

TUTORIAL
1.54

Jesus was buried, was raised from the dead & appeared to His disciples

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: ***Mark 15:33-47, 16:1-8, John 19:30,38-42, Isaiah 53:9, Psalm 16:10, Luke 24:8-12.***

Last time

The detail of soldiers tasked with Jesus' crucifixion took Him to a place called Golgotha, outside the city walls. They crucified Him there between two convicted criminals, one of whom recognised Him as the Messiah. Fulfilling His earlier prophecy to Nicodemus, Jesus hung there on the cross for all to see. Some of the people passing by stopped to mock Him. As did the religious leaders who'd come to enjoy what they thought was a victory over a dangerous rabble-rouser from Galilee.

The sun is dramatically darkened as God turns away from His Son

One of the terrible things about crucifixion compared with almost every other form of execution, is how it draws out the cruel ordeal for so long. It was not uncommon for victims to live on for two days before death mercifully came. Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9 in the morning and at midday He is still there alive.

At this point, a remarkable thing happens. Mark records that for three hours darkness comes across the whole land. Whether or not a naturalistic explanation can be made - such as a solar eclipse - the circumstances and timing clearly point to God's hand. For the benefit of the eyewitnesses and all who hear this Account, God is giving a physical demonstration of what is happening in the spiritual realm. As we know, millennia before, Adam and Eve's rebellion triggered an unstoppable epidemic of death in the world. From then on their physical bodies were dying, they were spiritually separated from God, the Source of life, and after death they faced a terrible eternity of separation from Him. What's more, every single one of their descendants is likewise infected.

God, as we know, is absolutely holy and righteous - it's not just something He sometimes does, it's who He is in His very being, His existence. Because of that, he can't associate with this now corrupted evil race of rebels. But He loves us, and His grace isn't diminished or obstructed by our sin. So even in the terrible moment when He is separating us from Himself, He's also promising that He'll make a way for us to come back to Him. But how? What is desperately needed is another man to take Adam's place as representative of the human race. But it has to be someone very different...someone who does not inherit Adam's sin and who voluntarily chooses to obey God, who lives up to God's perfect standards.

So as we know, God chooses His own Son, and the Son willingly, gladly, volunteers to be that man. He's born and lives as a human being. As we've heard, He fully demonstrates His obedience. He refuses to be tempted by God's Enemy, to rebel like Adam did. He is everything God created man to be and God is delighted by Him. But now, the last chapter is being written. On the cross, Jesus is representing all of Adam's lost, corrupted, sinful race. He is absorbing in Himself the death and separation that all humans deserve. And so now when the perfectly holy, righteous God sees Jesus there, He rejects Him...He turns His back on Him...and Jesus is alone, cut off from His Father with whom He has always been in perfect harmony.

So now, God demonstrates just what a momentous and terrible moment this is by shutting out the light of the sun. His face is turned away from His Son who is now the world's sin-bearer, and the sun's face is turned away as well.

Jesus gives up His life, declaring that “It is finished”

After three hours of this, in the middle of the afternoon, Jesus calls out in His agony and despair, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Soon after, He calls out again, and then stops breathing.

It's important to note that no one took His life from Him. From the moment the ordeal began in Gethsemane, through the trials, the abuse, the whipping, the crucifixion itself, and now as His life slips away. He has not been a victim - not of Judas, the armed men who arrested Him, the Jewish leaders, Pilate, the Roman soldiers or even of physical forces. He has been fully in control. He allows it because of His obedience to the Father, His love for us, to fulfill the prophecies, to redeem His lost race... He lays down His life as a sacrifice. The blood of animals that have been sacrificed can never pay for sin - they can only cover it temporarily and point towards Jesus' sacrifice that will satisfy God's perfect requirements.

Mark doesn't give Jesus' words when He speaks again just before death, but in his account John records that He calls out loudly, “It is finished.” We know that what is finished is the payment for sin. God's rescue effort put into place so long ago is now complete. A way has been made for humans to be forgiven

and have the relationship with God He's always intended. Whoever repents - agrees with God that they are sinners with no hope of making themselves acceptable to Him - and believes in Jesus and His death, is born again into God's family...forever.

Mark records something incredibly significant that takes place at the moment Jesus declares "It is finished" and gives up His life. The thick, heavy curtain in the temple that divides off the Most Holy Place is torn from the top to the bottom. As we know, God's glorious presence on earth has been there. No one has had access except the High Priest once a year when he brings the blood of a sacrificed animal to sprinkle on the covering of the ark of the Covenant. But now Jesus has paid the final sacrifice and through Him humans can have access directly to God. The curtain is ripped from above, by God, to show that He is completely satisfied with the payment Jesus has made for sin. Just as Jesus had foretold to His disciples during their Passover meal together, a new Covenant has been brought into place, sealed by His blood.

The Narrative includes a fascinating side note. One of the eyewitnesses to Jesus' death is a Roman army officer. He watches Jesus' death intently and when it's over exclaims, "This man was truly the Son of God!" A number of women are also mentioned who have been watching Jesus' crucifixion and death from a distance, no doubt too timid to come closer. They have been part of the group who've followed and supported Him in Galilee, believing that He is the Messiah.

Jesus is buried but is resurrected after three days

Mark explains that Jesus dies on a Friday. This makes things urgent for His friends who want His body to be properly buried - nothing, of course, can happen on the Sabbath, which officially starts at sunset the day before. The other complication is the concern about what the authorities will do to anyone showing their sympathy with Him or His cause. But someone boldly takes the risk. His name, Joseph, is a common one, so he's also identified by his home village, Arimathea. He's wealthy and a member of the Jewish Council, who has been a secret disciple of Jesus.

When he goes to Pilate to request the release of the body, the Roman governor is shocked that Jesus is already dead by this first afternoon. But after verifying the death with the officer who was present at the crucifixion, he allows Joseph to take charge of the body. John tells us that his fellow Councilor, Nicodemus, helps to take the body down from the cross, and wrap it in cloth according to Jewish custom. Then, in some haste no doubt because of the time, they carry it to a nearby garden and place it on a stone shelf inside Joseph's own previously unused tomb. Yet another of Isaiah's very specific

prophecies is fulfilled - this one predicting that the Messiah will be buried in a rich man's grave (Isaiah 53:9). A large disk of flat stone is sitting in a sloping groove beside the entrance. They take out the wedges and allow it to roll down, sealing the tomb. Opening it again will be difficult, requiring the strength of a number of men.

Early on the Sunday morning, three women who Mark mentioned as being present at the crucifixion, go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with the customary burial spices...something left undone perhaps in the hasty burial on the Friday afternoon. On the way, they wonder out loud who's going to help them move away the large stone from the entrance. But when they get there, much to their surprise, it has already been moved and the burial cave is wide open. Wondering, they stoop to enter. Inside their astonishment turns to fear. Instead of a body lying there, as they expect, they see a young man dressed in a white robe. It turns out this is one of God's spirit messengers, an angel, who is here in physical form in order to speak to them. Actually, both Luke and John record that there are two angels, but Mark only mentions this one, probably because he's the only one to speak. He tells them not to be afraid and then passes on some incredible news. The one they're looking for - Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified - has risen from the dead. They are to tell the disciples that He's gone on ahead to Galilee and that they are to meet Him there.

This should not really be a surprise - the angel reminds them that Jesus had predicted His death and resurrection a number of times. Perhaps beforehand the reality just never really sank in. No doubt they didn't want to even contemplate the possibility of Him dying, and so they'd never pictured him rising again. But the fact is, this had been prophesied hundreds of years before by King David. In a Psalm or worship song to God (Psalm 16:10) he wrote, "You will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave." The women run from the grave too scared to mention what they've seen and heard to anyone. But Luke tells us that they do go and tell the disciples.

Later, Jesus appears to many people, including His disciples, on a number of occasions. On the cross, Jesus took the sins of the human race on Himself. God turned His back on Him and judged Him for our sins. As the holy and righteous Judge, He passed sentence on Him and the sentence was death. But that sentence has now been completed, the penalty paid in full. And God, completely satisfied with the payment Jesus made for the sin He bore, has raised Him again from death, never to die again.

The Story, including the written Narrative, still has many chapters to be completed. But everything before has been leading up to this point...everything after, flows from it.

Jesus, God's Son, the Christ, the Deliverer, the crucified sin-bearer now resurrected, *is* the Story.



DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. How would you respond to someone who objects to the concept of God as the sovereign Judge who is willing to punish His own innocent Son for other people's sin? Can we really say that a truly loving God would reject and abandon His Son who is clearly in such agony of body and soul?
2. Reflect on Jesus' statement just before death that "It is finished", then:
 - (a) in your own words, describe some of the enormous implications of this declaration.
 - (b) describe what an individual actually has to do so that "it is finished" for them, i.e. for their sins to be forgiven and to be born again.
 - (c) answer the potential objection that it is contradictory to say Christ has finished everything necessary for salvation while also saying that an individual still has to do something personally to be saved.
3. Picture yourself as one of the disciples hearing the women describing what they saw at the tomb on the Sunday morning. How do you think you would have reacted? Confused, excited, dubious? Thinking back to what you know of Jesus and the things you've heard Him say, would you immediately believe He has been raised from the dead or would you be looking for some other explanation for the empty tomb?



ACTIVITIES

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1. Since Jesus' death and resurrection, many different teachings have been put forward that contradict the straightforward reality of the Narrative that He actually died physically and then was resurrected. Briefly describe two of these erroneous teachings and comment on the potential confusion they bring to anyone exposed to them.