

40. The Burial and Resurrection of Christ

John 19:31-20:9

The Gospel According to John

Warm-up Question: What is your favorite holy day (holiday) of the year? What do you look forward to doing on that day?

³¹Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. ³²The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. ³³But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. ³⁵The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. ³⁶These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," ³⁷and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced" (John 19:31-37).

What Happened at the Death of Jesus?

We are carrying on from our last study in this very emotional account of the suffering and death of Jesus and what took place on the cross. At midday until He gave up His spirit, darkness had come over all the land (Matthew 27:45). This darkness was not a complete darkness; those looking on could still see the drama as it unfolded. Some of the early church fathers wrote about this darkness, for example that it was not only over the land of Israel but also over the whole world. The early Church father and author, Tertullian, mentioned this event in his *Apologeticum*—a defense of Christianity written to unbelievers in the Roman Empire at the time: "At the moment of Christ's death, the light departed from the sun, and the land was darkened at noonday, which wonder is related in your own annals and is preserved in your archives to this day."¹

There were some hopeful hearts among those who were watching the crucifixion that death would not occur. It was just unbelievable to those close to Him that Jesus could die. They thought that He would in some miraculous way come down from the cross and confound His critics and enemies, but at that time they did not understand the reason why His death was necessary. True life could only come to the people of God through the death of Jesus, the Christ. God's love and justice demanded that sin must be paid for—Jesus had to die as the sin bearer instead of us.

The special Sabbath of Passover was drawing near, so I am sure their hearts were broken as the Roman soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves with a heavy mallet. Breaking the legs brought death quickly. No longer could the crucified push up on their legs to breathe. Death came quickly due to asphyxiation (depriving of air). When they came to Jesus, He was already dead, so they

¹ As quoted by John MacArthur, *The Murder of Jesus*, Nelson Publishers, Page 228.

did not need to break His legs. This was all seen by the prophets ahead of time: “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken” (Psalm 34:19-20). It was also spoken of the Passover lamb that in the eating of the lamb, “Do not break any of the bones” (Exodus 12:46). Through hundreds of years, the Jewish people ate the lamb on Passover night, never thinking that there would be an embodiment of this symbolic lamb, a Person who would come to fulfill literally these prophecies to the letter. At the same time as Jesus was being crucified, conservative calculations of at least 200,000 lambs were being slaughtered in preparation for the Passover meal to be eaten in homes all over Jerusalem. Jerusalem at Passover swelled to at least 2 million people. A minimum of ten people were required to eat the Passover because God commanded that the Lamb was to be ingested completely. None of the lamb was to remain (Exodus 12:10). The Lamb of God must be received internally.

In the foreknowledge of God, He knew that some would say that Jesus never really died. He just swooned on the cross, they would say. The Father allowed the Roman soldier to pierce Jesus’ side with his spear. John testifies that out of His side came blood and water (John 19:34). This is medical evidence that today would explain that death had already occurred. There were two primary causes of death by crucifixion: hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. The legs of the two thieves were broken to bring on exhaustion, making them unable to breathe.

Hypovolemic shock is a term that doctors give to low blood volume. The brutal beating of Christ caused Him to lose so much blood that He could not carry His cross. With hypovolemic shock, a victim collapses due to low blood pressure. The kidneys also shut down to preserve body fluids causing great thirst, and water would collect around the pericardium, the sac surrounding the heart. Before death, the rapid heartbeat due to low blood volume causes fluid to gather in the sac around the heart and lungs. Others say that the water and blood is indicative of death by the separation of clot from serum. Just as the Lord created a wife from the side of the first man, Adam (Genesis 2:22), so too, the Bride of Christ was born again from the side of the Last Adam, Jesus.

So many things were happening in the spirit realm at the moment when Christ died. Some of it is recorded in detail for us, but there are things that Jesus accomplished when he descended into hell that we cannot comprehend this side of eternity. Matthew writes:

⁵⁰And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹At that moment **the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom**. The earth shook, the rocks split ⁵²and the tombs broke open. **The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.** ⁵³They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people. ⁵⁴When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, **they were terrified**, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:50-54).

What made this crucifixion different for the soldiers to the extent that “they were terrified?” (Matthew 27:54). Discuss what they witnessed and experienced as they looked on.

We all understand what an earthquake is, but Matthew specifically mentions rocks splitting.

Imagine this scene and how unsettling this must have been for those who had just witnessed the death of Christ. Why do you think that Matthew mentions the rocks splitting? Darkness at midday and lasting for three hours was a foreboding of something terrible that was about to happen.

Remember that Jerusalem is built on very rocky terrain with little soil for burying people. Most tombs are cut out of the ground or hewn from the surrounding rock face and sealed with a slab, rock, or boulder. Could it be that these are the rocks to which he is referring? Think of it! Those who were around at that time actually witnessed sealed tombs being rent apart and godly men and women arising and walking around! We do not know who these people were, only that they were godly men and women who had died and were buried. I will have to wait to get to heaven to ask all my questions about this one! Why do you think they had to wait until Jesus' resurrection before going through the gates of the city of Jerusalem? What was the significance of their appearing to many people? We are told that Jesus was the first fruit among those who had "fallen asleep." More about this later.

What Happened in the Temple?

Matthew tells us of an incident that happened over at the Temple. Inside the Temple itself, there were two rooms that were separated one from another. The first room was called the Holy Place with the second inner room behind the curtain called the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies. In the Holy Place, the priests were allowed to work replenishing the bread on the Table of Showbread, incense on the Table of Incense, and olive oil upon the seven-branched candelabra. Separating the priests from the presence of God was the huge 30 feet wide by 60 feet high heavy curtain that was thick as a man's hand. Beyond that curtain was the Holy of Holies where God's presence dwelt in a cloud. In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, a box made of Acacia wood four feet, three inches long; two feet, eight inches wide and high. The Ark was covered inside and out with pure gold. Inside the Ark, the tablets of the Ten Commandments were kept. On top of the ark was a gold cover or lid called the Mercy Seat. We are told that Solomon's Temple had two golden angels that were placed either side of the Mercy Seat.

²³For the inner sanctuary he made a pair of cherubim out of olive wood, each ten cubits high [fifteen feet high]. ²⁴One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing five cubits—ten cubits from wing tip to wing tip. ²⁵The second cherub also measured ten cubits, for the two cherubim were identical in size and shape. ²⁶The height of each cherub was ten cubits. ²⁷He placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the temple, with their wings spread out. The wing of one cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the other touched the other wall, and their wings touched each other in the middle of the room. ²⁸He overlaid the cherubim with gold (1 Kings 6:23-28).

It was on the Mercy Seat that the visible presence of God, the Shekinah glory, was manifested as a cloud. Only one day a year, the Day of Atonement, could one man, the High Priest, take off his ceremonial resplendent robes and put on just a plain white robe made of linen. This plain white linen robe was not to be made of wool, which speaks of the works of the flesh, "They must not wear anything that makes them perspire" (Ezekiel 44:18). The things of God are not to be done with perspiration but with inspiration. With a rope tied around his left ankle and a little bell on

the hem of his garment, he would enter through the veil with the blood of a sacrificial lamb beyond the veil that separated man from God. The bell would let the priests know if the high priest was still alive, and the rope was for him to be pulled out if the sacrificial blood was not accepted.

The blood was to be sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. If the high priest came out, the sacrificial atoning blood was accepted. The Lord said that He would meet there with man: **“There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you” (Exodus 25:22)**. It was the acceptance of the blood sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat that God dispensed mercy. The people of God would wait in the courtyard of the temple for the high priest to come out. When the high priest came out, he would pronounce one word, “forgiven.” When the people heard the word, there was relief, rejoicing and celebration for their sins had been forgiven for another year.

This yearly reminder of the shedding of blood for forgiveness of sin was an essential part of the Israelites’ worship. What was God trying to teach them and show them through this ritual?

It is Matthew who records that, over in the temple, something shocking had occurred! The temple veil had been torn from top to bottom, indicating that God is the One who has torn the veil. The Father was showing that, from the time of Christ’s sacrificial offering, a new way of approaching God was being inaugurated (formally introduced). No longer would it be just one man being able to enter into God’s presence, but all men through the finished work of the cross. No wonder the Book of Acts records that **“a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7)**. Those priests that were in the Temple at the time, when they heard that Jesus died at exactly the same time as the curtain was torn, would have been amazed! It would be enough to make someone instantly believe, and we are told that is exactly what happened. I wonder if they ever fixed the torn curtain?

Jesus in the Heart of the Earth

Let us now consider where the Lord Jesus went while His body was being placed in the tomb. We know that He didn’t go to heaven when He died, for He said to Mary Magdalene upon His resurrection, **“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (John 20:17)**. It is believed that upon death, Jesus, in His spirit body, descended to the heart of the earth to a place called Sheol in Hebrew, often translated as the grave. In the New Testament, the word is Hades. It is an underworld with two states of living or being, separated by a chasm or gulf. On one side is a terrible place of “agony,” yet on the other side is a place where people are “comforted” (Luke 16:22-23). The good place was what Jesus was referring to when He told the repentant thief on the cross that he would be with Christ that day in “paradise.”

There is much that we are not told, but this blessed side was to be close to the heart of Abraham—the father of the righteous. **“¹⁹After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— ²⁰to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built” (1 Peter 3:19-20)**. When Jesus descended into the underworld, He proclaimed the righteous judgment of God to those in the torment side of the

underworld and victoriously won the keys of death and hell (Revelation 1:18). Those that were kept in the good side of the underworld were released upon His death on the cross.

“When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”⁹(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?¹⁰He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) (Ephesians 4:8b-10).

This perhaps explains whom those people were that had come out of their graves at the death of Jesus. These individuals were those who were held captive until Jesus made the redemption payment on the cross. It seems likely that they were around giving witness to the people of Jerusalem until they ascended with Jesus to heaven and to the Father. Jesus was called “the firstborn from the dead” (Revelation 1:5). In another place He is called “the firstfruits.” “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). “But each in turn: Christ, the **firstfruits**; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” (1 Corinthians 15:23). I take it to mean that, after the resurrection and seeing Mary Magdalene on that first morning, He was between earth and heaven, first ascending with the saints that were held in the good side of Hades, the underworld. From that point on, He went between places, heaven and earth, for forty days before His final ascension to the Father (Acts 1:3).

Did Jesus Die on a Friday?

There is much discussion about this, but there is evidence that Jesus died on a Thursday afternoon around 3 pm and not Friday as many would believe. He Himself had said that He would be in the heart of the earth for three days and nights:

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be **three days and three nights in the heart of the earth** (Matthew 12:40).

Our passage in John tells us that Jesus died on the day of Preparation (John 19:31), with sundown bringing the first day of Unleavened Bread or Passover. The Jewish people see the next day as starting at sundown. Passover is a special Sabbath where no work can be done. When the Scriptures record that the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath (John 19:31), it is my belief that it means the special Sabbath of the Passover Day, not the weekend Sabbath of Friday night. It doesn't change anything, but it does explain the three days that He was to be in the tomb.

³⁸Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. ³⁹He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. ⁴⁰Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. ⁴¹At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in

which no one had ever been laid. ⁴²Because **it was the Jewish day of Preparation** and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there (John 19:38-42).

It never ceases to amaze me how religious people can be so regimented in their details of carrying out the letter of the law. They wanted the three men off of the crosses before Passover began, and yet they had just committed the greatest crime in all of humanity—the rejection and murder of the Son of God. There can be no greater sin than the rejection of the Messiah. Two secret believers, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, members of the Sanhedrin, broke cover and sought to honor Jesus in His death, although they had not summoned the courage to be open about their belief in Him during His ministry. The two of them appealed to Pilate for the body and, according to Jewish burial customs, bought a very expensive amount of myrrh and aloes and began to wrap the body with seventy-five pounds of burial spices.

Myrrh was a fragrant sticky gum resin that was used by the Egyptians in embalming. The Jews used it in powder form but mixed it with the aloes, which is aromatic sandalwood. The two mixed together would harden and form a cocoon around the body. Some believe that Jesus didn't actually die on the cross. He just swooned. Let's think on that. He was pierced in the side with a spear, wrapped in seventy-five pounds of spices, after being scourged and crucified. He was then sealed in a cold tomb with no food or water for three days with a group of Roman soldiers the other side. It just goes against logical reason to think that He wasn't dead.

Why do you think both of them were quite open about their faith after the death of Jesus?

Perhaps, their love for Christ demanded that they stood up for what they believed. I'm sure they saw the need for the body to be buried before the Sabbath, which started in just three hours from the time he died. They felt moved to give Him a proper honorable burial. John is the only one of the disciples that tells us about Nicodemus assisting Joseph of Arimathea with the burial of Jesus. They were both secret believers up to this point and, perhaps, felt moved to make up in death for the neglect of Jesus or their lack of courage to support him when he was alive. The amount of spices used would have been considered exorbitant, enough spices for a king's burial, which is also symbolic when we consider that Jesus is the King of Kings. The amount Nicodemus brought was 100 *litrai*, or roughly about 75 pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes. It would have been exceedingly expensive. This fact also causes us to reflect on the expensive perfume that was poured on Jesus' feet earlier before his burial. Overall, we know that God the Father ultimately oversaw every detail surrounding the death and burial of His Son. Even Jesus' burial fulfilled prophecy, as it was foretold:

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth (Isaiah 53:9).

Accompanying the two men, we see several women who had made their journey down from Galilee with Jesus and the disciples (Luke 23:55). They saw just exactly where the tomb was so that they could return with more spices and perfumes for the body when the first day of the week arrived and the Sabbath had concluded. In his book, *The Reality of the Resurrection*, Merrill Tenney tells us about the customary procedure for the burial.

“The body was usually washed and straightened, and then bandaged tightly from the armpits to the ankles in strips of linen about a foot wide. Aromatic spices, often of a gummy consistency, were placed between the wrappings or folds. They served partially as a cement to glue the cloth wrappings into a solid covering. When the body was thus encased, a square piece of cloth was wrapped around the head and tied under the chin to keep the lower jaw from sagging.”²

In his gospel, Matthew tells us that Jesus was placed into a new tomb that had been cut out of the rock. Joseph of Arimathea was the one who owned this tomb that was close to Golgotha, and Matthew records him as being rich (Matthew 27:57). Rich men’s tombs, such as this one, were made big enough in which to stand. Matthew also adds that a big stone was rolled in front of the entrance to the tomb. The Jewish high priests and elders then went to implore Pilate for a guard of four Roman soldiers to be placed around the tomb to watch over it. They were afraid that some of Christ’s disciples would steal the body and then claim that there had been some supernatural occurrence, thus confirming that He was more than a mere man. To prevent a chance of deception to take place, a seal was placed on the stone (Matthew 27:60-66). Stones usually weighing a ton or more were cut into a coin shape and a slot was also chiseled for the stone to roll in.

[Why did the Jewish leaders go to Pilate for Roman guards to be placed around the tomb? Why didn’t they guard it with their own men?](#)

The Jewish leaders knew that the word of the Romans would carry more weight. After all, if the priests said that Jesus did not rise from the dead, it could be argued that they were lying to cover their deed of having an innocent man crucified. Another reason for using the Roman soldiers is that they were highly trained. They knew it was their life that was on the line if any of them lost a prisoner. Later in the book of Acts, we read of Peter, the apostle, being put in prison and four squads of four soldiers guarding him. When an angel brought him out, Herod had all 16 men executed for losing their prisoner (Acts 12:4-19).

Let’s now go further in the book of John to chapter 20:

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” ³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) (John 20:1-9).

² Merril C. Tenney, *The Reality of the Resurrection* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers), 1963, Page 117.

What do you think John saw in the tomb to convince him that Jesus was alive as opposed to the original supposition that the body had been stolen?

When the disciples first heard of the stone being removed from the entrance of the tomb, they assumed Jesus' body to have been stolen. Mary Magdalene told Peter and John; **“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!”** (John 20:2). When John entered the tomb, we are told he believed, but what did he believe? Simply that Jesus was gone? He believed that Jesus was risen when he saw the grave clothes. John was the first disciple to believe that Jesus was alive. He was the first to “get it.” Let's think about what John saw when he looked at the burial wrappings. We know that the body was wrapped in strips of linen with spices in between the wrappings, similar to the Egyptian style of wrapping, however, with the head wrapped separately with a cloth. The way I imagine it, the wrappings were probably stiff from the myrrh, aloes and spices. The body passed through them, leaving something that could be said to resemble a cocoon, rather than a mass of limp bandages tossed aside. The body could have passed through the bandages and left them intact. This is what I believe John saw. Whatever he saw convinced him that Jesus was alive.

It is interesting to consider that, when Mary Magdalene finally entered into the tomb, she saw two angels on either side of the place where Jesus was laid:

¹¹Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot (John 20:11-12).

How symbolic of the Holy of Holies, where on either side of the Mercy Seat stood the two angels! At the very place where His body had been laid, now there were two attending angels, at the head and at the feet. Jesus Himself now symbolizes the very mercy seat of God! How symbolic also when we consider that He was wrapped in white linen, which speaks of the priesthood and of purity, representing us before the Father and offering His own blood to make atonement for our sin!

Why So Many Details?

If Jesus was God and He did rise again, what is my response to Him and to the claims He has made? What impact does this have on my life? If we believe that He has indeed risen, then there must be an individual response to the claims that He makes on our lives. If Jesus really is the King of Kings, we must decide is He *my* King?

To answer those that would say that Jesus' body was stolen away by his enemies or his disciples, let's consider the rationality of this suggestion. First of all, the body was wrapped with a hefty amount of spices in the bandages, and the body of Jesus has been savagely beaten and pierced through, emitting blood and water, which was proof of death. John is careful to include this detail. How could Jesus survive after all of this?

Equally ridiculous is the idea that His enemies or His disciples would steal the body. His enemies would not have wanted to afford Christ's followers the opportunity to proclaim that Jesus had risen and was, therefore, divine. His disciples would also have no reason to steal the body. We know that after his death, they were overcome with sorrow. They were hiding away and in fear of persecution themselves. Later, however, we know that they suffered and died for their faith, based on the belief that Jesus was truly who He had claimed to be, the Son of God. Why would they give their lives for what they would have known to be a lie if they had indeed stolen the body?

It just makes no sense. In fact, some have said that it takes more faith to believe in these theories than it does to believe that Jesus did, in fact, rise again! Other critics have said that the women went to the wrong tomb or that Jesus had woken up, having only fainted, and rolled the stone away. The gospel writers go into great detail on such things because on this point hangs the crux of the Gospel story. If there is no resurrection, then there is no hope, no life after death.

The fact remains that there were miraculous instances experienced by many, and his followers went to their deaths with His testimony on their lips, obviously so convinced and sure in their faith that they gave their lives to continue following Him. If He was not whom He claimed to be, what does that say about His teaching? Then, His wonderful teaching and His life would not make sense.

When we consider the whole story of Jesus' death and His resurrection, our minds can be clouded with Hollywood details, e.g., from the larger-than-life view of the cross (it is estimated that the cross on which Jesus was crucified was probably 8 or 9 feet tall) to the scene where the sky darkened. In reality, I imagine a lot of people who did not have to stand guard would have departed, except for a faithful few. We are told that one soldier exclaimed, "Truly He was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54), but for many looking on and observing what was happening, the experience would have been simply terrifying.

Even Jesus' disciples were bewildered and afraid. For them, their journey had come to an end. They had hit a wall of reality in which they felt that Jesus had left them for good. It must have been horrifying as they wondered if the kingdom of God of which Jesus spoke was real at all. If He, who had healed diseases and raised the dead could not save Himself, then how could He save them? Yet once they understood that He had risen, history and tradition tells us that many of the disciples went on to testify bravely, full of the Spirit until their glorious deaths. John Foxe wrote a book that we know today as *Foxes' Book of Martyrs*. It was published in the year 1563 under the title "*Acts and Monuments of These Latter and Perilous Days.*" In it, he records facts about the deaths of many of the disciples as reported by history and tradition. Here are some of the details that he offers in this book regarding the last days of the disciples of the early church:

James, the brother of John was the first of the twelve apostles to be martyred and was said to be beheaded by order of King Herod Agrippa the 1st of Judea. The apostle Philip was scourged, thrown into prison, and then crucified. Mark, it is said, was dragged through the streets of Alexandria until he was torn to pieces after he spoke against a ceremony for their idol, Serapis. Peter was crucified upside down as he refused to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord, feeling that he was not worthy of the same

death. James the lesser (the brother of Jesus) was said to have been stoned, but some accounts state that he was thrown from the Temple Tower first, then his head was beaten in. Andrew, the brother of Peter, preached to many Asiatic nations and was crucified on an X shaped cross, which came to be known as St. Andrew's Cross. Little is known about Matthew's later life, but some writings say that he was pinned to the ground and beheaded in Ethiopia. Matthias was stoned at Jerusalem, and then beheaded. Jude the brother of James was crucified in Edessa in Mesopotamia. Tradition states that Bartholomew went to East India to preach there and was crucified there. Thomas preached the gospel in Persia, Parthia and India. In Calamina, India, he was tortured, run through with spears, and thrown in an oven. We do not know what happened to Luke. Some say that he was hanged from an olive tree, and other accounts state that he died of old age. The apostle John was arrested in Ephesus and sent to Rome where he was placed into a vessel of boiling oil that did not kill him. Then he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation. After being released from Patmos, he returned to Ephesus where he died about A.D. 98. Even with all of the persecutions and violent deaths, the Lord added to the Church daily.³

After considering all of this, do you think it is possible that the disciples would have given their lives for a lie? Whatever they experienced after the crucifixion so set their souls ablaze that they continued headlong in the face of persecutions and hardships in order to spread the gospel and to tell again and again of the acts of Jesus, His wonderful teachings, who He really is, and what He came to accomplish.

After hearing or reading all of this, I ask you, "What will you do with this Jesus, who claims to be the Son of God and who claims to be the King of Kings? What is your response to Him?"

Prayer: Concerning a prayer, I would encourage each of you reading these words to make up your own prayer to the Father. Thank Him for His love for you, and if you have never given your life wholeheartedly to Him, perhaps today is the day to do this.

Keith Thomas

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com

³ The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs, John Foxe, updated by Harold J. Chadwick.