

T H E S T O R Y

READ THE STORY. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE.

Chapter 27: The Resurrection

Key Question: What happened to Jesus after the crucifixion?

The Tomb

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The Jewish leaders wanted the crucified bodies brought down before the Sabbath began at sunset Friday. Because crucifixion victims had to push up on their feet to breathe, the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves, guaranteeing death within minutes.¹ But when they reached Jesus, they could see he was no longer breathing.² A soldier plunged his spear into Jesus' side, piercing the lungs and heart, and causing a flow of blood and water.³ There was no doubt: he was dead.

The Jewish leaders were not unanimous in condemning Jesus. Two of them, Joseph of Arimathea⁴ and Nicodemus,⁵ placed Jesus' lifeless, battered body in a new tomb belonging to Joseph.⁶ There they wrapped it in linen strips and a shroud, using an amount of spices one would use for a king. They rolled a stone in front of the tomb

1. (a) Why had Joseph kept the fact that he was a disciple of Jesus' a secret (John 19:38)? (b) By caring for Jesus' body, Joseph and Nicodemus publicly declared they were followers. What were they risking? (c) What are ways you let non-Christians know you follow Christ? (d) If you are Jesus' disciple, prayerfully consider if there is anyone from whom you've been keeping your discipleship a secret. What can you do to change that?

¹ Exhaling required victims to push up on their wounded feet and pull with their shoulders. Breathing caused excruciating pain to their nailed feet and wrists and to their scourged backs. Crucifixion was designed to cause a slow, torturous, and humiliating death. See William D. Edwards, MD; Wesley J. Gabel, MDiv; Floyd E. Hosmer, MS, AMI, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *JAMA* 1986; 255:1455–1463.

² A victim who was no longer pushing up on his feet to exhale had stopped breathing. Jesus had died at 3:00 p.m. and his body was taken down a little before sunset. Crucifixion victims died within a few hours to a few days, often depending on how much blood they lost when, just prior to crucifixion, soldiers scourged their backs with a leather whip embedded with small iron balls and sharp sheep bones. Ibid.

³ The "water" John describes was likely the fluid that surrounds the lungs and heart (serous pleural and pericardial fluid). Jesus' sudden death likely came from a heart rupture or cardiac arrest. Ibid.

⁴ Joseph was a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin who had not consented to the vote (Matthew 27:57; Luke 23:51).

⁵ Nicodemus was a Pharisee in the Sanhedrin who had tried to stop the other leaders from condemning Jesus (John 3:1–2; John 7:50).

⁶ Matthew 27:60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53.

The Risen Lord

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Arising before dawn on Sunday, a few women courageously headed to the tomb with more spices.⁷ There they discovered an angel had rolled back the stone from the tomb and the guards were shaking in fright.

2. (a) The angel told them not to fear. What did he say happened to Jesus (Matthew 28:5–6)?
(b) What evidence did he give them (28:6)? (c) They saw the empty grave clothes, but did not understand. What did the angel tell them to do (28:7)?

Frightened and bewildered, they found the disciples and told them someone had taken the body.⁸ Peter and John ran to the tomb.

3. (a) What did the disciples see when they looked into the tomb (John 20:6–7)? (b) If someone had stolen the body, the linen strips and head cloth would have been missing or in disarray, not folded where the body had been. What did seeing the cloths like this cause John to do (20:8)? (c) What did they not understand still (20:9)? (d) Describe an event that confused you before you understood Scripture better.

⁷ For a synchronization of the gospel accounts, see [Questions about the Women at the Resurrection](#).

⁸ Mark 16:8 and John 20:2.

Crying, Mary Magdalene followed the disciples back to the tomb. After the disciples left, she looked in and saw two angels. They asked her why she was crying.

4. What did Mary answer the angels (John 20:13)?

Still not understanding, she turned and saw through her tears the figure of a man standing near.⁹ Thinking he was the gardener, she asked where the body was.

5. (a) What did the man say (John 20:16)? (b) Who was he? (c) To whom did he say he was returning (20:17)? (d) In large letters, write out what Mary told the disciples (20:18).

6. What does the fact that Jesus' first appearance was to a woman teach us about how God regards women?¹⁰

Mary had come looking for a torn and lifeless body, and instead found Jesus whole and alive, standing on feet that had so recently been impaled. It wasn't possible, and yet...!

Seeing & Believing

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Later that day, two disciples on their way to a village called Emmaus met Jesus, but didn't recognize him immediately.¹¹ Walking with them, he explained the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

⁹ Some skeptics claim Jesus must have swooned on the cross and revived in the tomb. But note that he was standing, not crawling on hands and knees, weakened and near death from blood loss, dehydration, and not having eaten for days. If he had merely swooned, Mary would have wondered how he survived and rushed to get him medical help. He also would not have inspired the frightened disciples to risk their lives and the lives of their families by boldly proclaiming his resurrection.

¹⁰ Skeptics agree that this lends credibility to the story, for the disciples would not have concocted a story in which Jesus appeared first to a woman. People of the day didn't consider a woman's testimony trustworthy.

7. (a) When the man broke bread and gave it to them, what happened to them (Luke 24:30–31)?
(b) Something about Jesus' resurrected body was a little different, so they didn't recognize him immediately. What was his body able to do (24:31)? (c) What did the two disciples realize (24:32)?

They hurried back to Jerusalem and found the still frightened disciples in a locked room,¹² talking about how Jesus had appeared to Peter. Suddenly, Jesus stood among them.

8. (a) They thought he was a ghost. What did he ask them (Luke 24:38)? (b) What did Jesus have that ghosts don't have (24:39)? (c) How did he prove he wasn't a ghost (24:39–43)?

Those present now believed, but Thomas was missing. When the others told him about the risen Lord, he didn't believe them.

9. (a) What happened a week later when the disciples were again gathered behind locked doors (John 20:26)? (b) What did Jesus tell Thomas to do (20:27)? (c) What does this tell us about Jesus' concern for Thomas? (d) What did Thomas call Jesus (20:28)?

If these titles were not true, Jesus would have rebuked Thomas!

10. (a) Who did Jesus say are blessed (20:29)? (b) Are you one of those who are thus blessed?

¹¹ This is another point which one would not expect in a concocted tale.

¹² John 20:19.

Jesus had a spiritual body,¹³ something unheard of in any culture before. Jews knew humans had physical bodies on earth, and most believed in a resurrection of the spirit. But this body that was recognizable but somewhat different, that could be touched yet could enter through locked doors, that could eat and yet disappear at will, that bore the wounds of honor from his suffering yet without harm—that was entirely new.

This was what Jesus meant when he promised his followers resurrection: one day Jesus “will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”¹⁴

Peter Restored

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At the Last Supper, Peter had promised greater faithfulness than all the other disciples: “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will,” he said.¹⁵ But that same night, warming himself in front of a fire, Peter disowned Jesus three times, saying, “I don’t know him.”¹⁶

Jesus didn’t ignore Peter’s failure, but took steps to show Peter he forgave him and wanted their relationship to continue. One morning, Jesus lit a fire and made breakfast for the disciples. Afterwards he asked Peter three times if he loved him.

11. (a) Jesus first asked Peter if he loved him “more than these,” recalling Peter’s claim to greater faithfulness than the others. How does Peter’s reply show a new humility (John 21:15)? (b) Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him, leaving no doubt that he was calling Peter to confront his three denials before that other fire. How was Jesus allowing Peter to revoke his denials (21:15–17)? (c) What tasks did Jesus give Peter each time Peter said he loved Jesus? (d) How did this show Peter he forgave and still valued Peter? (e) What does this teach us about God’s willingness to use our strengths despite our weaknesses?

¹³ See 1 Corinthians 15:42–49 for a description of the spiritual body.

¹⁴ Philippians 3:21.

¹⁵ Matthew 26:33–35.

¹⁶ Matthew 26:69–74.

12. (a) What did Jesus tell Peter would happen when he was old (John 21:18–19)? (b) How did this assure Peter that he would have another chance to show his faithfulness? (c) What did Jesus tell Peter to do (21:19)? (d) How did this demonstrate their relationship was fully restored?

As we will see next week, not many days later Peter boldly proclaimed Jesus before a crowd.

In fact, for years to come, Peter proclaimed that he knew Jesus. One day, he received another opportunity to choose between life and acknowledging his relationship to Jesus. Just as Jesus foretold, this time Peter chose crucifixion rather than denying Christ.¹⁷

The Great Commission

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Jesus chose his disciples for a purpose. They had a task before them that would take courage.

13. (a) What authority did Jesus now have (Matthew 28:18)? (b) What three things were Jesus' disciples to go and do (28:18)? (c) What should they remember as they did these things (28:20)? (d) Are you a disciple of Jesus' who has been baptized and who is obeying Jesus' commands? (e) If yes, what can you do to guide others into becoming Jesus' disciples, being baptized, and obeying Jesus?

14. (a) Why were the gospels written (John 20:31)? (b) What is the result of believing Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) and the Son of God?

The disciples had been with Jesus, watched him die, and now had witnessed him alive—the conqueror of death and the grave. Emboldened, they were ready to share what they'd seen with the world.

¹⁷ Tertullian, *Scorpiace* XV, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anfo3.v.x.xv.html>.