

Jesus is Alive Forever and Ever!

Our Daily Bread University
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The Burial and Resurrection

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.” (Matthew 28:5-6)

A rich man named Joseph was a disciple of Jesus. He asked Pilate if he could bury Jesus’ body. Pilate gave the order. Joseph carefully took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in clean linen cloth. Then he laid it in his own new tomb near where Jesus was crucified. The tomb was like a cave cut out of the rock. He rolled a giant stone in front of the entrance of the tomb and went away.

The chief priests and teachers of the law went to Pilate. They remembered that Jesus said he would rise from the dead on the third day. They were afraid the disciples would steal the body and say Jesus had risen from the dead. So Pilate sent a group of Roman soldiers to guard the tomb. They camped outside the tomb to make sure no one stole the body of Jesus.

Just as he promised, Jesus came back alive on the third day -- and the soldiers were there as witnesses! An angel came down from heaven and there was a powerful earthquake. The angel rolled back the great stone and sat on it. He looked like lightning. His clothes were white as snow. The guards were so scared they shook with fright and fainted.

Mary Magdalene and other women went to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week. They saw the angel, too. He told them, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.” The angel invited them to see the empty tomb where Jesus had been lying. Then he said, “...go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There

you will see him.”

The women were afraid, but they were also filled with great joy. Suddenly Jesus met them and greeted them. They fell down, took hold of Jesus’ feet, and worshipped him. He told them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” The women ran to tell the disciples.

Meanwhile, the soldiers ran to tell the chief priests what had happened. When they told them, the chief priests and the elders had another emergency meeting. They decided to pay the soldiers to lie and say that the disciples stole Jesus’ body. They also promised to make sure the soldiers didn’t get in trouble with the governor. The soldiers agreed to tell that lie. Some people still believe it.

Life Questions:

If an angel appeared to you, would you react more like the women or the guards? Why?

The Resurrected Jesus Visits Friends and Followers

[Jesus] ... appeared first to Mary Magdalene. ... Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. ... Later Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were eating. (Mark 16:9a, 12, 14a)

Mary Magdalene and the other women ran to tell the disciples that Jesus was alive. But the men didn’t believe them. Meanwhile, two of Jesus’ followers were walking to Emmaus, a village about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were very sad. They were talking about all that had happened in the last few days. Jesus came up and started walking with them, but they could not recognize him.

Jesus asked them what they were talking about. They told him how they HAD hoped that Jesus was the Messiah. But the chief priests handed him over to be crucified. They no longer called Jesus Messiah; now they called him a prophet. Then they told Jesus how some women had seen angels who said Jesus was alive. They told him how some of the disciples had found the tomb empty -- just like the women said. But they were still sad and confused.

Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures. He began with Moses and all the prophets. They still didn’t know it was Jesus! When they got to where they were staying, they urged him to stay with them because it was getting late. When Jesus was at the table with them, getting ready to eat, he gave thanks, broke the bread, and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened so they could recognize Jesus. As soon as they did, He disappeared!

The two men returned to Jerusalem as fast as they could and joined the disciples who were gathered there. They told them how Jesus had walked with them and how he disappeared when they recognized him. Can you imagine how excited they must have been! While they were still talking, Jesus suddenly appeared! He was right there with them! They thought he was a ghost, so Jesus let them touch his body -- which a ghost doesn’t have. He showed them the wounds where the nails went through his hands and feet. He even ate food to prove he was really risen from the dead --not just a spirit. Then Jesus said, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.” Then Jesus opened their minds to understand. And they did.

Life Questions:

Why shouldn’t the disciples have been surprised that Jesus rose from the dead? How do you think you would have acted?

Saying Goodbye and Spreading Good News

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After he [Jesus] said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. (Acts 1: 8-9)

Jesus continued to appear to his disciples for forty days after he rose from the dead. He spoke to them about the kingdom of God. He explained how he had to suffer and rise from the dead

on the third day to fulfill the prophecies. He told them they were witnesses of these things. They thought Jesus was going to set up his kingdom on earth right then. Jesus said it was not for them to know when God would bring the kingdom to earth. Their job was to spread the good news.

One day Jesus was eating with them. He gave them a command. "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." The prophet Joel said that God would pour out his spirit on all who serve Him. The disciples would need God's Holy Spirit and God's power to do what God planned for them to do.

Jesus told his disciples to preach about all he had done and to tell people to turn from their sins and receive God's forgiveness. He told them to start in Jerusalem, spread to the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria, then go to the whole world. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." This command is often called the Great Commission. Before Jesus died, they just preached to the Jews, now they would preach to everyone.

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus was on the Mount of Olives with his followers. He lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he began to float up into the air. They watched him go. They didn't take their eyes off him until the clouds covered him and they couldn't see him any more. Suddenly, two men dressed in white stood with them. This is how angels often appeared. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." So they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy. They waited there until they were filled with the Holy Spirit and received power from heaven. Then they spent the rest of their lives spreading the good news about Jesus and making disciples all over the world.

Life Question:

What is the good news about Jesus? Have you ever told someone that good news?

Jesus Selects an Apostle

But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.” (Acts 9:15)

Jesus’ disciples waited in Jerusalem like Jesus told them. On the day of Pentecost they were all together. A sound like a mighty wind filled the room. Tongues of fire appeared over each one and they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then they began to spread the good news, starting in Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders who called for Jesus’ death fought against them. They even killed one of his followers named Stephen, by stoning him. A Jewish leader named Saul guarded the clothes of those who killed Stephen. He fully approved of what they did.

Saul was raised in the Jewish religion. He was taught by Gamaliel, one of the best Jewish teachers of the law. Saul believed that Jesus was a false prophet. He thought all of Jesus’ followers deserved to die. Saul decided to do everything he could to stop them from spreading what he thought were lies. Saul went house to house searching for Jesus’ followers. If he found them, he dragged them off and threw them in prison. He kept threatening to kill the Lord’s disciples. The news of Jesus was spreading. Saul determined to stop it. He got letters from the high priest saying he could arrest anyone who followed Jesus. Then he headed for Damascus, a large city about 150 miles from Jerusalem. He planned to arrest everyone he found who followed Jesus. Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground. He heard a voice speak to him. “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Acts 9:3-6) When Saul got up, he was blind. He was led into the city. For three days he didn’t eat or drink.

Meanwhile, Jesus spoke to a man named Ananias in a vision. He told him what happened and told him where to find Saul. He told Ananias to go pray for Saul to receive his sight and receive the Holy Spirit. Ananias was afraid. He had heard about Saul. “But the

Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.'" Jesus used Saul powerfully! You may know him by his other name, the apostle Paul. Paul went on three missionary journeys, creating churches all over the world. He preached the good news before kings. He also wrote more books of the New Testament than any other writer. Finally, he was put in prison and killed for his faith in Jesus.

Life Question:

Would you still follow Jesus if you could be arrested for being a Christian?

The Devil's Destruction

The devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1 John 3:8b)

Jesus came to save us from our sins. But our sins didn't come from nowhere. Sin started way back in the Garden of Eden. The first two people God created, Adam and Eve, were tempted to disobey God. The one who tempted them is the evil one. Sometimes he is described as a snake, a dragon, the devil, or Satan. The Bible tells us that the evil one used to be an angel named Lucifer, but he tried to put himself higher than God. He was thrown out of heaven. Since then he came to earth to fight against God and try to destroy the people God loves.

While Jesus was on earth, he fought against the devil. The devil fooled people into believing lies. Jesus brought the truth. The devil caused people to be blind spiritually -- unable to see God's way. Jesus made blind people see; he opened their eyes and their minds to see the truth. The devil tormented some people. His demons, other evil spirits who followed the devil, took over their minds and bodies, throwing them into fire or causing them to hurt themselves. Jesus commanded these evil spirits to get out of people. Only then were these people free from torment. They were back in control of their bodies and in their right mind. The devil caused disease and pain. Jesus healed people who were sick. The devil led people away from God. Jesus led people to God. Jesus called the devil a thief who comes to kill and steal and destroy. Jesus came to give people life in the fullest possible way. Jesus

came to destroy the works of the devil.

The devil is still at work on the earth today. That's why there is so much sin, sorrow, suffering, violence, sickness, and death. Jesus promised his followers the help they would need to overcome all the power of the evil one. But Christians must fight against the forces of evil. The Holy Spirit came to lead those who love Jesus into truth. The armor of God is given to protect us from the devil's attacks. Jesus taught us to pray that God will keep us from falling into sin when the evil one tempts us. We have God's help, but there is still a battle going on. One day that battle will be over. Jesus will get rid of the devil forever!

Many years after Jesus went back to heaven, the apostle John was arrested for spreading the good news. He was sent to the Island of Patmos so he couldn't tell more people about Jesus. While John was there, the Lord showed him a vision of Jesus and what would happen at the end of the world. This vision showed him what Jesus would finally do with the devil. He will throw the devil into a lake of fire, burning with sulfur. He will never be able to escape to hurt or fool anyone ever again. The devil will suffer "day and night for ever and ever."

Life Questions:

Do you ever feel that you're in a war with the devil and his evil forces? What has God given you to fight against him?
(Read Ephesians 6:10-18)

God Makes All Things New

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.
(Revelation 21:1)

People worry about where they will go when they die. Jesus told his followers not to let their hearts be troubled. He said that his Father's house has many wonderful places in which to live. Jesus said he was going away to prepare a place for all who love him. He promised to come back and take his followers to that special place so they all can live with him forever.

Most people say they want to go to heaven. But heaven will be

greater than anything we can imagine. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” It will be awesome.

The book of Revelation describes what God will do to make a special place for those who love him. It’s a whole new heaven and a whole new earth. God created a beautiful earth for us to enjoy: mountains, oceans, flowers, and beautiful scenery. But this earth has been damaged. It was cursed when Adam and Eve sinned. When God’s will is finally done on earth, there will no longer be any curse. God is going to make a brand new earth where everything is perfect!

Revelation also describes a new Jerusalem from which God will rule. The city of Jerusalem on earth today is beautiful, but nothing like the new Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem will have streets paved with gold. It will have walls made of gold and filled with jewels.

The old city of Jerusalem had a great temple. The new Jerusalem will have God himself! And God’s people will see his face. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun. The Lord God will give them light. Those who love God will rule forever and ever. Revelation 22:27b says that only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will enter the city.

The disciple John heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” (Revelation 21:3-5)

Life Questions:

How is John’s description of heaven different from what you thought heaven would be like?

The Teachings of Jesus

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19a & 20a)

You've heard about the awesome things Jesus did. Jesus also came to teach. Jesus was called Rabbi, which means teacher. To really know Jesus, you must also know his teachings. He told his disciples to go make more disciples, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." If you want to be a disciple of Jesus, you must learn what he taught. Jesus made a great promise to those who learn what he taught. It says: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." (John 15:7) That's a good reason to get Jesus' words into your heart and mind.

One of Jesus' most famous sermons is called The Sermon on the Mount (He gave it on a mountainside.) In that sermon Jesus taught how to be blessed. He explained how God expects people to live. Jesus taught that it's not just what we do that matters, but what is in our hearts. He seemed to make the Old Testament law more difficult. People had heard they should love their neighbor, but Jesus told them to love their enemies too. Jesus made it clear that no one can live the way God wants without His help.

Jesus taught people what God's kingdom is like. He taught how to pray and how to forgive. He taught that God's whole law comes down to two rules: 1) Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. 2) Love others as you love yourself. Jesus used stories called parables. These stories used examples from everyday life to teach spiritual truth. These parables were like riddles. Some people didn't get the point. Sometimes even the disciples didn't get the point. Then Jesus would explain what the parable meant so the disciples could understand. Jesus taught in parables to make the meaning clear to those who loved God and to keep it hidden from those who did not love God.

Everything Jesus taught agreed with God's word in the Old Testament. When he was only twelve, Jesus knew God's word. He amazed the teachers at the temple in Jerusalem. He asked them good questions and showed that he was wise with godly wisdom. You too can get to know God's word, even though you are young. You can ask good questions. You can become wise by learning the teachings of Jesus. The word "disciple" actually means "learner."

If you want to be a disciple of Jesus, learn what he taught. God hid his truth from men who prided themselves on being wise, but showed his truth to all who opened their hearts to learn from him -- even young people. God can show his truth to you too. Jesus is the truth. His teachings will show you the truth.

Life Questions:

Do you want to be Jesus' disciple? How can you learn his teachings?