

34. Why do you seek the living among the dead?

March 23, 2008

At the church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem – the place Emperor Constantine’s mother Helena decided was the place of the true cross and the true empty tomb – there is the powerful sense of dead religion and traditionalism. Yet for thousands and thousands of years people have flocked to this place hanging onto this kind of spiritual deadness in a desperate attempt to find eternal life in God.

We, too, often look for Jesus in the dead things – religious traditionalism, formalism, man’s rules, denominational regulations, human effort or substitutes of the flesh. We will never ultimately find Jesus in those things. We find Him only when we worship Him in spirit and in truth and believe that He is the Risen Savior of the World.

If you are standing on the top of Mount Olive east of Jerusalem toward the city, you will see thousands of tombs as well as the tomb of Rebekka, the tomb of David, the tomb of Absalom – but you won’t find the tomb of Jesus anywhere. You may say what about the place He was laid. You cannot really call it Jesus’ tomb because He borrowed it for only three days.

Historians and shop keepers around two locations in Jerusalem argue that their place is the real place for Jesus’ tomb. But the most important part of this is that Jesus is not there. He is physically in heaven.

A. HE AIN’T HERE

Luke 24:1-12 Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, 7 saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’ ” 8 And they remembered His words. 9 Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. 11 And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

We do not know at what time Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week, but it must have been very early. The earthquake and the angel opened the tomb, not to let Jesus out but to let the witnesses in. “Come and see, go and tell!” is the Resurrection Day mandate for the church.

These women came to the tomb with an intention to give Jesus’ body a more proper preparation for burial, but they discovered that the body of Jesus was not there. At this point, they were not even thinking about Jesus being resurrected. They thought somebody took His body away. But how could anyone take the body of Jesus only without disturbing the mummylike grave clothes?

The question that was asked by an angel in v4 was a gentle rebuke for their bad memories. Many times, Jesus had told them about His suffering, crucifixion and resurrection. But they were too busy thinking about Jesus as a conqueror against the Roman army, not the suffering Savior.

Obedient to their commission, the women ran to tell the disciples the good news. Ladies, you all know how much men pay attention to you when you talk to them. These disciples were so stuck in their own thoughts and didn't buy the great news from the women.

If any of you are skeptical about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I challenge you to disprove it. Many have tried it. As a matter of fact, those who seriously challenged the fact of Jesus' resurrection became great believers of God. They even wrote books about their research:

"Resurrection Factor" was written by Josh McDowell and "Who moved the stone?" by Frank Morison.

So far, nobody could find a hard proof that would stand against the fact of Jesus' resurrection. I am sure that these attempts will continue.

Some of you might say, "How can you believe Jesus' resurrection from the dead?" It's very easy if you can believe the first verse of the Book of Genesis: "In the beginning, God created heaven and earth." To God, resurrecting a dead body was a cake walk.

B. THE DIVINE REVELATION AT EMMAUS

Luke 24:13-35 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. 17 And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" 18 Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" 19 And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. 22 Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. 23 When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. 24 And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." 25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. 28 Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. 29 But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day

is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. 30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" 33 So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" 35 And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

If we were walking next to these two men, we would be able to tell that these two people were in deep depression by looking at their drooped shoulders, confused look on their faces and a low harsh tone in their voices because they didn't want to be crucified as the followers of Jesus Christ. To them, all of their hope was gone for good. But all of that was about to be changed. These disciples knew the messianic prophecies in the OT, but the prophecies didn't click with them concerning Jesus. They saw the glory but not the suffering, the crown but not the cross.

Like a father who pretends not knowing anything and lets his child explain how a toy car works, Jesus had to be patiently waiting for the right moment.

I've heard many great sermons from many wonderful Bible teachers in the last twenty years. But I believe that the sermon Jesus expounded the OT to these disheartened disciples would have beaten any sermon hands down.

Beginning with Genesis, Jesus threaded the scarlet truth of redemption all the way through the Old Testament, weaving a tapestry of both suffering and glory for the Messiah. It might have looked something like this:

In Genesis, Jesus is the Seed of the woman.

In Exodus, the Passover Lamb.

In Leviticus, the atoning sacrifice.

In Numbers, the bronze serpent.

In Deuteronomy, the promised Prophet.

In Joshua, the Captain of the Lord's host.

In Judges, the Deliverer.

In Ruth, the Kinsman Redeemer.

In the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, the promised King.

In Ezra and Nehemiah, the Restorer of the nation.

In Esther, the Advocate.

In Job, the Redeemer.

In Psalms, the All in All.

In Proverbs, the Pattern.

In Ecclesiastes, the Goal.

In Song of Solomon, the Beloved.

In the prophets, the coming Prince of Peace

These two disciples didn't wait for the sun to rise, they backtracked to Jerusalem and to the disciples to let them know about Jesus' resurrection.

C. DO YOU GET IT NOW?

Luke 24:36-49 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." 37 But they were terrified and

frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." 40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" 42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. 43 And He took it and ate in their presence. 44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things. 49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Even though Jesus told them, "Peace to you," the disciples were still afraid. So He had to show them His nail prints on His hands and feet. The only work of man now in heaven is the nail marks from the cross on the body of the exalted Savior.

Even though their own Bible 'New World Translation' renders the same way as our Bible in v39, Jehovah's Witness people believe that the resurrected Jesus didn't have a physical body, but only a spirit. Their own doctrine contradicts their Bible, but they still follow false doctrines.

Does Jesus have a physical body like ours? Yes and no. Yes, He has a body with flesh and bones, but His body molecules are much different than ours that He can walk right through walls and doors. I don't know how to explain to you but when I get that kind of body in heaven, I'll let you know.

Jesus even ate some fish and honeycomb. When you look at 'honeycomb' in Greek, it is chocolate chip cookies.

Unless God opens our hearts, we cannot understand the truth from the Word of God. But to have God to open our hearts, we must come to Him with humility and the desire to learn from Him.

D. JESUS' ASCENSION AND OUR COMMISSION

Luke 24:50-53 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

When Jesus blesses His people, it isn't just a pious wish like "I hope things work out for you" or "I hope you will be feeling better." Instead, the blessing of Jesus has inherent power within it.

V52 shows us that the disciples acknowledged Him as God and the Savior by worshipping Him. They knew better than to worship anything or anyone other than God from the OT lifestyle they'd been living in.

These people were filled with joy from knowing their God Jesus and excitement to witness to others.

Witnessing is not something that we do for the Lord. It is something that He does through us, if we are filled with the Holy Spirit. There is a great difference between a "sales talk" and a Spirit-empowered witness. People do not come to Christ at the end of an argument. We can go forth in the authority of Jesus' name, in the power of His spirit, heralding His Gospel of His grace.

E. LET'S FACE IT

But there are some people in this room who cannot believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Here are the reasons:

- 1) Until now you chose not to know His Word the Bible, so it didn't make sense to you.
- 2) Until now you chose not to know the life and teachings of Jesus, so you didn't know that the resurrection means that the payment that Jesus offered on the cross was perfect and complete.

Because of your unbelief, you are scared of dying, or you are at your wit's end without hope or you are feeling guilty for whatever you've done or you are in confusion about your life.

But if you choose to surrender to Jesus:

- 1) You can know that the cross was the payment for your sins and the empty tomb is the receipt.
- 2) You can know that death has no hold on you when you receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord.
- 3) You can have an assurance of eternal life in heaven through Jesus Christ.