

The power of the empty tomb

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Many friends of mine think about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ throughout the year, but they pay special attention to those life-changing events at this time of the year.

They think back to the suffering and death of our Savior (1 Corinthians 11:26). They partake of symbols (broken bread and wine) in remembrance of Him (verses 23-25).

Many of my friends consider how demoralized the disciples had to be following His crucifixion.

■ After all, hadn't the disciples recognized Him as "that prophet" (John 6:14), and hadn't they wanted Him to be a forceful king at that time? (verse 15).

■ When Christ informed His disciples about His suffering, death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21), hadn't Peter rebuked Him for His perceived shortsightedness? (verse 22).

■ When Judas came to identify Christ and when the soldiers came to take Him away (Matthew 26:47-50), hadn't Peter drawn his sword to defend his leader?

The disciples had to be upset when they saw the Christ taken and falsely accused by a lynch mob.

The disciples had to be puzzled when they saw the Messiah beaten.

They had to be troubled when they saw the Son of God nailed to a large piece of wood.

They had to be perplexed when they witnessed Him helplessly receiving the taunts and ridicule of others. When was He going to jump down and bring the Kingdom?

The events didn't occur as they had imagined. In fact, the events couldn't have been any worse.

Not only were they not seeing the Kingdom come to pass, they had to disperse while dealing with their inner thoughts of confusion and fear.

What was going on? Were they going to be beaten next? Was there a piece of wood awaiting them?

And then He died.

It wasn't supposed to end this way. The religious hierarchy was going to be displaced. The Messiah was supposed to lead a successful revolt against the Romans. Yet the religious leaders and the soldiers had killed Him instead.

One day passed. Then another. And finally a third day went by.

You know the story about the empty tomb.

Peter talked about the significance on the day of Pentecost.

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it [Acts 2:22-24].

Peter wrote about it again years later.

. . . You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God [1 Peter 1:18-21].

On numerous occasions, Paul wrote about how the empty tomb affects our future. Here are two examples.

And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power [1 Corinthians 6:14].

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [which] dwells in you [Romans 8:11].

And Paul also wrote about how the empty tomb affects our lives today.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life [Romans 6:1-4].