

DAY 4-TRUTH: JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN

Jesus Is Alive (Isaiah 53:5,9-11; John 19:17-20:18)

Was it hard to pause at the end of yesterday's Bible study? How thankful we are that the story did not end there! God's prophets foretold specific details of this amazing saga hundreds of years before they happened. Many verses in Isaiah 53 point to the things the Messiah would experience. They are not just prophecies of death and punishment; they are also promises of restoration and restitution.

John 19 describes the events of Jesus' final sentence and crucifixion. As Isaiah had prophesied, Jesus died in the company of those who had done wicked (unlawful things), even though He had done no wrong. When Jesus said, "It is finished," He knew that the debt of sin had been paid. Further fulfilling the Isaiah prophecy, Jesus' body was placed in the tomb of a rich man. Joseph of Arimathea had been a follower of Jesus, but he had kept his discipleship secret because he feared the Jews. Now, Joseph stepped forward to ask Pilate for Jesus' body. Joseph and Nicodemus (a Pharisee who also followed Jesus' teachings) took Jesus' body from the cross and wrapped it in linen cloths with the appropriate burial spices. They placed Jesus' body in a newly excavated tomb. Only the wealthy were able to afford the luxury of a personal tomb. Because of the limited descriptions of burial in the New Testament, many of us may have assumed everyone was buried in a cave-like structure with a large round stone over the opening. The truth is this type of tomb spoke of wealth. Many tombs of the less wealthy had only a rock slab to block the entrance.

Jesus had often told His followers what would happen, but they could not grasp the fact that Jesus would die and then come back to life on the third day. So, on the first day of the week, after the Sabbath was ended, Mary Magdalene approached the tomb to help finalize the burial rites for the body. What a shock! The stone was removed and Jesus was not there! Mary quickly ran to tell the disciples. Peter and John rushed back to the tomb to see for themselves. The tomb was empty! The Scripture says they believed but still did not understand.

As Mary stood crying by the empty tomb, she was aware of someone nearby but assumed it was the gardener. When the man asked why she was crying and whom she was looking for, Mary begged him to tell her where they had taken the body of Jesus. Then Jesus said, "Mary." At once Mary realized that it was Jesus who spoke to her. Jesus' words, "Don't cling to me," indicate His physical resurrection. Mary's relief and joy surely had her holding on to her Lord. In a time period and culture that often devalued women, Jesus first appeared to a woman and gave her the job of reporting His appearance to His followers. Mary had the joyous privilege of announcing the good news to the disciples. "I have seen the Lord!" Jesus is alive!

Facts and Artifacts

In addition to connecting Old Testament prophecies with New Testament fulfillments, this week of VBS links each day to real archaeological finds that further emphasize the reality of what we read in the Bible.

Today's artifact: Rolling Tomb Stone

During Jesus' lifetime, the poor or lower class utilized nearby caves for burial. Only the wealthy could purchase a tomb cut out of the rock, and only the wealthy could afford a rolling stone for the opening. In fact, very few exist. The vast majority of people would simply place a square block stone against the cave entrance.

Think About It

Have you ever had a time when you felt utterly defeated and then ... God revealed Himself in a very real way? Did you excitedly run to tell friends about it?