



Baptist hour messages



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WERE YOU THERE?

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Scripture: Luke 24: 1-9

The fact that Jesus Christ bodily arose from His grave is one of the best attested facts of all time. Tens of millions of people have believed it as a solid fact apart from heresy, surmise, or guesswork. Refusing to stop at so-called "scientific" evidence, they have gone on to that more convincing measure, the testimony of human experience, an experience between persons and the risen Saviour.

Luke, a Greek physician, writing about this experience, made certain that the record would cite the facts. He knew that many cynics would subsequently question the accuracy of the resurrection, that

many would attribute it to the hysteria and hypnosis of the moment and would dismiss it with smug finality. The conversation between Jesus and Thomas was recorded to make sure that Jesus was no disembodied ghost but one in whose hands the print of the nails could be seen and in whose side the riven gash of the sword could be felt.

But there was a resurrection of many other factors in addition to the body and life of Jesus Christ. Other graves were holding the hopes, the ambitions, the spirits of His disciples. So, let us look at something else that was resurrected simultaneous with the coming forth of Christ.

Baptist Hour Sermon Topics for May

- May 4—Security Against Sinning
- May 11—The Splendor of God
- May 18—Predestination: Fact or Fantasy?
- May 25—The Meaning of Sanctification

Hear them on
THE BAPTIST HOUR
Read them in
THE BEAM

DESPAIR TO DESTINY

The hopes of His disciples were buried with Him. Deep in their minds they buried their dream of a new kind of world. Their zeal and optimism gave way to despair and defeat. You know, that is easy to do when one sees the leader of his kind being temporarily set back and evil temporarily enthroned. When one loses heart, it is easy for all else to be lost.

Then, lo, out of that tomb of Joseph of Arimathea came forth the Nazarene under the power of eternal life vested in Him by Almighty God. A million graves with their entrance stones could have never contained Him when God chose to fuse

His corpse with divine resuscitation! Then the news was voiced around, and the dejected disciples rose up in a triumphant zeal. Now they, too, experienced a resurrection, a resurrection of their dreams, their faith, and their hopes. Despair rose up to a new destiny.

Prior to the crucifixion they had dreamed of Caesar's troops' being driven out; of their land's being returned to Israelite owners; of fertility of their land which would be flowing with milk and honey. Israel was to flower out like the roses of Sharon.

PROMISE FULFILLED

Now, with Jesus' making good His promise to rise on the third day, their despair gave way to a new destiny, not a destiny of an earthly kingdom as they one time imagined, but a spiritual kingdom, the rule of God in human hearts. My, what a contrast: Peter who had epitomized the despair of them all by saying, "Let us return to our nets," was now demonstrating again his old "all out" commitment.

Theirs was a resurrection of destiny, a return to the tender-nourished plant of a new tomorrow. Wherever they went, the earthbound populace could see that something had happened to them. A holy inebriation seemed to be theirs, a contagious zeal that would not let them keep the good news inside of them. They had to get it out. All the world had to be told that their Jesus of Nazareth was not imprisoned in a cold tomb, that He kept His word about rising from the dead.

DROPS OR DOWNPOUR

Two years ago during a heavy drought a group of rainmakers took their small packages of chemicals up in a small plane. There, among a few scattered clouds, they broadcast their seed with the hope of making rain. Soon a few drops were spattering on the dry dust below, but the total rain was a mere few gallons—hardly enough to settle dust.

Nearly a week later, many clouds began to thicken into a buttermilk sky; the air became humid and sticky. A cool breeze

fanned forth; then rain began to fall in torrents. Three inches fell in less than two hours.

This is no effort to discount the plans of men to relieve drought as best they can, but what a contrast to nature's own way. A few drops chemically induced or a torrent when the forces of nature are right! Just so with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Before that epochal event, man had vaguely dreamed of one who would conquer death. Poets and philosophers had searched through their logic and verse for some prophetic statement but with little success. These few drops on the dust of doubt and unbelief were hardly enough to settle anything.

"THEN JESUS CAME"

Then Jesus came, lived, loved, and died. Like a torrent of drenching rain in a dry land, He rose from the dead in triumphant power. Glory be to God when He takes our puny efforts and crowns them with divine power, and the rain of resurrecting power falls on the earth of the human race! It raises despair to a new destiny. Instead of the old dragging, halting gait of doubting disciples, instead of a quivering, nervous nature that approached kingdom things with reluctance, now there was a ring of certainty, a daring forth-rightness that spoke convincingly.

What a wonderful day when opinions give way to convictions, when childish notions yield to positive, persuasive certainties. It was this unflinching certainty that drove Caesar from his throne and in less than four hundred years completely supplanted the Roman Empire. Yes, more than Christ came out of that tomb. Despair made its return to life in the disciples.

SORROWS TO JOY

Then, too, their sorrows were changed to joy. It is a disconsoling sight to watch a close friend or loved one die. It does something inexpressible to you. All your values are weighed anew, and just for a short time, your world seems to come to an abrupt standstill. To condemn His disciples for being consumed by sorrow is

monstrously unjust; they were human beings who had watched their dearest friend nailed up and now looked as though He were gone forever. Tears have a way of coming at times like that, tears without apology.

Just suppose right now you had buried the one nearest to your heart and had walked away from that fresh mound of earth and garlands of flowers. Then on Sunday morning you returned real early to place fresh flowers and, lo, the grave was opened! Before you could figure out what had happened, there near the grave stood your loved one.

What would be your reaction? Awe? Fear? No, not half so much as inexpressible joy! You could never be the same again. Nor were those disciples of Jesus who actually experienced much of the same thing; nor were they ever the same again. From that garden they went with such consuming joy that their witness broke out like a wondrous infection. Their sorrow gave way to ecstatic joy when the grave could not hold Him.

DEATH RAISED TO LIFE

Not only did despair and sorrow rise to hope and joy, death gave way to eternal life. Several years ago I planted a dogwood tree in our backyard. Two years ago the tree died (at least, we thought it had died). The leaves withered, the bark

split and dried. The trunk of the tree was cut down nearly to the ground. This morning as I walked in the garden early, there I saw a three foot branch growing out of the old stump. Dead? Hardly. Out of what I had called death came new life, the same kind of life as the former. And it, too, shall some day bloom as the parent plant bloomed.

The soul of man, much like that dogwood tree, knows no powers of extinction. It can be changed in form, but it cannot be extinguished. One must admit that this is one of religion's hardest points to believe in. The universal monotony of death, which claims saint and sinner, young and old, rich and poor, is a fixed rendezvous of all mankind. It is vastly democratic and absurdly impersonal. To conclude that its universalism is also the final apostrophe is to conclude an absurdity.

The work of Jesus Christ on earth was largely a work to redeem men from sin and death; but to make of Him a reformer, a good teacher, a miracle worker, and to stop it at that (without conquering that imposter of death) is to misunderstand and to underrate miserably His primary mission on earth.

He took death by the throat and choked the permanent grip out of it. Little wonder that he said, "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

OUR FATHER

April 13, 1958

Scripture: Luke 11:1-4

That memorable prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray began, "Our Father . . ." The appropriate starting place for every petition is with God. Friends, in this second sermon on Fundamentals of our Faith, we are privileged to take a close look at that wondrous relationship called prayer.

To millions it is an unknown art; many never learned its value or, having known it, have lapsed into mild cynicism and stopped praying. To multi-millions of

modern disciples, prayer comes with difficulty not so much because they do not believe in praying but because they have placed such little value on the process.

TOO BUSY TO PRAY

Among those of us who deal with religious wares, the art of effective praying is sometimes a matter of gross neglect. Even in the business of formal worship, prayer can be pushed to one side as one of the many preliminaries to something of