

Luke 24:1 - 12 The Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it happened that while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel; 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? 6 "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 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." 8 And they remembered His words, 9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 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. 11 And these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. 12 [But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at that which had happened.]

Earlier this week we finally succumbed and ordered a different internet provider. That meant that an installer had to come and put up a radio receiver on the side of the house.

A young man showed up and as he walked up the sidewalk he was carefully adjusting a white paper face mask. I told him I'd had 3 pokes and was not sick and he simply stated, it's just better if I wear it.

It's a simple reminder of the fact that a huge sector of society does not share the same mindset about the fact of imminent death that we christians share.

I have been a christian for 52 years and I forget and perhaps take a little

bit for granted the freedom I have in Christ to not constantly be aware of and in fear of my mortality.

As christians we rise each day and celebrate life! Not just the current version either. We celebrate the fact that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling with us, and in us, a source of inner joy in every circumstance. And we celebrate that our relationship with God of very God, by His indwelling Spirit is only just the down payment of a future life with Him in glory forever.

I want people to see the glory of God shining in my face and eyes and expressions and it takes some duress to get me to put the mask on that covers up the intelligence God gave me as an image bearer.

We face life with joy and the death of this body is simply the turning of a page in a book where the next chapter is full of promises that would make me want that, more than this.

I forget that others live in fear and panic that this is all there is and that death is the end. You live briefly. You die. You go in the ground. You de-compose. You turn back into dirt. Why would anyone think otherwise? We have hard evidence. We understand the process of decay. We understand when life departs and rigor mortis sets in. The science isn't difficult and the mortality rate is easy to calculate. It's 100%.

Why then am I carefree and joyful while others are in a continual state of dread? Well, it turns out there's a book that explains the whole thing very clearly.

The Creator who owns everything. The life that He gives all things in their life cycles. The warning of death that He gave to His image bearers. Their dis-obedience and fall into that death cycle, and His subsequent provision to purchase men out of that cycle of death and

punishment.

Who would believe such a thing, and where is the proof, the evidence. If you turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 11, there is a long list of men and women who believed without evidence, simply because God said so. Hero's of faith.

God said it, I believe it, that settles it. A bumper sticker we used to see. We could abbreviate that thought even further. God said it that settles it. Whether I believe or not adds nothing to the ultimate equation.

I talk to people and they tell me they don't believe what the Bible says, they don't believe in God, any God, and I go away thinking, good luck with that argument on judgement day. Oh, you didn't believe? OK, I see then. That clears everything up. Come on in anyways? No. I don't think so.

God substantiates everything He says and does with evidence. The creation is evidence of His being and His intelligence, and His goodness.

Death and decay and wickedness are evidence that what is written in Genesis 3 is fact. Irrefutable fact. Perhaps if you cannot get out of Chapter 3 of the book without so much irrefutable evidence of truth that is unknowable in any other way, you should pay attention to the rest?

There's no other way to know how all of this was created except for the Creator to tell us. And there's also no other way to explain wickedness and death, because there are no eye witnesses, again, except God should kindly tell us.

We look around and the evidence of both of those facts is overwhelming. Literally overwhelming. Unarguable. Vast intelligent creation. Science simply magnifies what cannot be explained except for the Creator telling us.

Likewise we don't have to look very far to see the stink of decay and the evidence of evil. About one foot down from my brain, inside my heart, is overwhelming evidence that I have fallen from the original intent of creation and death is simply a date on the calendar that I can't change. Try as I may with all the click bate promises on my computer. It's advancing on me daily. Just like Genesis 3 said.

Imagine! A book that defines the problem with evidence and gives a solution. With evidence.

God selected a people, a family, generated from a single man who He chose, in order that this family, this race of people would become a nation, and they would be the vehicle that God revealed His truths, and also through which, a promised Son would be born who would conquer death and give life to all who would believe.

Every problem that begins in Genesis chapter 3 at the fall, sin, death, evil, the forfeiture of this planet to be ruled by the serpent, Satan, the resulting wickedness of men and evil everywhere, the chaos of sinful rebellion against God of an entire planet, all of it is solved by the end of this book. It all makes sense. It all fits together perfectly.

The old heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11 believed God simply because He said so. The Psalmist says; *“I know that someday I will wake in His likeness,”* or whether it is Job who says, *“Though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”* They looked forward to the promise of redemption from the curse of death.

But we have stronger evidence than these heroes had. The promised Son came. He died a brutal death He did not deserve. No sin that causes death was found in Him. No wages of sin was due Him. He lived a perfect and sinless life. And He died, in our place, taking our sins upon Himself so that He could declare us righteous.

He takes our sins and embraces the punishment of death, even the brutal death on a cross, and He gives to me His righteousness.

How do I know. Is there evidence that something so magnificent actually happened? The cause of my death sentence removed. Eternal life promised to me in glorious righteousness with God! Is there any evidence that these promises are true?

Yes, there is, and in fact it is the single point of departure that makes christianity different from any other religion dreamed up by fallen men and Satan.

Jesus died, He was pronounced dead by multiple tests and witnesses, he was buried in a tomb, and He rose up again from the dead. He defeated death. He rose from the dead on the third day as He said He would, and we have multiples of multiples of believable witnesses to this evidence.

Paul writes to the Corinthians in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians;
“Now, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who are asleep, for since by a man came death,” namely Adam, “by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive, but each in his own order. Christ the firstfruits and after that, those who are Christs at His coming.”

We are going to look at just a tiny bit of the overwhelming evidence of His resurrection from the dead this morning.

But first let's pick up where we left off in Luke. The women, those dear ladies who loved Jesus and who had been following Him from Galilee, on the afternoon of His crucifixion in shock and horror had prepared spices for His body. But they ran out of time and had to wait because of the Passover Sabbath day.

Then, unbeknownst to them, the ruling Pharisees and High Priests had asked Pilate for a guard. They knew about the stone being placed at the entrance to the tomb, but not about the soldiers.

But they will not see any soldiers when they return at dawn, the first day of the week. Why? Matthew tells us;

1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 2 And behold, 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. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow; 4 and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

The big bad Roman guard detail become sort of paralyzed. In a few verses, after they regained enough adrenalin to flee, we find them in Jerusalem explaining to the chief priests what has happened.

11b behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and counseled together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' 14 "And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble." 15 And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.

The chief priests and rulers never questioned the validity of the fantastic story the guards had to relay. On some level, they know they're dealing with something far bigger than a galilean trouble maker. So they opt for the incredibly unbelievable story that the guards, the Roman guard was sleeping and someone rolled that big stone away and stole the body of

Jesus.

It must have been a sizeable payment, because a Roman guard detail could lose their lives over such a ridiculous failure. Somebody stole the body while we were sleeping? Wow. So the Jews not only have to pay the guards to keep silent in an embarrassment, but they have to fix things between the soldiers and Pilate.

An angel comes and rolls the stone away and the guard is first paralyzed and then flees their post. Nothing less than an angel would suffice to make the story even believable.

Someone has well said that the angel didn't roll the stone away so Jesus could get out, he did it so we could go in! We don't get a view of the actual resurrection in the moments that it happened. Nobody got to actually witness that. Only one person was there. And He was dead, until He wasn't.

What we get to witness is that the tomb is empty. The angel rolled the stone away so that we could have lots of witnesses that went in to that tomb, witnessed the folded grave clothes, and reported that truth for us.

Why is it the women who get to be the first witnesses to the miracle of miracles? Because the disciples had fled. Only one disciple is at the grave scene. One witness isn't enough. But there were many women.

Let's pick up the story now in Luke's gospel.

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

This is the same group of women who we left a few weeks ago at the close of Luke 23. They had witnessed the horrible death on the cross. They had followed Nicodemus and Joseph in order to know where the

tomb was that Jesus was laid in.

They had prepared the spices, a token of honor and love and then they are stalled while Passover and Sabbath are happening. They have to wait. But now the window is open. Dawn of Sunday, the first day of the week.

John actually has Mary Magdalene running well ahead of these ladies carrying the spices.

1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. 2 And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid Him. Jn. 20

We know that Nicodemus spices were a hundred pound weight. Perhaps these ladies are struggling getting heavy spices moved and they send Mary ahead to figure out the situation with getting access? They knew the stone was rolled in place. They didn't necessarily know that it had been sealed and had a guard. They wouldn't know about the angels moving the stone.

Mary apparently freaks out when she sees the stone rolled away and comes to the immediate conclusion that the body is stolen, and makes a quick exit to go get Peter and John in a different direction. That's the best way to harmonize the accounts. When we get to heaven we'll find out all the details. Meanwhile the rest of the ladies get there.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it happened that while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel;

Angels very often take the appearance of men. It was angels who appeared as men who went to deliver Lot from Sodom. No surprises here. They appear as men but their clothing is dazzling. Bright shining luminous clothing. Obviously nothing the ladies have witnessed on earth. We have Hollywood to help. We can picture how this perhaps may have looked. Clothing shining like the glow of neon. Luminous and bright. Holy angels

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?"

By the way . . . the women are doing better than the men. The guards were catatonic with fright. Paralyzed. Then they fled. In a way, that is as it should be. The guards are on a mission for the enemy. These women are friends.

They quickly take the position of submission, bowing their faces to the ground. Also terrified. Can you imagine!?

And the angels in the form of men ask a spectacular question. *"Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"*

Why are you looking for someone who is alive in a tomb in a graveyard?

My dad, when I was about 8 years old or so, we lived across the street from Donna who is married to Jeff, and down on Foothill blvd. I think about Tyler street or maybe Bledsoe there was kind of a weird unkept pioneer graveyard. And we were driving past there one day and my dad said, I heard if you live more than 3 blocks away from this graveyard you can't be buried here. And of course us kids said, Really, why? And dad said, because if you live 3 blocks from the graveyard you're alive and they only bury dead people there. He had a lot of jokes like that. Dumb kids. We fell for it every time.

But in reality, he said the same thing that this angel just said to the women. Why are you looking for an alive person among the dead? What would a living person be doing here. Dead people are here. Jesus is alive.

And in their defense, the last time they saw Him, He was very very dead. And so far, dead people who come back to life are few. Although Israel has the highest rate of occurrence on the planet. The prophets had raised a couple. And Jesus had reversed death 3 times? Or is it 4.

But those few times were always at the hand of a prophet or messiah to show the power of God so that people would believe. So far, nobody has raised himself up from the dead.

But the angel just keeps right on as if this wasn't the most phenomenal miracle since God spoke the worlds into being. He continues right on as if looking for Jesus in a graveyard is the most illogical thing anyone ever did.

6 "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 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."

He had told them exactly that, over and over again, but there just wasn't any way for pre-resurrection of Jesus minds to actually comprehend. They chose to dismiss it from their minds because, (1) it was unthinkable to them. Untenable. A dead Messiah??? and (2) when Peter had taken up that fight, had tried to protest that a dead messiah was preposterous, he got shut down fiercely! *Get thee behind me Satan!*

Colossians 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

He is the prōtotokos the prototype, the first of many. Since Adam, all have died. Death reigned over all. Until Jesus. They killed Jesus but death couldn't hold Him. He came out of the grave on the morning of the 3rd day. Death is vanquished by Jesus.

There is a sense in which Satan captured the entire human race, the pinnacle of God's creation, the image bearers of God, captured and spoiled by Satan. And death, eternal separation from God in torment, reigned, because of sin. All sinned, all were dead. Jesus is the prototype of someone outside of that curse. They killed Jesus but death could not hold Him. He rose up from the grave.

And the good news is that in Him, because of His sinless life and His payment for sins by His death in our place, He can give that same resurrection life to all of us. Jesus has beaten death, and the door is thrown open for us to follow . . . in Him.

In the book of Acts, as the church is called out of this condemned world, by God, and assembled together in Jesus, every sermon recorded there by Peter or Paul is about the resurrection of Jesus.

All of our hope in forgiveness of sins and eternal life together with God in glory is based right here. Jesus rose up from the dead. If Jesus didn't rise up from the grave, christianity is a non-starter. The New Testament would have never been written. Just another dead jew.

But the whole point of the Jews as a nation, as a family, as a people chosen by God was to look forward to this single person, this single event which opens up the gates of heaven.

Jesus told them; *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”* Jn. 8:56 Likewise, all of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:13 *All these people died in faith, without having received*

the things they were promised. However, they saw them and welcomed them from afar. And they acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

The faithful jews looked forward to this morning when the gates of heaven would burst open in this prototype, Jesus. And faithful christians and completed jews look back to this event. Eternal life is opened for every soul who will enjoy forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God forever, right here. Jesus is our prototype. The firstborn of many sons. He is the true Son, in Him we are all adopted sons and daughters.

8 And they remembered His words, 9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 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.

I had an astonished call from my grandson a couple of evenings ago. Is it really true that women cannot preach?! Why?? He found that nearly impossible to reckon with. Yet it is spelled out succinctly in scripture.

But God has not forgotten women. The seed of the woman, clear back at the fall, the seed of the woman is the key to our deliverance. And our christian faith is based on the witness and testimony of these women.

The disciples were scattered in terror. Only one disciple witnessed the death of Jesus. Just John. So we can't base anything on a single witness. But the women watched His agonizing death. And those same women are the basis of the reliable witnesses that the tomb was empty. The grave clothes are neatly folded.

We have the names of these women because the basis of the reliable witness of the resurrection is based with them, and without that witness, christianity doesn't exist. The women watched Him die. The women found the tomb had been vacated.

11 And these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. 12 [But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at that which had happened.]

The initial reaction of the apostles is that they are hearing nonsense. An empty tomb. Angels. Stones rolled away. Nonsense.

But Peter, impetuous Peter runs to the tomb to investigate. Discovery. And we find out in John's gospel, not Peter alone, but Peter and John run to the tomb. And John is faster than Peter. Peter may be the natural leader of the group, but John is younger and faster.

John 20:3 Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb. 4 And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. 6 Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

Mary has jumped to the conclusion that the body was stolen. She got there first, in the dark. She didn't see the angels, she only saw the stone rolled away, and she runs to tell the disciples.

But the other women see and listen to the angels. And when John gets there, he looks in, and then when Peter gets there, he goes inside, and the evidence is; the tomb is empty, and the grave cloths are neatly folded lying in 2 different places.

Grave robbers would have a Roman army to deal with. A grave sealed with a large stone. And if somehow they could get past those barriers, would they remove the cloths from the body and fold them neatly and then scamper off with a naked decomposing corpse. Of course not.

Peter and John witnessed the empty tomb and the grave clothes and they believed. Soon they will see Him and talk to the risen Christ.

The early believers, the forming church, after Pentecost began to meet together not on Saturday, the Sabbath, but on Sunday, the first day after Sabbath because they were celebrating a risen Christ on the day He rose up from the dead. 2,000 years later we still meet on Sunday. There is unbroken continuity from this resurrection day morning to today.

It was the preaching of the resurrection in the book of Acts that turned the whole world upside down. We are waiting for a risen Christ to return and gather us unto Himself and take us to our home in heaven.

We believe all of that can happen, based on this single miracle. The empty tomb. The risen Christ.