully wrapped in a linen sheet, and the Redeemer was carried to the tomb. There, the three disciples straightened the mangled limbs, and folded the bruised hands upon the pulseless chest. The Galilean women came to see that all had been done that could be done for the lifeless form of their beloved Teacher. Then they saw the heavy stone rolled against the entrance of the tomb, and the Saviour was left at rest.

The women were the last ones at the cross and the last ones at the tomb of Christ. While the evening shades were gathering, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary's lingered at the resting place of their Lord, shedding tears of sorrow over the fate of their beloved Saviour, "Then they returned and... they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56).

This Sabbath was never to be forgotten by the sorrowing disciples, as well as among the priests,

rulers, scribes, and people. Christ had never before attracted the attention of the multitude as He did now that He was laid in the tomb. According to their practice, at this time during the feast, the people would bring their sick and suffering ones to the temple courts where they inquired, "Where is Jesus of Nazareth?" Many had come from far off to find the One who had healed the sick and raised the dead. All around, the cry was heard, "We want Christ the Healer!"

On this occasion, anyone showing indications of leprosy was to be examined by a priest. Many were troubled to hear that their husbands, wives, or children were pronounced leprous, made to leave their homes or the care of their friends, and forced to forever warn strangers with the mournful cry, "Unclean, unclean!" The friendly hands of Jesus that never refused a healing touch to the loathsome leper were now folded on His breast. The lips that had answered his petition with the comforting words, "I am willing; be cleansed" (Matt. 8:3), were now silent.

Many appealed to the chief priests and rulers for sympathy and relief, but their cries were in vain. They seemed determined to have the living Christ among them again and appealed with persistence, refusing to leave. Finally, they were driven away from the temple courts, and soldiers were stationed at the gates to keep back the multitude that came with their sick and dying, demanding entrance.

The sufferers who had come to be healed by the Saviour sank under disappointment and despair. The streets were filled with mourning. The sick longed for the healing touch of Jesus. Physicians were consulted

in vain. There was no skill like that of the One who lay in Joseph's tomb.

The mournful cries of the suffering ones brought the conviction home to thousands of minds that a great light had gone out of the world. Without Christ, the earth was dark. Many whose voices had swelled the cry to, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," now realized the calamity that had fallen on them, and would have cried just as eagerly, "Give us Jesus," if He was still alive.

When the people learned that Jesus had been put to death by the priests, inquiries were made regarding His death. The details of His trial were kept as private as possible, but during the time when He was in the grave, His name was on thousands of lips, and reports of His mock trial, and of the inhumanity of the priests and rulers, were circulated everywhere. Intelligent men now called these priests and rulers to explain the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, and in trying to invent interpretations, to avoid their application to Jesus, they became like insane men. They could not explain the prophecies that pointed to the Messiah's sufferings and death, and many were convinced that the Scriptures had been fulfilled in Christ.

The revenge that the priests thought would be so sweet was already turning bitter. They knew that they were meeting the severe censure of the people. They knew that the very ones they had influenced against Jesus were now horrified by their own shameful work.

These priests tried to convince themselves that Jesus was a deceiver, but it was in vain. Some of them had stood by the grave of Lazarus and had seen the dead brought back to life. They trembled for fear that Christ would Himself rise from the dead and once

again appear before them. They had heard Him declare that He had power to lay down His life and to take it up again. They remembered that He had said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). Judas had told them the words of Jesus to the disciples while on the last journey to Jerusalem, when He said, “we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again” (Matt. 20:18, 19). When they heard these words, they had mocked and ridiculed them. Now they remembered that Christ’s predictions had all been fulfilled up to now. He had said that He would rise again the third day. They longed to silence these thoughts, but they could not. Like their father, the devil, they believed and trembled.

Now that the frenzy of excitement was past, the image of Christ would randomly intrude upon their minds and interrupt their thoughts. All the events of His trial and crucifixion came back to them with an overpowering conviction that He was the Son of God. They felt that He might at any time stand before them, the accused to become the accuser, the condemned to condemn, the slain to demand justice in the death of His murderers.

They could hardly rest on that Sabbath. Though they would not step over a Gentile’s threshold for fear of being defiled, they held a council concerning the body of Christ. Death and the grave must hold Him whom they had crucified. So “the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, ‘Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver

said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first.' Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how'" (Matt. 27:62-65).

The priests gave directions for securing the tomb. A large stone was placed in front of the opening. Across it, they strapped cords, securing the ends to the solid rock and sealing them with the Roman seal. The stone could not be moved without breaking the seal. A guard of one hundred soldiers was then stationed around the tomb to keep it from being tampered with. The priests did all they could to keep Christ's body where it had been laid. He was sealed as securely in His tomb as if He were to remain there throughout all time.

While these weak men plotted and planned, little did these murderers realize the uselessness of their efforts! By their actions, God was glorified. The very efforts made to prevent Christ's resurrection became the most convincing arguments of its proof. The greater the number of soldiers who were placed around the tomb, the stronger the testimony would be that He had risen. Hundreds of years before the death of Christ, the Holy Spirit had declared through the psalmist, "Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed... He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision" (Ps. 2:1-4). Roman guards were now powerless to confine the Lord of life within the tomb. The hour of His release was near.

Part Three – The Lord Is Risen

The night of the first day of the week had worn away slowly. The darkest hour, just before daybreak, had come, and Christ was still a prisoner in His narrow tomb. The great stone was still in its place, the Roman seal was still unbroken, and Roman guards were still keeping their watch, but there were also unseen watchers on the scene. Satan and his angels gathered just outside the tomb, and if it had been possible, this evil army would have kept Christ trapped in the tomb forever, but a host of heavenly angels also surrounded the site. Heavenly angels that excel in strength were guarding the tomb, waiting to welcome the Prince of life back to life.

“And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven” (Matt. 28:2). As this angel left the heavenly courts, the bright beams of God’s glory went before him, illuminating his pathway. “His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men” (Matt. 28:3, 4).

Now, priests and rulers, where is the power of your guards? Brave soldiers who were unafraid of any human power were now paralyzed with fear as they looked upon the face of this immortal warrior, the mightiest of the Lord’s host. This messenger was the angel who took the position that Satan fell from. It is he who proclaimed Christ’s birth on the hills of Bethlehem. The earth trembles at his approach, the hosts of darkness flee, and as he rolls away the stone, heaven seems to come down to the earth. The soldiers see him removing the stone as if it were a pebble, and

they hear him cry, "Son of God, come forth. Your Father calls You!" They see Jesus come forth from the grave, and hear Him proclaim over the defeated tomb, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). As Christ comes forth in majesty and glory, the angels bow in reverence before their Redeemer, and welcome Him with songs of praise.

Just as an earthquake marked the hour when Christ laid down His life, another earthquake witnessed the moment when He took it up again in triumph. He who had defeated death and the grave came forth from the tomb as a conqueror amidst the reeling of the earth, the flashing of lightning, and the roaring of thunder. When He shall come to the earth again, He will shake "not only the earth, but also heaven." "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut," "the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll," "and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up," but "the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel" (Heb. 12:26; Isa. 24:20; 34:4; 2 Peter 3:10; Joel 3:16).

At the death of Jesus, the soldiers had seen the earth wrapped in darkness at noon, but at the resurrection, they saw the brightness of the angels illuminate the darkness and heard the inhabitants of heaven singing with great joy and triumph, "You have defeated Satan and the powers of darkness. You have swallowed up death in victory!"

Christ came out of the tomb glorified, and the Roman guards saw Him. Their eyes were riveted on the face of Him whom they had so recently mocked and derided. In this glorified Being, they saw the same

prisoner they had seen in the judgment hall, the One they had put a crown of thorns on. This was the One who stood before Pilate and Herod without resistance, whose flesh was lacerated by the cruel whips. This was the One who had been nailed to the cross, at whom the priests and rulers, full of self-satisfaction, shook their heads, saying, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save" (Matt. 27:42). This was the One who had been laid in Joseph's new tomb but was released by the decree of heaven. Even if mountains were piled on top of mountains over the tomb, nothing would have prevented the Son of God from coming forth.

At the sight of the angels and the glorified Saviour, the Roman guards fainted and momentarily became like dead men. When the heavenly angels were hidden from their view, they finally arose to their feet and made their way to the gate of the garden as quickly as their trembling limbs could carry them. Staggering like they were drunk, they hurried into the city, telling the amazing news to everyone they met, but while they were making their way to Pilate, their report made its way to the Jewish authorities, and the chief priests and rulers sent for them, urging them to come talk with them first. The soldiers appeared before the priests, still trembling with fear, and their faces colorless as they described the events of the resurrection of Christ. The soldiers told everything just as they had seen it. They did not have time to think or say anything except the truth, and with painful concession, they said, "It was the Son of God who was crucified. We heard an angel proclaiming Him as the Majesty of heaven, the King of glory."

The faces of the priests turned pale, like dead men. Caiaphas tried to talk. His lips moved, but no sound came out. The soldiers were about to leave the council room when a voice stopped them. Caiaphas finally found his voice, calling out, "Wait! Wait! Don't tell anyone what you have seen."

A false report was then given to the soldiers to pass on to the public. The priests appealed, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept'" (Matt. 28:13). Here the priests overreached themselves. How could the soldiers say the disciples had stolen the body while they slept? If they were asleep, how could they know? And if the disciples were proven guilty of stealing Christ's body, wouldn't the priests have been the first to condemn them? Or if the soldiers fell asleep at the tomb, wouldn't the priests be the first to turn them in to Pilate?

The soldiers were horrified at the thought of bringing the charge of sleeping at their post on themselves. This was an offense punishable by death. Should they lie, deceiving the people, and put their own lives in danger? Hadn't they diligently kept watch all night? How could they stand the trial, even for the sake of money, if they condemned themselves?

In order to calm their fears, the priests promised to secure their safety, saying that Pilate would not want such a report circulated any more than they did. Finally, the Roman soldiers sold their integrity to the Jews for money. They had come in before the priests burdened with the startling message of truth, and they went out with a burden of money, and on their tongues, a lying report invented for them by the priests.

Meanwhile, the report of Christ's resurrection had been carried to Pilate. Though Pilate was responsible for sentencing Christ to death, he had been relatively unconcerned. While he had condemned the Saviour unwillingly and with a feeling of pity, he had felt no real regret until now. In terror, he now shut himself inside his house, determined to see no one, but the priests made their way into his presence, told the story they had invented, and urged him to overlook the neglect of the guards on duty. Before consenting to this, he himself privately questioned the guard. They, fearing their own safety, dared not hide anything, and Pilate heard the account of everything that had taken place. He did not pursue the matter any further, but from that time on, he had no more peace.

When Jesus was laid in the grave, Satan triumphed. He dared to hope that the Saviour would not rise again. He claimed the right to the Lord's body and set his guard over the tomb, seeking to hold Christ as his eternal prisoner. He was bitterly angry when his angels fled at the approach of the heavenly messenger. When he saw Christ come forth in triumph, he knew that his kingdom would one day have an end, and that he would eventually die.

The priests, in putting Christ to death, had made themselves the tools of Satan. Now they were entirely in his power. They were entangled in a deception from which they could see no escape except continuing their war against Christ. When they heard the report of His resurrection, they feared the wrath of the people. They felt that their own lives were in danger. The only hope for them was to prove that Christ was an impostor by denying that He had risen. They bribed the soldiers and

secured Pilate's silence. They spread their lying reports as fast as they could, but there were some witnesses they could not silence. Many heard about the soldiers' testimony of Christ's resurrection, which had been shared before it was silenced by the priests. And some of the dead who rose with Christ appeared to many and affirmed that He had risen. Reports were brought to the priests of people who had seen these risen ones and heard their testimony. The priests and rulers were in continual anxiety, fearing that while walking down the street or even in the privacy of their own home, they might come face to face with Christ. They felt that there was no safe place for them. Bolts and bars were poor protection against the Son of God. Night and day, the awful scene in the judgment hall played in their minds, as they recalled their cry, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). The memory of that scene would never fade from their minds. Never again would peaceful sleep come to their pillows.

When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ's tomb, saying, "Your Father calls You," the Saviour came from the grave by the life that was in Himself. Now the prophecy that He had spoken to the priests and rulers was fulfilled; "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Over the broken tomb of Joseph, Christ had proclaimed triumphantly, "I am the resurrection and the life." These words could only be spoken by God. All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are dependent recipients of the life of God. From the highest angel to the humblest living creature, all are replenished from the Source of life. Only He who is one with God could say, "I have power to lay it down,

and I have power to take it again.” In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death.

Christ arose from the dead as the first fruits of those that died. He was the antitype of the wave sheaf, and His resurrection took place on the day the wave sheaf was to be presented. The sheaf dedicated to God represented the harvest. So Christ, the first fruits, represented the spiritual harvest to be gathered for God’s kingdom. His resurrection is the type and pledge of the resurrection of all the righteous dead. “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (1 Thess. 4:14).

When Christ arose, He also brought from the grave a multitude of captives. The earthquake at His death broke open their graves, and when He arose, many who had died came out with Him, as a promise of the future resurrection. These had testified for the cause of truth in their lives, and now they were again to be witnesses to Him who raised them from the dead.

They went into the city and appeared to many, declaring, “Christ has risen from the dead, and we were risen with Him.” This immortalized the sacred truth of the resurrection. The risen saints witnessed to the truth of His words, “Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise” (Isa. 26:19). Their resurrection was an illustration of the fulfillment of the prophecy, “Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isa. 26:19).

To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life. Through our Saviour, the life that was lost through sin is restored, for He has life in Himself and “gives life

to whom He will” (John 5:21). He has the authority to give immortality. The life He laid down in humanity, He takes up again and gives to humanity. “I have come,” He said, “that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly,” for “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 10:10; 4:14; 6:54).

To the believer, death is a small thing. Christ speaks of it as if it were of little importance. Jesus said, “if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death,” “he shall never taste death” (John 8:51, 52). To the Christian, death is merely a sleep: a moment of silence and darkness. The life is hidden with Christ in God, and “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

The voice that cried from the cross, “It is finished,” was heard among the dead. It pierced the walls of the tomb, calling the sleepers to rise. So it will be when the voice of Christ is heard from heaven at the return of Christ. That voice will penetrate the graves, unlock the tombs, and the dead in Christ will rise. At the Saviour’s resurrection, a few graves were opened, but at His second coming, all the precious dead will hear His voice and will come forth to glorious, immortal life. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead will raise His church and glorify it with Him, above all principalities, above all powers, and above every name that is named, not only in this world but also in the world to come.

Part Four – Why Are You Weeping?

The women who had stood by the cross of Christ waited and watched for the hours of the Sabbath to pass. On the first day of the week, very early, they made their way to the tomb, taking with them precious spices to anoint the Saviour's body. They did not think about His rising from the dead. The sun of their hope had set, and night had settled down on their hearts. As they walked, they recalled Christ's works of mercy and His words of comfort. But they failed to remember His words, "I will see you again" (John 16:22).

Ignorant of what was taking place at that very moment, they drew near the garden, asking, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" (Mark 16:3). They knew that they could not remove the stone, but they continued on their way anyway. Suddenly, the sky lit up with a flash of light. The earth trembled. As they ran to the tomb, they saw that the great stone was rolled away. The grave was empty.

The women had not all come to the tomb from the same direction. Mary Magdalene was the first to reach the place, and upon seeing that the stone was removed, she hurried away to tell the disciples. Meanwhile, the other women came up. A light was shining around the tomb, but the body of Jesus was not there. As they lingered in this place, they suddenly realized that they were not alone. A young man in shining garments was sitting by the tomb. It was the angel who had rolled away the stone. He had taken the form of a man so he would not alarm the friends of Jesus. Still, the light of heavenly glory was shining around him, and the women were afraid. Turning to

run, the words of the angel stopped them, urging, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead” (Matt. 28:5-7).

Looking inside the tomb, they again received the wonderful news as another angel in human form asked, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again’” (Luke 24:5-7).

“He is risen! He is risen!” The women repeated the words over and over again. There was no more need for the anointing spices. The Saviour was alive. Now they remembered that when speaking about His death, Jesus said He would rise again. What a day! Quickly the women departed from the tomb “with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word” (Matt. 28:8).

Mary had not yet heard the good news. She went to Peter and John with the troubled message, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him” (John 20:2). The disciples hurried to the tomb and found it exactly as Mary said. They saw the grave clothes and the napkin, but they could not find their Lord. Even in this, there was evidence that Christ had risen. The grave clothes were not thrown carelessly aside but carefully folded, each sitting in a place by itself, and John “saw and believed” (John 20:8). He did not fully understand the scripture that said Christ would rise from the dead, but

he remembered the Saviour's own words foretelling His resurrection.

It was Christ Himself who folded those grave clothes with such care. When the angel came down to the tomb, he was joined by another who had been guarding the Lord's body with him. As the angel from heaven rolled away the stone, the other entered the tomb and unbound the wrappings from the body of Christ, but it was the Saviour's own hand that folded each piece and laid it neatly in its place. There is nothing unimportant in the sight of Him who guides both the star and the atom. Order and perfection are seen in all His work.

Mary had followed John and Peter to the tomb, but when they returned to Jerusalem, she remained. As she looked into the empty tomb, grief filled her heart, but inside she saw two angels in the form of men. They asked her, "'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him'" (John 20:13).

Then she turned away, even from the angels, thinking she had to find someone who could tell her what had been done with the body of Jesus. Another voice repeated the question, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Through her tear-dimmed eyes, Mary saw the form of a man, and thinking that it was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away" (John 20:15). If this rich man's tomb was thought too honorable a burial place for Jesus, she would provide a place for Him. She still had a grave that Christ's own voice had made vacant—the grave where Lazarus had laid. She could

use that as a burial place for her Lord. She felt that caring for His precious crucified body would be a consolation to her in her grief, but now in His own familiar voice, Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

Now, hearing His voice, Mary knew that this was not a stranger who was addressing her, and turning, she saw before her the living Christ. In her joy, for a moment she forgot that He had been crucified, and springing toward Him as if to embrace His feet, she said, "Rabboni," but Christ raised His hand, saying, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'" (John 20:16, 17). At once, Mary went her way to the disciples with the joyful message.

Jesus refused to receive homage until He had the assurance that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father. He ascended to the heavenly courts and heard the assurance from God Himself that His atonement for the sins of humanity was sufficient, that through His blood, all who wanted it might gain eternal life. The Father ratified the covenant with Christ so that He would receive repentant and obedient men and women, and would love them even as He loves His Son. Christ was to complete His work and fulfill His pledge to "make a mortal more rare than fine gold" (Isa. 13:12). All power in heaven and on earth was given to the Prince of Life, and He returned to His followers in a world of sin in order to impart His power and glory to them.

While the Saviour was in God's presence, receiving gifts for His church, the disciples were thinking about His empty tomb, mourning, and crying. The day of rejoicing to all heaven was a day of

uncertainty, confusion, and perplexity to the disciples. Their unbelief in the women's words show how low their faith had sunk. The news of Christ's resurrection was so different than what they had anticipated that they could not believe it. It was too good to be true, they thought. They had heard so much of the doctrines and the so-called scientific theories from the Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection, that the impressions made on their minds in regard to the resurrection were vague. They could hardly imagine what the resurrection from the dead would look like, and they were unable to comprehend the great subject.

“But go,” the angels had said to the women, “tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you” (Mark 16:7). Since the death of Christ, Peter had been crushed with remorse. His shameful denial of the Lord, and the Saviour's look of love and anguish, were constantly before him. Of all the disciples, he had suffered most bitterly. To him, the assurance is given that his repentance is accepted and his sin forgiven. He is mentioned by name.

All the disciples had forsaken Jesus, and the call to meet Him again includes them all. He has not cast them off. When Mary Magdalene told them she had seen the Lord, she repeated the call to the meeting in Galilee. And a third time the message was sent to them.

After He had ascended to the Father, Jesus appeared to the other women, saying, “‘Rejoice!’ So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me’” (Matt. 28:9, 10).

Christ's first work on earth after His resurrection was to convince His disciples of His undiminished love and tender regard for them. To give them proof that He was their living Saviour, He had broken the fetters of the tomb. He could no longer be held by the enemy—death. To reveal that He had the same heart of love as when He was with them as their beloved Teacher, He appeared to them over and over. He would draw the bonds of love still closer around them, saying, "Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee."

As they heard this appointment so firmly given, the disciples began to think of Christ's words to them foretelling His resurrection. Still, even now, they were not ready to celebrate. They could not let go of their doubt and perplexity. Even when the women said they had seen the Lord, the disciples could not believe them. They assumed the women were confused by grief.

Each day seemed to bring a new crisis. On the sixth day of the week, they watched their Master die. On the first day of the next week, they found themselves deprived of His body. They were accused of having stolen it away in order to deceive the people, and they feared that they would never be able to clear the false accusations building up against them. They feared the hatred of the priests and the wrath of the people. They longed for the presence of Jesus, who had helped them in every crisis.

They continually repeated the words, "we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." Lonely and sick at heart, they remembered His words, "if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry" (Luke 24:21; 23:31). Meeting in the upper chamber, they closed and locked the doors,

knowing that the fate of their beloved Teacher could also become their fate at any time.

And all the time, they could have been rejoicing in the knowledge of a risen Saviour. In the garden, Mary had stood weeping when Jesus was close beside her. Her eyes were so blinded by tears that she did not discern Him. And the hearts of the disciples were so full of grief that they did not believe the angels' message or the words of Christ Himself.

How many are still doing what these disciples did! How many echo Mary's despairing cry, "they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him!" To how many of us today might the Saviour's words be spoken, "why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" (John 20:13, 15). He is close beside them, but their tear-blinded eyes do not discern Him. He speaks to them, but they do not understand.

Oh, that we might lift our troubled heads, that our eyes might be opened to see Him, and our ears might listen to His voice saying to us, "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen" (Matt. 28:10). Tell them not to look in the new tomb of Joseph. That was closed with a large stone and sealed with the Roman seal. Christ is not there! And tell them not to look in the empty tomb that Christ has abandoned. Christ is not there either! Do not mourn as those who are hopeless and helpless! Jesus is alive, and because He lives, we too will live! From grateful hearts, from lips touched with holy fire, let us sing the joyful song, "Christ is risen! He lives to make intercession for us!" Take hold of this hope today, and it will hold the soul like a sure, tested anchor. Believe, and you will see the glory of God.

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