

43. The ultimate victory

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June 18, 1815 was one of the decisive days in world history. Napoleon had left the island of Elba four months ago, where he had been rebuilding his army in his first exile. Sailing back to the mainland of Europe with him were 75000 soldiers, including the Old Guard—perhaps the finest fighting men in the world. Although the Duke of Wellington, Commander-in Chief of the British forces, offered to do his best to stop Napoleon, it seemed like a futile assignment. At Waterloo, with only 67000 allied troops, Wellington engaged Napoleon in battle. If Napoleon was indeed victorious, there would have been no stopping him in his drive to reclaim all of Europe. The people in England waited for hours as the battle raged. Eager for news, they positioned a ship in the Channel that would signal the outcome of the contest to watchmen stationed in towers along the shores of Dover.

Finally, before it became enshrouded in fog, the signal ship signaled this message to the towers: “Wellington defeated.” Although the hearts of the watchmen sank, they relayed the word quickly to the waiting messengers. And word spread like wildfire throughout England that Wellington had been defeated.

Hopelessness and despair set in as the British knew it would only be a matter of time before Napoleon would sail across the Channel and lay claim to their country. However, when the fog lifted, the ship fired a cannon to get the attention of those in the tower and the third and final word of the message was relayed. The word was “Napoleon.” What a difference the third word made, for the completed message read: “Wellington defeated Napoleon.” Suddenly, the hearts of the British people rejoiced. Napoleon had been stopped. They would remain a free people. The third word filled their hearts with great joy.

But the followers of Jesus experienced far greater joy, liberty and victory on the third day when the rest of His message came through. On the third day, the fog lifted and three words came forth: “He is risen!”

A. MAKING SURE HE STAYED BURIED

Matt 27:62-66 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, 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.” So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

1) Jesus died on Thursday, not on Friday

Contrary to the popular belief, Jesus died on Thursday, not on Friday. He told us that He would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

Mt 12:40 For 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.

To confirm my theory, this was not just any Sabbath, but it was the Passover Sabbath which means that Friday and Saturday were Sabbath.

2) The religious leaders without any excuses

The religious leaders were without any excuses. They had witnessed what happened at Golgotha, followed by the veil of the temple torn from top to bottom. They should have connected these things that all point to the true identity of Jesus, the Messiah. Yet they refused to believe Jesus Christ was the Messiah. They refused the truth. They refused to believe that they needed the Savior.

Some of you are like them. While you are listening to this sermon, you are refusing to accept the truth with your illogical ration. And you are refusing to find the truth of the Savior Jesus Christ. Why? What is it holding you back? Come to Jesus today.

3) Turning the table

Satan and his puppets, the Jewish religious leaders shut the tomb of Jesus and put a Roman seal on it. We will see that the table is going to be turned in the future.

Revelation 20:1-3 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

4) Affirming the resurrection of Jesus

The seal of the imperial sign of Rome was embedded in wax upon the rope in front of the stone. Anyone who tampered with the rope or touched the stone would be executed. The stone was sealed. The guards were set. This gives us the best proof that Jesus was dead and buried and humanly no one could take His body away without getting caught.

5) Whatever happened to Pilate?

Whatever happened to Pilate? Tradition has it that a year after this event, upset emotionally and in trouble politically, he resigned his position and went to Gaul (Germany), where he committed suicide.

B. COME AND SEE THEN GO AND TELL

Matt 28:1-7 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 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. But the angel answered and said to the women, "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, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

1) The women came to minister to the body of Jesus

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to finish the preparation of Jesus' body, which was cut short by the Sabbath. Doctrinally, they had missed the point entirely by assuming He would still be in the tomb. But devotionally, they were right on the mark in wanting to minister to Him.

2) The stone was rolled away for the people to see

The stone was not rolled away to permit Jesus to come out, for He had already left the tomb. It was rolled back so that the people could see for themselves that the tomb was empty.

What did they see in the tomb? The graveclothes lying on the stone shelf, still wrapped in the shape of the body. Jesus had passed through the graveclothes and left them behind as evidence that He was alive. They lay there like an empty cocoon.

When General Gordon, a godly man, discovered this tomb in 1885, he did a very wise thing. He took a jar of soil gathered from the floor of the tomb to some chemists and asked if there was any trace of decomposition of the dead body in the soil. The analysis found that there was no trace of decay in the tomb. Indeed, there never was.

3) The meaning of the resurrection

We must understand the meaning of the resurrection. Simply, Jesus' resurrection proved that His death was an actual atonement for sin and that the Father had accepted it as such. The cross was the payment, the resurrection was the receipt, proving that the payment was fully accepted. The comment made by Jesus, "It is finished" on the cross was a declaration of the ransom paid for the sin of mankind. The torn veil of the temple is a resounding "Amen" from the Father to the sacrifice of Jesus.

4) Come and see, then go and tell

Notice the wording. First: "Come and see." Then: "Go and tell." Sincere in their desire to see missionary work accomplished or evangelism explode, many say, "We're going to win the world for Christ." But it won't happen until they first "come and see." Not until we get a clear vision of the "place where He lay" - of His work on the Cross and His resurrection from the grave - then, we have a message to "go and tell."

Matt 28:8-10 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, 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."

5) Tell My Brethren

When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, His disciples split the scene. When He was being tried, Peter was cursing and denying he even knew Him. If I were in Jesus' sandals, would I have said, "Go tell my brothers I'm going to meet them in Galilee" - or would I have said, "Go tell those losers I'm back and they're in hot water"?

We have such a tendency to want to teach people lessons, straighten them out, shake them up, and set them right. But our Savior shows grace upon grace to all of us.

Did you notice Jesus use two women as the first messenger of the Gospel? I see three reasons:

First, in general, women has great spiritual sensitivity than men. If you don't believe me, look around to the church. There are more women who seek God than men.

Second, these two women were there available to be used by God. While the hot shot disciples were scared and worried to be seen, these women came to the tomb to minister to the body of Jesus.

Third, Jesus knew that if He told to the women, the words would spread faster and better than telling it to the disciples: Telephone, telegraph, and tell-a-woman.

C. THE WORST COVER-UP IN THE HISTORY

Matt 28:11-15 Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

1) From conspiracy to murder to bribery for a cover up

Mark Twain once wrote that a lie can go around the world while truth is still lacing up her boots. The religious leaders had given money to Judas to betray Jesus. They also gave money to the soldiers to say that the body had been stolen.

After employing deceitfulness, treachery, and mob psychology to bring about the death of Jesus, the chief priests and elders finally resorted to bribery to cover up His resurrection. They said to the Roman soldiers. "*His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.*" This was a ridiculous lie for two reasons: First, if the soldiers were sleeping, how could they have known who took the body? Second, if these soldiers had indeed fallen asleep, they would have been executed according to Roman military law for their failure to keep watch. However, these guys showed up the next day driving BMW chariots.

2) A pathetic "Swoon Theory"

A humorous letter to the editor to a Christian magazine accurately evaluated the "Swoon Theory":

Dear Editor: Our preacher said, on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?

Sincerely, Bewildered

Dear Bewildered: Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy lashes, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his heart; embalm him; put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens.

Sincerely, Editor

According to this theory, after Jesus woke up, He rolled away the one ton stone with the pierced hands all by Himself from inside where there was nothing to hold of, then He jumped on a squad of the trained Roman soldiers who had spears and swords with His beaten up body. He knocked them all out and ran away with His pierced feet. When that happened, you could hear the theme music from the movie "Mission Impossible."

If you believe that pathetic 'Swoon Theory', you have more faith than I do.

3) The evidence demands its verdict

On college campuses today, some so-called intellectuals still parrot this two thousand-year-old lie: "Jesus' disciples took His body."

If you do not believe Jesus resurrected, I challenge you to explain to me where His

body went. If the Romans had stolen it, why didn't they produce it? Christianity was ultimately the force that led to the destruction of the entire Roman Empire. If His disciples were merely hiding Jesus' body, why did they give their lives believing in Him?

Intellectually, when I look at all the evidence, I have no other choice but to believe. The body is not there. The Resurrection is the most analyzed event in history. I also believe it is the most provable. That's why Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Truly, the Resurrection verifies that Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be.

D. THE GREAT COMMISSION

Matt 28:16-20 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

1) To those who believe

If I were Jesus, I would go right back to the Chief Priest with the resurrected body that allows to go through the wall, just to scare a snot out of them. But Jesus didn't waste His time like that. Rather, He showed Himself to those who would believe and need the Living Hope.

2) As you are going

In this verse, the word "Go" has a continuing tense in Greek and literally means "as you are going." In other words, "As you are going to the grocery store, as you are going to school, as you are going to Mexico - wherever you're going - share the Gospel of Jesus." In this light, the Great Commission takes on a much broader perspective. We're to be sharing and teaching wherever we're going, whatever we're doing.

3) Which one is more important?

Some people ask me, "Which one is more important? Evangelizing or discipling?" I answer to them, "Both." You cannot neglect one from another. We need to evangelize to the people around us to bring them to Jesus. After they come to Jesus, they must grow in the Lord through the Word of God. Then, by growing in the Lord, people will go out to tell about Jesus to others. That healthy circle should be repeated all the time. The Sunday morning service in our church has two purpose: to evangelize and to teach. Our Midweek Bible Study on Thursday night is more for studying the Word of God. Then we have the Discipleship Class which is Home Fellowship and we have the Missions ministry for outreach locally and across the border.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) When we make ourselves available to the Lord to be used by Him, He will.

We have a choice to spread the Good News of Jesus like these women or hide away like the fearful disciples.

2) The love for Jesus will never go unnoticed by God.

We know from John's Gospel that when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found it empty, she initially thought someone had moved Jesus' body to another

grave. Seeing a Man she supposed to be the gardener, she asked, *“Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”* (John 20:15). How did Mary think she could move the body of Jesus all by herself? I don’t believe that she was thinking all that details. She loved Him deeply enough to not to care about it. Because of that, she received the privilege to become the first messenger of the resurrection of Jesus to His disciples.

3) Spreading the Gospel of Jesus is not limited to Pastors only. It is everybody’s Great Commission as a born-again believer.