

THE STORY

CHAPTER 27

Summary of Chapter:

Jesus was crucified on a Friday, which was preparation day for a special Sabbath day. The Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses and so asked Pilate to have their legs broken in order to speed up death as well as to remove the bodies before the Sabbath began – Pilate agreed. The soldiers did not break the legs of Jesus because he was already dead. They confirmed this by piercing his side which brought a sudden flow of blood and water. This fulfilled what was prophesied that “Not one of his bones will be broken,” and “They will look upon the one they have pierced.”

Joseph of Arimathea, along with Nicodemus, requested permission from Pilate for the body of Jesus, which they wrapped with linen and spices, as was the Jewish custom, and placed in a new tomb. The Pharisees had heard about his promise to rise again in three days and so, to prevent his followers from stealing the body and claiming this is what happened, they had Pilate seal off the tomb and place a guard in front of it.

After the Sabbath celebrations, the next day, Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices, to counter the odours of decomposition. When they arrived at the tomb they found that the stone, used to seal the tomb off, rolled away and the guards, as if they were dead, lying next to the tomb.

An Angel of the Lord appeared to them to tell them that Jesus had risen from the dead and they were to look inside the tomb and see that he was no longer there. The angel also said to them to tell the disciples that Jesus was alive and they must go to Galilee and he would meet them there.

Peter and one other disciple, after hearing the news, ran to the tomb. The other disciple arrived first looking into the tomb, but not going in. Peter, upon arriving, went straight inside and saw the linen cloth that was used to wrap Jesus body. They then went back to where they were staying.

Mary Magdalene stayed at the tomb crying, and the risen Jesus Christ appeared to her. He told her not to hold onto him for he had not yet ascended to the Father, but she should go and tell the disciples what he had said to her.

On that same day, two of Jesus' followers were on their way to Emmaus, talking about what had happened. Jesus came alongside them and talked with them, however they were kept from recognising him. He asked them what they were discussing for he noticed they were saddened. They were surprised that he did not know what had happened a few days earlier in Jerusalem, and began telling him about what they did to Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus rebuked them for not knowing that these things had to happen according to the scriptures. Then he began to explain to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning him. When they arrived, they invited Jesus to their house to stay for it was late. At the dinner table Jesus broke bread and gave thanks and it was only then that they recognised Jesus and he disappeared from their sight. They returned to Jerusalem to tell Jesus' disciples that he was indeed alive.

While they were telling them how Jesus had appeared to them, Jesus appeared to them all in the room. They were afraid, thinking Jesus was a ghost, but he said to the “Peace be with you,” after which he showed them his hands and feet, to prove to them he was alive.

Thomas, one of Jesus disciples was not with them on this occasion when Jesus appeared to them. When they told him, he refused to believe and wanted concrete evidence that it was true that Jesus was alive. A week later they were all in the house again locked up for fear of the Jews and Jesus appeared to them again. Jesus invited Thomas to put his fingers in the holes in his hands and his hand in his side and he urged him to believe and stop doubting that he had risen from the dead.

After this, Jesus appeared to his disciples again by the Sea of Galilee. Some of the disciples were fishing and Jesus came to them on the shore and shouted to them, asking if they had caught anything. They replied negatively, to which Jesus told them to try on the other side of the boat.

When they did, they were unable to haul the net into the boat because of the large number of fish they had caught. One disciple said to Peter, "it is the Lord," to which Peter jumped out the boat and made his way to Jesus. The disciples enjoyed breakfast with Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

The eleven disciples made their way to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go in Galilee. There he asked them to go and make followers of him from all nations, baptising them and teaching them to obey all that he has commanded. He promised them that he would be with them as they did this, until the end of the age.

1. After Jesus died, why did some of his followers come to the tomb? What does this tell you about friendship and loyalty among Jesus' companions?

Some of Jesus followers, namely Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James and Salome, came to the tomb to anoint Jesus body with spices to offset the smell of decomposition. It had been a few days already and because of the restrictions of the Sabbath they had to wait until Sunday before they could anoint his body.

This event tells us that friendship with, and loyalty to Jesus, was very important to them. Just because Jesus had died, and maybe in their minds he had nothing to offer them now, they were still committed and loyal to him because of their love for him. They were real friends of Jesus and loyal and devoted to him until the end.

2. Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Why?

"A saving knowledge of Christ crucified and risen is not the mere result of right reasoning about Historical facts. It is the result of spiritual illumination to see those facts for what they really are: a revelation of the truth and glory of God in the face of Christ – who is the same yesterday, today and forever." – John Piper

And so why do we believe Jesus rose from the dead? With the help of God's Spirit these historical facts help us to see and believe that Jesus did rise from the dead.

- Jesus himself testified to his coming resurrection from the dead. (Mark 8:31, Matthew 17:22; Luke 9:22)
- The tomb was empty on Easter Sunday. Luke 24:3 tell us that "When they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." Matthew 28:13 tells us that the enemies of Jesus confirmed this by claiming that the disciples had stolen the body. The dead body of Jesus could not be found – what happened to it? Some Theories...
 - *His enemies stole the body* – If they did, they surely would have produced the body to stop the spread of Christianity. (They never claimed to have done so anyway)
 - *His friends stole the body* – Would they have preached with such authority that Jesus was raised knowing that he was not? Would they have risked their lives and accepted beatings and torture for something they knew was not true. Unlikely.
 - *Jesus was not dead, but only unconscious when they laid him in the tomb.* Could this man who had taken a flogging from the Roman soldiers, a flogging that often resulted in death because of the damage it caused to the body and loss of blood, nailed to a Roman cross for six hours, stabbed in the side to see if he was dead by the soldiers, considered dead by them as well and not needing to have his legs broken, placed in a tomb without food and water for at least 48 hours, wrapped in tight linen, suddenly wake up, have enough strength to roll the large stone away, overpower the Roman Guard who was guarding the tomb, walk about with no one noticing him until he appeared to his disciples. Not even Jesus' enemies considered this line for it was clear to them that he was dead.
 - *God raised Jesus from the dead.* This is what he said would happen, and it is what the disciples said did happen.
- The disciples were almost immediately transformed from men who were hopeless and fearful after the crucifixion into men who were confident and bold witnesses of the resurrection. (Luke 24:21; Acts 2:24, 3:15)

- The apostle Paul claimed not only had he seen the risen Christ, but that 500 others had seen him also, and many were still alive who had witnessed the resurrected Christ when he made this public claim. (1 Corinthians 15:6)
- The sheer existence of a thriving, roman empire conquering early Christian church supports the truth of the resurrection claim. The early church spread on the power of the testimony that Jesus was raised from the dead and that God had now made him both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36)

3. When Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection, how do you think their lives were changed?

Before his resurrection they were timid and fearful of the authorities and religious leaders of the day that they hid themselves from the public eye. But after Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection, their faith in him was renewed and they became bold and courageous to unashamedly proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. They were willing to give up their lives for the sake of the good news about Jesus Christ. Their lives were radically changed in terms of living for Jesus and not for anyone else, including themselves.

4. What does Jesus' resurrection from the dead reveal about God's power over death and sin?

Jesus' resurrection shows us that God's power over death and sin is far greater than death and sin themselves, and it is sufficient enough to rescue us from our sinful ways, to save us from the penalty of our sin and to give us hope and assurance that death is not the end, that through the death and resurrection of Jesus there is life eternal for all who would believe in him. If Jesus conquered sin and death through the power of God, we too, through that same power which comes to us through faith in him, can also conquer death and sin.

5. What difference can or does it make in your life knowing that Jesus is alive today?

It makes all the difference.

If Jesus is not alive today, then he is a liar, for he claimed that after his death in 3 days, he would be raised to new life. If we can't trust Jesus in this, we can't trust the other things he claimed as well, eg: being the Messiah, sent by God to save sinful men and women. Therefore our faith would be useless to us.

If Jesus is not alive today, then sin and death has not been defeated, we still face a hopeless and helpless eternity and therefore life here on this earth is all about self and living to find pleasure for oneself at all cost.

Jesus being alive, having conquered sin and death, provides us with a different view of this life. We now live with a hope that death is not the end, that sin is and can be defeated in our lives and for those who follower Jesus by faith, they will also enjoy being resurrected to new life with God forever. Knowing that Jesus is alive today, enables us to live for him with boldness and courage, even in the face of opposition.

Knowing that he is alive today, makes obeying his commands and following closely after the way he lived through faith so much more worthwhile and beneficial to us.

6. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he commands his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations." If you are a believer, when was the last time you talked to someone else about your faith in Jesus?

I presume the "someone else" in the question refers to those who are not believers yet. Maybe have those who have talked to someone else about their faith, share about their experience. If there are not many who have, challenge the group to think of a person or persons to speak to, and encourage them to return next time with those experiences.

Maybe have the group speak about the attempts they have made to show Jesus through their actions or words or responses to those who do not yet know that Jesus loves them.