

Luke 24:1-9, 36-43  
1 Cor. 15:53-57

EASTER April 9, 2023

## The Death Of Death

People say that nothing is certain but death and taxes. That is not quite correct... you might find a way to avoid paying tax. But you cannot avoid death or put it off. When your time is up, your time is up.

Why am I talking about death on this happy day? ... If we can't talk about death on Easter, then we can't talk about it at all. The very essence of this day is a celebration that one person has slipped through the grave and come back to tell us about it. Death could not hold Him. And now He holds the keys of death and hell. Easter, then, is about the death of death. *Christ Jesus ... has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,* 2 Timothy 1:10b.

### If Death Is Destroyed, Why Do We Still Die?

If death has been destroyed, someone forgot to tell the undertakers. People die every day – from cancer, strokes, heart attack, sudden accidents, unexplained tragedies, ethnic cleansing, and bombs in the night. The cemeteries fill up and new ones open. There is no end of funeral homes, mortuaries, wakes, and weeping spouses.

So, if death has been abolished, why do we still die? The Bible tells us that death came into the world because of one man's sin (Romans 5:12). Sin entered the world through the first human – Adam. First there was sin, then there was death – and that's why we know death as inevitable for humans. Sin always leads to death and as long as sin exists in the world death will never be far off. When you die, the coroner will fill out a death certificate for you and it has a space that says, "Cause of Death." If we understand the Bible, the cause is always the same: "Sin."

### How, Then, Did Christ Destroy Death?

Yet we say, *Christ Jesus ... has destroyed death...* II Timothy 1:10. What can that mean? The word translated here as "destroyed" means to "render powerless." When Jesus rose from the dead, He broke the power of death forever, and one day death itself will disappear. This is what Jesus meant when he said, *Whoever lives and believes in me will never die,* John 11:26.

Did Jesus really die? Yes, He died like we die. He wasn't partly dead or mostly dead. He was as dead as any person could be. He died on Friday afternoon, they buried Him on Friday evening, and on Sunday morning His tomb was empty.

**How did He destroy death? He conquered death by entering the realm of death, yanking the keys from the hands of the devil, unlocking the door, and marching out on Easter Sunday triumphant over the grave.**

**The phonograph was invented in 1877, by Thomas Edison. Edison's phonograph was the first to be able to reproduce the recorded sound. A person's voice could be recorded and preserved on a cylinder and then played back again and again even after the person had died! So, if man can do that, cannot God, without half-trying, return the voice of your departed? If God can bring back the voice, then why not the lips, the face, body and bones? The phonograph appeared 146 years ago. Today we can send live pictures zipping around the globe in seconds. We can take your DNA and identify you in a crowd of 6 billion people. We live in a remarkable age. But if man can do that, what can God do? ... He can raise the dead. He did it once and He can do it again.**

### **Unexpected Return**

**We should note that Jesus was not expected to return from death. No one ever had. They'd all seen Him dead as dead can be. Three days after Jesus' crucifixion, a group of women went to His tomb. They were stunned: The tomb was empty. They ran back to Jerusalem to tell the apostles. The disciples concluded that the women were nuts. Then, the apostle Peter went to the tomb, had a look-see and was amazed, but none the wiser. The empty tomb told the astonished disciples almost nothing.**

**Later, when Jesus appeared to the men, Luke says that they *...were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost*, Luke 24:37. In all this commotion nobody yet believed the crucified Jesus had been raised from the dead. The women concluded that someone had stolen the body. The men thought that they had seen a ghost. The idea of resurrection occurred to no one.**

**It was not the empty tomb that led to their belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Rather it was Jesus' return to them, His presence with them, His undeniable intimacy with them in bread and wine, in sermons and acts of love and mercy, that led them to proclaim to a disbelieving world that the crucified Jesus has been raised from the dead. That was the foundation of the church.**

### **Was His A Physical Resurrection?**

**Our Christian faith is not a disembodied spirituality; it is not a sentimental and emotional memory. The Christian faith insists that: *The Word became flesh*. We mean that Jesus, the Word of God, is not abstract, a general truth or principle. Rather, we know that embodied in Jesus we encounter God's truth up close and personal. When the truth is living in the here and now, then it is the real thing and we have to deal with it. Then we can know for sure that "the kingdom of God has come near."**

**God's Word has become a person, a person in motion. Jesus is God Almighty daring to get physical; God with a body, muscular, a body in action. So, when Jesus left an empty grave and visited his disciples, it was not as some apparition or figment of their imaginations. After His body was brutally crucified, Jesus physically rose...**

**Many did not want to believe (and many still don't) that Jesus was physically raised from the dead. That shouldn't surprise us. They couldn't accept God in the flesh in the first place. The Word became flesh. Perhaps this is the most offensive part of the story—Jesus has a body. I didn't say that Jesus had a body. Everybody knows that Jesus slept, ate, wept, and bled and then agonizingly died. What everybody doesn't yet know is that, though the tomb was empty of Jesus' body, He was back—in a resurrected body. He returned from death, unconfined by time and space, passing through doors. But it was nevertheless, a body in which Jesus was recognized by those who had known Him before. He was able to share meals and discussions with His astonished followers, which was irrefutable proof for them that Christ was raised from the dead.**

**When Christians affirm the Apostles Creed, saying "We believe in the resurrection of the body," we're saying that we believe that the same God who raised Jesus from the dead shall somehow, someday raise us, but not as ghosts or disembodied spooks. Paul said that our perishable body will put on an "imperishable" body. We will all be changed. There's no person without a body and, in saying that we believe God will raise our dead bodies to new bodies, we are saying that we believe in the resurrection of persons with recognizable personalities. Specifics of that grand resurrection, such as date and form, are still matters unknown to us. Nevertheless, we are confident that when Jesus says, *In my Father's house there are many rooms ... I am going there to prepare a place for you*, John 14:2, He is telling the truth.**

**I work with words all the time and love the words of Jesus. But I doubt that Jesus would have been crucified—I'm sure there would be no church— if all we had were the words of Jesus. From the first, the thing that really attracted some people and disturbed others were not the words of Jesus, it was Jesus Himself. King Herod tried to exterminate Him when He was but a babe, even before He could say, "Abba." He was God in the flesh, here, now ... but not the God people wanted. What attracted the hapless, helpless, hurting multitudes, what convened the church, was not the assorted writings about Jesus; it was Jesus. His resurrected presence ("I'm back and I'll never let you go") birthed the church; not the church's fond memories of Jesus or sentimental notions about Jesus. It was and is Jesus who is God with us.**

### **What About Us?**

**As I said earlier: death stalks us all the time. It's great Jesus rose from death. But what about you and me? Can we have life after death? *If a man dies, will he***

***live again? Job 14:14a. That is the greatest of all questions.... And, the one that Easter answers. Now death is the reward of the evil one who tempted Adam and Eve to try to supplant the Author of life. And as long as people keep trying to take God's place, they will be reap the devil's reward.***

**But the gift of God in Christ Jesus is life. His power for life has overcome the power of evil and death. Death for us is no longer a curse. The New Testament calls it "sleep" because when you sleep, you plan to wake up later.**

**People ask, "Will I have the same body?" Yes, but greatly improved – which is good news for most of us and for some of us it's the only hope we have. Our resurrected bodies will be immortal and incorruptible. Scientists tell us the human body constantly renews itself as old cells disappear and new ones are formed. Every seven or eight years we have an entirely new body. Yet you remain the same person. Even though the body changes, human personality endures forever. Now if God can do that on this earth, think what He can do when He has unlimited time to work on you.**

**How will He do it? He'll do it in some manner beyond our understanding. If there were no mystery, how could we believe it? God would not be God if He only does things I understand.**

**One more thing: those early believers did not say, "Jesus is raised, now we'll all get to go to heaven when we die and live forever, so let's just wait around for it." No, they said, "Jesus is raised! He's alive! We thought He was defeated on the cross, but it wasn't so. God's great new world is breaking in right now, before our very eyes!" Yes, Jesus destroyed physical death. Additionally, He destroyed the slow, creeping death that strangles joyous, contented living. Like all the guilt, remorse, broken relationships, broken health, hopelessness, strife, conflict, and war ... all the fruit of spiritual death that infuses our living. Jesus' resurrection has destroyed death – physical and spiritual. Those who attach themselves to the risen Lord have attached themselves to One who can rescue them from death right now. He gives the fruit of His spirit, not the fruit of the evil one.**

### **What About You**

**Here's the final question: Are you trusting the man who rose from the dead? Have you met the Risen One? Today, on this day of resurrection, take a step of faith and allow Jesus to prove to you that He is alive. If your soul is hungry for something more than you have found, try Jesus. If Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart, make sure you open it.**

**Rejoice! Easter has come again, death has been defeated, and someday will be destroyed completely. ...*Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep,* I Cor. 15:20. Ours is to show and tell the whole world this truth about reality.**