

## LUKE 23:50-24:11

### WHAT THE WOMEN DID NOT FIND

“There was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

“On the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment.

“But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.’ And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”<sup>1</sup>

“**A**pril is the cruellest month.” So begins “The Waste Land,” by T. S. Eliot. It is a strange way of describing spring, and the promise of new life. He writes of lilacs growing once more as they thrust upward from the dead earth, the dead tubers spontaneously springing to life. Eliot is describing the return of feeling after emotional numbness, of those who are already old witnessing youth and growing depressed. New love can be a reminder of youth and of love lost. Thus, April is the cruellest month.

Was Eliot a believer in the Risen Christ? I can’t say, but this poem is written without expressing any hope beyond this life. On that glorious day when the women at last went to the tomb where the body of the Master had been laid, they went expecting to show their consideration to one who had died at the cruel hands of wicked men. When they arrived, they found the tomb, and they also found the grave clothes. It was what they didn’t find that energised the early churches. And it is what they didn’t find that thrills the soul to this day.

**THE FIRST EASTER** — Jesus of Nazareth was a wonderful teacher, a powerful preacher. Though He did rebuke arrogance, and though He did not suffer religious pettiness, He delighted those who heard Him speak. His words disarmed even those intent on seizing Him. On one occasion, the Jewish leaders dispatched armed men to arrest Jesus. Those who had been sent to seize Him returned empty-handed. On the return of those dispatched to seize Him, the chief priests and Pharisees asked, “Why did you not bring him?” The divine text informs us that the officers answered, “No one ever spoke like this man” [JOHN 7:45, 46].

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

At the conclusion of the account of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Matthew adds this observation, "When Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" [MATTHEW 7:28, 29]. Jesus wasn't like the scribes, also known as the teachers of the Law. Jesus had something worth hearing. Jesus' words caused those hearing Him to be almost overwhelmed.<sup>2</sup>

Those who listened to the scribes and the rabbis as they spoke in the synagogues were used to hearing lectures on religion, lectures on the Talmudic commentaries, lectures on rabbinical studies—dry, boring, unsatisfying lectures. It wasn't often that a prophet came along. John the Baptist excited the populace precisely because he spoke pointedly, making practical application of the call to repent and prepare for the coming Messiah. Then, Jesus came. Mark writes, "Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'" [MARK 1:14, 15]. His words were exciting, demanding, challenging, though always providing insight and understanding that the lectures could never provide. When Jesus spoke, the people were given hope and the promise of intimacy with the Living God; they heard Him with genuine joy.

For three and on-half years, Jesus of Nazareth itinerated throughout Judea and Galilee, walking occasionally through Samaria and other nearby regions. As He walked about, He healed the sick, gave sight to blinded eyes, restored the ability to hear to those who had been trapped in cruel silence, restored strength to withered arms and legs and brought the dead to life. He cleansed lepers and staunched the flow of blood so that those who were relegated to the fringes of society or who had become outcasts were welcomed again. All this He did openly.

On one occasion when the Jewish leadership was enraged by His teaching, they picked up stones with which they intended to stone Him. Jesus asked them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me" [JOHN 10:32]? In their response, the leaders didn't even attempt to deny that He had performed many good works; they were enraged at Who He was. "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you," they exclaimed, "but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God" [JOHN 10:33]. Jesus of Nazareth presented Himself as very God in human form.

The final straw, so far as religious leaders were concerned, was raising to life a man who had been dead for four days. Jesus raised Lazarus to life, creating a panic among religious leaders. When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard of this they gathered in council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" [JOHN 11:47, 48].

This man not only laid claim to being the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, but He demonstrated the validity of that claim by doing the things that only God could do. If the religious leaders accepted His claim, they would lose power over the people. Unable to disprove His claim, incapable of responding either to His words or to His actions, the religious and civic leaders determined that He must die. These religious men could not permit someone who arose out of obscurity, who did not present a viable militant plan to overthrow the hated Romans, who refused to show deference to religious tradition and religious leaders, to press a claim to being the Son of God—He must die! At last, the religious and civic leaders got their way. Jesus was seized, brutalised, sentenced in a mock trial, sent to the Roman procurator to have the sentence ratified so that He could be crucified.

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<sup>2</sup> See Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, **Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains** (United Bible Societies, New York, NY 1996), 311–312

Jesus of Nazareth was beaten, flogged, mocked, humiliated and at last crucified. Hanging on a crude cross, He quickly died. His death was a surprise; many people lingered for days before they died of exhaustion and suffocation. Jesus died within a few short hours. When Joseph, a respected member of the Council from Arimathea went to Pilate to request the body of Jesus, “Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead” [MARK 15:44]. He dispatched soldiers to break the legs of those crucified; after all, the religious leaders did not want to desecrate the holy day by having dead bodies hanging on a cross [see JOHN 19:31-34]. These soldiers verified that Jesus was dead by piercing his side with a spear, there was no need to break his legs.

Pilate granted permission for Joseph to take the body of Jesus in order to bury it in Joseph’s own tomb. The Jewish leadership requested that Pilate seal the tomb with the Imperial seal and post guards to ensure that the disciples of this man would not come to steal the body. The account informs us, “After the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, ‘Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore, order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.’ Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.’ So, they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard” [MATTHEW 27:62-66].

Jesus of Nazareth was hurriedly buried. There wasn’t even time to perform the usual burial rituals before the tomb was sealed. What a miserable commemoration was that Passover for the disciples. I can only imagine that the women wept bitter tears for those days of calling to memory how God delivered His people from Egyptian bondage. As the disciples killed the lamb, they no doubt remembered how John had pointed to Jesus pronouncing Him “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” [JOHN 1:29, 36]. The words must have echoed through the emptiness of their minds, ringing as a hollow mockery. As they ate the bitter herbs, they must surely have thought of the bitter irony of the way in which all their dreams of freedom had been smashed and broken.

At last, Sunday morning came; the Sabbath was past. I’m quite certain there hadn’t been much sleep in the houses of the disciples. Peter had likely spent the entire period mourning what he saw as his cowardice—he had denied the Master three times. Self-preservation seized his mind, compelling him to assert that he never knew Jesus. John had no doubt spent the time with his mother and with Mary. He would have felt helpless as the women wept and grieved at the cruel spectacle they had witnessed. Perhaps James had joined this small band, shamed at his lack of courage and yet sorrowing at the grief he witnessed in his mother and in his aunt. Mark alternated between teenage bravado and hot shame at how he had fled, leaving behind his cloak. If only he would have another chance to stand up for Jesus; but that didn’t appear as though it would ever be. The other disciples were no doubt isolated with their own sorrowful thoughts.

The women’s eyes were red from weeping; their voices were husky from their mourning. Their bodies felt numb, as if their very lives had stopped with that cruel crucifixion. The hours had crept by, it was as if time had stopped. They wanted to honour Him by preparing His body for burial, but that would not be permitted until after the Sabbath. At last, the Sabbath was officially past and several women joined in a sad procession to go to the tomb. The women included Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna and others. They had bought spices—myrrh and aloes, perhaps a few other sweet spices—intending to ensure that the body of the Teacher received the honour they believed He deserved.

**THE WOMEN FOUND A DISTURBED TOMB** — “[The women] found the stone rolled away from the tomb” [LUKE 24:2]. It is natural to assume that their walk to the tomb was made in silence. The weight of all they had witnessed bore down on them. As they drew near, the question of how they could gain access to the interior of the tomb arose. “[The women] were saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?’” [MARK 16:3]?

The stone covering the mouth of the tomb was large, so large that several men working hard for a long time would be required in order to move the stone so that the women could enter the tomb. To be certain, Mark says the women were asking who would “roll” the stone away. The Greek term *apokulío* is usually translated “roll away.” However, the term can also mean “dislodge” or “move.” Many people assume that what is identified as “The Garden Tomb” is where Jesus was buried. If this is the case, it would require a stone five or six feet in diameter to cover the mouth of the tomb. To the right of this particular tomb, an inclined groove with a deeper indentation at the entrance of the tomb is cut into the stone. The stone required would have been about twelve inches thick; it would have been massive.

However, of more than nine hundred Second Temple-period tombs have been examined by archaeologists, only four have been discovered that would require round blocking stones to close the mouth of the tomb, and these belonged to the wealthiest families. The tomb in which Jesus was buried was for an ordinary family. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that it would have had a round stone to close up the tomb. Likely, the closure was a cork-like stone, making it more difficult still to move, even with several men working to do so. John appears to support this view that is supported by archaeology, when he writes, “On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb” [JOHN 20:1]. “Taken away” translates the Greek word *háiro*, which conveys the idea of “removed.”<sup>3</sup> Disc-shaped stones to close the mouths of tombs became more common during the late Roman and Byzantine periods. However, Jesus’ tomb was probably closed with a cork-like stone. The women realised that they would be unable to move the stone.

Moreover, there were the Roman guards with whom the women would need to contend. They would soon complete their assignment guarding the tomb, but these hardened men would never be willing to assist the women by opening the tomb. The Imperial seal was still on the tomb, and until it had been removed, the soldiers would not leave. They would be prepared to kill anyone who dared near the mouth of the tomb. What could be done? In their eagerness to complete the funeral rituals for the Teacher, the women hadn’t considered how to gain entrance to His final resting place. This was the genesis of their discussion.

Then, as they neared the tomb, it was apparent that all was not as it should have been. Where were the guards? There were no armed guards to be seen. The tomb was open! There were no men about to account for how it had been opened. With boldness born of love for the Teacher, the women rushed into the tomb. It is perhaps significant that the first people to enter into the tomb were these women. It is as if God wanted all to know that love triumphs over fear. We would have expected women to be frightened to enter into a tomb. Or perhaps we would imagine that they would be concerned about ritual impurity. However, the text is quite clear, “When they went in...” These women did not hesitate to enter into the tomb. What they saw confirmed that the tomb was not as it should have been—it was open for all to see.

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<sup>3</sup> For further information, consult Megan Sauter, “How Was Jesus’ Tomb Sealed?”, Bible History Daily, 04/06/2017, <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/jerusalem/how-was-jesus-tomb-sealed/>, accessed 13 April 2017

The founders of Communism are dead and buried; the bodies of Marx and Lenin are entombed in London and in Moscow. Confucius died and was buried in Qufu, China. The Buddha died and was cremated, though it is claimed that his right tooth was recovered and can be viewed in the Temple of the Tooth in Sri Lanka. The prophet Muhammad died; his tomb is in Medina, Saudi Arabia. However, those who seek Jesus find only an empty tomb in Jerusalem.

**THE WOMEN FOUND ANGELS WAITING FOR THEM** — It was disconcerting enough that the tomb was opened; but angels were also present. This is what Doctor Luke has written concerning that morning when the women went to the tomb. “Two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise’” [**LUKE 24:4-7**].

Matthew adds the notation that the women were sent to tell the disciples what they found. “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him’” [**MATTHEW 28:5-7**]. The women were not permitted to linger; they were told to hurriedly run to tell the disciples what they had witnessed.

Have you ever encountered an angel? Would you know if you did encounter an angel? The writer of the Letter to Hebrew Christians admonishes believers, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” [**HEBREWS 13:2**]. That admonition has always been intriguing to me. There exists the possibility that we have been in the presence of angels, though we knew nothing of these heavenly visitors at the time. After the fact, perhaps some have suspected who their visitor might have been. Our eyes are often masked so that we don’t recognise who is with us.

This is one excellent reason for congregations to strive to be warm, welcoming places where visitors are made at home. Church members are encouraged to ensure that they both invite others to Christ and that they welcome them when they enter into the assembly. We have likely been in the presence of angels on multiple occasions, never knowing that God had sent these holy messengers. Peter makes a most intriguing revelation in this context when he writes, “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look” [**1 PETER 1:10-12**].

Think of that! Though they are appointed to serve the saints of the Most High God, angels have no understanding of what it means to be redeemed? They cannot comprehend what it means to be freed of guilt, since they have never experienced what it means to be lost. Therefore, they are curious, wanting to know what it means to be saved. Each Christian knows what it is to have been separated from the love of God and to now be accepted into His Family. This knowledge compels us to be compassionate toward those about us who we know to be lost. We are eager to proclaim the Good News of Christ Jesus, because we know that it is by His grace that we have been delivered from judgement. We are not proud; we are humbled at the knowledge that God has shown us mercy.

When angels do appear in their unveiled glory, they inevitably cause those to whom they appear to be astonished, awed. Think of Mary's reaction when the angel announced that she would bear the Son of God. Luke says she was "greatly troubled" [see **LUKE 1:29**]. Her reaction was not unlike that of Zechariah when the angel appeared to him to announce the birth of the Baptist [see **LUKE 1:11, 12**]. In either instance, Zechariah and Mary experienced great emotional distress; they were each shaken. When Gabriel was dispatched to give Daniel the answer to his prayer, he was terrified, overwhelmed [see **DANIEL 8:16, 17**]. When Manoah, Samson's father, became aware that he had seen an angel, he was terrified. The Bible states, "Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. And Manoah said to his wife, 'We shall surely die, for we have seen God'" [**JUDGES 13:21-22**]. An angel appeared to John on Patmos. Joh's reaction was precisely what we would have done: "I fell down at his feet" [see **REVELATION 19:10**]!

The text states that the women "were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground" [**LUKE 24:5**]. The angels that met the women appeared as men, but they were clothed in "dazzling apparel" [**LUKE 24:4**]. Of the Gospel accounts, only Luke notes that there were two angels. One of these two angels was undoubtedly the angel who removed the stone and then sat on it. Listen to the account that Matthew has provided. "There was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men" [**MATTHEW 28:2-4**].

**THE WOMEN DID NOT FIND A DEAD SAVIOUR** — "When [the women] went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus" [**LUKE 24:3**]. Jesus had been buried in a borrowed tomb. The Jewish law did not permit the body of one who had been crucified to be buried in a place of honour. Jesus normally would have been placed in a common burial site with the two thieves who were crucified with Him. However, Joseph of Arimathea had received the body of Jesus and placed it "in his own new tomb" [see **MATTHEW 27:60**]. Thus, the body of Jesus was laid in a place of honour because there were no other bodies in that tomb.

The Jews held that a face was no longer recognisable three days after death. Because of the Passover and the Sabbath that followed, the women were anxious to go to the tomb. For seven days after burial, loved ones would attend to place spices and aromatic perfumes on the body to mask the stench that would develop as the body decayed. After a year, they would attend the body to remove the bones, placing them in an ossuary where they would then remain. The women were concerned that they would not be able to recognise the Teacher any longer, accounting for their anxiety as they hastened to the tomb at the first opportunity.

We can imagine the women's surprise when they discovered that the stone blocking entrance was removed. Of course, they would be concerned that the body of the Teacher might have been desecrated. The religious leaders hated Jesus; who could doubt that they would dishonour His memory if possible. The love these women had for the Teacher impelled them to rush in to see what had happened. Note Luke's emphasis throughout this account—"they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."

The word picture drawn by Doctor Luke indicates that the women were nonplused—they were astonished. Suddenly, they became aware of two men standing nearby, whether in the tomb or outside of the tomb is not stated. These men were clothed in dazzling apparel, as we have already seen. When the women noticed them, the angels asked the appropriate question, "Why do you seek the living among the dead" [**LUKE 24:5**]? No one goes to the cemetery to look for living people; it is inappropriate to look for the living among the dead.

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It was almost too much to take for them to take in—the stone was removed; the niche where His body should have been was empty save for the grave clothes; then, these two men appeared. Frightened wouldn't do justice to the terror the women must have felt. Somehow, the voices of these two angels tempered the terror and calmed the raging torrent of emotions rising in the women. "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise" [LUKE 24:5-7].

Like us, the women lived in the present. They had witnessed Jesus' death. They had just spent three days absorbed in the deepest grief imaginable. Hurrying to the tomb at the first opportunity, everything was suddenly turned topsy-turvy. Nothing made sense. We're like that. We become so caught up in the moment that we can't always think straight. The women needed to be jolted to see things as they truly are and not as they appear. We need a similar reminder. So, the angels said, "Remember!" Remember. Jesus had told those who followed Him that He must be delivered over to the hands of sinful men. He had spoken often of the fact that He would be crucified. However, He had always pointed forward to His resurrection.

When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Master had responded, "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 he will be raised*" [LUKE 9:22].

On another occasion, Jesus had taken the twelve aside to speak pointedly of what would take place. "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, *and on the third day he will rise*" [LUKE 18:31-33]. The Gospel account adds the notation, "But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said" [LUKE 18:34].

Challenged by Jewish leaders to produce a sign to justify His cleansing the temple of those who marketed religion, Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, *and in three days I will raise it up*" [JOHN 2:19]. They imagined Him to be speaking of Herod's Temple, "But He was speaking about the temple of His body" [JOHN 2:21]. The disciples heard Him when He made this statement, but it was only after He was raised from the dead that "His disciples remembered that He had said this." Only then did "they believe[] the Scripture and the Word that Jesus had spoken" [JOHN 2:22].

The chief priests and the Pharisees on multiple occasions had heard the Master testify that He would rise from the dead. They didn't want to believe that such a thing could happen, but they were unwilling to chance being wrong. Therefore, they took steps to stop Him from conquering death. "The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, 'Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, "After three days I will rise." Therefore, order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, "He has risen from the dead," and the last fraud will be worse than the first.' Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.' So, they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard" [MATTHEW 27:62-66].

The emphasis of the account before us is the resurrection of the Saviour. In fact, note the **THIRD VERSE**: "When they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." The title, "the Lord Jesus" is new in this Gospel—it has not been used before this. The emphasis is on the absence of His body, His conquest of death and thus, His lordship.

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Prompted by the angels, the women did remember. They had heard the prophetic words Jesus had spoken, but they had not understood what was said. They were no different from the Apostles in this matter! The Resurrection of the Master began to clarify so many of the things He had said in the previous years. The women began to understand what was happening.

Luke now clarifies who these women were when he writes, “It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles” [LUKE 24:10]. Combining what Luke has written with what is available from the other Gospels, we have a more complete idea of who came to the tomb on that first Resurrection morning. Of course, Mary Magdalene is named—actually, she is named in all four Gospels. Mark adds that Salome was among the others [see MARK 16:1]. She is most likely the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John [cf. MATTHEW 27:56]. Mary, identified as the mother of James is named in all three Synoptic Gospels. Joanna was the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward [see LUKE 8:3]. Since he uses the plural, Luke is informing us that there were others present that morning, as well. Thus, it wasn’t just one or two women who came to the tomb; rather, it was several women. This is not surprising since Jesus set women free. Women were no longer accoutrements to worship, they were accepted as full participants in worship of the Son of God.

These women raced back to where they knew they would find the disciples; they had to tell them that the Master had conquered the tomb. I note that Luke says, “these words seemed to [the Apostle’s as] an idle tale, and they did not believe them” [LUKE 24:11]. The Apostles could not believe that anyone could defeat death! Though they had heard Jesus’ words repeatedly, they could not believe that He had triumphed over death.

Is that any different from this day? Listening to my words this day are people who have heard the testimony that Jesus is alive, and yet they say, “I can’t believe that!” Nevertheless, throughout this world are multitudes of twice-born individuals who are alive in the Risen Son. These men and women, together with many of us here, have accepted the truth that though we were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of the flesh, “God made [us] alive together with [Jesus], having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” [COLOSSIANS 2:13b-15]. Christ is victorious!

Within the sound of my voice are people who have been born from above, and yet they struggle to believe that Jesus is alive. These dear saints are fearful of what may lie ahead in the future, though the Risen Saviour promised, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” [MATTHEW 28:20b]. These tragic souls are fearful that they must stand alone against the world, despite the promise of the Lord Jesus, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” [HEBREWS 13:5b]. Among the faithful will always be some who live in fear of death, despite the promise of our Great Shepherd. Speaking in confidence born of divine revelation, David testified,

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.”

[PSALM 23:4]

Dear saint of God, Remember! Remember!



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On this Easter morning, remember this truth—Christ Jesus the Lord of Glory conquered death. He offered His life as a sacrifice because of our broken condition. We were dead in the trespasses and sins in which we once walked. We were following the course of this fallen world. We were separated from God and without hope in the world. Then, Christ presented Himself to take upon Himself the punishment we deserved. “He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God” [2 CORINTHIANS 13:4].

The call of God is very personal. If all you hear is a plea to join the church, though you may observe rite and ritual you have no personal relationship with the Risen Son of God. If all you hear is a plea to participate in a religious activity, you have no personal relationship with the Living Saviour. He calls each one to new life—new life that begins now and continues forever. Christ Jesus calls us, saying, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” [ROMANS 10:9, 10]. This, then, is the promise of the Living God, “Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved” [ROMANS 10:13].

And that is our message to you on this Easter Sunday. May God, the Living God, grant you mercy to believe. May Christ Jesus the Lord supply each one with the grace to receive His gift of life. Amen.