
Looking at the Tomb

“When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave” (Matthew 27:57–61).

The greatest event of the ages has now occurred. Jesus, the Son of God, has been crucified and buried.

The arrest in the garden, the whirlwind trial, the torturous crucifixion, and the divine signs of heaven’s confirmation of Jesus’ death and deity have now come and gone. Two men, Joseph and Nicodemus, councilors, secret believers, have claimed Jesus’ body, and have brought it to the nearest tomb that they could use, Joseph’s personal tomb, and laid it to rest. Hurriedly and reverently, they have buried it. After wrapping the body in linen and placing one hundred pounds of spices within the folds of the linen, they have placed it on a cold, stone bench in the sepulcher. They have rolled a large stone, a huge sealing stone, over the entrance to the tomb. All of this, can you image, took place in less than a twenty-four hour period!

Some women who have followed the agonizing death and the burial process are now seated near the tomb looking at it in profound and reverential silence. They are looking, weeping, meditating, and saying very little. With terrific pathos, Matthew wrote, “And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave” (Matthew 27:61). Emotionally spent, stunned, bewildered, numbed with grief, they sit together and gaze at the stone grave of Jesus.

The city and the place where our Lord had been crucified have become silent, perhaps not totally aware even now of the atrocious crime that has been committed. The rabble is gone, the noise has ceased, and the groans have

died away into the stillness of death. Darkness has come and gone, but is coming again with the ending of Friday and the beginning of the Sabbath. Even though these women soon must leave their vigil, for now, they sit and look, attempting to make some sense out of what has happened, while expressing by their presence the love they have for their Master.

Let us imagine ourselves sitting next to these women, knowing what we know from the New Testament about His death, looking at the tomb, dazed and horrified by it all. What would have been our thoughts, our meditations, and our inner observations?

To be sure, we would have been overwhelmed by what had happened. As we look across the way at the tomb, we are thinking about all that has happened that day.

No one of us can even begin to envision what a crucifixion was like. Had we stood before the cross, watching the sufferings, the inhumanity, the cruel, slow, excruciating death of Jesus, our souls would have been pulverized and devastated by what we were seeing. We would have seen a side of life that was raw, blood red, and impossible to fathom. On top of all of that, we would have been dumbfounded by the insensitive actions and the murderous designs of religious and pagan men alike. Who would have ever thought that men would have reacted to the ministry, the love, the salvation of Jesus the way they did?

As we sit looking at the tomb, our minds spin with the horror, with the nightmare of what the world has done to Jesus, the One sent

by God to save us.

Sitting and watching the tomb, knowing the truth about His death, we would surely be meditating upon what all of this means. As we quietly look over at the resting place of our Savior, we are reverently reviewing in our minds the divine purpose of His death and the far-reaching effects of what has happened.

Jesus came to die. He knew what man would do to Him. He had laid it out before His apostles several times before He went to Jerusalem for the last time. Mark reported one scene where Jesus informed His apostles of what lay ahead:

And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again" (Mark 10:32b-34).

Our Lord predicted that He would be mocked, spit upon, scourged, and killed. Here is the four-pronged response that the religious and political powers would make to Jesus. Thus He described His executioners as being the chief priests, scribes, and the Gentiles. Every detail that He mentioned came to pass just as He had said.

Jesus had not only told us what was going to happen, but He revealed to us why it was going to happen. His death is not so much a drama of what men did to Him as it is a revelation of what He was doing for us. He described His death as a ransom for those who would follow after Him (Matthew 20:28). He pictured His blood as being for the remission of our sins (Matthew 26:28). He was giving His life for the sheep (John 10:11). He said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

God's eternal purpose has the death of Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world in the center of it. As we look at the tomb, we

would undoubtedly be overwhelmed by these thoughts.

As our eyes survey the tomb, we are compelled to make deep resolves about following Jesus. In the depths of our hearts, we are making our life commitment to discipleship that only the death of Jesus could constrain us to make. The trials, the scourging, the cross, and the other events connected with our Lord's death have drawing power; they have the constraint of divine love. Jesus had said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32). At the tomb, we feel that drawing power.

Driven by sorrow, love, understanding, and penitence, we are committing our hearts to an undying service to the One who has died for us.

There are two places where we need to continually stand and sit—at the cross and beside the tomb. We stand at one and sit at the other. At the cross we see what He did. The blood is red and the agony is vivid. At the tomb we meditate upon what He did. The reflection is profound and the memory is fresh. At the tomb we find quietness and reverence, the perfect place to contemplate what has happened. We need both the cross and the tomb. It is imperative that we see the cross as we stand at the foot of it and it is essential that we meditate upon its meaning as we sit beside the tomb.

Eddie Cloer



We must serve the Lord as He deserves to be served . . .

To give to Him out of our treasures and not count the cost.

To fight for Him and not count the wounds.

To dream for His cause and not worry about being excessive.

To toil for Him and not ask for rest or vacations.

To live for Him and not ask for any reward save only the knowledge of knowing that we are doing His will.