

“Were You There?”

“Were you at the ball game the other night? It was great! We were behind by one point with four seconds left on the clock and Frank made a basket from mid-court to win the game for us!!”

“Did you see what happened to the building on first street? Were you there? It was awful!! The building caught on fire and a number of people were trapped on the second floor . . .”

Notice the excitement that is generated in us by our experiences. The people relating these two incidences are both excited . . . just in different ways. One is an excitement of joy. The other an excitement of shock over a tragedy. Yet both types of excitement make us want to share it with someone else—or as many people as possible.

It’s interesting how many times we try to share our excitement from an experience and end up being frustrated. Why? As you share, it doesn’t seem like the other person is getting excited about your experience with you. It may make you respond in frustration with: “I guess you just had to be there!”

Were you there? There was quite a lot of excitement generated in the events connected with Jesus dying on the cross as well. The crowd was caught up in quite a frenzy when they cried out together, *Crucify Him!* In fact, when Jesus joined two men who were walking on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection He asked them in Luke 24:17 → *What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?* They were surprised that with all the excitement in Jerusalem over the past three days Jesus didn’t know about any of it! They said: *Are You the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?*

Jesus pursued the subject further by asking them *What things?* With that they proceeded to explain about Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection along with their disappointment in the midst of it all. They had been there to witness Jesus’ death and three days later their excitement subsided to disappointment! Excitement is usually short-lived in the midst of the struggles with sin and unfulfilled expectations in life.

“Where you there?” is still a good question for us to answer today. Naturally, none of us were there physically since Jesus’ crucifixion happened almost 2,000 years ago. However, we can “be there” everyday as we encounter over and over the Good News of Jesus dying to forgiveness us of our sin and rising again to give us eternal life! We can “be there” as we read His Word, the Bible—the Holy Spirit’s witness to us of our salvation in Christ. We can “be there” whenever we partake of the Lord’s Supper and proclaim Christ’s death until He comes back again to take us to heaven!

Jesus stressed the importance of the written Scriptures as that upon which the people who were present at His crucifixion should depend for their faith in Him. In Luke 24:25-27 He went on to tell the two men on the road to Emmaus: *“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* He pointed them to **the written Word of God** as the basis for their faith in Him!!

The whole purpose for Jesus’ teaching and healing during His earthly ministry was to bring people to see their sin so they see their need for His atonement—His suffering the judgment of our sin **for us!** Throughout His earthly ministry He kept telling people to trust in His Person & Work **on the basis of the written Word of God as contained in the Old Testament Scriptures.** For instance, during one of His discourses about demon possession *a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed!”* It was a compliment for His mother. *But He said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”* (cf. Luke 11:27-28) He pointed her to the written Word of God.

On another occasion Jesus told a parable about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. It pictures

the rich man in hell, tormented under the heat of eternal suffering, begging father Abraham to send Lazarus from heaven *to dip the end of his finger in water and cool his tongue, for he was in anguish in the flame.* (cf. Luke 16:24) Discovering that there would be no relief he requested that Lazarus be sent from the dead to warn his brothers so that they would not end up in his suffering in hell. *But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them."* *Moses and the Prophets* was a common New Testament way of referring to the written Old Testament Scriptures. He directed them to the written Word of God as that upon which their faith should be based. At this the man in hell replied: *"No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent."* He said to him, *"If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."* (cf. Luke 16:29-31) It is the same message which you learned since you were "knee-high to a grasshopper" when you sang: "Jesus loves me this I know, **for the Bible tells me so!**" It is the same message which has been reinforced over and over again throughout your confirmation instruction as well!

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus also generated a lot of positive excitement as Jesus' followers experienced His appearances during the forty days following His resurrection. As they walked away from the experiences of the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, along with the receiving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, they were excited for Jesus and shared the Good News with others!! Acts 4:20 says that they were so excited they couldn't help speaking about what they'd seen and heard!!

Were you there? Absolutely!! 1 Peter 3:18 says: *Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God* He died one death for all people, for all sins and for all time. That means that while Jesus was on the cross, you were on His mind! From His perspective you were there because He did it all for you! Amen.