

BREAKING THE SEAL

Text: Matthew 27:57-28:7

After Jesus was taken down from the cross and placed in Joseph's tomb, the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate worried that the disciples would come in the night and steal away the body of Christ. The Pharisees and chief priests were deviant and deceptive men and they assumed that the apostles were like them. They were concerned that the resurrection would be faked so they asked Pilate for some security. Pilate gave them a watch(some soldiers to guard the tomb) and he sealed the stone.

Sealing the stone meant that they put ropes all over the stone and in the center of the ropes was the Roman seal pressed into clay. That seal was used to signify authority, authenticity, and ownership. Seals were used to secure documents, mark property, and ensure that something remained untouched until the rightful owner or an authorized person opened it. When Pilate had the stone sealed, it then became a crime against the empire to break that seal and was punishable by law. The people that plotted the death of Christ wanted some assurance that he would stay in the grave and Rome put it's authority behind it. So by sealing the tomb, they claimed ownership of the contents meaning the body of Jesus Christ.

Stealing the body of Christ was the furthest thing from the minds of his followers. The faith of the apostles was completely crushed and they were in hiding for fear of their own arrests and imprisonment. The women that ministered to him had no plans of finding him alive or stealing his body but came to anoint a dead man for proper burial. But when men had no faith and women were grieving, heaven stepped in...broke the seal and rolled the stone away. See Rome had no right to claim the body of Christ as their property because Jesus had already been sealed – When Jesus fed the five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, the next day that crowd ran him down because they wanted more food. This was the Lord's response to them **John 6:26-27** Jesus answered them and said, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. The Father set His seal on Jesus as His son that means He claimed him as His own. The miracles were to his teachings what a seal is to a written document. The many and mighty works that Jesus did was the proof that he belonged to the Father.* So when the angel of the Lord descended on that morning, he was authorized by God the Father to break Rome's seal and let the women into the tomb.

So why did Jesus Christ go through all of this? The arrest, the trials, the whippings, the mocking, the shame and the cross? Because in the beginning God breathed His Spirit into man and the Holy Spirit was in Adam and his wife. God's Spirit is what gave them life and God said “the day that you eat thereof(the forbidden fruit) ye shall surely die”. When Adam and his wife took the fruit and ate it, they died instantly...not physically but spiritually. When the Bible says that their eyes were opened it was because their sin caused the Spirit of God to leave them and they became spiritually dead. They now had to depend on their eyes to define reality for them

because God's Spirit, His voice, His presence was no longer in them. Their spirit was now dead even though their body was still living. Sin had separated them from their Creator and they were now afraid of God and ashamed of their actions so they hid themselves. **Genesis 3:8** And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. *They heard the voice of God moving through the garden with their physical ears because they could no longer hear his voice in their spirit.* This is what is meant by being lost. Sinners are cut off from God and from life because God's Spirit does not reside in them. They are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and they act just like Adam and his wife. They hide from God and feel ashamed and afraid in His presence. They try to cover themselves with religion, morality, or by being a “good person” like Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with fig leaf aprons. Not only are sinners cut off from God on earth but if they die in that condition, they go to hell which is eternal separation from God.

Hell is not a state of mind or anything like is depicted in cartoons or movies. Hell is a place for rebels against God it was created for the devil and his angels. Jesus said it was a place where their worm dies not and the fire never shall be quenched. He gave us a glimpse into that place when he spoke about the rich man that died and went there. That man was conscious, had his memory, could feel pain and was tormented continuously yet never ceasing to exist. Hell is God's justice against lawbreakers and rebels and every sinner deserves that place. God is a just God which means He must punish sin, but He is also a God of amazing grace and mercy. That's why He sent His son – Jesus said in **Luke 19:10** For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

What was lost? Man's sinless state before God, a Father and child relationship between the Creator and His creation, and the Spirit of God dwelling in man. For God to recover what was lost He had to deal with sin, wash the sinner clean, and renew His Spirit inside. When Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood it was the payment and penalty for sin. **2 Corinthians 5:21** For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The blood of Christ is what cleanses us from all sin making us clean in the sight of God. The blood is the cleansing agent but it does not give you life, that's the Spirit's job. **John 3:6-7** That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. *The new birth is God's Spirit making your dead spirit alive again.* **Titus 3:5** Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; *Salvation is God forgiving all your sins and washing you clean so that you are perfect in his sight, making your spirit alive eternally never to die again, and returning to a Father and child relationship with God.*

Someone may ask if sinning is what caused God's Spirit to depart from man initially, will God's Spirit leave me if I sin after being born again? Will I be lost again? No and here's why, when a person is saved God knows they are still in a body with a sin nature and that would mess up everything that He has done. So He performs what is called “the circumcision made without hands”. Circumcision means “to cut loose”. God spiritually cut your inner man loose from your body, judicially ruled your body dead with Jesus Christ, buried with him in baptism and raised

to walk in newness of life. So now we take this body that we used to do our will and do God's will! But a person may say that's all well and good but if I sin or go astray or become unfaithful, won't God's Spirit leave me like it did Adam and Eve? No because of God's seal on you - **Ephesians 1:12-14** That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

God's seal – not only did God cut loose your inner man from your body, but He sealed His work claiming His ownership of you as His child forever. His seal carries His authority meaning that no one including you has the right to break it. The sealing is the security to the believer that their sins are gone, they have eternal life, and they will always be God's child.

How do we know we've been sealed? The Holy Ghost himself is the seal. If you have the Holy Ghost dwelling in you, you're saved and if you don't you are not - **Romans 8:9** But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The Spirit of God cannot leave us when we sin so he is grieved! Ephesians 4:30-32 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. *When we sin as Christians, the Holy Spirit can't leave us so he is grieved.* Grieve means to hurt or to cause to sorrow. The Holy Spirit is in us and when we do wrong he is grieved and we know it because he lets us know it. We feel sorry for what we've done and there is a desire to be turn away from it and seek his forgiveness.

How long will we be sealed? The verses we just read in Ephesians 4 says until the day of redemption. That means until the day when God gives us a new body to go with our new spirit. Right now we possess a new spirit in a natural body that will die some day. That body will be put in the ground but Paul said what we plant is not what comes out - **1 Corinthians 15:42-44** So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Christ's body was sealed in a tomb to keep him in, but heaven broke it. God sealed His son in us so that no one could break it. God's seal is the assurance of our salvation and what gives us reason to rejoice everyday.