



The service starts with the Church in near complete darkness.

The service involves a lot of noise and movement.

Like a Christmas service of nine lessons and carols, we start with many Scripture readings. They relate the loving purposes of God.

One highlight is the Exsultet. This hymn is ancient and dates from near the birth of our faith. During its singing, we ring bells, bang symbols and make a joyful noise. There is no greater joy than a Christian celebrating Easter!

The second highlight occurs when we renew our baptismal vows around the font. All the faithful process to the font placed behind the newly blessed paschal candle. The image is intended as a re-enactment of the chosen people following a pillar of fire as they escape slavery in Egypt and push forward toward the promised land.

Introduction

Brothers and sisters in Christ, on this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus Christ passed over from death to life, the Church invites her children, dispersed throughout the world, to gather in prayer and vigil. For this is the Passover of the Lord, in which through word and sacrament, we share in his victory and death.

As we await the risen Christ, let us hear the record of God's saving deeds in history, recalling how he saved his people in ages past and—in the fullness of time—sent his Son to be our Redeemer; and let us pray that through this Easter celebration, God may bring to perfection in each of us the saving work he has begun.

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Let us pray:

Almighty God, from the beginning of time,
you have been working for the salvation of the world.
By the strength of your right hand,
you rescued your people from the slavery in Egypt:
by the same power,
set free all the peoples of the world
from the bondage of their sins
and make them heirs of the glories
of your everlasting kingdom:
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

Readings, psalms and prayers

1. **Genesis 1:1-5, 26-end** in which we hear how God created the universe and everything in it.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Psalm 33:1-9**Response** The earth is filled with the loving-kindness of the Lord.

- 1 Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones;
Praise is becoming to the upright.
- 2 Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre;
sing praises to him with a harp of ten strings.
- 3 Sing to him a new song;
play skilfully with a shout of joy. **R**
- 4 For the word of the Lord is upright,
and all his work is done in faithfulness.
- 5 He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Lord. **R**
- 6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made;
and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
- 7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
he lays up the deeps in storehouses. **R**
- 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord;
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
- 9 For he spoke, and it was done;
he commanded, and it stood fast. **R**

Prayer

Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image, and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

All Amen.

2. **Exodus 14:21-15:1a** in which we hear of the rescue of the Israelites during their flight from Egypt. The story foreshadows our own deliverance through the waters of baptism.

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them

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on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.'

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.' So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

So the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work the Lord did against the Egyptians. The people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord, 'I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously.'

Canticle Let us sing to the Lord (from Exodus 15).

Response Sing to the Lord, for he has won a glorious victory.

- 1 Let us sing to the Lord, for he has won a glorious victory:
the horse and his rider he has hurled into the sea.
- 2 The Lord is my strength and my song:
he has become my salvation. **R**
- 3 He is my God and I will praise him:
my father's God and I will exalt him.
- 4 The Lord fights for his people:
the Lord is his name. **R**
- 5 Your right hand is glorious in power:
your right hand, Lord, shatters the enemy.
- 6 Who is like you, Lord, majestic in holiness:
who is like you, Lord, awesome in glory, working wonders? **R**

- 7 In your unfailing love:
you will lead the people you have redeemed.
- 8 And by your invincible strength:
you will guide them to your holy dwelling. **R**

Prayer

Lord God our redeemer, who heard the cry of your people
and sent your servant Moses to lead them out of slavery:
Free us from the tyranny of sin and death
and, by the leading of your Spirit,
bring us to our promised land;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

3. **Isaiah 55:2-11** in which we hear the prophet's proclamation that the Lord is near.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Canticle I will Praise you, Lord (from Isaiah 12)

Response Sing hymns to the Lord, for he has triumphed.

- 1 I will praise you, Lord:
though you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.
- 2 Surely God is my saviour:
I will trust and not be afraid. **R**
- 3 The Lord is my strength and my song:
he has become my salvation.
- 4 With joy you will draw water:
from the wells of salvation. **R**
- 5 Give thanks and praise to the Lord:
and call upon his name.
- 6 Make known among the nations what he has done:
proclaim that his name is supreme. **R**
- 7 Sing hymns to the Lord for he has triumphed:
let this be made known in all the world.
- 8 Shout aloud and sing for joy you people of God:
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. **R**

Prayer

Lord of all power and might,
the author and giver of all good things:
increase in us true religion,
nourish us in all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

4. **Romans 6:3-11** which says that in baptism we are united with Christ in his death and in his resurrection.

If we have been united with Christ in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved

to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Psalm 114

Response Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

- 1 When Israel went forth from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of a strange tongue,
- 2 Judah became his sanctuary,
Israel, his dominion. **R**
- 3 The sea looked and fled;
Jordan was driven back.
- 4 The mountains skipped like rams,
the little hills, like young sheep. **R**
- 5 What ailed you, O sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you were driven back?
- 6 You mountains, that you skip like rams?
O little hills, like young sheep? **R**
- 7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
- 8 Who turned the hard rock into a pool of water,
the flint-stone into a springing well. **R**

Prayer

Grant, Lord, that we who are baptised into the death of
your Son Jesus Christ
may continually put to death our evil desires
and be buried with him;
and through the grave and gate of death
we may pass to our joyful resurrection;
through the merits of the same, your Son Jesus Christ,
who died and was buried and rose again for us.

All Amen

The service of Light

The building is in darkness, the minister and congregation walk in silence to the main entrance, one of them carrying the unlit Easter candle.

A fire is kindled, from which a taper is lit.

Eternal God, who made this most holy night
to shine with the brightness of your one true light:
set us aflame with the fire of your love,
and bring us to the radiance of your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen**

The paschal candle is brought to the front. The priest traces symbolic signs upon the candle:

Christ: yesterday and today
the beginning and the end
Alpha
Omega
all times belong to him
and all ages
to him be glory and power
through every age for ever. Amen.

All **Amen.**

The paschal candle is lit from the newly blessed fire.

May the light of Christ, rising in glory,
dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

The solemn procession

On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' Then they remembered his words and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.

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Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened. *Luke 24:1-12*

The minister bearing the paschal candle raises it, and says:

Christ our light

All Thanks be to God

- The procession moves further into the building, and then stops. These words are repeated often and the candles of those around are lit from it.
- The procession moves to the centre of the nave, and stops once more. The versicle and response are again repeated, and the candles of those nearby are lit.
- The Easter candle is placed on a stand in the midst of the building, and all other candles are now lit.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

The Easter proclamation (the Exsultet)

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing choirs of angels!

Exult, all creation around God's throne!

Jesus Christ, our King is risen!

Sound the trumpet of salvation!

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendour,

radiant in the brightness of your King!

Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!

Darkness vanishes for ever!

Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!

The risen Saviour shines upon you!

Let this place resound with joy,

echoing the mighty song of all God's people!

My dearest friends,

standing with me in this holy light,

join me in asking God for mercy,

that he may give his unworthy minister

grace to sing his Easter praises.

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The Lord be with you.

All And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them up unto the Lord.

Let us give thanks and praise to the Lord.

All It is meet and right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly right that with full hearts and minds and voices we should praise the unseen God, the all-powerful Father, and his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For Christ has ransomed us with his blood and paid for us the price of Adam's sin to our eternal Father!

This is our Passover feast,
when Christ, the true Lamb, is slain,
whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers.

This is the night,
when first you saved our fathers:
you freed the people of Israel from their slavery,
and led them dry-shod through the sea.

This is the night,
when the pillar of fire destroyed the darkness of sin.

This is night, when Christians everywhere,
washed clean of sin and freed from all defilement,
are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.

This is the night, when Jesus broke the chains of death
and rose triumphant from the grave.

What good would life have been to us,
had Christ not come as our Redeemer?

Father, how wonderful your care for us!
How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.

O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam,
which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

Most blessed of all nights,
chosen by God to see Christ rising from the dead!

Of this night scripture says:

'The night will be as clear as day:
it will become my light, my joy.'

The power of this holy night dispels all evil,
washes guilt away, restores lost innocence,
brings mourners joy;
it casts out hatred, brings us peace,
and humbles earthly pride.

Night truly blessed,
when heaven is wedded to earth
and we are reconciled to God!

Therefore, heavenly Father, in the joy of this night,
receive our evening sacrifice of praise,
your Church's solemn offering.

Accept this Easter candle,
a flame divided but undimmed,
a pillar of fire that glows to the honour of God.

Let it mingle with the lights of heaven
and continue bravely burning
to dispel the darkness of this night!

May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning:
Christ, that Morning Star,
who came back from the dead,
and shed his peaceful light on all mankind,
your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All Amen

The Gloria

We traditionally sing this song, the first Gloria of Easter, to the accompaniment of ringing bells. This version is sung to the tune of the Ash Grove (please click [here](#)).

**Sing glory to God in the height of the heavens,
salvation and peace to his people on earth;
our King and our Saviour, our God and our Father,
we worship and praise you and sing of your worth.**

**Creation unites in the power of the Spirit,
in praise of the Father, through Jesus the Son.
So complex, so simple, so clear, so mysterious,
our God ever Three yet eternally one.**

**Lord Jesus, the Christ, only Son of the Father,
the lamb who has carried our burden of shame,
now seated on high in the glory of heaven,
have mercy upon us who call on your name. Refrain.**

**For you, only you, we acknowledge as holy,
we name you alone as our Saviour and Lord;
you only, O Christ, with the Spirit exalted,
are one with the Father, for ever adored. Refrain.**

The Collect

Let us pray:

Lord of all life and power,
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son
overcame the old order of sin and death
to make all things new in him:
grant that we,
being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour,
glory and might, now and in all eternity.

All Amen

The renewal of baptismal vows

All follow the paschal candle as it is taken in procession to the font.

As we celebrate
the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead,
we remember that through the paschal mystery
we have died and been buried with him in baptism,
so that we may rise with him
to a new life within the family of his Church.
Now that we have completed our observance of Lent,
we renew the promises made at our baptism,
affirming our allegiance to Christ
and our rejection of all that is evil.

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Therefore I ask these questions:

Do you turn to Christ?

All I turn to Christ.

Do you repent of your sins?

All I repent of my sins

Do you renounce evil?

All I renounce evil

And now I ask you to make the profession of Christian faith into which you were baptised, and into which you live and grow:

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
who made the world?

All I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in his Son,
Jesus Christ, who redeemed the world?

All I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in his Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God?

All I believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church

**All This is our faith:
we believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Almighty God, we thank you for our fellowship in the household of faith with all those who have been baptised in your name. Keep us faithful to our baptism, and so make us ready for that day when the whole creation shall be perfect in your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

All Amen.

Intercessions

Father, we praise you for the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ from the dead: shed his glorious light on all Christian people that we may live as those who believe in the triumph of the cross.

Lord hear us.

All Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for those who, at this season, are receiving in baptism your Son's new life by water and the Spirit:

dying with Christ, may they know the power of his resurrection.

Lord hear us.

All Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for all we know and love, both near and far:

may their eyes be opened to see the glory of the risen Lord.

Lord hear us.

All Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for those who suffer pain and anguish:

grant to them the faith to reach out toward the healing wounds of Christ and be filled with his peace.

Lord hear us.

All Lord graciously hear us.

We remember before you all who have died in the hope of the resurrection:

unite them in your undying love.

Lord hear us.

All Lord graciously hear us.

Join our voices, Lord we pray, to the songs of all your saints in proclaiming that you give us victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All Amen.

The peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said,

'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord.

The peace of the risen Christ be with you. Alleluia! Alleluia!

All Peace be with you. Alleluia! Alleluia!

We offer one another a sign of peace.

We greet each other with the words,

The Lord is risen.

All He is risen indeed.

Litany of thanksgiving for the resurrection

Let us bless the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Let us praise and exult him for ever.

**All Blessing and honour and glory and power
be to him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever.**

**All Great and marvellous are your works, Lord God
Almighty; just and true are your ways, King of saints; all
glorious are your gifts, Spirit of life.**

**All Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and
power and might be to our God for ever and ever. Amen.**

O Give thanks to the Lord for he is gracious;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

He has loved us from all eternity;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

And remembered us when we were in trouble;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

For us, his people, and our salvation he came down from heaven;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

He became incarnate of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was made man;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

By his cross and passion he has redeemed the world;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

And has washed us from our sins in his own blood;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

On the third day he rose again;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

And has given us the victory;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

He ascended into heaven;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

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And opened wide for us the everlasting doors;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

He is seated at the right hand of the Father;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

And ever lives to make intercessions for us;

All for his mercy endures for ever.

**All Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be. Amen.**

For the gift of the Spirit,

All blessed be Christ.

For the world-wide Church,

All blessed be Christ.

For the means of grace;

All blessed be Christ.

For the triumphs of his gospel,

All blessed be Christ.

For the lives of his saints,

All blessed be Christ.

In joy and in sorrow,

All blessed be Christ.

In life and in death,

All blessed be Christ.

Now and to the end of the ages,

All blessed be Christ.

**All Blessing and honour and thanksgiving and praise
more than we can utter,
more than we can conceive,
be to you, O most adorable Trinity,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
by all angels, all peoples, all creatures,
for ever and ever.
Amen and amen.**

Blessing and dismissal

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Let us bless the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

The God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
make you perfect in every good work, to do his will,
working in you that which is pleasing in his sight,
through Jesus Christ to whom be glory for ever and ever.

All Amen

Sermon

It may come as a surprise to know that there are many people—including people who call themselves Christians—who do not believe that Jesus actually died. They say that the disciples made up the whole story and then imagined that Jesus was with them. They deny the authenticity of the whole event. Now, if they are correct, then Christianity is a lie and a farce. Nothing but a made up religion which is offering false hope and no security. But they are not correct. One event which adds to the ability of Christianity to show that Jesus died is to focus on the burial of Jesus.

Before we go any further let's read about the specific event we have in mind.

Now if the Romans had their way they would have left all three of the crucified bodies on the cross to rot. This would serve as a gruesome reminder to the whole community as to what would happen if you messed with the Roman legal system. After the body had rotted, the left-overs would be thrown into a mass grave, usually out in the open. But the Romans knew the Jews were very sensitive about dead people. In fact Jews would bury everyone. So, out of respect for Jewish law and custom, the Romans allowed burial.

Which is how we are introduced to a very unlikely pair of undertakers? Joseph of Arimathea, who asks Pilate for the body of Jesus, and Nicodemus. In the Bible Joseph of Arimathea appears only in connection with the burial of Jesus. However, his appearance is so important all four Gospel writers tell us about him. Matthew tells us he had become a disciple of Jesus. Matthew also tells us that Joseph owned the tomb which Jesus was buried in. Joseph is a devout man who was a faithful

servant of God. He was a prominent member of the Council. Luke tells us that did not consent to the Council's decision and action. So he tried to defend Jesus and prevent the injustice. John tells us that Joseph had been keeping the fact that he was a disciple a secret. It's good to know these things but the most telling piece of information John tells us is that Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews.

I guess we could say that if Joseph was truly a disciple, he should have stopped being such a coward and let people know. Yet Joseph, who has been fearing the Jews, comes out of hiding. Joseph shows his true colours after Jesus dies. Which is amazing when you think about it? Now the council expect Jesus' lifeless body to be unceremoniously thrown into the valley of death with the rest of the decaying murderers, thieves and political prisoners. They don't want anyone to mourn Jesus' death—Joseph is going against that wish. Joseph has nothing to gain by helping to bury Jesus ... in fact he has heaps to lose.

And what about Nicodemus? Who is Nicodemus? Nicodemus appears earlier in the book of John. He was the man who went to Jesus one night to have a talk with Jesus—he went at night because he was afraid. Nicodemus was also a member of the Jewish Council. But he is afraid no longer. Now he is showing who he really is and who he really stands for. He makes his devotion known through the contribution of about 35 kilograms of burial spices which would cost a small fortune. This amount of burial spice was usually used to bury a king ... which is exactly what Jesus was. It is an overwhelming response of commitment to the Saviour whom Nicodemus loved. And like Joseph, Nicodemus shows his true colours after Jesus dies, even though he has so much to lose. They had to make a choice, and for them their choice was obvious. That is who Joseph and Nicodemus were: two Pharisees putting their reputation on the line to bury Jesus; two men willing to cover the cost of doing so.

How does all this tie in with the authenticity of Jesus' resurrection? Well, it comes down to what is actually happening, and what should have been happening.

Here we are seeing the most unlikely circumstances and the most ambiguous people being used to take care of the body of Jesus. Surely it should have been the disciples going to Pilate and asking for the body of Jesus—after all He is their closest friend, and their master. But, more than that, the disciples have every reason to expect that this situation is only a temporary situation. Because Jesus clearly taught the disciples that He was going to rise from the dead. Jesus reminded them even on the night of His arrest.

Jesus told them, 'This very night you will all fall away on account of Me, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee' (Matthew 26:31–32).

What should have been happening at the foot of the cross was the 11 disciples standing around Jesus' body discussing where they are going to put Him for three days until He comes alive. Instead, we find that the disciples have gone into hiding. They are fearful for their lives. Instead of the disciples it is Joseph of Arimathea who went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. And it is two members of the Jewish council tenderly leaning over His body, removing the nails which held Him fast, and wrapping His body with linen and spices. The ones who should have been making preparations for the resurrection of Jesus are nowhere to be seen. The ones who will face the wrath of the Sanhedrin because of their identification with Jesus are the ones who are making the hasty burial arrangements. The place where Jesus was buried was witnessed by many and known to many. There were women watching Joseph and Nicodemus: the soldiers guarded the right tomb; there are witnesses to say Jesus was alone in the tomb; there were witnesses who saw the rock being rolled over the entrance; there were witnesses who saw the Roman guards put a seal on the rock. Is it possible that Jesus was not dead, or that the disciples somehow switched bodies, or that the disciples were able to make up some sort of conspiracy? Not at all. Those who bury Jesus risk much and gain nothing—they should have been home, but they weren't. There is no chance to switch bodies, or confuse burial sites. There is no question about the death of Jesus. At the burial of Jesus everyone thought the end had come. And when Jesus rose from the dead He took everyone by surprise. The guards at the tomb, the women who came early on Sunday morning, the disciples the temple leaders. It's a surprise because Jesus was dead—and everyone knew it. The fact that He has come back to life means that Jesus is the authentic Saviour.

- God promised to give us life through the coming to life of Jesus. That promise is made secure at the resurrection.
- God promised to take away all hindrances which stop us from coming to Him in faith. That promise is secured at the resurrection.
- God promised that whoever believes in the Son will not perish but have eternal life. That promise is secured at the resurrection.

Amen