

# ALIVE

## MARK 16:1-14

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB material.)

Christian historian Jaroslav Pelikan has said that "If Christ is risen, nothing else matters. And if Christ is not risen, nothing else matters."

1. Do you agree with that, and why?

Today's study is about the most important event in history, the resurrection of Jesus. Not resuscitation but resurrection!

2. Why would I say it is the most important event in history? (All eternity hinges on this one event in human history!)

Last week we saw that Jesus was crucified, and we looked at the different characters that were there, and what their attitudes were. Mark tells us that after Jesus had breathed His last, Joseph of Arimathea got permission from Pilate to take His body, and Mark 15:46 says he laid Him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock.

We live in a skeptical world where proof is required and often questioned. Sometimes, people even think our proof requires proof! As believers, we need to be confident in the reality of Jesus' resurrection because our faith is worthless without it. In today's study, we're going to look at what proof we have of Jesus' resurrection.

### **SOUGHT! Read Mark 16:1-4**

1. What significance is there in the fact that these women were bringing spices for Jesus' body that Sunday morning? (They kept the Old Testament Law. They waited until the Sabbath was over. So these women remained faithful to God's Word, even though they were sorrowful, and though they did not yet understand why Jesus had died. This tells us that they did not expect Jesus to rise again from the dead! They were going to prepare His body for a long-term burial. They did not have faith that He would rise again, or they wouldn't have brought the spices! This also shows that they cared for Jesus, they loved Him.)
2. What did they have to gain from their actions? (Nothing!)
3. Why is the size of the stone rolled across the entrance of the tomb important? (If three women wouldn't move then certainly one man couldn't either. But in addition to that there were the Roman soldiers and the seal Pilate had placed on the stone.)
4. Why is it important for us to seek the truth about Jesus and His resurrection? (It makes the difference for all eternity!)
5. What keeps people from examining the truth of the resurrection? (It is beyond comprehension without faith. It is not reasonable that someone could come back alive after being in the tomb for three days!)

The women found so much more than they expected. Seeing the stone moved away was just the beginning for them!

Daniel Akin states the following: "I have a friend who is an atheist or, at least, an agnostic. When he and I were visiting, I asked him, 'What is the bottom line when it comes to Christianity?' He responded, 'That's easy. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' He then quickly added, 'If the resurrection is true, then so are a number of other things: (1) There is a God; (2) Jesus is that God; (3) the Bible is true; (4) heaven and hell are real; and (5) Jesus makes the difference whether you go to one or the other.'"

Christianity stands or falls on the historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. No resurrection, no Christianity. In 1 Cor. 15:17, Paul plainly writes, "And if Christ has not been raised. Your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."

## **RISEN! Read Mark 16:5-8**

1. Why was the stone rolled away? (To let people in, not let Jesus out. He was in His glorified resurrected body, not subject to the laws of nature anymore.)
2. How does the eyewitness testimony of the women increase the credibility of the resurrection account? (In that day and time, a woman's testimony was not accepted in a court of law. So, if the resurrection is a "made up" story why would all four Gospels report Jesus' first appearance after the resurrection was to women? They wouldn't! It's real!) They risked humiliation by sharing that women were the first ones to see the empty tomb.
3. Why do you think Peter was mentioned specifically? (Peter may have thought he had no further usefulness to God at all!)
4. What keeps believers from sharing their experiences with Jesus? (Fear of rejection.)
5. What are some basic ways we can prepare ourselves to share when the opportunity presents itself? (Study the Bible. Pray about it. Write out your testimony.)

You probably do not know the name of Albert Henry Ross, who was born in 1881 and died in 1950. He was an English advertising agent and writer. In the late 1920s he set out to write a book on the last days of Jesus, which would de-bunk the story of the Resurrection. He felt sure that by studying the different Bible resurrection stories in detail, he could disprove it. Later he called it, "The Book That Refused To Be Written," because as he studied the Resurrection, in copious detail, the more and more convinced he became that it was indeed true. And under his literary name of Frank Morison, he published the book, "Who Moved The Stone," which analyzes every detail of Jesus' resurrection, and proposes and answers many objections to its veracity. He said the best explanation for the empty tomb, is that Jesus really DID rise from the dead! His book has been read by countless people, who have come to Christ through Morison's witness!

## **SEEN! Read Mark 16:9-14**

1. Who are the people who saw Jesus in these verses? (Mary Magdalene; two of Jesus' followers walking in the country, most likely these are the two on the Road to Emmaus.)
2. What was the disciples' response to the report of these people having seen Jesus alive? (Disbelief! In spite of all Jesus had told them, they still didn't believe!)
3. Why did Jesus appear to Mary Magdalene first? (It was obviously His plan to, but why? Perhaps she loved Him most. Maybe there is a clue in the words "from whom He had cast out seven demons." That the first person He appeared to, was someone who had needed SO much grace, would be an encouragement to all the rest of us, that there is enough grace in Jesus for any of us to come to Him!)
4. What can we learn from the fact that the disciples didn't believe their reports? (People may not initially believe us when we witness to them, but don't give up, keep telling the story of Jesus and His love. Someone's initial reaction is not necessarily their final response!)
5. What role does faith have in how a person views the resurrection of Jesus? (It is everything! It is by grace through faith that we are saved!)
6. How should we approach those who wrestle with unbelief about His resurrection? (Pray for them. Continue to witness them as the Holy Spirit leads you. Don't push them, allow the Holy Spirit to do His work of conviction.)

Finally, in verse 14, Jesus appeared to the disciples and rebuked them for their unbelief. Even then some found it difficult to believe.

## **CHALLENGE!**

- The empty tomb reminds us that Jesus experienced real, physical death.
- The empty tomb demands a response.
- The empty tomb calls for all people to believe.

R. W. Dale was a pastor in England in the 1800s. One time Dale was preparing an Easter sermon when the truth of Christ's physical resurrection burst in upon him with compelling power. "Christ is alive!" he said aloud; 'He is alive—alive!' He began to walk about the room saying to himself, 'Christ is living! Christ is living!' Not only that following Easter Sunday, but for months afterward he exulted in the theme of the resurrected Christ. He even began the practice of having a resurrection hymn sung each Sunday morning; just to remind the people that they were worshiping a living Christ." (Warren Wiersbe, *Walking With the Giants*, p. 45)

We need to make sure we don't take Jesus' resurrection for granted. Let's let the importance of it sink in this week and remind all of us: Jesus is alive! It makes all the difference!