

Death Defeated in the Garden Luke 23:50-24:12

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[0 : 0 0] So it's Luke 23 verse 50 and that's page 1060 in the Church Bibles. Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action.

He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body.

Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was preparation day and the Sabbath was about to begin.

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes, but they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

[1 : 1 7] While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in cloths that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, Why do you look for the living among the dead?

He is not here, he is risen. Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee, The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified, and then on the third day be raised again.

Then they remembered his words. When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.

But they did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Thank you, Avin. Well, we've been following the journey of Jesus during his last week before his death and resurrection.

[2 : 3 8] And this morning we come to this incredible, amazing scene at the empty tomb. Let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at it together.

Amen. May the risen Lord Jesus in all his power and greatness be present with us now by his Spirit and be at work in our lives, reminding us afresh of the truth and the reality that Jesus is alive.

Help us to be convinced where we doubt. Help us to trust in the face of skepticism.

Help us to believe. And may our lives be changed by what you have done. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Well, this past week, Kirsty and I took a trip down memory lane.

- [4 : 10] We went to Waterford, the city where I grew up. And one of the places that we went to visit was my old secondary school. There were some funny memories, as I pointed out, different places.
- Like the time Mr Lawler, our e-teacher, got hit in the head with an apple. There was also a sad memory. As we walked into the main court area, which was a grassy area, there was a tree.
- It was now significantly bigger than what I remember. And at the base of the tree was a small memorial plaque. I remember my friend Richard very well.
- We went through primary school. We started the same secondary school together. He was good fun. He was great at sport. He was in our circle of friends.
- But following a tragic accident in third year, Richard died. Death is never easy, is it? Whatever age it confronts us.
- [5 : 21] It takes from us those we love and those we care for the most. It robs our joy and it steals our happiness. It leaves within us this aching void that no one and nothing seems to fill.
- It shatters dreams and it destroys our hopes. And in that moment of agony, we long for someone to come along and speak these words to us.
- The words that are written in chapter 24, end of verse 5. Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here.
- He is risen. We long that death is not the end. Well, as we think about the resurrection of Jesus as we celebrate on this Easter Sunday, I want us to see that these words are not just for the women who came looking for Jesus.
- These words were written for you and for me. Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen.
- [6 : 37] Risen. You see, sooner or later, we will all face death. And if we live long enough, we will watch our friends or perhaps even our loved ones die.
- So we need to be absolutely sure that the resurrection of Jesus is not some April Fool's hoax, but is true, is reliable, is dependable, is this rock-solid, unshakable foundation on which we put all our trust.
- So first, we want to examine the evidence together. For so many people, the resurrection of Jesus is just completely untrue.
- It's just a myth. It's an invention of the church. We can't trust it. Well, for those who doubt and remain skeptical, look at the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection.
- The first people to come to the tomb were told in Luke's account were women. Chapter 24, verse 10 tells us their names. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others.
- [8 : 10] The others are other women who were with them. These women had witnessed the death of Jesus. If you go back to chapter 23, verse 46, it's talking there of Jesus' final words.
- Jesus called out with a loud voice from the cross, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. When he had said this, he breathed his last.
- verse 49, all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.
- These women watched Jesus nailed, beaten, hung, executed, die on the cross.
- These same women also witnessed his burial. If you look down at verse 55, chapter 23, the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.

[9 : 24] They saw his burial. They saw Joseph lay the body of Jesus in the tomb. And it's the same women who witnessed the resurrection.

When they went to the tomb, chapter 24, verse 2, they found the stone rolled away from the tomb but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

The tomb was empty. It's not that the body was just missing. There was no body to be found.

Now, witnessing the death, the burial and resurrection of Jesus might seem a credible witness to us but we must remember that in the first century, this would have been laughed out of court.

The testimony of women were simply not counted. Their social standing meant their testimony was not admissible evidence in court.

[10 : 29] Women were just considered hysterical. they couldn't be trusted. In other words, if you were writing this account and you wanted to prove the fact of the resurrection, you would never use the witness or testimony of women because that would undermine your evidence.

Writers of this time in the first second century never used women as their testimony for their case. It just didn't happen.

So why on earth would Luke writing do that? Well the only reason Luke would tell the resurrection account like this is because what the women saw was true.

This is a true account. If it was all made up and he wanted to convince us, he would have used men as the witnesses.

But here we have the first witnesses being the women. They see the death, the burial and resurrection of Jesus. Now some will go, okay, come on.

[11 : 42] Because everybody believed in the resurrection and because they knew Jesus was going to die and three days later he would rise again, they had to meet people's expectations.

So they just simply created evidence. And they invented the whole account. But the fact is, as we'll see later on again, the women and the rest of the disciples had no expectation whatsoever.

In their belief system, yes, they had this understanding there would be a resurrection at the very end of time, but a physical resurrection of somebody, a bodily resurrection of somebody in the middle, that was just not in their thinking.

You see, why would the women, 24 verse 1, come to the tomb with their spices and perfumes if they thought Jesus might rise? Or look at the response of the disciples down in verse 11.

They did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense. It doesn't sound like the response of those who expected a resurrection.

[12 : 55] to them it was a nonsense in their minds. It's an impossibility. No one believed in a physical bodily resurrection in the middle of history.

It just wasn't in their thinking. You see, these women and the disciples are not unlike most people today.

They're sceptical. But when confronted with the evidence they came to believe. Now I don't know all of your stories.

You might think that the resurrection is just a nice story. But really deep down you can't really trust it or believe it. But if we take time to look at these eyewitness accounts, it will help us see that the words that were spoken by the angels to these women are words that are also spoken to you and I today.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen. So first we examine the evidence.

[14 : 11] The second thing, we need to remember his words. Look, the women who came to the grave of Jesus were met by two angels.

We read about them in verse four. While they were wondering about this as they were thinking about the empty tomb, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

Now listen to what the angel said, verse six. He is not here, he has risen. Remember, remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee.

The son of man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified, and on the third day be raised again. You might remember that when Jesus was in Galilee, these were the words that he spoke to his disciples to tell them what would happen.

happen. Just have a look back with me to chapter 18 verse 31. Chapter 18 verse 31. This is the third occasion that he told them what was going to happen.

[15 : 37] Chapter 18 verse 31. Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, we are going up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem. And everything that is written by the prophets, that is in the scriptures about the son of man, that Jesus will be fulfilled.

He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, and spit on him. They will flog him and kill him. And on the third day he will rise again.

Jesus has made it crystal clear to them what is going to happen. I don't want you to be in any doubt. When we arrive in Jerusalem, I am going to die, but three days later I am going to rise again.

But to help these disciples see that they could trust his words, Jesus does something remarkable. Two extraordinary events follow this prediction.

Look at chapter 19. They are making their way to Jerusalem from Galilee, where Jesus is going to die. And in chapter 19, verse 30, we read these words.

[16 : 58] He says to the disciples, go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a donkey tied there which no one has ever ridden.

Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you why you are untying it, say the Lord needs it. Now look what happens, verse 32.

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. He told them what was going to happen, and it did happen.

Now look at chapter 22. It's now four days later from that event in chapter 19, and it's the day before Jesus' death.

We pick it up in verse 8. Jesus sent Peter and John saying, go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover. Where do you want us to prepare for it, they asked.

[18 : 01] He replied, as you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you, follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, the teacher asks, where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished, make preparations there. That's a lot of predictions. Again, look what happens, verse 13.

They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. Jesus told them of his death and resurrection, but knowing how hard it would be to believe Jesus' words, he then provides them with these two extraordinary events to show them, say, look, when I say something, you can trust me, I will deliver on my words.

Now go back to chapter 24, verse 8. The angel has spoken.

They remind them of what Jesus had said. 24, verse 8. Then they remembered his words. This is a moment of revelation.

[19 : 26] They see the empty tomb. They remember Jesus' words about the resurrection. They remembered all that he had said, that they will mock him, they will insult him, they will spit on him, they will flog him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.

They remembered his words. We can trust in his words. We believe in what he has said. Now the question is, when we are facing death, be it our own death, or the death of someone else, will we believe his words about the resurrection?

Do you confidently put your trust in what Jesus has said? You see, these women and these disciples are, they're really not unlike us.

They are facing the reality of death. They've seen their loved ones die in a desperate way. They've seen him buried.

Their close friend, their loved one, has gone. They're completely heartbroken. Their dreams and their hopes have been shattered. But, verse 8, they remembered his words.

[20 : 56] To remember the words of Jesus gives us reason for certain hope. When we face the reality of death, when we stare into that space, we can rest in the absolute trustworthiness of his words, what he said would happen, did happen.

So, let me ask us all again, do you trust Jesus with your life? Do you trust his words to you? You see, the person who dies trusting, the words of Jesus, the words that the angels spoke to the women, become true for us.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, he has risen. So, we look at the evidence, we remember his words, and when we examine this evidence, when we reflect on these words, when we take that deep into our hearts, when we trust it with our life, it changes us dramatically.

let me just show you three ways in which the resurrection can change us. First, it can change us in such a way that we can stand confidently in the face of opposition.

Look back at verse 50. Here we meet this character, Joseph. Joseph. We're told, verse 50, that he's a member of the council, a good and upright man.

[22 : 49] Verse 52, going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one yet had been laid.

Now this is an incredibly courageous act. Joseph, verse 50, we're told, is a member of the council.

He's part of the Sanhedrin. These were the guys who were responsible for overseeing all the religious and social affairs. They were the rulers, the ones in authority. If you got on the wrong side of the council, you could lose your life.

In fact, it was this very council that had been planning and plotting the death of Jesus. They've just told a whole bunch of lies to Pilate to make sure that Jesus got executed.

And where was Joseph in the midst of all of this? Well, Joseph had stood up to them. Look at verse 51. He had not consented to their decision and action.

[23 : 57] When it came to the vote, Joseph wouldn't go with it. And now he's identifying with Jesus by asking for his body to bury him.

Now, such an act is not just going to get you sidelined, it could also get you killed. Now, I want to ask the question, what gives Joseph this kind of courage, one amidst many, to make that kind of stand?

God? How is he so confident in the face of such powerful people? Well, look at the rest of verse 51. We're told he came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God.

God. Now, I don't think he expected a resurrection to happen, but he had faith that the kingdom would come, that God was going to come in power, that God was going to deliver on all of his promises, but he just didn't know how it was going to be worked out, but he had faith that God would do it.

Now, this side of the cross, this side of the resurrection, we now stand with a greater advantage because we can look back to the truth of the resurrection.

[25 : 24] Jesus did die, he was buried, he rose again, which means we can now stand confidently. We may face opposition, we may be the one amongst many people who only believe this and put our faith in the Lord Jesus.

We may face powerful enemies and powerful people who think we're just a nonsense and a load of rubbish. But because it is true, we do not need to fear their threats because Jesus is Lord over life and over death.

And many of these disciples would go on to make their stand and they would be put to death. But at the end of the day, what does it matter that they should lose their life because they would go on to the kingdom?

They would have eternal life. So you and I can stand confidently in the face of opposition, one amidst many, because Jesus has risen.

Stand confidently. the second way in which it can change us is it gives us a message of hope. We can speak hope.

[26 : 38] When we encounter, when we believe the resurrection, it fills us with sure and certain hope. Hope that we can pass on. look at chapter 24 verse 9.

Talking about the women when they came back from the tomb. They told all these things to the eleven and to all the others.

I mean, this is news you can't keep to yourself. We've just been to the tomb. It's empty. We've remembered what Jesus has said. We've believed his words.

Death has been defeated. And now they begin to speak this hope and this comfort to those who are broken hearted, to those without any hope at all.

One of the hardest things in life is to stand at the grave of a loved one. In some ways it marks the end. We're there to say our goodbyes.

[27 : 41] But for the Christian, it's just the beginning. You see, in the midst of brokenness and hopelessness, we can bring the comfort of the risen Lord Jesus to say, here is one who understands your hurt.

Here is one who understands your pain and one who will walk with you. But you know what? More than that, he is the one who has defeated death. Defeated death for you.

And all who entrust their life to Jesus can look forward in hope to brand new bodies so that we will never get sick again.

The Bible tells us we will become like Jesus so that we will never sin or struggle with temptation. we can look forward to the new kingdom that beautiful new world where there is no more funerals no more goodbyes just joy and joy and more joy forever and forever and forever without end.

This is the hope that we can speak to those who have no hope. it changes our message.

[28 : 57] It changes what we can bring to people. Or maybe you're just struggling to believe that any of this is true.

Maybe you watch things on the telly and all the evidence that people try to throw up to say it's just a hoax and you just go can I really believe this?

Is it really true that when I die I am going to receive eternal life? Maybe you have doubts like that.

Maybe you're just like the disciples. Look at verse 11. They did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense. How could this possibly be true?

They simply don't believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Even though he told them on three different occasions even though the women have seen the empty tomb they don't believe.

[29 : 57] But look at what unbelieving Peter does. He steps out in faith verse 12. Peter however got up and ran to the tomb bending over he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves and he went away wondering to himself what had happened.

This wondering is not so much a sense of confusion but wonder as in amazement. There should be a body but there's none.

Peter is beginning to make sense that what Jesus said and what the women had seen was really true. but it only happened for him as he stepped out in faith to look for himself.

And so I think Luke the author here is inviting us again. He's saying look come with Peter look afresh into the empty tomb stand there at that empty tomb see the stone rolled away look inside the strips of linen lying by themselves wonder be amazed that Jesus has destroyed death and defeated the grave.

The words spoken by the angel are not just for the women. They are words that have been spoken to us today to give us hope to bring us comfort to bring us peace.

[31 : 48] Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen. Examine the evidence.

Remember his words and see how it can change your life hope. To stand confidently to speak hope to others and to step out in faith.

Let's pray together. thank you father for giving to us this eyewitness account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

thank you for allowing us to take the journey with Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and walk with them to see what they saw people to remember his words to look into the grave just like Peter and see the cloths lying there and to be amazed that Jesus who died for us is our risen savior lord over life and lord over death father give us faith that we might believe help us to stand confidently in the face of opposition in the face of those who may say it's a nonsense it's rubbish help us to stake our claim on the foundation that

Jesus is alive and father would you give us opportunity that we might speak these words of hope and of comfort to those who have no hope where death is their enemy and there is nothing beyond it help us to speak words of hope and when we doubt help us to look afresh at what you have done and give us hearts to believe thank you that Jesus is alive amen