

EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

A Place for Pondering and Praise
Isaiah 53:3–6; 1 Corinthians 11:23–30



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Even without that spring weekend two thousand years ago, Jerusalem would be an incredible place. The central narrative of Scripture, both completed and yet to come, revolves around this land and this city. Yet only on one event does history swing on its hinge: the weekend when Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose again, according to Scripture. And it happened in Jerusalem. It was in Jerusalem that the life of everyone who has turned to God was set apart. It's at the cross of Jesus Christ that life begins. And when we talk about His resurrection, we move from today into eternity. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ make up the most critical event in history—one worthy of our pause, our pondering, and our praise.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Pause and Ponder the Death of Christ (Isaiah 53:3–6)

Everything within us urges us to rush past the torturous scene of Jesus' suffering and death. How easy to forget the agony and simply focus on the ecstasy of the resurrection! But let's pause a moment and ponder Jesus' death.

The injustices that pinned Jesus to the cross satisfied, strangely, the justice of God. The cross was the Father's plan for Jesus. Nothing pictures God's heart for His creation more passionately. Nothing. And as God the Father gave His love, Jesus—God's Son—gave His life.

2. Pause and Praise God for the Cross and the Tomb (1 Corinthians 11:23–30)

In first-century culture, death was an intimate part of life. People lived with death. They touched it. They smelled it. They witnessed it. They also knew what to do when it occurred because families prepared their own members for burial. The family and friends of Jesus were His undertakers.



Quotable

*I fear that
we who love
the hope of the
gospel don't
linger long
enough at
the cross.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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The theological term that describes Jesus' sacrifice is *substitutionary atonement*. Think of *substitutionary* as these three words: "IN MY PLACE." And *atonement* as "PAYMENT."

Jesus knew His death would become so central to our faith. The Lord's Table was established to slow us down, to quiet us, to take us back. The Lord's Table helps us remember Jesus' ignoble death and His glorious resurrection.



A CLOSER LOOK

A New Orientation

Synagogues in Jesus' day were built with geography in mind. The foundations of the buildings always faced Jerusalem. Specifically, they were oriented toward the second temple, the one Jesus knew, in remembrance of the place where God's glory once dwelled.

On the southwestern hill of Jerusalem stood a building that housed a meeting spot for Jesus and His disciples. Called the Upper Room, this was where the Last Supper took place (Luke 22:8–13). The Upper Room was also a safe place for the disciples to gather on the weekend following Jesus' crucifixion. The resurrected Jesus appeared to them there behind locked doors that Sunday night, and the disciples returned there after Jesus ascended into heaven (John 20:26; Acts 1:13). They continued to meet there with other followers after Jesus' ascension.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, Jewish Christians built a synagogue on the traditional site of the Last Supper. Today, the building has been rebuilt as the alleged Tomb of David, but within the foundational wall remains a section of that first-century synagogue; that stone holds a fascinating piece of history.

If the structure had been simply a Jewish synagogue, the first-century believers would have made the wall that contained the niche that held the Torah scrolls to be physically in line with the temple. But that section of wall reveals that the earliest Christians chose to orient the niche and their synagogue directly with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the likely site of Calvary and the empty tomb. In these followers' hearts, the temple's sacredness had been replaced by that of the place where Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. They oriented their new building toward the place where their new understanding of faith began.

The Upper Room you can visit today is called the Cenacle. The room was rebuilt in the tenth century by Crusaders. If ever you have the privilege of visiting, don't leave the site too quickly. Survey the east wall of the outside courtyard and notice the first-century foundation; orient your focus, as did the first-century believers, to the place where Jesus died and rose again.¹



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3. Praising God for the Resurrection

Think about it as if you're hearing about it for the first time:

Resurrection.

Jesus came back to life after He died. Jesus, who was dead, breathed . . . never to die again. Amazing!

The precious Lamb of God, chosen to die since the foundation of the world, had been sacrificed (John 1:29; 17:24) and raised from death. God's justice, paid in full. God's mercy, complete.

Old Testament's faith had finally become sight. History's perspective had changed.



LET'S LIVE IT

Pause right where you are and ponder the death of Christ—a death He died to save you from your sin. And then praise Him for His resurrection, which ensures life eternal for all who believe.

Ask yourself: when the time comes for you to die, what will be your only hope of true life beyond the grave?

ENDNOTE

1. For more information, see Bargil Pixner, "Church of the Apostles Found on Mt. Zion," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (May/June 1990): 16–35, 60.



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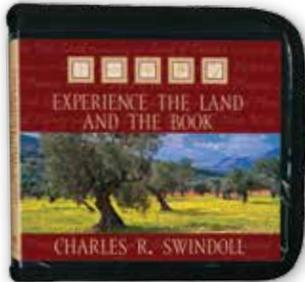
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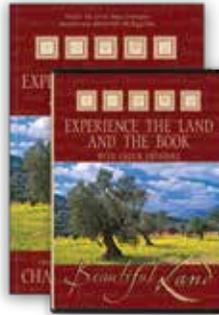
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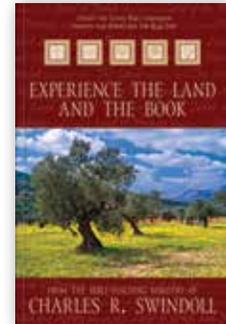
Tools for Digging Deeper



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