

## INTRODUCTION

Today we're going to talk about "Seven Words that Rocked the World." We've all heard about the seven sayings of Jesus from the cross. But these seven words were spoken at the empty tomb of Jesus. They were spoken in a cemetery.

Cemeteries can be spooky places. After a long evening in the pub, a Scotsman named Ian took a shortcut to his house that took him through a dark cemetery. He accidentally fell into a freshly dug grave. Ian tried to climb out, but discovered the hole was too deep, so he just decided to wait until the morning when someone would come to help him out. So, he sat in the corner and covered himself with his coat and went to sleep. Sometime later he was awakened by the sound of another inebriated man who fell in the same hole. The second guy never saw Ian and started to try to climb out. Ian watched as the young man tried unsuccessfully to climb out of the grave. Finally, Ian said, "Stoop your tryin' Ya canna' get out." But believe it or not, that young man jumped all the way out of that grave!

In Matthew 28:1-15 we read about the only person in history who walked out of a grave, and is still alive today!

"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

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. Then 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.' Now I have told you.'

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, 'You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. In John 2 Jesus ran the moneychangers out of the temple for the first time. They asked Him prove that He had the authority to do that, He said,

“Destroy this temple, [meaning His body] and I will raise it again in three days.” (John 2:19) As we talk about the resurrection today, I want to first speak of the miracle, and then the meaning.

## **I. THE MIRACLE OF THE RESURRECTION**

I hesitate to call any miracle the greatest miracle in history. Last week when we examined the cross I said it was ONE of the greatest miracles in history. But as we examine the resurrection of Jesus, I can say without reservation that I believe it is the greatest miracle in all of human history. It is the heart of the Christian message. How do we KNOW the resurrection happened? Consider two sources.

### **A. First, it was communicated by the angel**

Just as angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in the fields around Bethlehem, God sent an angel to announce the resurrection. When the women arrived, the angel of the Lord was sitting on the huge stone and he made an important announcement. These are the seven words that rocked the world: “He is not here. He has risen!”

Whenever I visit Jerusalem I always take our group to a special place outside the walls of Jerusalem called the Garden Tomb. There is a rock-face cliff which looks very much like the face of a skull. Not far from there archeologists discovered an empty tomb. It was a very expensive tomb; with places for several bodies. It had to be the tomb of a wealthy man. The Bible prophesied in Isaiah 53:9 that the Messiah would “make his grave with the rich.” The New Testament says Jesus was placed in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, who was a wealthy man. The scripture says it was a new tomb, and had never been used before. A few years ago when scientists took microscopic samples from the soil and rocks in this tomb, they found no microscopic trace of human remains. So if it was His tomb, Jesus was the first and last to use it.

The angel invited the women to “come and see the place where He lay.” So I invite you accept the angel’s invitation. Investigate the empty tomb. One of the greatest proofs of the resurrection is the fact that no one has ever produced the corpse of Jesus. The Romans couldn’t be convicted of murder in an American courtroom today because there was no dead body! Even if you’re a skeptic, and atheist, or an agnostic, you’ve got to come up with an answer to this question: What happened to the body of Jesus? According to the angel, “He is not here. He has risen!” Not only was it communicated by the angel,

### **B. It was confirmed by eyewitnesses**

The absence of a body alone is not a compelling argument for the resurrection. But when you combine it with the fact that a living, breathing Jesus appeared on several occasions to His disciples, you either have to say the account is fictional, or Jesus really came back from the dead.

On the first Sunday evening, Jesus suddenly appeared to His disciples from behind closed doors. He invited the disciples to feel His hands and feet—He even invited Thomas to put his hands in the wound in His side. Can you imagine the wonder and the awe as the same folks who witnessed the savage crucifixion seeing Jesus alive? No wonder Thomas fell to his knees and

cried, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28) But Jesus didn't just make one or two appearances. The Bible says during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension He made numerous appearances.

The Bible says, "He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:4-6)

There are two theories that skeptics have raised to explain away the resurrection. First, they claim the disciples stole the body of Jesus. Our text points out that the Jewish leaders bribed the Roman soldiers to say the disciples of Jesus had stolen His body while they were asleep. First of all, if they were asleep how would they know WHO stole the body? But the argument that they stole the body doesn't make sense. If the disciples were dishonest enough to steal the body and fabricate a lie, surely they did it for selfish gain. What did they get? They were tortured, beaten, crucified upside down, and beheaded. When faced with torture and death, don't you think one of those 500 eye-witnesses would have changed their story and said, "We made it all up?" But they went to their deaths claiming to have seen the risen Christ.

Chuck Colson is a respected Christian leader and author. But in the early 1970s he was sent to prison for being a part of the cover up of the Watergate scandal. At first, he and his friends lied to investigators about their role, so he is qualified to comment on lying to cover the truth. Here's what he writes about the claim that the disciples stole the body and lied about it: "If six Harvard and Yale educated men could not stand a modicum of media scrutiny to protect the most powerful man on earth, how likely is it that eleven uneducated fishermen could withstand torture, imprisonment and death to cover a hoax concerning an obscure Jewish rabbi. As incredible as the resurrection may seem, a cover-up is even more incredible."

The second hypothesis to explain away the miracle is the "swoon theory." This claims Jesus really didn't die. He was merely unconscious, and once He was laid in the cool tomb, He revived and escaped. Of course, this theory doesn't explain how He was unable to unwrap himself from eighty pounds of bandages soaked with spices prepared by Joseph of Arimathea or how He moved a stone weighing two tons.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee was one of my favorite Bible teachers. He's with the Lord now, but when he had his radio program, a lady wrote him a letter saying, "Our preacher said that on Easter Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed him back to health. What do you think?" Dr. McGee replied, "Dear Sister, beat your preacher with a leather whip. Nail him to a cross. Hang him in the sun for six hours. Run a spear through his heart. Embalm him. Put him in an airless tomb for three days. Then see what happens."

The angel declared, "He is not here. He has risen!" The disciples went to their graves affirming that they had seen Jesus alive and in the flesh. It was a miracle, but let's go beyond the miracle and talk about:

## **II. THE MEANING OF THE RESURRECTION**

The resurrection changes everything. If indeed, Jesus was raised from the dead, what does that mean for us?

### **A. Jesus is more than a man**

Some people say if there had been no resurrection Jesus would still be remembered today as simply a great teacher. I disagree. Had there been no resurrection, we would never have heard of Jesus. His influence would have been buried with Him in the tomb. He would have been among the thousands of obscure teachers from history who gathered a flock of followers who disbanded after their teacher's death.

If there is no resurrection, we really are a bunch of fools. Paul contemplated that issue when he wrote: "If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ. And face it— if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors...If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is Christ has been raised up." (1 Corinthians 15:13-18 *The Message*)

Scholars agree that among the major religions of the world, Christianity is the only faith that teaches the bodily resurrection of its founder. Buddhists teach Gautama Buddha died at age 80 and was cremated in India around 480 B.C. However, many Buddhists make a pilgrimage to worship at the Temple of the Tooth in Sri Lanka, which is said to contain the right front tooth of Buddha. Abraham is considered the Father of Judaism, and you can visit his tomb near Hebron. Mohammed died June 8, 632 at age 63 A.D. He was buried in Medina. Millions of Muslims visit his tomb in Saudi Arabia every year. Mohammed never claimed to be God, or that he would rise from the dead.

Jesus stands alone as a man who claimed to be alive before Abraham and He predicted He would come back from the grave. As C.S. Lewis aptly reasoned, you cannot simply call Jesus a good man. He was either a lunatic, who thought He was God and really wasn't. Or he was a liar who claimed to be God and knew He wasn't. And the only third option is that He is Lord! He is who He claimed to be and He is alive forevermore.

### **B. I can be forgiven**

The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Imagine that in order to get to heaven you have to jump in one single leap from here to California. We could all try. I might make it off these steps. Some of you couldn't jump that far. Some of you younger folks might even make it to the front pew. Bryan Clay, the gold medal Decathlon winner can jump 28 feet. He could make it to the fourth pew. But the truth is we ALL fall short.

But the good news is that Jesus died on the cross to become the bridge to span the gap we couldn't jump across. Colossians 2:14 says Jesus took our sins out of the way, nailing them to His cross. But if He had never come back from the dead, we would still be lost in our sins. When He came forth from the grave He conquered sin and death.

Believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a key factor in obtaining forgiveness. The Bible says, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be SAVED." (Romans 10:9)

We throw the word "saved" around a lot, so just what are we "saved from?" We're saved from the punishment for our sins, which is hell. Why doesn't the Bible say, "Believe in your heart that Jesus was born of a virgin?" Or "Believe that Jesus walked on water?" Or "Believe that Jesus healed a blind man?" Why? Because it is the resurrection that makes Jesus totally unique among all the people who have ever walked on the earth. The only way you can have your sins forgiven is to believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

### **C. I don't have to fear death**

Americans don't like to talk about death. We avoid it by using words like "he passed on" or we talk about "the deceased." Human beings are the only creatures that know they're going to die, and they are desperately trying to forget about it.

Many people fear death because they believe death is the end. Bertrand Russell was a 20th century philosopher and an atheist. As he approached his death in 1970, he wrote: "The life of Man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach and where none can tarry long. One by one, as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent Death." Compare that to the words of Jesus Christ, God: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." (John 11:26)

Because of Jesus resurrection, we don't have to fear death. The Bible says, "Death has been swallowed up in victory. 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

I once heard about a mother who took her two children to a park on a spring day. She had an older son and a younger daughter, and they were enjoying a picnic. Suddenly a bumblebee flew up and landed on the son's arm. As he brushed it away, it stung him. He began to cry because of the pain. The bee was still buzzing around and his little sister was terrified. She started screaming in fear. After putting a wet cloth on her son's arm, the mother took her daughter in her arms she said, "Sweetheart, settle down. Don't worry." She removed the wet cloth from her son's arm and said, "Look at your brother's arm. Do you see that little black stinger? A bee can only sting once because he leaves his stinger when he stings someone. That old bee can buzz you and bother you, but he can't sting you because your brother already took the stinger."

That's a beautiful picture of what Jesus did for us. Jesus took the sting of death in His body. Since the resurrection, death can buzz you and bother you, but Praise God, it can't sting you! Jesus took the sting for us.

### **CONCLUSION**

Elwood McQuaid write a powerful poem describing how Jesus conquered death. The poem begins just after Jesus has been taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb. Father time enters into a conversation with King Death.

Father Time met pale King Death  
Sitting by a tomb;  
"Hello, old friend, I guess you're here  
To seal somebody's doom."

"You might say that," replied Death,  
As a smile slid up his face;  
"Inside reposes that Jesus man  
Who said He'd save the race."

Time said, "Say, why you guarding just one grave  
With all your vast domain?  
Seems like you'd be out rambling 'round  
And smiting folks with pain."

Death said, "Well, this one's something special,  
He challenged me, they say;  
Said he'd rest here just three days,  
Then stir and walk away.

Now I'm the conqueror, you know,  
They don't talk up to me;  
When I step in to cut 'em down,  
It's for eternity."

It's a rather lengthy poem, so I won't read it all. For each of the next two days, Father Time stops by the tomb to find Death still waiting. Death is supremely confident, and arrogantly states that he is certain that Jesus will stay in the tomb. We'll pick up the narrative on the third morning.

Next day, Time was quite surprised to see; Death quivering on the ground in frightful agony. His eyes were set, his throat was marked, his clothes in disarray. It wasn't difficult to see that Death had had his day.

"What happened, Death," said Father Time,  
"What makes you look so bad?  
I've never seen you shake this way  
Or look so scared and sad."

Death pulled himself up on a rock  
Looking sick and humble,  
Hung his head and wrung his hands,

And Time could hear him mumble.

"I was sitting here before the dawn,  
About to take my stroll;  
When all at once this whole, wide world  
Began to reel and roll.

That great, big stone jumped off the door  
And skipped on down the hill;  
Then everything grew dark and quiet,  
Seemed like the earth stood still.

I saw Him standing in the door,  
He didn't move or speak;  
Just looked at me and all at once  
I felt so tired and weak.

He came and got a hold of me  
And threw me to the ground;  
He put His foot here on my neck  
And He took my keys and crown.

Two angels came to talk with Him,  
They glistened like the sun;  
Jesus said, "The plan's all finished,  
Redemption's work is done!"

...

Time and Death met once again,  
Off yonder by the gate.  
"How are you, Death," asked Father Time,  
"I've wondered 'bout your fate."

Death said, "I'm just a servant now,  
There's little time to roam;  
I just open up this old gate,  
And help the saints go home!"

*"Death Meets His Master," Elwood McQuaid\**

The world was forever changed when Jesus walked out of that tomb. How do you know for certain the resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact? Let me compare it to another historical event. On October 19, 1781, British General Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington at Yorktown. This was the last battle of the Revolutionary War and led to our independence. How many of you were there when the British General Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington

at Yorktown? Well how do you know it happened? Have you seen photographs or a YouTube of the surrender? So how do we know it happened? I believe it happened because we have the reliable record of eyewitnesses who were there. But there is another reason why we know it happened. Look around. Our nation is no longer a British colony. We don't speak with British accents and have tea and crumpets every afternoon. We don't submit to the rule of the Queen or the laws of Parliament. We elect our own President and members of Congress. We are the United States of America! And this is because the American army defeated the British.

I wasn't there when Jesus walked out of the tomb, but I believe the word of the eyewitnesses. But when I look at our world, I realize that it is different because Jesus is alive. Millions of Christians are making the world a better place. Look at the thousands of Christian hospitals and charitable organizations. We no longer live under the rule and reign of death and the grave.

"Because He lives I can face tomorrow! Because He lives all fear is gone. And I know He holds my future; and life is worth the living; just because He lives!"

*\*Full text available at the end of this document*

## OUTLINE

### I. THE MIRACLE OF THE RESURRECTION

#### A. Communicated by the angel

Seven words that rocked the world: He is not here. He has risen!

#### B. Confirmed by eyewitnesses

"He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep." *1 Corinthians 15:4-6*

### II. THE MEANING OF THE RESURRECTION

#### A. Jesus is more than a man

"If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ. And face it— if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors...If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is Christ has been raised up." *1 Corinthians 15:13-18 The Message*

#### B. I can be forgiven

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be **SAVED**." *Romans 10:9*

#### C. I don't have to fear death

"Death has been swallowed up in victory. 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." *1 Corinthians 15:54-57*

## Death Meets His Master

by Elwood McQuaid

Father Time met pale King Death  
Sittin' by a tomb.  
"Hello, old friend, I guess you're here  
To seal somebody's doom."

"You might say that," sly Death replied.  
A smile slid up his face.  
"Inside reposes that Jesus man  
Who said He's save the race?"

"And you, Time, why you stoppin' here?  
Don't you have things to do?"  
"I come each day to draw the veil  
And let the mornin' through."

"Say, why you watchin' jus' one grave,  
With all your vast domain?  
Looks like you'd be out ramblin' 'round  
And smitin' folks with pain."

"Well, this one's somethin' special.  
He challenged me, they say.  
Said He's rest here just three days  
Then stir and walk away."

"Now I'm the conqueror you know,  
They don't talk up to me.  
When I steps in to cut 'em down  
It's for eternity."

"I sure can testify to that,"  
Responded Father Time.  
"I ain't seen one shake off the dust  
Since you been in your prime."

"Well, I got other things to do,  
I must be on my way.  
I'll see you when I come back by  
To make another day."

So whiskered Time went up the hill  
To bid the sun to rise.  
He left Death standin' by the tomb  
Lookin' strong an' wise.

Next day, Time ambled by again,  
"And how are things?" he queried.  
"Kinda quiet," Death replied.  
"I'm startin' to be wearied."

"I won't be here when you come by  
About this time tomorrow.  
I'm anxious to be on my way,

An' spread some grief and sorrow."

Now Father Time was quite surprised  
When he came back to see  
Death a quiverin' on the ground  
In frightful agony!

His eyes were set, his throat was marked,  
His clothes in disarray.  
It wasn't difficult to see  
That Death had had his day.

"What happened, Death?" asked Father Time,  
"What makes you look so bad?  
I've never see you shake this way  
Or seem so scared and sad."

Death pulled himself up on a rock  
A-lookin' sick an' humble.  
Hung his head an' wrung his hands  
And Time could hear him mumble.

"Was sittin' here before the dawn  
About to take my stroll  
When all at once this whole wide world  
Began to reel and roll.

"That rollin' stone jumped off the door  
An' skipped on down the hill.  
Then everything grew dark and quiet,  
Seemed like the earth stood still.

"I saw Him standin' in the door,  
He didn't move or speak,  
Just looked at me an' all at once  
I felt so tired and weak.

"He came and got a hold on me,  
And threw me to the grou'  
Put His foot here on my neck  
Then took my keys an' crown.

"Two angels came to talk with Him,  
They glistened like the sun.  
He said, 'The plan's all finished now,  
Redemption's work is done.'

"As they passed the garden gate  
I heard Him say, just then,  
He's settin' free my captives  
And givin' gifts to men."

Time and Death met once again  
Off yonder by the gate.  
"It's good to see you," said Old Time,  
"I've wondered 'bout your fate."

"I'm just a lowly servant now,  
There's little time to roam,  
I just push open this old gate  
And help the saints get home!"

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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*David O. Dykes, Pastor  
Green Acres Baptist Church  
Tyler, Texas*