

SESSION 6

GOD IS LIFE-GIVING

Leader pages on pp. 122-125

THE POINT:
THE RESURRECTION
OF CHRIST CHANGES
EVERYTHING.

MARK 16:1-6; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4,20-22

^{16:1} When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they could go and anoint him.

² Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise. ³ They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?"

⁴ Looking up, they noticed that the stone—which was very large—had been rolled away.

⁵ When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side; they were alarmed.

⁶ **"Don't be alarmed," he told them. "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him.**

MEMORY VERSE

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^{15:1} Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³ For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

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²⁰ But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man.

KEYWORDS

Sabbath was over (v. 1)—The Sabbath ended about 6:00 p.m. on Saturday evening. It had begun on Friday, the day Jesus was crucified, at sundown.

According to Scriptures (vv. 3,4)—Paul anchored his preaching in the Scriptures, which included the OT. These Scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus.

He was buried (v. 4)—Most gospel presentations contain the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. The burial served the purpose of verifying both the death and resurrection of Christ.

In Adam all die (v. 22)—All humanity is designated by the term "in Adam." All have died because of his sin and their own sin.

WHAT MAKES THE DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS SIGNIFICANT?

There are words that change everything. They put in perspective all the moments that came before and redirect all that are to come. A minister says, "I now pronounce you husband and wife." An ultrasound technician says, "There's the heart beating!" The judge says, "Not guilty." The doctor says, "You are cancer free."

With just a few simple words, the world is transformed in a moment. There is hope where there was despair. The tables are turned; the script is flipped. It's a brand-new day.

One Sunday morning two thousand years ago, three frightened women heard a sentence that didn't just change everything for them; it changed everything for everybody. This good news would topple empires. It would redraw maps. It would change the way we mark time itself. It would alter eternity. It was the most life giving, paradigm shifting, world transforming sentence that has ever been spoken. It is the reason we are reading this session today. What was this sentence?

He has risen.

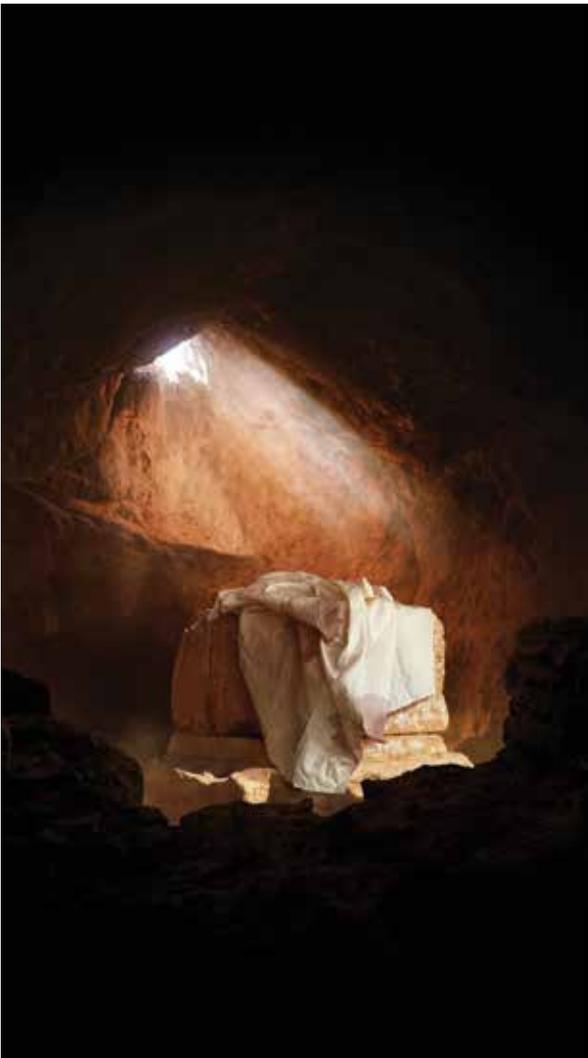
The Resurrection Is a Fact //

Mark 16:1-6

Even though the author of the gospel of Mark was anonymous, it was accepted in the early church that John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10) was its author. Since he was not one of Jesus's disciples, biblical scholars believe the apostle Peter was most likely his primary source, as the two developed a close relationship in Rome before Peter's execution around 64 or 65 AD (1 Pet. 5:13). This would mean Mark was written no more than forty or fifty years after the events it described.

This by itself is strong evidence that Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection are historical facts. Imagine you were writing a history of the late 1960s. In your history, you claimed that Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated, but that three days later he had come back to life. There's no way you could get away with such a claim, because there are millions of people still alive today who were alive during King's political activism. They would all line up to refute your story. So, if Mark had lied about Jesus's resurrection while there were still so many living eyewitnesses that could have refuted him, his account would never have gained traction, much less be read and revered and studied today.

But that is only the beginning of the proofs Mark's Gospel has to offer. Notice that chapter 16 begins



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with “Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome” bringing spices to the tomb, intending to anoint Jesus’s body. Like a good journalist, Mark called them by name, adding another detail that could have been easily refuted. What’s more, the mere fact that they were women demonstrates Mark was telling the truth. In first century Jewish and Roman culture, a woman wasn’t considered a credible witness, and her testimony wasn’t permitted in a court of law. So, if Mark had invented his story, he would not have had the first witnesses to the resurrection be women! But Mark wasn’t trying to convince his readers. He was merely laying out the facts.

The women had brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus since they were not able to do it before the start of the Sabbath the previous Friday when He died on the cross. On the way, according to verse 3, the women were wondering how they were going to move the heavy stone that sealed the tomb. Once again, a writer making up a story would have written it to be more believable. They would have brought men with them to do the heavy lifting, or there would have been an explanation of how the stone had moved, or it wouldn’t have been mentioned at all. Instead, verse 4 simply says the stone had already been rolled away.

When they entered the tomb, the women encountered a young man sitting on the right side. Matthew confirmed in his gospel the young man was an angel (Matt. 28:5). In Mark 16:6, the angel addressed the women, saying, “Don’t be alarmed . . . You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.” Here is the one detail even the most skeptical agnostic can’t dispute: Jesus was not there. In all of history, no one has ever credibly produced the body of Christ. What do you do with that truth? You could choose to believe Jesus’s disciples stole His body. That was the story the religious leaders circulated, according to Matthew 28:13. But to believe that would also require you to believe Roman soldiers fell asleep on guard duty (an offense punishable by death) yet lived to tell about it.

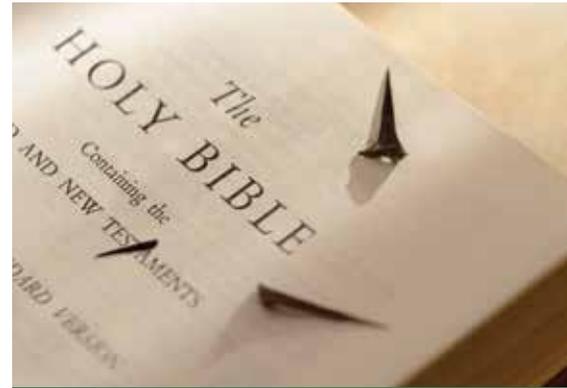
You could claim the women went to the wrong tomb. But that would mean there was a “right tomb” somewhere. We really are only left with one conclusion: He has risen!

WHY DO SOME FIND IT DIFFICULT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AS HISTORICAL TRUTH?

The Resurrection Is Most Important //

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

If someone asked you, “what’s the most important thing to know about the gospel?” what would you say? There are a lot of things



DIGGING DEEPER DOCTRINE

A growing number of believers are convinced that there is an urgent need in the Body of Christ for a greater understanding of Christian doctrine. We should know what we believe and why we believe it. Also, just as important, we should be unified in our beliefs. Doctrine refers to the teachings of God explicitly based on Scripture that guides faith and practice for believers. Having shared core beliefs promotes unity and brings to reality Jesus’s work to “present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). It should be our hope that by God’s grace all Christians can discuss and live out the doctrines of the Bible. Christian doctrine is not just Bible knowledge, but its belief in the living truth that transforms lives.

How will you commit to knowing and living out Christian doctrine?



you could say. But none of them includes what Paul said was “most important” in our understanding of the gospel (v. 3). You see, we don’t have to decide for ourselves what is most important. The Bible already has told us. There are three essential components of the gospel message Paul emphasized in verses 3-4:

The Title. First, consider the title Paul used for Jesus: “Christ” (v. 3). The term “Christ,” derived from the Greek “Christos,” means “Anointed One.” This title holds great significance for both Jews and Greeks. For Jews, it signifies the long-awaited Messiah foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures. In a city like Corinth, recognizing Jesus as the true Christ was a bold declaration that challenged the authority of the Roman Empire, which demanded allegiance to Caesar. Early Christians asserted their ultimate allegiance to Jesus, which was a radical stance in a culture where loyalty to the empire was expected.

The Source. Paul appealed to “the Scriptures” twice in verses 3-4, signifying his reliance on the authority of Scripture as central to the Christian faith. By grounding the death and resurrection of Christ in the Scriptures, Paul emphasized that these events were divinely ordained as part of God’s redemptive plan. The Old Testament is rich with prophecies, allusions, and symbolism pointing to Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection. Josh McDowell, in *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, estimates that more than three hundred Old Testament prophecies find fulfillment in Jesus.¹⁰

The Message. The core message is that Jesus lived, died, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Any complete explanation of the gospel must include these elements. In the book of Acts, several key sermons emphasize this message:

- Peter’s sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36)
- Peter’s sermon to the Israelites (Acts 3:12-26)
- Peter’s second sermon (Acts 4:8-12)
- Peter’s sermon before the Jewish leadership (Acts 4:8-12)
- Stephen’s speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2-53)
- Paul’s sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-41)
- Paul’s address in Athens (Acts 17:22-31)

Later in chapter 15, Paul was straightforward: “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” (v. 17). This is a powerful statement. If Christ is a mere legend, He cannot save anyone. If He was just a great teacher, we might learn how to thrive in this life but gain no hope for eternity. Without His atoning death, our sins would remain. If there were no resurrection, those who trust in Him would have wasted their lives. But Christ isn’t a legend. He lived, died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. Therefore, we hold onto hope for eternity.

HOW IS JESUS’S RESURRECTION ESSENTIAL TO OUR FAITH?

The Resurrection Brings Eternal Life // 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

In Leviticus 23, the Lord gave specific instructions to the Israelites for how to celebrate the Feast of Firstfruits. It was to be celebrated on the day after the Sabbath the week following Passover. In other words, on Resurrection Sunday.

The idea was that farmers would bring their first sheaf of harvested grain (usually barley) to the priests at the temple, who would then wave it before the Lord as an offering. It was an expression of gratitude to God for providing their sustenance,

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and an expression of confidence that the best was yet to come.

Paul made the most of his Jewish audience's familiarity with this feast to teach about the significance of Jesus's resurrection. In verse 20, he described Jesus's resurrection as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." In the same way as the Feast of Firstfruits expressed both gratitude and anticipation, Christians could be thankful that Jesus's resurrection was a foretaste of the resurrection that will happen for all of us who have died ("fallen asleep").

When Adam chose to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit, it brought sin into the world. This act affected everyone, making all humans born with a tendency to sin. Adam served as a substitute for us, but not the substitute we need. Because "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). But the resurrection of Jesus gives us a new representative. Because of our sinful nature (the result of Adam's choice), we cannot fix our relationship with God by ourselves. That's where Jesus comes in.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JESUS AND ADAM?

DID YOU KNOW?

In a survey of Christians, when asked if they had shared how to become a Christian in the past six months; only 38% shared with loved ones and 30% shared with a stranger.¹¹ A believer in Christ should always be able to share their faith. Our hope should be centered in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When this is not central in sharing our faith with unbelievers, that conversation can quickly turn into a debate with the unbeliever asking random questions that the believer cannot answer. When the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is central; the focus will be on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any sharing that defends the truth but never presents the call to believe in Jesus Christ is a missed opportunity. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of Christian belief.

Biblical Truth: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation. . . ." (Rom. 1:16).

How would you share your faith in Jesus Christ in a conversation with an unbeliever?

LIVE IT

How does the assurance of Christ's resurrection impact your daily life?

In our passage Paul presented two contrasting facts. In Adam there is sin and death. In Christ there is redemption and life. The first fact applies to all mankind. The second fact applies only to those who are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. You have an opportunity today to respond to the life that is available to you because of the resurrection of Christ.

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- **Pause.** Reflect on the significance of Jesus's resurrection in your personal life. Take time to thank God for His love and grace, recognizing that through Jesus, you have hope for eternal life.
- **Share.** Have conversations about the importance of faith in Jesus and what His resurrection means for forgiveness and new beginnings with family and friends. Consider inviting someone to join you for a church service or Bible study.
- **Study.** Explore the implications of the doctrine of federal substitutionary atonement and how it influences your understanding of sin, grace, and redemption. Equip yourself to better articulate and defend your faith.

DAILY READINGS

1. RESURRECTION REALITY I // MARK 16:1-6

Knowing about Christ's resurrection intellectually differs vastly from believing it happened and personally identifying with its life-giving power. When we truly grasp that Jesus conquered death and rose again, we understand that His resurrection becomes our resurrection—we are raised with Him to new life. Personal identification with Christ's resurrection means recognizing that the same power that raised Him from the dead now works within us, enabling us to overcome sin, fear, and despair. This truth should revolutionize our daily walk, replacing hopelessness with hope, weakness with strength, and death with life.

The resurrection isn't just something that happened to Jesus—it happens in us!

2. RESURRECTION REALITY II // 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

The good news that saves is beautifully simple yet profoundly powerful. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Christ's death satisfied God's justice for our sins, His burial confirmed His genuine death, and His resurrection validated His victory over sin and death. When we receive this truth, we are transformed from condemned to forgiven. Understanding this gospel should humble us deeply—we needed a substitute to die in our place—while filling us with overwhelming gratitude for God's love.

Our relationship with God rests entirely on Christ's finished work.

3. THE RESURRECTION GATEWAY // 1 CORINTHIANS 15:26-28

The resurrection of Jesus Christ represents the ultimate breakthrough; not just victory over death, but a pathway to truly know the living God. Through His risen life, we move beyond distant religious concepts into intimate relationship with our Creator, discovering that God desires

genuine fellowship with us. This resurrection power transforms our understanding of both God's character and our own identity. The same Spirit that raised Jesus now dwells within us, empowering us to grow in knowledge of His truth, experience His presence daily, and reflect His love to others in our Christian journey.

Christ is the gateway to having a relationship with God.

4. REST ASSURED // JOHN 14:1-3

The profound peace of eternal assurance rests in Jesus's promise: "I go to prepare a place for you." This isn't wishful thinking but divine guarantee—our eternal home is already secured by His sacrificial love. When we face life's uncertainties or contemplate our mortality, we can rest knowing that Jesus Himself will escort us into His presence. This truth reveals God as our faithful shepherd who never leaves His sheep vulnerable or alone. Understanding this assurance transforms our perspective—we see ourselves not as temporary beings facing uncertain futures, but as eternal souls with guaranteed inheritance in heaven.

Christ's provision extends beyond this life into everlasting fellowship with our Creator.

5. THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER // PSALM 103:17

God's eternal nature means that every attribute we experience today will never diminish or change throughout all eternity. The psalmist declares that His loving kindness endures forever—not as poetic language, but as unchanging reality. This eternal consistency reveals God as our immutable foundation in a world of constant change. When we understand that God's love toward us is as permanent as His very existence, we begin to grasp His infinite, unwavering affection. This truth can transform us from anxious performance to confident rest.

God's tender mercies are new every morning and will endure forever.