

JESUS, THE GRAVE ROBBER!

TEXT: Luke 23:45-56

INTRO.: A. We have gone *into the garden* with our Savior – a most solemn time. We have gone *to the cross* & witnessed His death – a most gruesome sight. Now come with me *into the tomb* – a most somber place.

B. The graveyard is never a pleasant place. It was even less so for the followers of our Savior since they had been convinced that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah of Israel, their Deliverer, that Great Prophet Who would be greater than Moses, Elijah, King David or John the Baptist. Their hopes had been dashed as they witnessed His death on the cross & now as they go to the graveyard to watch as His body is anointed for burial & then entombed. But unknown to them this was merely...

I. A RESTING PLACE (NOT A ROTTING PLACE):

A. "Low in the Grave He Lay..."

1. It is indeed true – Jesus is dead!
2. It is reality – His body is buried!

ILLUS.: Some have taught that he only passed out on the cross & when His body was placed in the cool tomb, it revived. But the experts on crucifixion – the Roman soldiers – knew He was dead; they came to break His legs to hasten His death before the Jewish Sabbath & found Him lifeless! Others have taught that His body was only a phantom or spirit-thing. But spirits don't bleed, suffer, or cry out for relief. You can't nail a spirit to anything or bury a spirit. ***Yes Jesus is dead & now is buried!***

- a. But all is not lost, because the Scriptures are true.
- b. All is not over, because the prophecies must be fulfilled.

Ps.16:10 *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

Acts 2:29-31 *Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.*

Acts 13:32-37 *And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.*

ILLUS.: For all but a very, very few, bodies were placed into graves where they have rotted. Enoch never died but walked right into God's presence. Elijah never died but rode into heaven in a chariot of fire. Jesus is placed in a grave, but His body somehow did not deteriorate during those 3 days & nights. It refused to corrupt. The grave was not ***a rotting place*** as with others, but a mere ***resting place***. It was also:

II. A RESURRECTION PLACE (NOT A RESTRAINING PLACE):

A. "Vainly They Watch His Bed...Vainly They Seal the Dead..."

1. Until Jesus death, burial & resurrection the grave was a prison house.
2. But He became the "firstfruits" of our resurrection.

ILLUS.: One of the most fascinating & fantastic Scriptures is to be found in Mt.27, where a strange event is recorded...

Mt.27:50-53 *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

3. At His death Jesus became a grave-robber!

4. Because of the price He paid on Calvary the grave could no longer restrain the bodies of buried believers.

ILLUS.: The good news is that because of Calvary the grave will no longer be a permanent prison for the bodies of those who died in Christ. ***"Because I live, ye shall live also"*** is the promise of the Savior.

III. A TEMPORARY TOMB (NOT A PERMANENT HOME):

A. "Death Cannot Keep His Prey...He Tore The Bars Away..."

1. Gethsemane was a somber place.
2. Calvary was a solemn place.
3. The cemetery was a secured place...but only for 3 days & nights!!!!

ILLUS.: Thank God for "the rest of the story!" The hymn doesn't end w/the tomb, nor does the story of redemption end in the grave. The hymn ends on a victorious note & says ***"Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes; He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever w/His saints to reign; He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!"***

CONCL.: Traditionally in some Roman Catholic churches on Good Friday the figure of Christ (?), is removed from the cross & paraded thru the streets in a solemn procession. **Then it is nailed back on the cross!!!!** *Thank God the cross is empty, because the tomb is empty! "He is not here, He is risen!" as He said!*