

**Dead (at least temporarily)**

Dead! It's a hard word to read and hear, but that is the state of Jesus. His followers had seen Him walk on water, calm the storm, feed 5,000, heal the blind, raise the dead, etc., and they believed He was the promised Messiah. But now He is dead. Crucified and executed in the most gruesome way, like a common criminal. All their hopes and dreams lie shattered and broken. But praise God, there is more to the story.

But before we get there, we want to stop and meditate on what just happened. Normally, we have some introductory questions, but today I want you to dive right in. This is a longer section, but we want you to be immersed in the story. Think through what it would feel like to be a witness to these events:

**John 19:31-42** <sup>31</sup>Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken\* and that they might be taken away. <sup>32</sup>So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. <sup>33</sup>But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup>But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. <sup>35</sup>He who saw it has borne witness\*—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup>For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” <sup>37</sup>And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

<sup>38</sup>After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. <sup>39</sup>Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night,\* came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. <sup>40</sup>So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup>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. <sup>42</sup>So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

## Notes:

\*Verse 31: When hanging on a cross, the victim must push himself up using his feet in order to be able to breath. To speed the death, the Romans would break the legs of their victims to ensure a quick death.

\*Verse 35: John is saying that he was at the cross and personally witnessed Jesus' death.

\*Verse 39: Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus is recorded in John 3.

- 1) Imagine you are a religious leader. Jesus has annoyed and denounced you for years. You have tried futilely again and again to trap Jesus, but you finally got Him killed. Now go back and reread the whole passage above. What are you feeling? What do you think of Jesus now? What do you think of His disciples? What do you think of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus?

- 2) Imagine you are Nicodemus. Even though you are one of the religious leaders, you have come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. You tried to prevent the other leaders from crucifying Jesus, but failed. Now go back and reread the whole passage above. What are you feeling? What do you think of Jesus now? What do you think of the other religious leaders? What do you think of His disciples?
  
- 3) Imagine you are Mary, Jesus' mother. You remember the promise the angel gave you before His birth. You saw Him grow up, and have always known Him to be special. You witnessed much of his 3 years of ministry. What are you feeling? What do you think of the angel's prophecy (Luke 1:26-38)? What do you think of His disciples? What do you think of the religious leaders? What do you think of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus?
  
- 4) Imagine you are one of the disciples. You have spent 3 years following Jesus and have seen all of His miracles. You believed He was the Messiah. Now go back and reread the whole passage above. What are you feeling? What do you think of Jesus now? What do you think of the religious leaders? What do you think of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus?

Now I realize that this exercise is somewhat repetitive, but I think we often rush through the story so fast that we stop to meditate on what really was taking place. The religious leaders were probably celebrating. Jesus had been a serious pain to them, and now He was gone. They were probably confident that His uneducated followers would quickly scatter. But for the believers, there was deep hopelessness and confusion. All they had believed and heard made no sense. How could the Messiah and Savior be dead?



**John 20:11-18** <sup>11</sup>But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. <sup>12</sup>And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup>They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>14</sup>Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” <sup>18</sup>Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.

- 9) Why do you think that Mary originally didn't recognize Jesus (verse 14)?
- 10) Why do you think the first person Jesus physically appeared to was Mary Magdalene? What significance might this have?
- 11) What does Jesus want Mary to go and do? Having experienced the resurrection changing your life, what does Jesus want you to go and do?

While it is important to stop and meditate on what it must have been and felt like to witness the crucifixion and death of Christ, the reality is that Jesus didn't stay in the grave. Praise God He Rose! Yes, dark, hard, and confusing moments are part of life. But the story doesn't end there. Jesus has a plan. There is new life now and eternal life! There is always a reason to hope.

Consider closing your time meditating on the lyrics to the song “Death was Arrested”. I know the song was recommended a few days ago, but I love its description of the tension that “darkness rejoiced as if Heaven had lost”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMsMiluCUUI>