

**23:50 And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man
23:51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the
Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God;
23:52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.
23:53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the
rock, where no one had ever lain.**

Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin (23:50) who had opposed the Sanhedrin's decision to crucify Jesus (23:51). Not all the religious leaders were hostile toward Jesus. Luke says he was a good and righteous man. In Luke 6:45 Jesus said, "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good"; Joseph fulfills these words. Matthew 27:57 says he was rich and a disciple of Jesus, while Mark 15:42-43 notes that he was "a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God" (also Lk. 23:51). "Prominent" refers to either noble birth or character. John 19:38 says he was a secret disciple who feared the Jews (Mk. 15:43). Since there was a unanimous decision in the Sanhedrin of Jesus' guilt at the trial (Mk. 14:64), Joseph must not have been present.

Mustering up his courage, he went to Pilate to ask for Jesus' body (Mk. 15:43). Pilate wondered if Jesus was dead at the time of Joseph's request, so he summoned the centurion and "questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph" (Mk. 15:44-45).

All the gospels note that Joseph asked for Jesus' *body* (σῶμα *soma*) to make it clear that Jesus was dead. But this also makes it clear that the body that was missing on Sunday morning was the same body – but transformed. The Bible does not teach that Jesus was raised as a spirit (as Jehovah's Witnesses teach); the word "resurrection" is only applied to a physical body. Acts 13:29-30 clearly says, "they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead." "Him" is the body taken off the cross, placed in the tomb, and raised from the dead.

Joseph took the body and wrapped it in linen. John 19:39-42 says, "Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there."

Luke says the tomb was cut into the rock (23:53). Matthew 27:60 says it was Joseph's own new tomb. Typically, graves of this type were tunneled into the limestone rock in the hillsides in Palestine with an entrance about three feet tall; however, Mark 16:4 says that the stone was extremely large which seems to indicate the entrance was larger than normal. There are thousands of such tombs in and around Jerusalem. Edwards says that after the corpse decomposed the bones could be removed and buried, so the tomb could be used again. 2 Kings 22:20 refers to gathering bones and depositing them with the ancestors (Edwards, 703). Others say that because graves were expensive some had multiple chambers to accommodate a number of bodies (Morris, 362). Whatever the case may be, Luke wants his readers

to know that the hewn rock niche was a place where “no one had ever lain” (23:53). A tomb’s entrance was then sealed with a stone block to keep animals and grave robbers out. Because the Bible says that the stone was rolled away (24:2), many conclude that the tomb’s entrance was the type that had a stone disc that was rolled in a channel to close it. This was common but was more expensive to make; they tended to be used more by the wealthy (Edwards, 704). However, it must be said that it may have just been a large rock that plugged the entrance with no channel; there is no way to know (Bock, 1888). The impression left is that the body of Jesus was secure and inaccessible.

Through Joseph’s actions Isaiah 53:9 came to pass: “His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death.”

23:54 It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

The day before the Sabbath was called the preparation day since people had to make and set aside food, and do whatever else needed to be done so they could rest when the Sabbath came. Hirsch says, “At 3 p.m., the Hebrews began to prepare their food for the next day, and to perform all labors which were forbidden to be done on the Sabbath and yet must be done. They bathed and purified themselves, dressed in festive apparel, set their tables, and lighted their lamps” (Hirsch, ISBE, Day Before the Sabbath).

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 says, “If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.” This is not a reference to crucifixion since that was not practiced by the Jews; nevertheless, the same principle applied. Jews most commonly executed people by stoning. The criminal’s corpse was then hung on a tree; however, even the criminal was buried by sunset. The Romans would leave bodies on the cross until they decayed to deter would-be rebels.

Friday dusk to Saturday dusk was the Sabbath, so the new day, the Sabbath, was about to begin. Mark 15:42 says it was starting to get dark already: “When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath.” Likewise, Matthew 27:57 says, “it was evening.” The time reference meant that Jesus needed to be buried with haste for if they continued to prepare the body after the Sabbath started they would be working on the Sabbath, breaking Sabbath law.

The mixture of the Sanhedrin’s thinking is bizarre; they didn’t mind murdering the Son of God, but they would not tolerate ceremonial defilement. They wanted Jesus off the cross before the day ended at dusk; what they didn’t know was God wanted Jesus off the cross and buried before the day ended, as well.

23:55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.

23:56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Luke 24:10 mentions Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James, but there may have been more women present who followed Joseph to see how he laid the body in the tomb. The word for “see” means to look at something intently, “taking it in” (Edwards, 706); this makes it impossible to believe the claims of sceptics who say there was no resurrection, rather the disciples and women were mistaken about where the tomb was. It is doubtful everyone in the group would forget, and that Joseph himself would forget the location of the tomb he had just placed Jesus in. Only John hints of where the tomb’s location was. He says, “Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. . . . they laid Jesus there” (Jn. 19:41-42). The site of Jesus’ tomb is almost certainly not the “garden tomb” where visitors are directed when they visit Israel, but the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (Carson, John, 631).

Although Nicodemus had brought spices (Jn. 19:39), there was such little time before the Sabbath began that the body could not be properly prepared. Thus, the women returned home to prepare more spices and perfumes; nevertheless, they were pious Jews and obeyed Sabbath law by resting. They would return to finish the body preparation on Sunday morning after the Sabbath was over.

Typically, spices and aromatic perfumed oils, such as myrrh, were used to lessen the stench and slow decomposition. The body was washed, the chin was bound up, the eyes closed, and then the body wrapped (like a mummy) in cloth strips (“linen wrappings” – plural; Jn. 19:40) layered with spices packed around the body; it was not embalmed – that was an Egyptian practice. They then wrapped a cloth over it all. It is hard to know how far they got with the preparation of Jesus’ body, or exactly what the women intended to do on Sunday morning.

24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

24:1 is linked grammatically with the preceding verse, associating the resurrection with the burial. Literally the Greek reads, “day one of the Sabbaths” meaning the first day following the Sabbath. In other words, Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday. Luke describes the time literally as “deep dawn.” John 20:1 states it was still dark. Mark 16:2 says, “Very early on the first day of the week . . . when the sun had risen.” In other words, it appears that they went to the tomb just as the sky was getting light and they could see.

“They” is feminine in Greek, referring to the women who were at the cross (23:49) and the tomb (23:55-56).

They brought the spices they had prepared, alluding back to Lk. 23:56.

The stone sealing the tomb was extremely large (Mk. 16:4), so the women were concerned about how they were going to gain access to the body; “They were saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?’” (Mk. 16:2-3). Matthew 28:2-4 informs us how this happened: “. . . a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing

as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.” In other words, the angel caused an earthquake that rolled away the stone.

The Gospel of John gives different details which appear to be a discrepancy, but is resolved in different ways (see Bock, 1886-1888).

***24:2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,
24:3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.***

Verses 2 and 3 tell us what was found and what wasn't found. The women found that the stone had been rolled away, and they also found that the body of Jesus was gone (these thoughts are balanced – Marshall, 884). This is the first hint of resurrection – there is no body!

***24:4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;
24:5 and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?
24:6 "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee,
24:7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."***

The women were at a loss to explain what was happening. They had come to prepare the body of Jesus, but there was no body to prepare. The tomb had been opened even though it was under guard.

While they were pondering what had happened, two men (later identified as angels – Lk.24:23) suddenly appeared. Of course, their dazzling clothing lets us know that these were not just men; the apparel is common on heavenly beings (Lk. 9:29; 10:18; Acts 9:3; 22:6). Although the angels have good news, they create fear in the women who bowed their faces to the ground.

It is interesting to note the number of times Luke refers to the principle in the Mosaic law that two or three witnesses were needed to confirm every fact. There were three people who testified against Peter when he denied Jesus. There were three people who declared Jesus' innocence at the cross. The women (plural) could testify that Jesus' body was laid in the tomb on Friday and that the body was gone on Sunday morning. There are two angels that testify Jesus had risen. Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13ff), and two angels appear at Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:10).

The angels ask, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”

"Why do you seek the living One among the dead?" is a rebuke; the women had not listened to Jesus' prediction that He was to suffer and die in Jerusalem, but then rise from the dead (Lk. 9:22, 44; 13:33; 17:25; 22:37). Remembrance awakens them to the truth and leads them to belief. The light begins to dawn; Jesus DID announce that He would rise from the dead!

Jesus rose on the third day. Some would argue that this necessitates a Thursday crucifixion instead of Friday. Matthew 12:40 is used as evidence for this: "For just 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." However, sometimes when the OT is used to make analogies it is difficult to determine what is central; that is, it is hard to know what point of the analogy is to be applied. The connection between Jonah and the resurrection is the third day.

It is better to hold to the traditional Friday crucifixion. In Jesus' day, it was common to refer to a part of a day as a day. We sometimes do the same thing. I could say, "I was at camp for three days," meaning that I went there Friday afternoon and left Sunday. "Three days" need not mean three 24-hour periods of time. This is most likely what is meant when the Bible says that Jesus was three days in the tomb. In a Jewish calendar Sunday began at dusk. He was buried Friday before the sun set and was in the tomb on Saturday (6:00 PM Friday night to 6:00 PM Saturday night). The third day began on Saturday at dusk. Jesus was in the tomb on that day, as well, until He rose from the dead sometime early Sunday morning.

24:8 And they remembered His words,

24:9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

The women recall what Jesus had said (24:8), and immediately went to report that Jesus had risen from the dead to the eleven disciples and the rest of those who followed Jesus.

24:10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.

24:11 But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.

24:12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

The women's report was not immediately accepted. Jesus had died. He had laid in a tomb for three days. Dreams that Jesus was the Messiah had ended. Talk about a resurrection sounded like an imaginary hope contrary to reality.

Peter, however, had learned to believe what Jesus says, even contrary to his own convictions (Luke 5:1-11; 22:61-62). So he ran to the tomb to see for himself what had happened.

The disciples must understand that they can trust what Jesus promises. This provides another lesson for Luke's readers who cannot see Jesus, but are under fire for believing in Him. They can trust that He is alive.

When Peter arrived at the tomb he found the stone removed. Stooping and looking in, he saw only the wrappings suggesting that Jesus' body was there at one time. John 20:6-7 says, "And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself." Surely if the body had been stolen, the grave clothes would not still be there; the body would be taken

as it was wrapped. Peter “went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.” “For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead” (Jn. 20:9).

It is a moment for reflection, decision, and faith. Is resurrection the only adequate explanation for what Peter sees? Is not resurrection what Jesus promised? Has not God acted on behalf of Jesus? Is Jesus alive to carry out God's plan after all? These are questions not only for Peter in the moment of his discovery, but for all who relive that moment through Luke's retelling of the story. What else can explain these events? Can one really believe in resurrection hope? The story is not over. The apparent end has become a new beginning. Those who doubt will have their doubts laid to rest by the Lord who stands risen from his encounter with death (Bock, 1900, 1901).

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, reminding them of what was “of first importance,” he noted “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, *that he was raised on the third day* in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). It is of first importance to know that Jesus died for our sins and that He was raised from the dead. If Jesus died for our sins, and through His death our sins are forgiven, what does it matter that He rose from the dead? Why is the resurrection so important? Why is it part of the gospel?

1. The resurrection vindicated Christ.

The Jews generalized that bad things happened to bad people. To be crucified meant that the person was cursed of God. Jesus' resurrection shows that the cross was not God's judgment of a sinner, a false messiah, but that His death was sufficient, and therefore our sins can be forgiven. Paul emphasizes this in 1 Corinthians 15:17 where he argues that “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”

In other words, Paul saw a direct connection between the resurrection of Jesus and the sufficiency of His death to atone for our sins. When Jesus rose again on the third day, it was the public announcement that God was fully satisfied with the sacrificial death of his Son. In His resurrection, Jesus was vindicated. But in His vindication, we are vindicated too. In other words, Jesus' resurrection authenticates and confirms that our justification has been secured. It is evidence that Christ's work on the cross has been completed. That's why Paul says in Romans 4 that Jesus “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

2. The new birth and the benefits that flow from it are inseparably tied to, and are a direct result of the resurrection of Jesus. His future is now the future of every Christian.

1 Peter 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy *has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*”

Our new birth is called a living hope “because Christ, the ground for that hope, is ever living. The present reality of the Christian’s life is defined and determined by the reality of the past – the resurrection of Jesus Christ – and is guaranteed into the future because Christ lives forevermore” (Jobes, 1 Peter, 85).

Jesus’ resurrection not only proves that the dead will rise; it also “has inherent in it that which makes the resurrection of the believing dead inevitable” (Fee, 748), for His resurrection is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (I Cor. 15:12-28). The act of God raising Christ from the dead is a guarantee by God Himself that the believing dead will also be raised. As Hodge says, “As Christ died as the head and representative of his people, his resurrection secures and illustrates theirs. As He lives, they shall live also” (Hodge, Sys Theo II, 627).

Perhaps C. S. Lewis in his book *Miracles* said it best:

The New Testament writers speak as if Christ’s achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe. He is the ‘first fruits,’ the ‘pioneer of life.’ He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has been opened.