

# Not Here - But Risen

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*“And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.” Luke 24:5-6.*

Many things appeared very confused that morning of the resurrection of Christ from the grave. The story of the guards was already being spread. They had testified, having been paid for repeating a false story, that while they slept the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus. They did not tell the people how frightened they had been at the earthquake that early morning nor their reaction to the appearance of angels.

The women who had followed Christ in much of His ministry also had their own plans for this early morning. Because the Sabbath had been nigh at hand, the women were unable to care for the body of Christ properly after it was taken from the cross. Now, early on this first day of the week, these women were on their way to the tomb to complete their final task of love: preparing the body of Christ properly for burial. To these women the angels at the tomb speak, “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.” What few words can beautifully emphasize such profound truths!

“He is not here!” The women and the disciples had to learn that. They had seen in the Christ all of their hope. They were convinced that He was truthfully that promised Messiah for which Israel looked. His words and His works confirmed this conviction.

But their hopes had been dashed to pieces the past Friday. That horrible cross appeared to be the final end. The grave was the seal upon His death. His followers saw nothing beyond that grave. In that attitude the women had also come that Sunday morning. They came to see the last remains of one dear to them. They came to anoint His body for burial. They came to weep at this separation which had taken place.

In a certain way, this conviction that the grave is the end can be seen in the celebration of Easter or “resurrection” by the world. The world in this season will commemorate the “resurrection” by donning its Easter finery and by looking for the “new life” which begins to appear in this springtime. But of a literal resurrection of the promised Messiah from the dead, the world will have nothing. This truth it will scorn.

The question of the angels points up the foolishness of the women in coming now to the tomb. Why do they seek the living among the dead? Christ is the Living Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity. In that sense, He lives forever. No man can kill God. But the question of the angels points also to the truth that the Christ in His human body is living. The women should have known that. They knew the words of prophecy. They had heard the words of Christ Who instructed them. Yes, He must die. This was essential for the very salvation and glorification of His people. One must bear the wrath of God for our sins and endure that until this wrath was “burned out.” The full justice of God must be satisfied. Of this both the prophets and Christ had spoken.

But Christ had also told them more. The third day He must rise again as Victor over sin and death and the grave. The women (and all the disciples) ought to have remembered His words. They ought not to have been looking for their Savior in the place of the dead. They who confessed that Christ was the promised Messiah ought to have been waiting for the resurrected Christ to manifest Himself to them. But in their foolishness and ignorance they go to the tomb in tears.

The angels answer the women. "He is not here." That was an obvious fact, for the grave was empty except for the grave clothing which had not been disturbed. The women were painfully aware of the fact that He was not there. Does the obvious have to be emphasized?

But this is a significant fact. First, the empty grave with its grave clothing is mute testimony of the falsity of the story of the guards. His body could not have been stolen.

Christ is not here because He is risen from the dead. Don't you see that, women? The tomb is empty. The body was definitely not stolen. There is then only one answer: He is risen from the dead and has the victory over sin and the grave. Christ had assumed our sins. If guilt were not removed through His sacrifice, He would remain in the tomb. But the fact that He is not here is proof that His was the victory. Sin and its guilt are taken away.

But even more. That He is not here points to the truth that Christ is no longer of the earth earthly. Lazarus and others were also raised from the dead. They came back to this earth and for a time enjoyed their former relationships until once more they died. Christ did not so arise. He did not come forth in order to live again on this earth with His disciples. His resurrection is through death and the grave a resurrection into the heavenly.

Christ had completed His work. Obedient He was even unto death. He had paid for the sins of His people and had merited for them eternal life and glory. And He Himself is first partaker of that heavenly life. No, He is not here not on this earth with that old flesh and blood again. He is victorious and therefore now possesses that body which is fit to inhabit the kingdom of heaven. The women too must not look anymore for those old relationships to be restored. He will continue to be with His people but now through His Comforter Who dwells in their hearts.

Christ is risen even as He had said. God raised Him from the dead; but also, Christ Himself arose from the dead. It is this which the women and we must see. They must not look anymore for an earthly king who would reign in Jerusalem. They must now look for the King of kings Who shall ascend into heaven and reign at the right hand of God over all creation. This was the fulfillment of God's promise. The women then ought to be filled with joy. They came to mourn One whom they deeply loved. Now they must rejoice in this message of His complete victory. Not only is the Christ raised from the tomb, but they, through His work, are also raised from the dead and given newness of life. Theirs is also the victory through Christ. Then they must rejoice.

We also rejoice in the fact of the resurrection of our Savior in this season. Beware lest we join the world in its godless celebrations! We do have reason for joy: first, because through the resurrected Christ we are regenerated; the new life of Christ is ours. Secondly, we shall also live in heaven itself for He shall take us to be where He is. We long for that heavenly dwelling-place. And we are absolutely certain we shall enter there on the basis of His completed work of redemption. Why, then, should we ever seek the living among the dead?

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