

# LUKE—WEEK 30

## DEATH AND RESURRECTION



F. Michael Slay  
*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Luke 23:39–24:12 — Death and Resurrection*  
*The Cover Picture is “The Entombment” by Raphael*  
*(1483–1520) on display at Galleria Borghese, Rome*

After telling the thief next to Him that’ll he’ll be in paradise soon, Jesus dies. Everyone witnesses this, and the centurion declares His innocence. Joseph of Arimathea buries Jesus, but then Joanna and the two Marys find the tomb empty. Upon hearing this, Peter rushes to the tomb and realizes the truth.

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We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.

Luke 23:39–24:12 — Death and Resurrection  
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1 Luke 23:39–43 (ESV)

*One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”*

This is a fascinating case study because we know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that this guy was saved. What did he do right? Let’s list the clues.

First, he feared God. *“Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?”*

Second, he was aware of his sin and was repentant. *“We are receiving the due reward of our deeds.”* He had absolutely no sense of deserving anything other than crucifixion.

Third, he knew that Jesus was innocent. *“But this man has done nothing wrong.”* Taken literally, this means Jesus was without sin, but in context it just means He wasn’t a criminal.

Fourth, he knew that Jesus’ crucifixion didn’t stop Him from entering His kingdom. *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* This is big, even puzzling. How did he know?

Fifth, that same sentence implies that he was asking Jesus to save him, not in the way the other thief asked, but spiritually.

From our vantage point, number four (*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom*) means he believes in something functionally equivalent to resurrection--that Jesus wasn’t done. His request for spiritual salvation (#5) means he believes in God (#1). Number three is obvious. So, the thief’s valid confession of faith is—repentance plus believing Jesus is the resurrected king plus asking for salvation.

That’s it. That has to be a valid confession of faith. But there’s something amazing missing—any understanding of the purpose of the crucifixion. Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, but understanding that isn’t required. Like many things we teach, the mechanism of salvation is good to know but not definitive. This lines up perfectly with Romans 10:9.

*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* (ESV)

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One of the great truths of Christianity is that saving faith isn’t complicated. These DEEP studies often tackle complex issues, but do not think that they are essential. They aren’t.

Our understanding of eternal things is simple-minded anyway. We can’t understand eternity until we get there. Complex faith is useful, even valuable, but if it isn’t rooted in simple faith, it’s built on sand.

Worship the Lord, not the doctrine.

2 Luke 23:44–49 (ESV)

*It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.*

Every sentence in this passage is familiar to Christians—except the last couple. Yet the last sentence is the cornerstone of the case for Christ.

*And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.*

*All his acquaintances* saw Him die. They all knew He was dead. They were **eyewitnesses**.

Imagine how emotionally crushing this was. For the next 36 hours or so, they will be depressed and confused. Their whole world has just come crashing down. Everything they thought they knew just expired. Now they don't know what to think.

Scripture doesn't record anyone being a leader or even being strong in this time of intense mourning and confusion. It seems that they were just standing around stone-faced hugging each other. They took care of the proper burial tasks, but otherwise, they did nothing of note.

But something is coming that will change everything. It'll completely reverse their depression and make them as strong as iron.

And their eyewitness testimony will turn the world upside down.

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We're still in the business of turning the world upside down.

But we often seem to evangelize as if we're selling Veg-o-Matics. "Heaven is a free gift," we say. That's true, but are we respecting the significance of what we're talking about? Many eyewitnesses were martyred for the gospel. Our evangelism sometimes feels like using an infomercial to sell nuclear bombs.

"But wait! There's more! If you call now, we'll double the offer! That's two nukes, and the Ginsu knives, for only \$14.95 billion—plus shipping and handling. Operators are standing by."

We're asking people to reject their whole worldview in exchange for the lordship of Jesus Christ. They end up with the ultimate retirement plan but only after they die. Isn't the key that this is all true?

We need to be bolder—not just bolder in what we've always done—but preach a bolder gospel.

Proclaim truth as truth.

3 Luke 23:50–56 (ESV)

*Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.*

*On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.*

Other than the accounts of this action, Joseph of Arimathea isn't mentioned anywhere else in scripture. The portrait of him painted by this passage is fascinating. Since the council vote was unanimous (see Mark 14:64), Joseph must have been absent. This fits with the tense of the verb when it says he "*had not consented to their decision and action*" rather than "did not consent."

He's described as good and righteous (or upright). Given what he did for Jesus, that's obvious. But it's the end of verse 51 that tells the story — "*and he was looking for the kingdom of God.*"

This isn't some throw-away line; it's what separates Joseph from the crowd. The rest of the council was as blind as a bat. They looked right at Jesus and all His miracles and saw nothing, but Joseph saw the Messiah. Why? Because he was looking for the kingdom of God. But what were the others looking for?

Obviously not the kingdom of God. We can't know exactly, but given their selfish actions during the whole process, they must have been thinking about their own "kingdoms."

Joseph wasn't, and that made all the difference.

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As always, we need to watch out for thinking that we are better than the typical fallen people described in the Bible. Consider how we are like the council.

In modern America, there's a curious connection between being "responsible" and not depending on God. It's obviously good to pay bills on time, yet in doing so, we control our future.

Making life predictable is a good thing. Christian financial advisors recommend having some money in savings because it prevents our being a burden on others, which would be wrong. But still, that is the opposite of what the first Christians did.

This spills over into every aspect of life. A person who doesn't plan is a fool. But how can we balance kingdom priorities with being responsible? I'm not recommending we stop wearing seat-belts (!), but we should ask God to help us see and prioritize the kingdom of heaven. Americans are control freaks—to an astonishing extent. We're so used to controlling our lives that letting God drive seems nuts.

Seek His kingdom perspective.

4 Luke 24:1–9 (ESV)

*But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.*

This is the emotional climax of scripture and the words Luke uses to describe it are “*perplexed*” and “*frightened*.”

*While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground,*

The events have exceeded their mental capacity to process what’s going on. There are simply too many pieces and not enough connections.

A lot of movies are like this—confusing most of the way through, but then everything comes together at the end. Most mysteries work this way (for obvious reasons) but so do some dramas—such as “*Les Misérables*.”

It can be tiring to watch a movie while waiting for the dots to connect, but these women are anything but tired. One moment they’re depressed, faithfully carrying out a dreadful duty. The next moment they’re pure adrenaline. Suddenly, the cause of their depression is snatched away.

But how? By whom? The mind reels. Then the *two men in dazzling apparel* speak.

*“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” And they remembered his words,*

The understanding rushes through them like a wind. Excitement jumps out of every pore. They race home with the news.

*“And returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.”*

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At Christmas time we sing, “Joy to the World.” Why only then?

Sure, we like being in Christ. Christianity is fun. It’s heartwarming. It’s rewarding.

But without the infectious joy that these women had that Sunday 2000 years ago, it’s just another religion.

We should be bursting with joy. It’s all true!

5 Luke 24:10–12 (ESV)

*Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.*

The apostles don't just disbelieve what the women said; they think it's *an idle tale*. The NIV translates it as, "*Their words seemed to them like nonsense.*" This is insulting but typical of the treatment of women at that time. For example, in first-century Jewish law, the testimony of a woman was not admissible in court.

<https://www.rightreason.org/2011/women-as-first-witnesses-to-the-empty-tomb/>

*But Peter*, whose emotions have been crushed like nothing we can imagine, cracks. He didn't just go to the tomb, he *ran to the tomb*. He may be just as prejudiced as everyone else, but he's so out of his mind with pain that he just takes off.

This is instant sanctification. Peter needs this desperately; the glance he got from Jesus as the rooster crowed has been gnawing on his psyche ever since.

Grief is tough enough without that baggage. Peter is a confused, empty shell of a man as he sprints down the road, over hills and around curves. Finally, out of breath, he arrives at the tomb.

*Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves.* This doesn't absolutely prove everything the women said, but it's close—and Peter doesn't have enough energy left to be cynical.

At last, he gets it. The light bulb comes on, and Peter connects all the things he heard from Jesus to what his eyes see. It all makes sense now, *and he went home marveling at what had happened.*

Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter (the rock) because he needed someone who would not be shaken by tough trials. Simon wasn't that person. Major transformation was needed.

This is the final step in that transformation.

Peter has arrived.

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Many Christians struggle with doubt. As painful as those struggles are, they are often beneficial. Trials and tests of faith are there for a reason. God uses trials for the sanctification of His people.

So, we don't need to pray for people we know who are in the midst of a trial, right?

God forbid! Pray that their eyes (and minds) will be opened. Ask the Holy Spirit to comfort them while also illuminating them. If you know someone who is struggling, pray specifically for them.

If it's you, tell someone—so they can come alongside.

