

John 19:38 – 20:18

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~ We witnessed the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross in the last leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God. We didn't quite make it to His burial so, that's where we are going in this report. This report will also take us beyond His death and burial - and through His resurrection. Those are the three great historical and basic facts of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Word of God that our salvation rests upon. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried – and the burial is a very important aspect; then, Jesus was raised again from the dead the third day, also according to fulfillment of Scriptural prophecy.

Our relationship with God today is solely contingent upon trusting Christ as our Savior and having faith in what He did for us when He died on the cross for our sins; and that our Father in Heaven raised Him from the grave according to Scripture. The Lord Jesus, a Man Who was a mere carpenter, unheard of at this time beyond the boundaries of the little nation Israel, which was in the hinterlands of the Roman Empire, died a vicarious, substitutionary and redemptive death for us. So, let's put this in a correct context: Jesus died on a Roman cross as a common criminal; yet, His Gospel, the fact that He died for others, will be preached throughout the entire world forevermore. Today, more than two thousand years after the crucifixion, in this modern world of almost complete and utter chaos, ruin and turmoil, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope we have, friends – and Christ is the only hope humanity has ever had - or ever will have....

XIX

38 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

~ “....after this....” means the crucifixion was complete. Interestingly, we see two Pharisee's take possession of the body of Jesus. Joseph of Arimathaea was a very rich man, materially speaking; and Nicodemus was one of the chief rulers of the Jews, whom we saw sneaking around to come to Jesus in the middle of the night so long ago in this Gospel. Both of these men are what we have to label secret disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe there are many of them today. Here, we see them coming out in the open for the first time. When we studied Matthew, I was quite critical of them both; but in this report, we are going to set all of that aside. The apostles have now been scattered like sheep and they are all hiding out somewhere at this time; but not these two Pharisee's. They are wide open for criticism now. These are the only four hands to handle Christ's body after His death, and they are loving hands, not the enemy's hands.

During those four plus long centuries in Egyptian slavery, the children of Israel learned something about embalming. Many credible historians believe the children of Israel were the ones to actually perfect the embalming process in Egypt. Of course, the Egyptians are credited in history with originating the methods of perfectly preserving a perished body, but the children of Israel are the only ones to believe that their body would be raised again from the dead according to the Old Testament promises made to them by God. They were sown in corruption, but raised incorruptible; sown in weakness, but raised in power – so, that all makes total sense to me. They were promised to be raised in a glorified body, too. That's why the child of God – even today – should have a particular care and concern for the proper burial of the deceased body. Today's funerals go way overboard with this; but the idea remains of being raised and united with loved ones and family eternally.

Well, Joe and Nikki have all the materials for the mummification process in their possession. This was accomplished by wrapping a digit first - and then rubbing in myrrh and aloe - and then wrapping the next digit - then adding more myrrh and aloe. Then, the process was repeated digit by digit, limb by limb and then the appendage. That was done until all possible particles of dust, air and oxygen were completely blocked from reaching the skin. After an arm was wrapped, it would be wrapped again close to the body that had

already been wrapped previously. A mummified body could weigh well over one hundred pounds in addition to the original body mass weight. This all begins to sound irreverent as we overthink them making a mummy out of the Lord Jesus; but that's exactly what they did....

40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

~ Jesus was taken down from the cross before sundown on the Passover. The tomb was conveniently close by for this process to be started; but this wasn't the whole process, because the women came with MORE myrrh and spices, and they apparently intended to perform more applications of spices to His body. Of course, this next chapter is the record of what happened when they arrived to perform this next step in this preparation process....

XX

1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

~ Jesus rose in resurrection on Sunday, the first day of the week; and ever since that day, believers have met on the first day of the week to worship Him. However, at this time in which we are studying, Mary did not think for one moment that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Mary has no understanding of resurrection at this time; but rather, the only reasonable conclusion for her is that someone has removed His body to some other location. She saw an open tomb and she turned around and left. By the time the other women met up with her, she was likely halfway back to John's house.

Simon Peter was staying at John's house and, as far as we can tell, it doesn't look like any of them intended to come out of the house that day at all. I feel like Peter and John thought Mary had probably become confused so early in the morning – Mary probably hadn't had any coffee – and they assume she just went to the wrong tomb. So, Peter and John head on down to the cemetery - but they don't expect that He has been raised from the dead, either. See, people don't go to a graveyard to look for the living. Live people just don't happen to be hanging around a cemetery – unless, perhaps, they are a Gadarene. Many people walking around today look exactly like they live in a cemetery, but I digress. I am sure these two apostles thought they would definitely find the body of Jesus....

2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

~ This "other disciple" was John; and John was a much younger and leaner man than old, rugged fisherman Simon Peter. Well, what we have next is very, very important to understand. The things that John sees convince him that Jesus is back from the dead; even though no one had actually seen Jesus at this time. All John had to go by was the evidence lying on the floor of the tomb. I find it utterly amazing how God uses the minutest of details to absolutely nail down conviction and thinking in the minds and hearts of many people and change the destination of this world.

Remember, Moses was placed in a basket and floated down the river. That's when God pinched Moses at exactly the right time to bring together the cry of a baby and the tenderness of a woman's heart. Pharaoh's daughter heard the cry of baby Moses and the destiny of the children of Israel was changed forever. Century's later, late one night, a king couldn't

sleep. So, he told the bookkeepers to start reading to him. That's when the king discovered that a man named Mordecai had never been rewarded for thwarting a rebellion against the king. It's a good thing that record was read because, at that very moment, the gallows were being built for Mordecai's execution. Well, the king didn't permit that to happen and, once again, the future of the nation Israel was altered completely. It seems insignificant that a king has a sleepless night, but it changed the destiny of those people. That's exactly how God works, friends. The largest doors of the kingdom swing on relatively very small hinges. Here, we see something that the average person passes right on by without a second glance. John had a certain amount of reticence and reverence, and he isn't going in that tomb....

5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,

~ So, we see Peter finally catch up with John - and Peter is winded and gasping for air. Peter doesn't have the reticence a younger man would naturally have, so he just barges right on in. The truly remarkable aspect of the linen clothes lying there is that it would have been physically impossible to get out of that wrapped encasement. The myrrh and aloe pressed into the linen would have formed a glue-like substance. Well, those linen clothes are what Simon Peter saw. Jesus came up out of that mummification wrap like a seed would break through at germination. Remember, the Lord Jesus Himself gave us this analogy. Well, all that was left was a shell that Christ had been in; but Christ wasn't in it anymore.

Remember, by contrast, when Jesus told Lazarus to "come forth" from the grave, He also, said, "unloose him" – because Lazarus was all bound up in those same type of wrappings - and they had to all be undone. That account even told us the "napkin" was still over his face – and that is simply a horrifying, putrid picture Jesus painted. Jesus leaves all of that behind and comes right up and out in a glorified body. Even the "napkin" was left lying in a place all by itself. "Wrapped together" means the napkin was still in

the shape of the head - as if the head were still in it. That, my friends, is what we call the resurrection, and this is evidence that is typically passed over....

7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.

9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

~ Jesus had said He would rise from the dead, and the Old Testament Scriptures prophesied of the resurrection. However, the disciples somehow knew it not. Today, there are many of us who have read certain Scriptures, but we have no idea what they mean - and we usually don't even remember them for very long. Two very definite observations I can make about the Word of God are that I can read the Bible for the hundredth time and see things I have never seen before; and that certain Scriptures can never be understood until we experience them firsthand in our lives. That is mainly related to the trials and sufferings and unpleasant events we all face in this life.

Another observation to note is one way we know the Bible is truly the Word of God. When David wrote, "... the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want" – David was writing from experience. An inexperienced Christian could never pen those words; and they could never say that in prayer, either – although this may be the most memorized verse we have in all of Scripture. The twenty-third Psalm is the first chapter of the Bible I ever read. I was made to memorize it in Sunday school at about age ten or so. A Sunday school teacher gave me a little leather cross necklace as a reward for memorizing it. Well, I can remember thinking "... I don't understand any of that" – and I remember a whole lot of wanting afterward, too. No, friends, it takes a LONG time to really understand God – much longer than most people realize....

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

~ We saw that Judas couldn't recognize Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and, here, Mary doesn't recognize Him either. Judas didn't recognize Jesus because he was betraying Him; but Mary doesn't recognize Him because she does not believe that Jesus was back from the dead. Unbelief is totally and completely blind, deaf and dumb. Zechariah went dumb until John the Baptist was born because of his unbelief, you will recall. Well, all Mary could possibly see was an earthly explanation. However, she did have a great concern for what had happened. That's when Jesus simply calls her name, and she suddenly knew Who He was. Remember, when Jesus raised Lazarus, He just called his name. I, personally, believe that if the rapture occurs in your lifetime, you're going to hear your name called from Heaven. His sheep hear His voice, and He knows them – and His sheep know Him, too – and His sheep follow Him when He calls them....

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

~ Here, we see a relationship that Christ has with the Father that is very different from the relationship we have with the Father. We become sons of God through faith IN Jesus Christ; but the Lord Jesus is a member of the Trinity – and that distinction is clear and pronounced. Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God is going to drop off here in this report. We have two more extremely intense reports remaining that will lead us out of this Gospel of John, and back to the Old Testament. There, we will resume the wilderness march with Moses on this side Jordan at Kadesh-Barnea; between Paran and Tophel; in the fifth book of the Pentateuch called Deuteronomy which, to us, means: Love and Obedience....

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