

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

They had seen him die. A horrific death. Designed to maximize discomfort, intensify pain and prolong the agony as long as possible. It is called crucifixion and it existed long before the Romans chose to use it as their usual means of capital punishment. The Roman Empire was brutal when it wanted to be and that was pretty often. When it came to sending a message to a conquered people about not having second thoughts about revolting against the power and control of Rome, Rome would periodically crucify any number of the locals. They would do this in a public place and do everything they could to emphasize how cruel a way it was to die. Stay in line. Mind your manners. Go along with what we want—taxes, submission, compliance—and you could have a modicum of a life.

They had seen Jesus die like that. But that was Friday. This is Sunday. They saw him buried in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb and they saw the stone rolled across the entrance. Jesus was really dead and he was really buried. But that was Friday. This is Sunday. Now that tomb is open. Now that tomb has no body in it. Now that tomb is the resting place for his burial cloths but nothing else. Mary Magdalen got there first. And, at first, she thought someone must have stolen Jesus' body because it was gone. But who would unwrap a dead body from its burial cloths. Remove the cloths and then take the naked, bloodied, stiff body away? It made no sense. No. It didn't.

The alternative did not make much sense either. He was alive. Something happened in that tomb. Yes. Something did happen in that tomb. Maybe the angels came and waited upon the body of the Father's beloved Son. Maybe there was a special detail of the cherubim dispatched to clean the bloodied remains of the Holy One of God. And then there is the Holy Spirit who created harmony and order out of the original chaos on the face of the earth who is unleashed once again to renew the face of the earth and to transform death into life—first in the person of Jesus, and then in each and every one who believes in him. Only those who believe? God alone can answer that. But for the rest of us. If we have heard the message of resurrection then we have to decide if we believe it, and in Him crucified but raised from death. That is the Easter question. Do I believe that Jesus has been raised to life never to die again? And does his resurrection include me? The question of the week.