

"God's Love Story Sermon Outlines"

by Doug Hamilton

Section 31: God's Love Story in Three Words (Matthew 28:1-7)

The concept of this series has been clear from the beginning. The one great common theme of the Bible is God's great love for humankind. The Bible can be a big intimidating book, for there is so much within the pages. The Bible has 66 books and 1,189 chapters. If you count the verses you would find 31,102 of them. If you were to count every single word of the Bible, you would find 783,137 of them. There are three words from within all of the pages that will be focused upon in this lesson. Let us examine the morning leading up to the resurrection of Jesus.

Matthew 28:1-7 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. ² And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. ³ And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. ⁶ "He is not here, for **He has risen**, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. ⁷ "Go quickly and tell His disciples that **He has risen** from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

"HE HAS RISEN!" are the three most powerful words ever to be arranged together and spoken upon the earth. These words are the center of everything which defines the Christian, for Jesus was confirmed the "Son of God" through that fact of history (Romans 1:4).

- Mark 16:6 "**He has risen**; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him."
- Luke 24:6-7 "He is not here, but **He has risen**. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

This is at the core of our being and the most basic description of God's love for us.

- It is the one thing to be believed for our salvation (Rom. 10:9).
- It is the one thing that gives us the strength to walk for God (Galatians 2:20).
- It is the one thing that will determine whether we are raised from the dead to live for evermore (Rom 8:11).

"He has risen" can never be forgotten by the Christian, for it is the defining pinnacle of God's love for all mankind. 1 Corinthians 15:17 "*...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*" We could spend the entire lesson covering only the resurrection and would run out of time. The focus though is not just on the resurrection, but also on the death and burial. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...*"

It is said that one of the best ways to learn is to focus on contrast. If the topic is "He has risen", then the opposite would be "He has died." How alive was Jesus on the first day of the week? We can better answer this question by asking "How dead was Jesus?"

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How dead was Jesus? There are theories out there floated by the Jesus-hating world which propose that Jesus really did not die on the cross.

- For example it says in the *Qur'an 4:155*: “*and for their unbelief, and their uttering against Mary a mighty calumny, and for their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God' -- yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them*”. The Muslims propose that Jesus really did not die, but only appeared to die.
- Another worldly proposition put forth is called the “Swoon Theory”. This proposes that Jesus really did not die on the cross, but only passed out. It goes on to say that Jesus was revived from the cool of the tomb and went to live a long life in a distant land.
- Yet another is the Gnostic version from the first century. Some were selling the concept that Jesus was a spirit Savior, not a bodily Savior. The Gnostics taught that the Jesus whom was resurrected from the dead did not die because He was a spirit being. To them spirits did not die, but only bodies.

How Dead Was Jesus?

1) He was “Spear in the Side” Dead

John 19:33-34 tells us that when the soldiers came to Jesus on the cross that “they did not break His legs; ³⁴ but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.

- It was the normal practice of the Romans to leave a corpse on the cross until vermin would consume them. They did this in an effort to deter against rebellion in the future. Since the holy day of Passover was upon them, it would surely cause a riot to see bodies hanging out before the public. Therefore they sent a Jewish delegation to put a little PC pressure on Pilate to hasten the deaths and take the victims down for burial.
- The means which they sped up the process of dying was to break their legs, called *crurifragium*. This was carried out by one of the four soldiers by bashing their shins with a heavy iron mallet. The pain would be so severe, causing the victim to be unable to support themselves with their legs and they would die in a matter of minutes. Since Jesus was already dead, this would not apply. This was significant because it was prophesied that Jesus would not have His legs like the others, for He is our Passover (Ps 34:20).
- In order to confirm the death of Jesus, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear as predicted by Isaiah six centuries prior (Is 53:5). From out of this puncture poured water and blood, indicating that Jesus was dead, for when a stressed heart of one being crucified finally gives out, the lungs will fill up with water and blood from the pericardium. This would have been typical of a person suffering through crucifixion. Jesus was “Spear in the Side” dead as confirmed by the men who crucified Him on the cross that day.

2) He was “Government-Confirmed” Dead

Mark 15:43-45 Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked

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for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ And Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. ⁴⁵ And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

- There was a man named Joseph of Arimathea. He was a member of the Sanhedrin and a secret disciple of Jesus (John 19:38). He apparently did not approve of the dishonest trial and sentencing of Jesus, but was outnumbered by the many others on the high court. At a time that the other Jewish leaders were probably beginning their preparation for the Passover, Joseph mustered up the courage to request the body of Jesus for a decent burial.
- Pilate wondered if Jesus was really dead because usually six hours was not enough to kill a man on the cross. After summoning the centurion for inquiry, it was officially confirmed that He was dead. He approved the body of Jesus to be released to Joseph. Jesus was "Government-Approved" dead, receiving official recognition by the Roman governor. In Governor Pilate's eyes Jesus was officially dead.

3) He was "Funeral Director" Dead

John 19:38-40 And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret {one,} for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body. ³⁹ And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds {weight} ⁴⁰ And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

- It is in the John account that we find a second member of the Sanhedrin that was very sympathetic to Jesus; His name was Nicodemus. He was the leader that early on in Jesus' ministry secretly came in the night to learn more from the Lord (John 3). He was also the Sanhedrin member that tried to add civility to the hostilities against Jesus in the Jews plot (John 7:50). Together with Joseph, they were released the body of Jesus and they began the preparation of His dead body.
- They were playing the part of a funeral director. The normal means of Jewish preparation of the body for burial involved the following steps:
 - 1) The cleansing of the body: In the case of Jesus, the body was in bad shape, for He was bloodied and dirty from the path that He took to the cross.
 - 2) The wrapping of the body: They would wrap the body in clean linen. It was usually a big sheet that could go around the body a couple of times.
 - 3) Preservation of the body: They would make a paste of Myrrh and aromatic spices to overcome the stench of decay. Seventy-five pounds would certainly be enough to do the job. They would dip strips of linen in the paste and stick it between the folds of the sheet. Because it was sticky the result would be a soft cocoon-like wrapping.
- The KJV, ASV, NAS, RSV, NKJ and BBE that they used "one hundred pounds" of body preparation material, but the more modern NIV states "seventy-five pounds". This contradiction is easily understood when we understand that the foremost versions use English pounds and latter uses Roman pounds. The NIV more accurately translates the

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word *litras* for just under 12 ounces, the Roman *litras*. On the other versions it simply calls it pounds (16 ounces) in the English.

- If there was ever a time for someone to know whether or not Jesus was dead, it would be in the preparation of the body for burial. Jesus was “Funeral Director” dead. It would be foolish to pretend that the preparers of the body didn’t know Jesus was dead.

4) He was “Graveyard” Dead

John 19:41-42 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

- Because 6 PM was the official beginning of the Sabbath, they needed to put Jesus in the tomb quickly. There was not a funeral procession, but a quick transport to a nearby tomb owned by Joseph following the preparation of the body. Apparently the tomb was an expensive one, being carved out of the limestone, just had been prophesied in Isaiah 53:9.
- Once inside the tomb, they would roll a millstone across the front of the tomb entrance. During the first few days, there could be additional body preparation made. That seems to be the case of the women who had planned to come back after the Sabbath (Luke 23:55). Guards were placed to watch over the tomb to make sure someone did not attempt to steal the body (Mathew 27:62-66). When that millstone was rolled in front of that grave, Jesus officially became “Graveyard Dead!”

The Closing Point:

Ignorant men have come up with all kinds of theories as to how Jesus seen alive by more than 500 eye-witnesses (1 Cor. 15:6) following His death on the cross.

- The apostles, who were there, said He was dead.
- The women followers of Jesus, whom stood by his side, said He was dead
- Governor Pilate, who released the body, said He was dead.
- The Sanhedrin members, who prepared His body, said He was dead.
- The soldier, who killed people for a living and pierced a spear through Jesus’ heart and lungs, said He was dead.
- The Chief Priest and his cronies all said he was dead.
- The guards who watched over the tomb said He was dead.

All the eye-witnesses who were there said He was dead! What eye-witnesses do the “theorists” quote who say Jesus was not dead?

Conclusion:

How dead was Jesus? He was “Apostle-recognized”, “Sadducee-established” “Military-guarded”, “Spear in the Side”, “Government-confirmed”, “Funeral Director-approved”, “Graveyard” DEAD. Jesus was as dead as dead could be. As dead as Jesus was, as alive as He is today! He died out of love and was raised out of love. Anything less than that would rob us of the joy of saying...HE HAS RISEN!