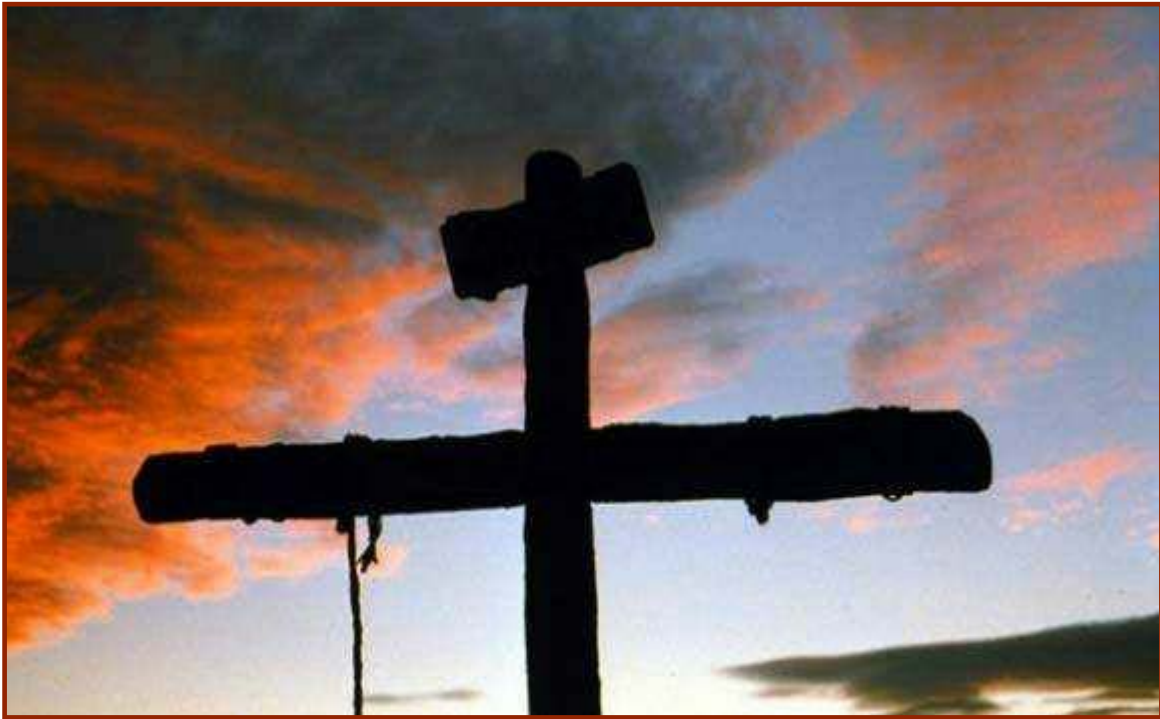


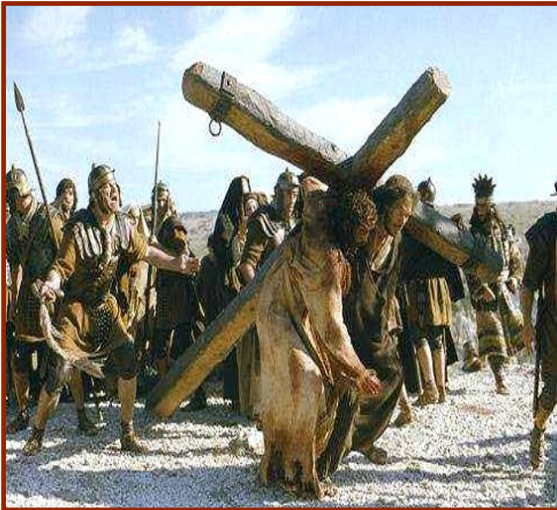
DEATH DEFEATED! (Victory At The Cross)



...Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (John 20:3-8 NIV)

The darkness of night descended on Jesus' band of followers as the truth sunk into their broken hearts. Their hero had died, betrayed by one of their own number. Another had repeatedly denied Him even cursing in the courtyard where He was ridiculed. And all of them had forsaken Him and fled. Their darkness lasted more than one night. It was impenetrably deep. Darkness clearly ruled this night just as surely as it had called to Judas and seduced him into betrayal. The nightmares that stirred them awake and haunted their waking hours was no dream — it was real and horrifying and life shattering. But

even with the door tightly shut and fear running rampant in their hearts, the dull rays of sunrise penetrated their darkness. Too wonderful to believe at first, they had to know for themselves. But it was true! Sunrise, or better yet, "SONRISE", had dawned. The world was forever changed. And these fearful few became the torch-lights of salvation.



The horrors of Calvary, the betrayal in the garden, the denials in the courtyard, and fearfulness in the disciples hearts remind us that Jesus' resurrection wasn't part of a fairy tale world of antiseptic heroes. Jesus' resurrection was lived out in the world of grit and the stench of death. Jesus' resurrection was God's stiletto that ripped open the suffocating veil of sorrow and death and opens a way for all of us to

escape the fear that holds us hostage. Jesus' resurrection is the promise that every dark night is followed by sunrise and victory over death.

It is hard to realize that Jesus tomb has become a place of joy.

Your finery from yesterday's Easter Sunday is now in the closet. The colored eggs have made their appearance. Shouldn't we just put it away now until next years celebration?

Oh, I hope not! When you or someone you care about gets the tragic news that her baby has Downs Syndrome, his son was killed in a car wreck, or her Dad has Alzheimer's Disease, what single truth gives hope? What is the definitive answer to paralysis, leukemia, senility, fatal accidents, incurable diseases, and death? You know the answer: The bodily resurrection of Jesus is the sure promise of our own victory over sickness, disease and death.

We're not exactly sure what happened that first Monday. We do know, however, the disciples were forever changed and their change will certainly reach through the centuries and change us. We do know this: they would listen and learn from their

Master, they would recall the things He taught them and see them in a fresh light because of His resurrection, they would wait on the Lord in prayer, and they would be filled with the Holy Spirit and change the world.

Well over 100,000 Mondays have come and gone since that first Monday. Our lives have been touched and our destinies have been changed by the events that happened early on the first day of the week when the tomb was opened and the Lord walked triumphantly from the grave. On this Monday, we ought to remind ourselves of that early passion by the disciples who firmly believed their Lord was risen from the dead. We should follow their example and make that first Monday commitment to listen to our Master, to see what He taught in the light of His resurrection, to wait on Him in prayer, and to live for Him by the power of His Spirit.

Monday's can be hard. For believers, however, they are the first day after the resurrection. We don't just begin a new week, we also get a fresh start on new life — life shaped by the empty tomb, the power of a risen Lord and the joy of knowing that our wildest dreams are not wispy memories from a night's sleep, but God's promises waiting on the horizon to dawn.

Jesus' resurrection promises us God's new world in which death doesn't have the last word. And we need that perspective all year round.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1: 6-9) (1 Peter 1:6-9)