

The Garden Tomb



Isaiah predicted that men would plan to bury the Messiah with the wicked, but that He would be "with the rich in His death" (**Isaiah 53:9**).

This was fulfilled about seven hundred years later when Joseph of Arimathea, "a rich man" (**Matthew 27:57**), removed the body of the Lord Jesus from the cross and laid it in "his own new tomb" (**Matthew 27:60**), which was in the garden which was "nigh at hand" to the "place where [Jesus] was crucified" (**John 19:41,42**). Those who crucified Him desired nothing better than that He should be flung under a heap of stones with the bodies of the malefactors, but God fulfilled His Word. It had been foretold through the Psalmist that Jehovah would not "suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (**Psalms 16:10**).

This signified that the holy and sacred body of Jesus, though undergoing death, was not in the least touched by the process of decay and corruption. "He whom God raised again, saw no corruption" (**Acts 13:37**). But it also meant that His body should not even come into contact with it externally. God did not interfere as long as Jesus was suffering in the sinner's place, but from the moment that soldier pierced His side, no unclean hand touched the body of the Son of God. Not one person was allowed to do anything that would in any way dishonor that sacred corpse. When God fulfills His Word, He does it with thoroughness and completeness.

Why did Joseph own a sepulchre so near to the place of the crucifixion? The Scriptures say he was a righteous man who consented not to the deed of the Council of which he was a member (**Luke 23:50, 51**), that he waited for the Kingdom of God, and was a secret disciple of Jesus (**John 19:38**). Perhaps he was led of God to purchase and prepare this place of burial for the Messiah, and with Nicodemus, another timid disciple, he now boldly came forth to care for the body of the One who was "lifted up" in death to give them eternal life (**John 3:14,15**).

Unlike all other men, the story of Christ's life did not end with His death and burial. When Mary Magdalene, followed by Peter and John, went to the grave early in the morning on the first day of the week, they found it empty. Christ was risen from the dead (**Mark 16:6**), and was seen on eleven different occasions after His resurrection. He was seen by women and by men, at the seashore, in rooms when doors were closed, on a country road, and on a mountain. At one time five hundred people saw Him.

*The evidences of His literal,
physical resurrection are
conclusive.*

The bodily resurrection of Christ is an event upon which rests the whole plan of redemption for man. It is an essential part of the gospel message (**1 Corinthians 15:1-8**), proving that Jesus is the Son of God (**Acts 2:32-36**), and that His death on the cross has been accepted by God as payment for the great debt of sin (**Romans 4:24, 25**). Because the tomb is empty, our faith is not in vain (**1 Corinthians 15:17**). How glorious is the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ for everyone who confesses with their mouth Jesus as Lord and believes in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead, for God plainly declares that person shall be saved! (**Romans 10:9**).

The Resurrection of Christ is...

- *The Heart of Christianity* - take this away and it is a lifeless thing (1 Cor. 15:17).
- *The Keystone of the Arch of Truth* - it is connected with every truth in the Bible (1 Cor. 15:14).
- *The Foundation of the Church** - no power of hell can ever overthrow it, for He lives as Head Eph. 1:19-23).
* (The Church is not a hierarchical institution but the body of Christ composed of believers who rely solely on Him as their Saviour).
- *The Mainspring of Christian Activity* - for when He had accomplished His atoning work, the Father gave to Him all authority in heaven and earth, so that He could send forth His disciples to preach the Gospel, promising to be with them always (Matt. 28:19, 20).
- *The Lever to Move the World* - this the world owed to its rulers in their account of the stir the apostles made by preaching the resurrection, turning "the world upside down" (Acts 17:1-7).

The Answer to Any Who Condemn the Believer - to bring any charge against Him (Rom. 8:34).

- *The Link Which Binds Believers Together* - risen with Him we are also "seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).
- *The Life That Secures Us* - for since He is risen, He is the One who is the Life Eternal; "Because He lives, we shall live also" (John 14:19).

He was seen!

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

I suppose that I had read this verse tens of thousands of times, and yet, a little while ago, I sought of the Lord a clearer view of it. After reading these familiar words over, perhaps a hundred times, prayerfully asking for new light and insight, it flashed on my thought that there are *ten words* in the verse that are quite prominent words, such as "God," "loved," "world," "whosoever," and so on. Further careful study showed these words to be in *five pairs*. Let us look at this text in the light of this fresh arrangement of the thoughts which it contains.

"God" and "Son"

These are two of the persons of the Godhead. Many are troubled about the relation of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father. They cannot exactly see how Jesus Christ can be equal with God if He is God's Son. They cannot see how He can be as glorious as the Father, and how He can be entitled to the same honor and homage and worship as the Father if He proceeds forth from the Father, and comes into the world.

Let us seek a simple illustration. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." What is a word? It is the expression of a thought. A thought in a mind is not visible, but when it takes the form of a word, that thought comes to your eye on the printed page, or to your ear through the voice of the speaker. The thought is the word *invisible*; the word is the thought *visible*. Now Jesus Christ was the invisible thought of God put into a form in which you could see and hear it.

A great many people have the notion that God the Father is all wrath, and that Jesus Christ, who incarnates the principle of love, comes in between the angry God and the sinner. That is a very shallow notion indeed.

Have you never gotten hold of the truth that the Father is just as much interested in you as the Son is, and that the Father loves you just as much as the Son does? Look at our verse. It puts all the glory of the love and the sacrifice upon the Father: "For *God* so loved ... that *He* gave." When Philip said, "Lord, shew us the Father," Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? *He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father*" (John 14:8, 9).

"Loved" and "Gave"

The word "love" has different meanings in different cases. I love God because I know Him to be the most beautiful, the most wise, the most glorious, and the most gracious Being in the universe. But why did He love me? Was it because He saw that I was beautiful and truthful, honest and honorable? Not so, says the Bible: "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ... when we were enemies" (Romans 5:8, 10).

So there are two kinds of love. You love a beautiful person with a lovely character because you see something in the person that draws out your love. But that is not the kind of love God has for us. God's love is impartial, universal, self-denying, self-forgetting and voluntary. Now, it is a characteristic of *that* kind of love that it *gives*. Such love keeps nothing, but gives everything that it has. And so these words, "loved" and "gave," naturally go together. You could not have one without the other.

There could not be this wonderful giving without this wonderful loving; and there could not be this wonderful loving without this wonderful giving.

"World" and "Whosoever"

These are both universal terms. "World" is the word that God uses to indicate the objects of His love. There is always a danger of losing sight of ourselves in a multitude of people, but when God looks at us, He never forgets each individual. Every one of us stands out just as plainly before the Lord as though we were the only man, woman, or child on earth.

He never forgets each individual. Every one of us stands out just as plainly before the Lord as though we were the only man, woman, or child on earth. So God adds here another word, "whosoever," that is also universal, but with this difference: "whosoever" takes everyone out of the world and holds him up separately before the Lord.

If this precious text only said, "God so loved the world," one might say, "Oh, He never thought of me. He had a kind of a general love to the whole world, but He never thought of me." But when God uses that all-embracing word "whosoever," that *must* mean you and me; for whatever my name or yours may be, it is included in "whosoever," is it not?

"Perish" and "Everlasting Life"

In the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest [of the forbidden fruit] thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). It did not mean that Adam should that day die *physically*. It meant something worse than that. He *died to God* when he ate. One proof that Adam and Eve died to God when they ate the forbidden fruit is that, when the Lord came down to walk in the garden as their companion, our first parents shrank from the presence of the Lord and hid.

How do you know that you are dead to God?

- *You want to get out of His way.*
- *You do not love the things that God loves;*
- *You would like to be independent of God's rule.*
- *You would like, if possible, to get into some corner of the universe where there is no God.*

The Psalmist twice says, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). The impious man hates God. It is an uncomfortable thing for him to think that there is a Sovereign of the earth who will judge all the works done in the body. When one is unprepared to go into that judgment and meet the Judge, it is uncomfortable to think of the judgment day that lies beyond the grave.

After the prodigal son went into the far country, and had wasted his life and possessions, he came to himself. He came back to his father and said, "Father, I have sinned." The father rejoiced, because his son "was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

Now, let us once more hear the word of the living God. God so loved you that He gave the best that He had to give, and all that He had to give. While He gave to the whole world, He singled you out as the object of His love, and said, "whosoever." God says, "Come back to Me, My prodigal and wandering child."

How long would it take to change from death unto life? Just as long, and no longer, as it takes to turn around. Your back has been on God. When you turn, your face will be toward Him. It will take no longer for a sinner to become a living son of God than that. Just put your heart into your acceptance of Jesus. Cast your whole will into the acceptance of the Son of God, renounce your sin and your rebellion, and take the salvation that is given to you.

"Believe" and "Have"

Believing is receiving. This word occurs forty-four times in the gospel according to John, which is the great gospel of "believing." It is constantly repeating believing, believing, believing, and having life. In the twelfth verse of the first chapter, we read:

"As many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on His name."

That little word "even" indicates that to believe is equivalent to receive. You may, in any one of those forty-four instances in this gospel, put the word "receive" in the place of the word "believe" and still make good sense.

You *have* what you *take*, do you not?

It is a very simple thing to take what is given to you, and so to have it. That is practically all there is in faith. We may make faith sound complicated by talking too much about it, leading others to infer that there is some obscurity or mystery in it.

Faith is very simple: it is taking God at His word.

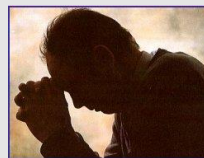


Just as you can put forth your hand and receive a gift, you are able to put forth your will and receive the gift of God, even Jesus Christ, as your Saviour.

The Lord Jesus Christ says to you, "I love you; I died for you. Do you believe? Will you receive the salvation that I bought for you with My own blood?" You need to do no work; all that you need to do is with all your heart to believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again. Trust God at His word and take this salvation which He offers to you.

Moments with the Book – Adapted from The Heart of the Gospel by A.T. Pierson.

POINT TO PONDER



'But without faith it is impossible to please Him for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.' Hebrews 11: 6

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