



“Grave Clothes Can Have Meaning”

Lesson Text Romans 8:28; John 19:38-40; 20:2-9

All four of the Gospels recount the events leading up to and the actual resurrection of Jesus. Each account either adds or leaves out a few details, but the essence of the occurrence is generally consistent. This morning I have chosen the writings of the Apostle John to demonstrate how the symbolism of grave clothes can be depicted as either tragic or triumphant. The graphic details of Jesus' death are especially important in John's record because he was an eyewitness.

We read where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus came and wrapped Jesus' body and laid Him in a new garden tomb. They had to hurry and bury Him to avoid working on the Sabbath, which began Friday evening at sundown. They placed Jesus' body in the tomb, the tomb was sealed, a huge stone placed in front of it, and soldiers were assigned to guard it against the possibility of the apostles stealing the body. While it was still dark on the first day of the week some women including Mary Magdalene came to tend to Jesus' remains. Simon Peter and John came running to the tomb as well. They found the stone rolled away. John outran Peter to the grave, looked in and saw the grave clothes, however, he did not enter the grave. The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out, but to let others in to see that Jesus was gone.

These people had just experienced an unbelievably difficult week-end and now to arrive at the grave to find Jesus gone and only His "neatly folded" grave clothes left had to be the final insult. John 20:8 records that John saw the empty grave and the grave clothes and he believed Jesus had risen. Through the rags of death John saw the power of life. John realized that the meaning of the grave clothes, was that Jesus took His time, unwrapped His shroud, folded the clothes, and fulfilled His destiny. He said that He would rise in 3 days. HE DID WHAT HE SAID HE WOULD DO!!! The grave clothes were left as if Jesus had passed right through them. The headpiece was still rolled up in the shape of a head, and it was at about the right distance from the wrapping that had enveloped Jesus' body.

Jesus' resurrection is the key to the Christian faith. Why? (1) Just as He said, Jesus rose from the dead. We can be confident, therefore, that He will accomplish all He has promised. (2) Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ, not a false prophet or imposter, is ruler of God's eternal kingdom. (3) We can be certain of our own resurrection because Jesus was resurrected. Death is not the end-there is future life. (4) The divine power that brought Jesus back to life is now available to us to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life. (5) The resurrection is the basis for the churches witness to the world.

This Resurrection Day, let the grave clothes continuously remind us that Jesus is alive and wants to redeem us.

HAVE A BLESSED LIFE.

Pastor Gerald L. Durley