

He Is Risen! Thousands Gather at Empty Tomb in Jerusalem to Celebrate Christ's Resurrection

With COVID restrictions lifted, Christians were finally able to gather today for the first time in three years to attend morning services at The Garden Tomb in Jerusalem to celebrate the death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

British-born Pastor Stephen Bridge, director of The Garden Tomb, told those attending the 6:30 a.m. sunrise service that he and his colleagues weren't sure how many people would show up this year.

They had originally planned only one in-person English language service at 9:00 a.m., which would also be livestreamed globally.

But sensing the Lord's encouragement, Bridge decided to hold the sunrise service after all.

Bridge said he was stunned to see the garden's seating completely packed, with many having to stand in the back and on the sides through the worship, prayer time and teaching from the Bible.

Between the two English-language services and the noon Scandinavian service, several thousand Christians worshipped at The Garden Tomb today.

"Located just outside the city walls of Jerusalem you will find The Garden Tomb, a possible location for the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus," notes the ministry's website. "Near to the Damascus Gate and standing in the shadow

of Skull Hill you will find this beautiful garden with its ancient empty tomb. Since 1894 the focus of our ministry is Worship and Witness, as we declare the victory of the risen Christ.”

Teaching the Gospel Accounts

In addition to classic worship songs and hymns about the death and Resurrection of Jesus, numerous biblical passages were read, including the account of the first Easter Sunday as recorded in the Gospel According to Luke.

*But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that 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, and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he *saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened (Luke 24:1-12, NASB).*

The interchange between Jesus and Martha—just before Jesus raises Martha’s brother, Lazarus, from the dead, was also recounted.

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?’ She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world'” (John 11:25-27)

The Central Text of the Morning

The main focus of Bridge’s message was the Apostle Paul’s first letter to the Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus in the Greek city of Corinth.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also (1 Cor. 15:1-8).

“Resurrection changed everything,” Bridge said. “There’s no doubt that the victory was won on the cross. It was at the cross that Jesus destroyed the powers of Satan and took everything upon Himself. And He did say, ‘It is finished.’ And when they laid him in the tomb, His Spirit was already with the Father: ‘Into Your hands, Father, I commend My Spirit.’ And He breathed his last.”

“The job [of conquering the curse of sin and death] was done on what we call Good Friday, but the victory was revealed on Easter Sunday, and it has transformed the world,” Bridge

continued.

“How have you been transformed by this message?” he asked. “Has anyone here been transformed by this man, Jesus?”

Bridge went on to share some of his personal story of how his realization that Jesus really is the Messiah—and why he placed his trust in Jesus to forgive all his sins and adopt him into God’s family—fundamentally transformed his own life.

He also shared several examples of how God had answered his fervent prayers and healed his father of a serious heart condition, and healed his son of chronic fatigue.

“I know what it feels like to meet some of the risen Christ,” Bridge said. “I know what it is to have a testimony. And that’s what I’m sharing with you this morning.”

“We don’t get all the healing we want or need this side of the resurrection, our resurrection,” he noted. “But healing has been released into the world. And God does restore broken lights. Physically, mentally, spiritually, he brings restoration to those that He loves. That’s why He came. ... So, if at any point in your life you’re suffering under the destructive powers of the evil one, for this purpose, Christ was revealed to destroy that thing that’s assailing your lives. He’s here to heal now.”

“So, as we conclude our service, as we sing the songs and pray together, I encourage you to move from an academic, theological statement—‘I believe in Jesus; I believe He is the Son of God; I believe he died and rose again’—to a life-transforming statement, to truly understanding that He’s here now, standing in our midst, with the power to heal you now.”
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