

Matthew 23-04-09b

Let's resume our study now. We're looking at the ladies that are involved in the time of Jesus' great work on the cross, the path to the cross, and the women of Jerusalem and Jesus' words to them, the ladies at the foot of the cross, the three Marys and Salome mentioned by name. And I wanted to continue with a little bit of information about the name Miriam, from which the word Mary comes.

If you go to Jewish sources, there is a website I visit from time to time to research things related to Israel, Hebrew, Judaism, and so on. It's kavod.org, C-H-A-B-A-D. Remember kavod is the word for glory, and it also means heavy.

But they have 10 facts about Miriam that everyone should know. And of course, this is from a Jewish perspective, a Judaistic perspective. And so you get a lot of Talmud and some Jewish tradition, but it's interesting nonetheless.

So the first point here is Miriam was one of the seven prophetesses of the Bible. And the reason I like going to sites like this, even when there's extraneous and unbiblical things that might be in there, I am often reminded of things that I should have remembered and I forgot. So Talmud lists seven prophetesses in Jewish tradition.

Sarah, the wife of Abraham, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, mother of Samuel, Abigail, remember her husband, the fool, and then she becomes the wife of David, Huldah, and Esther. In Jewish tradition, these are seven prophetesses. And I thought, well, I get Deborah, but how did they arrive at Miriam being a prophetess? Well, the Bible says so, that's why.

And come to Exodus chapter 15, verse 20, Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand and all the women came out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam called out to them, sing to the Lord for very exalted is he, a horse and its rider he cast into the sea. And this is a real interesting rendition.

This is chapter 15 of Exodus from the kavod.org website. And so this is an English translation from the Hebrew. And of course, in Hebrew, the name of books comes from the first word in the book.

So for example, you have Bamidbar in the wilderness, this is Shemot. So after Moses and the children of Israel sing a song to the Lord, saying, I will sing to the Lord, very exalted is he, a horse and its rider he cast into the sea. And that goes forward.

And then when you get to verse 20, Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister. It's so interesting that she's mentioned as Aaron's sister, not as Moses' sister, but we know that Aaron is Moses' brother. So she's got to be Moses' sister, but the account, and to me, people have scratched their heads over this, so why doesn't the writer, who is the writer?

Moshe.

Moses wrote this. And you get the idea that maybe when he thinks of his sister, he says, well, that's Aaron's sister. He doesn't say, Miriam, my sister, she's my brother's sister.

They're two peas in a pod, maybe. But it's very interesting when you start looking at Miriam in the Bible, this is the first reference to her by name. You have the story of the bulrushes and the daughter of Pharaoh and so on, but she is not named there.

And I had forgotten that as well. If I was on a quiz show and the big prize was dangling in the balance, I would have lost out because I would have said, well, it's the first couple of chapters of Exodus where Miriam is introduced by name, but no, it's right here. And the very first thing that is said about her is that she is a prophetess.

The second thing that is said about her is that she is Aaron's sister. If you go to the last reference where Miriam is mentioned, God is speaking in Micah chapter six, verse four. And God says through the prophet Micah, for I brought you up from the land of Egypt and from the house of bondage, I redeemed you and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

God says in Micah, I sent as your leadership, Moses and Aaron and Miriam. She is a prophetess. So if you think about this for just a moment, we're looking at this theme of threefold things.

You've got the three Miriams at the foot of the cross. Who is Miriam in the old Testament? She is introduced. The very first fact you learn about her by name is that she is a prophetess.

What is Aaron's identity functionally to Israel? Who is the first Levitical high priest? Aaron. So in this notation in Micah, these three are formally grouped together as sent by God, Moses, who is the closest thing to a king that Israel is going to have because God is the king, but Moses is his functional presence on earth through whom comes the law. This is the administrative branch of the government, if you will.

The law comes by Moses. So you have this kingly function, law enforcement, rulership through Moses. You have priesthood in Aaron and you have prophecy, interestingly, introduced in Israel through Miriam.

She is a prophetess. I had spaced that fact. I think it's just very interesting.

She is a prophetess. There is a prophetic function. And so when she sings this song in the 15th chapter, Miriam calls out, sing to the Lord, very exalted is he.

He casts a horse and its rider into the sea. And so it is bracketed. The beginning and ending of this song in that chapter is bracketed with that, the horse and its rider he has

cast into the sea.

And there is a metaphorical reference to what has happened in the drowning of the Egyptian army, the horse and its rider. The rider is the guidance, the leadership. The horse is the power, that which makes man more than what he can do in his own strength.

And both of them, the intentionality, the sentience, the planning, the purposing in the man and everything that he has harnessed for his use has all been put out of the way. And it's such an interesting reference to Mary that you find indirectly if you're watching, if you're looking, if you're in a contemplative frame of mind and thinking about the scene at the cross, there's so much to think about. I was reviewing in my mind all of the specials that we have done on Resurrection Sunday over these many years.

And there is always a fresh aspect. The centrality of the Lord Jesus and his work is never to be forgotten. But God has set that jewel in such a wonderful, beautiful setting.

And things that compliment and set off and enhance our appreciation of this moment and this great work. The time of our salvation, the time of our granting of life through death. And as with so many elements of reversal and the elder serving the younger and Jesus coming from an unexpected place at an unexpected time with an unexpected aspect and an unexpected message and an unexpected role, he doesn't lead an army to conquer the Romans.

He sits people down in the grass and feeds them. It is not conquest by force. It is conquest by beatitudes and by exhortations to love and to self-denial.

And it is so counterintuitive in every way. And you see this in both obvious ways and less obvious ways. I think that's part of what we're looking at here.

But when you put Exodus 15 verse 20 with Micah chapter 6 verse 4, you're bracketing Miriam. But in between, what do you have? Remember in Numbers chapter 12, you have an extended episode there where Miriam and Aaron speak to Moses. And what is the upshot of that? They speak against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married.

The church is so often imagined and pictured as the bride of Christ. It isn't explicitly stated, but a husband should love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. And you have this woman who is Moses, the most prominent man in Israel.

And she's not from here. She's not from the people. She's from Ethiopia.

She's identified as such. It doesn't say she's a daughter from one of the tribes. She's from Ethiopia.

And you remember the Jewish reaction against Gentiles coming to faith and coming into the fold and ultimately becoming the center of gravity of the church as it shifts from emphasis on the first generation Jewish church to there is neither Jew nor Greek, there's neither slave nor free, we are one in Christ. But that resistance is reflected here where Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses. Evidently, this is Moses' second wife, not the daughter that he found tending the flocks of Jethro and so on.

And so they said, has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also? And the Lord heard it. Miriam can say, I'm a prophetess of the Lord. Aaron can say, I'm a priest of the Lord.

They're well past the building of the tabernacle and so on at this point. Aaron's the high priest. She's the high prophetess, if you will.

And so they get together and say, has the Lord indeed only spoken through Moses? Now the man Moses was, and when it says very humble, scratch it out, he was afflicted. The man Moses was very afflicted more than all men on the face of the earth. But the Lord came down to the pillar of cloud, stood in the door of the tabernacle and called Aaron and Miriam and they both went forward.

He said, hear now my words. If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision. I speak to him in a dream.

Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, not in dark sayings.

He sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And there is a movement afoot in Christianity, which we have spoken of in the past and we'll talk about again at another time, where the authority of the scripture is being subverted by those who want to rely on other aspects of revelation and no longer subordinate them to God's word. They want to ignore portions of God's word and function on what they consider to be legitimate.

Is Aaron a legitimate high priest? Yes, he is. Is Miriam a legitimate prophet sent by God? Yes, she is. But not out from under the authority of the lawgiver and the one with whom God speaks face to face.

And this is their error, and she ends up being struck with leprosy for this. But if you move forward in the account, you find that shortly after this in chapter 20, the children of Israel come to the wilderness of Zin, and there is no water for the congregation. They gather together against Moses and Aaron.

The people contend with Moses, and this is where the Lord speaks in verse 7, Take the rod, you and your brother Aaron, gather the congregation together, speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water. Thus you shall bring water for them out of

the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals. Moses took the rod from before the Lord as he commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock. He said to them, Hear now, you rebels, must we bring water for you out of this rock? Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod. Water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe me to hallow me in the eyes of the children of Israel, you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them. This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and he was vindicated, he was hallowed among them. The striking of the rock the first time was a picture of the events that we have been reviewing in the four Gospels.

After that single striking, it is now only necessary to speak for this rock to split and to bring forth its water. And as you return now to Matthew chapter 27, and we see this scene at the cross, this takes place, the crucifixion begins at 9 a.m., and for the next three hours, you have the picture of the soldiers gambling at the foot of the cross, you have the women standing at the foot of the cross with John, and then you have the two robbers in verse 38 who are crucified with him, one on the right and the other on the left. Those who pass by blaspheme him, wagging their heads and saying, You who destroyed the temple and built it in three days, save yourself.

If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, say, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

That last phrase does not appear to be original, and we will believe him. This is what I call the Richard Dawkins attitude. When pressed, what would it take, what evidence would be required to convince you that there is a God? In a debate not too many years ago, Richard Dawkins said, You know, I used to think that if God would do certain things, if I could witness certain things, I would be forced to believe.

But he said, You know, the more I think about it, there isn't anything. There is nothing I could witness, nothing I could hear or see, nothing I could be told, nothing I could find out from science that would convince me there is a God. I am just so sure that there is not.

That if I saw a vision or heard a voice, I would assume I was delusional, or that someone was playing a joke on me or a trick. There is no amount of evidence that could compel me to believe there is a God. This is kind of the situation with the Messiahship of Jesus.

These men believe in God, but they cannot accept Jesus as their Messiah, and there is no

amount of evidence. They have seen the resuscitated Lazarus walking around, and that didn't convince them. They have heard and even witnessed miracles of the Lord Jesus, and it didn't convince them.

And as Jesus depicts in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, if the law and the prophets do not convince the brothers of the rich man, even one rising from the dead will not spark belief. It isn't a matter of evidence, it's a matter of attitude. And this is why we are conservative about trying to argue people who are faithless or disinterested or agnostic or atheistic, trying to adduce to them arguments and proofs and evidences that are very persuasive and convincing to us.

They convince and persuade us because we are convincible and persuadable. We are seeking and looking for truth and humble enough to go wherever God's truth leads us. There are people who do not have that attitude, and without the attitude it is pearls before swine.

And don't waste your time. Don't allow the pearls of the Word of God to be trampled underfoot. It is unproductive.

They will turn and tear you to pieces. There is a hatred, there is a bitterness, and you see it all around us in society today, against not only God, but anything that reminds people of God, anything that stems from God, anything that reflects His standards or His values. The Judeo-Christian foundations of our country are being consciously, aggressively destroyed and attacked.

So the two robbers are blaspheming. And Edersheim has an interesting idea. He suggests that the thieves on the cross are the first ones to say, oh, well, we've heard you're this great miracle worker.

Work a miracle and get us out of this. And that perhaps the chief priests hear that and pick up that theme. In Matthew's order, this is how it goes.

If you are the Son of God, save us. Save yourself and us. And when you compare the gospel accounts, then people passing by pick this up, wagging heads and saying, yeah, you say you're going to destroy the temple and build it in three days.

Save yourself. If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross. So the chief priests, the chief priests, can you imagine this? It is for any reason, if somebody is so tragically afoul of the law that they are enduring the indignity and the punishment and the execution.

How can you be a priest of God and mock and deride somebody in this manner? The chief priests, these are the leaders of the 24 courses. These are the factotai directly under Annas and Caiaphas. They're the leadership.

They are the most ornately robed. They are the ones to whom Israel is supposed to be looking for spiritual guidance. And this is their example.

And I point this out because in our country, there are believers who have taken sides politically and mock, deride, and really corrupt the name of Christ, representatively speaking, by their attitude in politics and in speaking out with corrosive, divisive, hateful, ad hominem, and ultimately useless. All you're doing is sowing bitterness and hatred and divisiveness. You can take issue with policies. You can take issue with personal behavior.

But to go out and do your best to try to destroy someone by way of reputation, go back and look at what Jesus said about saying to your brother, Raka, and thou fool. And the judgment with which you judge others is the judgment with which you will be judged. Would you really like to hear a chorus of angels calling out all of your personal failures and offenses and shortcomings at the judgment? Because that is what you did to public figures or people in the periphery, maligning, seeking to inflict some kind of penalty.

There is a religion afoot today. It's a religion that has people in politics as Satan. And because this or that president, this or that leader in Congress, the Senate or the House, these prominent people, because we violently disagree with their values and their politics, they're fair game.

You can say anything. You can denigrate them in any fashion. You can be bitter and spiteful and vindictive and harsh and cruel, cruel in holding them up to scorn and spite.

Just think about what went through the mind of the Lord Jesus when he heard these people, his people, the people of Israel for whom he was sent, to him he was sent as their anointed one. And this is what they're saying. They're mocking, they're scorning and deriding him and convincing themselves and each other that he couldn't possibly be who some people reputed him to be.

How could he possibly be the Christ? Look at him. He's, and here is a man that is suffering and in the process of dying. Would you go into a cancer ward and start mocking people who were in the last throes of their disease and in some cases the throes of the treatment? Just walk up and down in a cancer ward.

Walk up and down in a place where there are people dying of injuries. Walk up and down in a ward for men that have come back from war and have had their limbs blown off and so on. Walk up and down and mock them and make fun of them.

Well, this is what you get for joining the military. This is what you get for supporting the deep state and these, it's your own fault. Well, Jesus said, when you do that kind of thing in your heart, you might as well have gone out and done it in actuality.

And it is easy to pass by the harshness of people's attitudes and focus on the harshness of Jesus' physical suffering, not to diminish the physical suffering, but there were many

who were crucified. The 3,600 I read to you in Jerusalem, all of whom were crucified. Their children put to the sword, watching their families slaughtered in the streets.

You don't always die immediately from a sword thrust. These people could have lingered for days with separating infected wounds. They could not heal because there's no such thing as antibiotics.

When's the last time the Romans washed his sword? Who's the last person he stabbed? What else has he been hitting? They were agonizing, torturous, cruel, physically just insufferable deaths all through history. Jesus is one of them, but the suffering from being misunderstood, misjudged, and vindictively attacked by the very people Jesus is dying to achieve pardon for sin and the opportunity for life and salvation. And you think the discipline the Lord Jesus had to not call 10,000 angels to destroy the world and set him free, which would have been his right.

And he told his disciples that, Peter, put your sword away. Don't you think I could put an end to this at any point? And at that point, it hadn't even started. The chief priests also mocking with the scribes, the Bible scholars, the Bible church pastors, the expositors, the experts in the text, those who knew the doctrines and could preach in the synagogues, are standing up, completely misrepresenting the Lord Jesus as enemies.

He saved others, himself he cannot save. And you have the idea, so he's the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross. This supposed miracle worker can't even get himself free from these four Romans and the centurion who's overseeing.

There's a crew of four at each cross, so there's a dozen Roman soldiers there and their centurion commanding officer. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him. And this is a quote from Psalm 22, verse 8, for he said, I am the son of God.

Even the robbers who were crucified with him reviled him with the same thing. And I wish we had time to review the parallels. There is great detail.

Do you notice there is more detail about the mocking and the scorning, the derision and this intense hate and this self-satisfied, arrogant, victorious feeling amongst the Jewish leadership than there is with Jesus' physical suffering? It says he was scourged, it says he was crucified. Doesn't go into detail about the hammer blows, doesn't go into detail about the lacerations, doesn't go into detail about the physical suffering. Verse after verse after verse about the cruelty and the egregious evil that inflicts suffering on the soul of the Lord Jesus, even as he is serving as the Passover lamb for these same people.

From the sixth hour to the ninth hour, there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, that is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And my closing thought for this morning, this has been a very difficult concept that in this hour where it seems as though all

except this handful of faithful ladies at the foot of the cross and John have fled and out of fear, and those who are present are hostile, to put it mildly, and in the darkness, it's difficult for Jesus to even see a friendly face. And then he cries out these words.

It's very interesting to look at this. It's given in two languages. Two of the three languages that are on the sign over his head, which is Aramaic and Greek.

And in both languages, if you look at this carefully, the word why and the word forsake, I did a lot of work on this in Old Testament usage and also in New Testament usage. But in Aramaic, as in Hebrew, this is lama, Eli, Eli, my God, my God, lama. The L there is two or four and ma doesn't so much mean why as what.

And this is not a suggestion original to me, but I have seen it in several places. And in fact, there is an early translation in Greek that makes this even more clear. To what have you left me? In looking at this entire circumstance, remember when we were looking here within the last week or at John 14, six and Thomas asks, we don't know where you're going.

How can we know the way? And Jesus says, I am the way we tend to put the emphasis on way, truth and life. But Jesus put the emphasis on himself. I am the way and the truth and the life.

That's what I am. And you gain a lot by putting the emphasis in the right spot. I see the same thing here.

We tend to put the emphasis on forsaken. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why have you abandoned me? Why are you gone in this, the hour of greatest human need ever in all of history? And God seems to have left the building, so to speak. But the emphasis, when you look at this in Aramaic and in the Hebrew parallels in the old Testament, and even in the Greek here, where it is Hina T. Hina is normally translated when it's not a question in order that.

And T or Tis, T-I-S is normally translated what and sometimes who. So in order that, what have you left me? And it's not left me in the sense that your presence is no longer here. You have to, what have you, why have you put me in this situation? And it's not even that it is what, what sort of situation have you, have you put me into? It isn't an emphasis on the elimination or absence of God's presence as it is what circumstance have you left me in? But the, and to leave somebody in a situation is not to be actively presently helping them, but it doesn't mean it's gone either.

And I wanted to give you really quickly a a parallel in Psalm chapter nine, verse 10. Those who know your name, verse nine, the Lord is a refuge for the oppressed and a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name, trust in you for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Is this a time of oppression? Is this a time of trouble? Those who know your name, remember when Jesus said, nobody knows the father, but the son and those to whom the son chooses to reveal him. Those who know your name, trust in you for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you. And the word forsaken there is Zabath, which is the Sabach or Sabathani, depending on which gospel you look at, it's transliterated slightly differently, but that is, this is Sabathani, not Sabach, Sabathani.

And it's the very word used in Psalm nine, 10. Those who know your name, put their trust in you for you have not forsaken those who seek you, O Lord, you have not. So it isn't that God has, the emphasis is not on the absence of God's presence, if you will, it is on to what, that's why it's in the front.

My God, my God, what is this to which you have left me, Lama, to what? What is this you have left me? And if I had more time, I would give you some parallels in the old Testament where they will leave possessions in the care of someone. David will leave possessions. He's not abandoning them.

He is placing responsibility for them. He is putting them under someone's watch or someone's care. And so he has, remember when, when somebody says, well, I'm leaving you in charge, I'm leaving him in charge.

I'm not abandoning him in charge. I'm not forsaking him in charge, but this is for him to deal with. He's, he's, I'm, I'm so that you may know that the son of man has power on earth to forgive sins.

Has God abandoned Jesus to the power to forgive sins or has he put it under his charge? You're responsible. You, you do this. This is your task.

This is your responsibility. This is your assignment. And the magnitude of this assignment, I think is what Jesus is focusing on.

Lama, my God, my God, to what have you left me? What is this task you have left me? The emphasis is not on where did you go? Even when you go to Psalm 22, one and two, depending on if you're reading Hebrew or English. Why are you so far from helping me? It doesn't say, why are you so far away? You have left this to me and there, the deliverance isn't coming. There aren't flights of angels coming to set him free from the cross.

You're far from helping me. But if you keep reading the Psalm with all of its details that reflect the crucifixion, there is an answer in the Psalm. As he writes it, David understands that there is a purpose and he knows it all along, but he's, he's turning the different aspects of it in his mind.

But the Lord Jesus understood. And this is not God saying, all right, you know, take it. And he's leaving to go do something else.

The, the lifting of the darkness at 3 p.m. It tells us that God knew exactly what was going on and exactly how long it needed to go on. And the final thought I'll leave you with is back in Matthew chapter 27, which is given alone by Matthew, because this is resurrection Sunday. In the account, after they give him the sponge with sour wine because he calls out, I thirst, Jesus cried out again in verse 50 with a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.

Look at verse 51. Then behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked and the rocks were split.

This is why I spent a little time in numbers, looking at God splitting the rock in the wilderness so that life-giving water would come out. Even when there's an earthquake rocks don't typically split. You know, a rock is usually sitting in dirt.

You would have to have a solid granite cliff and maybe that would crack, but rocks in and around Jerusalem cracked, you know, boulders cracked. Why would a rock split just on account of an earthquake? I think this is supernatural darkness, this is a supernatural earthquake, and these rocks are supernaturally split to include rocks that were used to seal tombs. They were split.

And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming out of the graves after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. This is my final happy thought.

Does that look like a happy thought? It is. I'll tell you why. As soon as Jesus breathes his last, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, breathes his last, and he has died, his work is complete, it is finished.

At that point, earthquake, the veil is torn, top to bottom, you know the significance of that, and the earthquake and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened, and bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming out of the graves after his resurrection, look at the, I wish this verse was not split, 52 and 53, it all needs to be one verse. Picture this, Jesus is still on the cross, he has just died, the darkness is lifting, there is an earthquake, the veil in the temple is split, and the rocks crack, and the graves are opened, and the bodies are exposed.

It says the bodies are raised, it means the bodies are exposed, they're lifted, they're not down in holes where you can't see them, they're not in tombs where you can't see them, the rocks are split, and these bodies are everywhere. Now think about this, this is just before sundown on Passover, you've got bodies everywhere. There are guys who won't even enter the praetorium, because they would be defiled and not able to eat the Passover, right? You think anybody can go do any cleanup on these opened graves? There's bodies spilling out all over the hillside, in the graveyard, nobody can do anything about it.

So the bodies are laying there exposed, all night, while they're preparing Jesus and getting him into the tomb, he's in the tomb, and these other bodies are out. Nobody's got time to remediate these. And so they lay there all day Saturday, all day Friday, all day Saturday, nobody can go do this, these are high Sabbath days, and early in the morning, on Sunday, when Jesus is raised, that's when these people get up and start going into the town.

They've been laying exposed ever since the crucifixion. The grip of death has been broken with Christ's death. When he dies, their imprisonment in death is symbolically broken.

The rocks are split, their graves are open, but they don't actually live until after Jesus is raised. How long a time is that? After two days, we will live again. On the third day, after two days we will rise, on the third day we will live again, remember? It has been 2,000 year days since the Lord Jesus died and secured our freedom, broke the power of sin and death.

We will actually rise early in the morning on the third day. And why weren't the graves opened on Sunday? They're open to the point that Jesus has finished his work. They're open, but they don't experience their resuscitation until after Jesus is revealed in new life.

And when Jesus is revealed in new life, we will be like these whose graves were opened when the work is finished, but to experience the resuscitation and to rise and appear to many, that comes after the Lord Jesus' appearance. After his appearance, then those who have been freed by his work appear to many after the resurrection. It's only in Matthew, but it's the coolest thing because you think about the completed work of Christ, but we are still waiting through the two days and for that early morning on the third day when we will be raised and be like him.

We will see him as he is. And you have an adumbration, an anticipation, a foreshadowing of that in this notation. The graves are opened.

It is as though you roll away the stone at Lazarus' tomb, but you wait a couple of days before you say, come forth. Lazarus is a different picture, but this is so significant. When are the graves opened? When do the people rise up and appear, go into the city? After two days, after the Lord Jesus appears, then they appear.

Fascinating. And what a wonderful hope for us that at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, the power of death and sin has been broken for us, but we will truly live and truly appear when he appears and comes to take us to himself and present us before the Father's throne. So it's even in the midst of this tragedy, just as the darkness is lifting, and this looks like such a tragic scene.

Look at these broken up graves. It's going to take days and weeks to try to rebury these disturbed graves, but these people stand up, walk into the city, and visit their friends and relatives on Sunday. A lot to think about.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ who, according to your plan and purpose and in obedience and conformity to your will, came as the fullest expression of your love and your grace, died for our sins, set us free, and granted us new life which we experience in an anticipatory form now with the presence of your Spirit and the power of your Word, and a life which will come to us in its fullness at the return of the Lord Jesus in to gather us and to prepare us for service and function in the kingdoms that are to come. We thank you for this day.

We thank you for our hope. We thank you for our confidence. We pray that we can be cautioned as well as inspired by the actions of those who were at the foot of the cross who appreciated and understood the Lord Jesus and those who did not, and that we will, in expending and in investing the remainder of our time in this life, be a reflection of His glory and a reflection of His body in living the life of love for you and love for one another to which we are called.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.