

THE PATH OF LIFE

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Lesson: Luke 24: 1-12

What is the first thing that comes into your mind when you think of Easter? You might think of the story of Palm Sunday, when the Lord rode into Jerusalem and the people placed palm branches on the ground before Him. Or you might think of that part of the Easter story when the Lord met with His disciples for the last time and told them how He would soon leave them and go up to heaven. Still another part of this story was when the Lord was crucified, and His body was put into the grave. But the most important part of Easter was when the Lord rose on the third day and showed Himself to His disciples.

You remember that Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, came to the sepulcher on Easter Sunday. They were very sad, because they thought that the Lord would no longer be with them. But what happened when they came to the place where the Lord's body had been laid? Do you remember how the great stone in front of the sepulcher had been rolled away, and an angel was sitting there? The angel said to the women, "He is not here, but is risen." The disciples were very happy then, because they knew that the Lord was not dead, but that He had risen, and they would see Him again. This is the happiest part of the Easter story.

Now have you ever wondered why the Lord allowed all the things in the Easter story to happen? Why did the Lord have to be crucified and why did His body have to be put into the grave? Certainly, the Lord was powerful enough to stop anyone from hurting Him. There must have been some very good reason why the Lord allowed all these things to happen. And the Word tells us what this reason was. The Word tells us that the Lord allowed all these things to happen so He could bring people to heaven.

Did you know that before the Lord came on earth, people had forgotten the way to heaven? In fact, before the Lord came on earth, people had even forgotten that there *was* such a thing as heaven. The Lord had prepared a beautiful place for all people to live, but people on earth had forgotten how to get there. The path that went to heaven had been lost.

The path that leads to heaven is just like a path through a forest or a jungle. If someone has cut a path through a thick forest, people can get through the forest very easily—there are no branches or vines to get in their way. As long as people keep walking over this path, it remains clear. But what happens if a path is left alone and no one walks over it for many months? Have you ever

seen how quickly a path can get covered? Vines and branches grow over the path, and soon it becomes so blocked that people cannot get through, even if they want to. Sometimes a path is even lost, and people forget that it was ever there.

The same thing had happened with the path that leads to heaven, just before the Lord came on earth. The Lord had made a beautiful path, leading right up to heaven. He told people about this path in His Word. But, as people turned away from the Lord, fewer and fewer of them walked on the path. Slowly, the path became overgrown with evils and falsities, just as the path in a forest can become overgrown with vines and branches. The Lord feared that people would soon lose the path that went to heaven completely. He feared that those people who wanted to go to heaven would not be able to find their way.

The Lord knew that someone would have to clear the path. Someone would have to come down and go over each step of the path leading to heaven, cutting away all the evils and falsities which stood in the way. Of course, this person would have to be very powerful, someone very strong, with a large sword to cut his way through. Who do you think this person was? It would have to be the Lord, for no human being would be strong enough to fight against all those evils and falsities which stood in the way of heaven. This was the reason why the Lord came on earth.

Now where is the path that leads to heaven? It is not an ordinary path. It is a person's *life* that leads to heaven. Your whole life, from the time you are born to the time you die and go to the other world, must follow this path which the Lord has given. Every person must go over this same path. The Lord, in order to clear this path and free it from evils and falsities, had to go over each step of the path Himself. It is for this reason that the Lord had to be born on earth as a tiny baby, why He had to grow up and live as an adult, and, finally, why He even had to die and rise up to heaven. The Lord had to walk each step of the path leading to heaven. There was nothing He could leave out of the path of life, for He knew that people would soon follow Him. For this reason the Lord had to die, just like all human beings do, so He could finish clearing the last steps of the path that leads to heaven.

So, when you hear the Easter story, the first thing that comes into your mind should be the three words spoken by the angel, "He is risen." These three words tell us the whole reason why the Easter story took place. The Lord came on earth to free humankind from the evils of the hells and to clear the path that leads to heaven. The Lord came on earth so that all people can rise and go to heaven to be with Him.

Amen.