

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

4s-2nd Grade

Easter Study

The Thief on the Cross

The Thief on the Cross

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective Using the story of the thief on the cross, to present the Gospel clearly and to give all students the opportunity to respond.

Key Verses

Luke 23:32-24:8—Main Teaching Passage

Matthew 27:27-50 (Parallel Passage)

Romans 10:9, 13

Memory Verse - John 3:36

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Hook

Ask the students if they can think of a time when a person did something unkind to them. Ask if they were able to forgive that person. How long did it take them to forgive? Ask if they think they could forgive the person while they were still being unkind.

Today, we are going to learn something awesome about the forgiveness of Jesus. In the worst moment of His life, when people were crucifying Him, He was forgiving them. In fact, He forgave one of the most unlikely people.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

Our focus today is on the scene between Jesus and the criminals next to Him on the cross (Luke 23:39-43), but it is important to review the events leading up to this. The previous night, Jesus was arrested by the religious leaders and brought to the Roman governor, Pilate. Pilate could find nothing wrong with Him, but due to pressure from the religious leaders, he sentenced Jesus to die on a cross.

Jesus was brought to a place called Calvary, and there they crucified Him, with one criminal on either side of Him. As they did this, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). He was rejected by everyone, being blasphemed, mocked, and insulted. He was rejected by the people (vs. 35; Matthew 27:39-40), the rulers, chief priests, scribes, and elders (vs. 35; Matthew 27:41-43), the soldiers (vs. 6-38), and even the criminals being crucified with Him (vs. 39; see especially Matthew 27:44).

Both Matthew and Mark mention that the two criminals next to Him heaped insults on the Lord Jesus. But in Luke's account, after one thief blasphemed Jesus (vs. 39), the other rebuked the first thief. This second thief's heart changed. In his response in verses 40-42, we see that:

- He mentioned the fear of God.
- He realized his sin.
- He knew Jesus did nothing wrong.
- He called Jesus "Lord."
- He believed Jesus to be a King.
- He asked Jesus to remember him.

Jesus responded and promised the thief that he would be with Jesus in Paradise. Jesus had forgiven his sins.

The rest of Luke 23 records Jesus' death and burial, but of course the story doesn't end there. On the third day, early in the morning, some of the women who followed Jesus went to the tomb to anoint His body. But when they arrived, they discovered that the body was gone. Jesus had risen from the dead!

LOOK

The story of Jesus' death and resurrection is at the center of the Gospel. All of Jesus' life on earth was leading up to this moment, when He accomplished His mission to save humanity from our sins. And in the

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK (Continued)

middle of this narrative, we see a beautiful picture of Jesus doing exactly what He came to do. We see Him saving a lost soul and forgiving him of his sins.

In the passage we just looked at, there were two other people being crucified with Jesus. They were criminals who insulted and blasphemed Him. Both of them deserved the punishment that they received. But even more than that, both deserved eternal punishment from God because they were sinners. They had broken God's Law.

But Luke records something amazing that happened with one of the thieves. God opened his eyes and changed his heart. He turned to Christ and was forgiven. This criminal would have heard Jesus say, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." He understood that Jesus was forgiving, and he hoped that perhaps he could be forgiven too.

All the thief asked was for Jesus to remember him. But Jesus gave him far more than that. He promised that he would be with Jesus that very day in Paradise. Jesus forgave that criminal of all of his sin. The thief had absolutely nothing to offer and could do nothing to pay for his sins on his own, but Jesus still saved him and granted him eternal life.

All of this matters because of what happened next. On the third day after Jesus died, He rose again and defeated death, but not just for Himself. He overcame death for His disciples, for that thief on the cross, and for you and me. Because Jesus lives, those of us who believe in Him can live with Him forever.

The two thieves give us a powerful picture. One rejected Jesus. The other turned to Jesus and believed in Him. One was lost. The other was saved. One will spend eternity separated from God. The other will rejoice forever in the presence of God.

You and I are no more worthy of God's forgiveness than the two criminals were. We too have broken God's Law countless times and sinned, and because of our sin, we deserve punishment. And like the thief on the cross, on our own there is nothing we can do to fix this problem. We can't pay the price of our own sin. All we can do is turn to Jesus and ask Him to forgive our sins. But the good news is that anyone who calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13)! All you need to do is confess to Him that you are a sinner, believe that He died and rose again for you, and ask Him to forgive your sins and be your Lord (King) and Savior (Romans 10:9). When you do that, Jesus forgives your sins, and you will get to spend eternity with Him.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize John 3:36.

Invite the children to respond to the Gospel. Record the names of any students who give their lives to Christ. If they do not already own a Bible, let the students know that they can receive one from the Children's Ministry office.

Pray: Praise God for sending His Son for the forgiveness of sin. Thank Him for His sacrifice, praise Him that He conquered death and rose from the grave.

Parent Question: How can my sins be forgiven?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Luke 23:32-24:8 by David Guzik

B. Jesus dies and is buried.

3. ([Luk 23:32-33](#)) Jesus is crucified.

There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

a. **When they had come to the place called Calvary:** There was a specific place outside the city walls of Jerusalem yet still close, where people were crucified. At this **place called Calvary** Jesus died for our sins, and our salvation was accomplished. **Calvary** means, “place of a skull,” and it was the place where criminals were crucified.

i. “It is a telling criticism that Fitzmeyer, a Jesuit theologian, observes in an aside comment on [v. 32](#) that the account of Jesus’ road to the cross says nothing about the fourteen stations of the cross, such as the falls of Jesus, the meeting with His mother or with Veronica (‘true image’). Such later traditions, though certainly sentimental in appeal, seem to have no historical basis.” (Pate)

b. **There they crucified Him:** In days the New Testament was first written, the practice of crucifixion needed no explanation. In the many generations since then, most people do not appreciate what a person experienced in the ordeal of execution by crucifixion.

i. “Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.” (Edwards)

ii. The combination of scourging and crucifixion made death on the cross especially brutal. The victim’s back was first torn open by the scourging, then the clotting blood was ripped open again when the clothes were torn off before crucifixion. The victim was thrown on the ground to fix his hands to the crossbeam, and the wounds on the back were again torn open and contaminated with dirt. Then, as the victim hung on the cross each breath caused the painful wounds on the back to scrape against the rough wood of the upright beam.

iii. When the nail was driven through the wrists, it severed the large median nerve. This stimulated nerve produced excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms, and often gave the victim a claw-like grip in the hands.

iv. Beyond the extreme pain, the major effect of crucifixion was to restrict normal breathing. The weight of the body, pulling down on the arms and shoulders, tended to fix the respiratory muscles in an inhalation state and hinder exhalation. The lack of adequate respiration resulted in severe muscle cramps, which fur-

ther hindered breathing. To get a good breath, the victim had to push against the feet, and flex the elbows, pulling from the shoulders. Putting the weight of the body on the feet produced searing pain, and flexing of the elbows twisted the hands hanging on the nails. Lifting the body for a breath also painfully scraped the back against the rough wooden post. Each effort to get a proper breath was agonizing, exhausting, and led to a sooner death.

v. “Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals.” (Edwards)

vi. Death from crucifixion could come from many sources: acute shock from blood loss; being too exhausted to breathe any longer; dehydration; stress-induced heart attack, or congestive heart failure leading to a cardiac rupture. If the victim did not die quickly enough, the legs were broken, and the victim was soon unable to breathe because of the posture of the crucified person.

vii. How bad was crucifixion? We get our English word *excruciating* from the Roman word “out of the cross.” “Consider how heinous sin must be in the sight of God, when it requires such a sacrifice!” (Clarke)

c. **There they crucified Him:** The most significant thing about Jesus’ suffering was that He was not, in any sense, the victim of circumstances. He was in control. Jesus said of His life in [John 10:18](#), *no one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself*. It is terrible to be forced to endure such torture, but to freely choose it out of love is remarkable.

i. This was the most important act of this most important life, and this is reflected even in ancient secular histories. The existing mentions of Jesus in ancient extrabiblical literature each highlight His death on the cross.

- A letter written by Mara bar Serapion to his son (ca. a.d. 73)
- Josephus, the Jewish historian (ca. a.d. 90)
- Tacitus, the Roman historian (ca. a.d. 110-120)
- The Babylonian Talmud (ca. a.d. 200)

d. **The criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left:** In His death, Jesus was identified with sinners – He was crucified between two criminals.

4. ([Luk 23:34-38](#)) Jesus on the cross.

Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.” The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.” And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: This is the King of the Jews.

a. **Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do:** The love of Jesus never fails. On the cross, He prayed even for His executioners, asking God the Father to not hold this sin against them.

i. Jesus probably prayed in this manner for His enemies all through His ministry. This prayer was heard and

noted because He had no quiet place to pray.

ii. In this Jesus fulfilled His own command to *love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good for those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you* ([Matthew 5:44](#)).

b. **For they do not know what they do:** In this, Jesus recognized the blindness of His enemies in His prayer. This did not excuse the guilt of those who put Jesus on the cross; but Jesus set His enemies in the best possible light in His prayer to the Father. We must pray with the same heart, after the same pattern.

i. “If ignorance do not excuse a crime, it at least diminishes the atrocity of it. However, these persons well knew that they were crucifying an *innocent* man; but they did not know that, by this act of theirs, they were bringing down on themselves and on their country the heaviest judgments of God. In the prayer, *Father, forgive them!* that word of prophecy was fulfilled, *He made intercession for the transgressors*, [Isaiah 53:12](#).” (Clarke)

c. **And they divided His garments and cast lots:** On the cross, Jesus retained no material possessions. Even the clothes on his back were taken and **divided** by the roll of the dice. This shows that Jesus came all the way down the ladder to accomplish our salvation. He let go of absolutely everything – even His clothes – becoming completely poor for us, so we could become completely rich in Him.

i. [2 Corinthians 8:9](#) says it like this: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

d. **Even the rulers with them sneered... The soldiers also mocked Him:** Jesus was not honored or encouraged as He hung on the cross. Instead He was scorned and mocked. His religious enemies said, **“He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.”** Yet it was precisely because He did *not* save Himself that He can save others. It could be rightly said that *love* kept Jesus on the cross, not nails.

e. **An inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: This is the King of the Jews:** In [John 19:21](#) we read that the religious leaders among the Jews objected to this title. They felt it was *false*, because they did not believe that Jesus was **the King of the Jews**. They also believed it was *demeaning*, because it showed Rome’s power to humiliate and torture even the **“King of the Jews.”** Yet Pilate would not alter this, and when asked to take down the inscription he answered, *What I have written, I have written* ([John 19:22](#)).

i. “The written *charge* (or *titulus*) was normally carried before a criminal on the way to execution, or hung around his neck, and would then be fixed to the cross, thus reinforcing the deterrent effect of the punishment.” (France)

ii. “This venerable eulogy and epitaph, set upon our Saviour’s cross, proclaimed him King of all religion, having reference to the Hebrews; of all wisdom, to the Greeks; of all power, to the Latins.” (Trapp)

5. ([Luk 23:39-43](#)) A criminal on a cross finds salvation.

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into

Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

- a. **One of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him:** One of the criminals crucified with Jesus joined in the mockery and scorn. He reasoned that if Jesus *were* the Messiah, He should save those who are being crucified with Him (**save Yourself and us**).
- b. **But the other, answering, rebuked him:** Both Matthew ([Matthew 27:44](#)) and Mark ([Mark 15:32](#)) indicate that *both* criminals mocked Jesus. Though at first they both mocked Jesus, in the hours spent on the cross, one of the criminals came to see things differently, and to actually put his trust in Jesus.
 - This second criminal respected God (**Do you not even fear God**).
 - He knew his own sin (**under the same condemnation... we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds**).
 - He knew Jesus (**this Man has done nothing wrong**).
 - He called out to Jesus (**he said to Jesus**).
 - He called out to Jesus as Lord (**he said to Jesus, “Lord...”**).
 - He believed Jesus was who Jesus said He was (**remember me when You come into Your kingdom**).
 - He believed the promise of everlasting life from Jesus.
- i. “It is worthy of remark, that this man appears to have been the first who believed in the *intercession* of Christ.” (Clarke)
- c. **Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise:** Jesus answered the trust of the second criminal, assuring him that his life after death would be **with** Jesus, and be in **Paradise**, not torment.
 - i. Here is something truly remarkable: a deathbed conversion, and may fairly be said to be the only Biblical example of a last-minute salvation. There *is* one deathbed conversion in the Bible, so that no one would despair; but *only one*, so that no one would presume.
 - ii. Significantly, this thief who trusted in Jesus at the last moment goes to the same heaven anyone else does. This may not seem fair, but in the larger picture it gives glory to the grace of God, not to human merit in salvation. In heaven, we will all be filled to the full with joy and reward; but the degree of our faithfulness now determines how big our container for joy and reward will be in heaven, though all will be filled to the fullest they can hold.
 - iii. **In Paradise:** “Paradise (*paradeisos*), a Persian word meaning ‘garden, park,’ was used in the Septuagint for the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:8](#)). It then became a type of the future bliss for God’s people in [Isaiah 51:3](#)...In the present passage is represents the state of bliss which Jesus promised to the criminal directly after death.” (Pate)
 - iv. This assurance was so important to Jesus that it cost Him something. It *hurt* Jesus to even say these words. “Since speech occurs during exhalation, these short, terse utterances must have been particularly difficult and painful.” (Edwards)
 - v. Jesus answered the second criminal far beyond his expectation.

- The thief on the cross had some distant time in mind; Jesus told him **today**.
 - The thief on the cross asked only to be remembered; Jesus said “**you will be with Me.**”
 - The thief on the cross looked only for a kingdom; Jesus promised him **Paradise**.
6. ([Luk 23:44-46](#)) Jesus dies on the cross.

Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ “ Having said this, He breathed His last.

a. **There was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour:** The remarkable darkness all over the earth showed the agony of creation itself in the Creator’s suffering. “Origen (*Contra Celsus*, ii,33) and Eusebius (*Chron.*) quote words from Phlegon (a Roman historian) in which he makes mention of an extraordinary solar eclipse as well as of an earthquake about the time of the crucifixion.” (Geldenhuys)

i. A Roman historian named Phlegon wrote: “In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake.” (Cited in Clarke)

ii. The crucifixion took place during Passover season, and Passover is always held at a full moon. A *natural* eclipse of the sun is impossible during a full moon.

b. **The veil of the temple was torn in two:** The tearing of the temple veil signified at least two things. First, now man has free access to the throne of grace by the cross. Second, no one should ever think again that God dwells in temples made with hands.

i. [Matthew 27:51](#) notes that the temple was torn *from top to bottom*. God tore it from heaven instead of man tearing it from earth.

c. **When Jesus had cried out with a loud voice:** Jesus cried out something with **a loud voice**, *then* He spoke to God the Father in the lines that follow. [John 19:30](#) tells us what He said: *it is finished*, which is one word in the Greek (*tetelestai* – “paid in full”). This was the cry of a winner, because Jesus had paid in full the debt of sin we owed, and had finished the eternal purpose of the cross.

i. At some point before He died, before the veil was torn in two, before He cried out *it is finished*, an awesome spiritual transaction took place. The Father set upon Jesus all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and He bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God for us.

ii. As horrible as the physical suffering of Jesus was, this spiritual suffering – the act of being judged for sin in our place – was what Jesus really dreaded about the cross. This was the *cup* – the cup of God’s righteous wrath – that He trembled at drinking ([Luke 22:39-46](#), [Psalm 75:8](#), [Isaiah 51:17](#), [Jeremiah 25:15](#)). On the cross, Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father’s fury. He did it so we would not have to drink that cup.

iii. [Isaiah 53:3-5](#) puts it powerfully: *He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has*

borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

iv. "Reader! *one drop* of this cup would bear down thy soul to endless ruin; and these agonies would annihilated the universe. He suffered *alone*: for the people there was none with him; because his sufferings were to make an atonement for the sins of the world: and in the work of redemption he had no helper." (Clarke)

v. "The fact that He could raise His voice, when normally a crucified person could barely gasp for breath, indicates that Jesus was still in control of His destiny." (Pate)

d. **Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit**: His work on the cross accomplished, with prayer Jesus yielded His living **spirit** to God the Father as He yielded His body to death on the cross. This shows that Jesus gave up His life when He wanted to and how He wanted to. No one took His life from Him; He gave it up when His work was finished. Jesus is not a victim we should pity, but a conqueror we should admire.

i. Save your pity for those who reject the complete work of Jesus on the cross at Calvary; for those preachers who do not have the heart of Paul in [1 Corinthians 1:23](#), when he proclaimed the center of the Christian message: *we preach Christ crucified*.

ii. **I commend My spirit**: "Or, *I will commit my spirit-I deposit my soul in thy hands*. Another proof of the *immateriality* of the soul, and of its *separate* existence when the body is dead." (Clarke)

e. **Having said this, He breathed His last**: Once the work of the cross was accomplished, Jesus felt no further need to endure the suffering. He yielded His living **spirit** to God the Father and He yielded His body to death on the cross and **breathed His last**.

i. "The words of [v. 46](#), 'Jesus expired' ('breathed out His life'), can be seen to echo [Genesis 2:7](#). There it is said that God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living soul. The one God breathed into the breath of life – Adam; the other breathed out the breath of life – Jesus. The latter paid the consequences for the sin of the former in order to inaugurate a new creation." (Pate)

7. ([Luk 23:47-49](#)) The reaction of bystanders at Jesus' death.

So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!" And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

a. **When the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God**: At the expiration of Jesus on the cross, the Gentile centurion immediately gave glory to God and understood Jesus for who He was (**Certainly this was a righteous man**).

i. Surely, this centurion had seen many people crucified before. Yet there was something so remarkable about Jesus that he said something about Him that he could say about no one else.

ii. This is a picture of all who come to Jesus through the cross, fulfilling Jesus' promise *if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself* ([John 12:32](#)).

b. **The whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned:** Others went home sadly; they were too close to Jesus to see how remarkable His death was, and they forgot His promise to rise again.

8. ([Luk 23:50-56](#)) Jesus is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

a. **This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus:** Customarily, the bodies of crucified criminals were left on their crosses to rot or be eaten by wild animals. But the Jews wanted no such horror displayed during the Passover season, and Romans were known to grant the corpses to friends or relatives for proper burial.

i. Joseph did *not* serve Jesus in many ways, but he did serve Him in ways no one else did or could. It was not possible for Peter, James, John, or even the many women who served Jesus to provide a tomb, but Joseph could and did. We must serve God in whatever way we can.

b. **That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near:** They were unable to properly prepare the body of Jesus for burial because of the coming Sabbath. So in hurried preparation, Jesus' body was placed in a borrowed tomb.

i. "In the hours of crisis it is often the Peters who have sworn loyalty to Jesus with big gestures and fullness of self-confidence, that disappoint, and it is the secret and quiet followers of the Master (like Joseph, Nicodemus and the women) that do not hesitate to serve Him in love – at whatever the cost." (Geldenhuys)

c. **Laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before:** Tombs like this were very expensive. It was quite a sacrifice for Joseph of Arimathea to give his tomb to Jesus, but Jesus would only use it for a few days.

THE RESURRECTED JESUS

A. The resurrection of Jesus is discovered.

1. ([Luk 24:1-3](#)) Women followers of Jesus discover the empty tomb of Jesus.

Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

a. **Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning:** Jesus was crucified on Friday (or on Thursday by some accounts). After His entombment, the tomb was sealed and guarded by Roman soldiers ([Matthew](#)

[27:62-66](#)). The tomb stayed sealed and guarded until discovered by these women **on the first day of the week, very early in the morning**.

i. A rich man like Joseph of Arimathea would likely have a tomb carved into solid rock; this tomb was in a garden near the place of crucifixion ([John 19:41](#)). The tomb would have a small entrance and perhaps one or more compartments where bodies were laid out after being wrapped with linen strips smeared with spices, aloes, and ointments. Customarily, the Jews left these bodies alone for a few years until they decayed down to the bones, then the bones were placed in a small stone box known as an ossuary. The ossuary remained in the tomb with the remains of other family members.

ii. The entrance to the tomb was blocked by a heavy circular shaped stone, securely rolled in a channel, so it could only several strong men could move it. This was done to ensure that no one would disturb the remains.

iii. [John 19:42](#) specifically tells us that the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea that Jesus was laid in was close to the place of Jesus' crucifixion (and the each of the two suggested places for Jesus' death and resurrection bear this out). Joseph probably didn't like it that the value of his family tomb decreased because the Romans decided to crucify people nearby; yet it reminds us that in God's plan, the cross and the power of the resurrection are always permanently and closely connected.

iv. "This became the day of Christian worship (cf. [Acts 20:7](#)). The change from the traditional and biblical Sabbath is in itself a strong evidence of the Resurrection because it shows the strength of the disciples' conviction about what happened on that day." (Liefeld)

b. **They, and certain other women with them:** These women are of special note. **They** refers to the women from Galilee who saw Jesus put in the tomb ([Luke 23:55-56](#)). Luke agrees with [Mark 15:47](#) and [Matthew 27:61](#) that **they** included *Mary Magdalene* and *Mary the mother of James* ([Luke 24:10](#)). The **certain other women with them** included *Joanna*, ([Luke 24:10](#)) and others, unnamed (*and the other women with them*, [Luke 24:10](#)).

i. "These women came first, by a wonderful providence, before the apostles, to confute that impudent lie made by the priests, that the disciples had stolen the body away." (Trapp)

c. **Came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared:** The body of Jesus was hastily prepared for burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus ([John 19:38-41](#)). The women came to properly complete the hurried job performed immediately after Jesus' death.

i. [Mark 16:3](#) tells us that the women discussed the problem of what to do with the heavy stone blocking the entrance to the tomb.

d. **But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus:** The actual *event* of Jesus' resurrection is nowhere described, but the discovery of it is recorded in some detail. Here, the women who intended to give Jesus' body a more proper burial discover that the stone was rolled away from the tomb, and that the body of Jesus was not inside the tomb.

i. "This lack of spectacular detail itself speaks for the historicity of the New Testament documents. There is no attempt on the part of the writers to embellish the event of the Resurrection." (Pate)

ii. [Matthew 27:65-66](#) reminds us that there was a guard set round the tomb. The stone could not have been

rolled away by the women (they were not strong enough) or by the disciples (even if they were brave enough, they could not overcome the armed guards). No one else would have wanted to roll away the stone, and [Matthew 28:2](#) tells us that it was an angel who rolled it away.

iii. The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out. [John 20:19](#) tells us that Jesus, in His resurrection body, could pass through material barriers. The stone was **rolled away** so that others could see in and be persuaded that Jesus Christ was and is risen from the dead.

2. ([Luk 24:4-8](#)) The angelic announcement of the resurrection.

And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” And they remembered His words.

a. **As they were greatly perplexed about this:** Once the women saw the stone rolled away and the tomb empty, their immediate reaction was that they were **greatly perplexed**. They did not expect to find an empty tomb. This shows that the resurrection accounts cannot be the product of wishful thinking; they were not even *expecting* that it could happen.

b. **Two men stood by them in shining garments:** Even as angels announced the birth of Jesus, ([Luke 2:8-15](#)) so they also announced the resurrection of Jesus. The announcement of His birth was made to a few humble people, considered unimportant by the culture; His resurrection announced by angels to a few women.

c. **Why do you seek the living among the dead?** This was a wonderfully logical question. The angels seemed almost surprised that the women were surprised; after all, the angels had heard what Jesus said regarding His resurrection, and they knew the women had heard it also. They naturally wondered why the women were surprised.

i. “Jesus is not to be thought of as dead: therefore he is not to be sought among the dead.” (Morris)

ii. “As places of burial were unclean, it was not reasonable to suppose that the *living* should frequent them; or that if any was missing he was likely to be found in such places.” (Clarke)

iii. The angels’ question made a point: the **living** are not to be found among the **dead**. We should not expect spiritual life among those who do not have it. Many look for Jesus in dead things – religious traditionalism, formalism, man’s rules, human effort and ingenuity. We find Jesus only where there is resurrection life, where He is worshipped Spirit and in truth.

d. **He is not here:** These were some of the most beautiful and important words ever spoken by an angel to men. One may look all over Jerusalem and see countless thousands of tombs, but one will never find the tomb of Jesus – because **He is not here**.

i. Every so often someone claims to have found evidence of the tomb of Jesus or the bones of Jesus. Each claim is found to be untrue, while the testimony of the angels is proved true over and over again: **He is not here**.

ii. Even the beginning of the resurrection account refutes many of the false alternative theories suggested by

some.

- The wrong tomb theory is answered by [Luke 23:55](#); the women knew exactly which tomb Jesus was buried in.
- The wishful thinking theory is answered by [Luke 24:4](#) and [24:11](#), which note the surprise of the women and the disciples of the news of Jesus' resurrection.
- The animals-ate-the-body theory is answered by the presence of the stone ([Luke 24:2](#)).
- The swoon theory is answered by the presence of the stone ([Luke 24:2](#)).
- The grave robber theory is answered by the presence of the Roman guard and seal ([Matthew 27:62-66](#)).

e. **The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again:** To the women, it must have seemed like a long time ago that Jesus said these words ([Luke 18:31-33](#)). Nevertheless, they needed to remember them and the angels remind them of what Jesus said.

i. **Must** is the critical word here; just as much as the crucifixion of Jesus was necessary and ordained, so was His resurrection. Jesus would have never come to the place of Calvary unless there was also an empty tomb of resurrection there also.

f. **And they remembered His words:** The first notes of hope were sounded in the hearts of the women when they **remembered** Jesus' words. The empty tomb, the presence of angels, the words of the angels in and of themselves could not change their hearts – but **His words** could change and cheer their hearts.