



**“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33).**

### **Serving the Risen Lord**

**Central Truth:** The Christian's greatest joy comes through serving the risen Christ.

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**Topic:** Christ: Resurrection of; Resurrection: Of Christ.

*“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:18).* Those words of the glorified Jesus express the message of Easter Sunday.

The truth of the living Christ is not to be remembered one day of the year, but every day of the year. The birth of a new day each morning, as the sun rises in the east, should remind the Christian of the resurrection of his Lord. The observance of the first day of the week as a day of rest and worship should remind the Christian that his Savior arose from the grave on the first day of the week. The great privilege of a Christian is to share fellowship daily with the once-dead but now risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ are so important that we need a special time each year when we make a special effort to remember and memorialize them. They lie at the heart of the Christian faith. There would be no gospel or salvation apart from those two events.

*“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10).*

There is a very special aspect to the resurrection of Jesus. It authorizes the commission He gave to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person. It is in the obedience to that commission that the Christian finds his greatest joy.

## **I. PRELUDE TO THE RESURRECTION**

### **(Mark 15:42-47)**

The burial of the body of the crucified and dead Jesus was essential to the resurrection. Time was of the essence in that regard. It was common that the body of a crucified criminal not be buried at all, but thrown aside to be devoured by scavengers. Sometimes it took days for one to die on a cross. Yet, Jesus was put on the cross at nine o'clock in the morning, was dead by three o'clock in the afternoon, and was buried by six o'clock in the evening. Several people were involved in the burial of the body of the crucified Jesus.

Joseph of Arimathea took the lead in the burial of the body of Jesus. What is known about Him? He was from the town of Arimathea, called "Ramah" in I Samuel 1:1, located in the tribe of Ephraim. He was a distinguished (prominent) member of the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of the Jews (Mark 15:43). He was rich (Matthew 27:57). He was constantly waiting for the coming of the kingdom of God, so was devoutly religious (Mark 15:43). He was a disciple of Jesus, though up to this point a secret disciple (John 19:38). He was the only member of the Sanhedrin who objected to the condemnation of Jesus (Luke 23:50, 51). That is all we know of him.

The crucifixion of Jesus brought Joseph of Arimathea into the open as a disciple of Jesus. He "*went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus*" (Mark 15:43). The eleven apostles fled, but Joseph stood out openly.

Having ascertained from the centurion in charge of the crucifixion detail that Jesus was already dead (a fact which surprised the governor), Pilate gave permission for Joseph to remove the body of Jesus from the cross.

Nicodemus joined Joseph in the burial of Jesus. John 3 describes him as a cautious inquirer, but a man of spiritual perception. He was fair-minded and stood up for Jesus in an earlier discussion among the religious leaders (John 7:50-52). Nicodemus was so committed to a respectable burial for the body of Jesus that he provided about a hundred pounds of spices to be used in the cloth wrapped around His body (John 19:39-42). He helped Joseph with the details of burial.

The body of Jesus was buried in a tomb (a room cut from rock back into the side of a hill) which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. It was a new tomb where no person had been buried before. It was located in a garden near the place of the crucifixion. (See Matthew 27:59, 60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53, 54; John 19:39-42).

Certain women who were disciples of Jesus carefully observed the burial of the body of Jesus. The apostles had fled in terror and hidden in sorrow, but the women (Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses, Mark 15:47) remained faithful. Their careful observation of the place at burial guaranteed their return to the right tomb to discover the resurrection.

A detail of soldiers was placed to guard the tomb, which had been sealed by the officials to prohibit its being opened (Matthew 27:62-66). Little did the enemies of the Lord know that by such action they were certifying the reality of the resurrection on the first day of the week.

All that happened in a single day. Jesus was placed on the cross about 9:00 a.m., died about 3 :00 p.m., was buried before 6:00 p.m. A new day began at 6:00 p.m., according to Jewish method of reckoning time. It was a Sabbath day in which all activity ceased, except that related to worship. The women watched the actions of Joseph and Nicodemus and saw where the body of Jesus was buried. They waited over the Sabbath day (6 :00 p.m. on Friday to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday). When the market opened after 6 :00 p.m. Saturday, they secured the ointments they would use to anoint the body of the dead Jesus. Early in the morning, as it began to dawn on Sunday morning, they came to the tomb of Jesus. There they discovered that He had risen!

## **II. WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION**

### **(Mark 16:1-7)**

Women were prominent among the earliest disciples of Jews. Their love and loyalty to Him were manifest at His death. They were at Calvary when He died, in Joseph's garden when He was buried, and at the tomb in early morning to anoint His body. Women were the first to know of His resurrection and to carry the glad good news to others.

At least five women were at the garden tomb to bear the message that Jesus was alive. They were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and other women (plural indicating at least two others) with them (Luke 24:10).

They had gone to the tomb with the purpose of anointing the body of Jesus, who they were sure was dead and still in the grave. On their way, they began to think about the huge stone (about four feet in diameter and one foot thick, shaped like a wheel) which rested on the opening to the tomb. How would they ever be able to move so great a weight? They had no cause for concern.

An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled away the stone as a great earthquake shook the earth. The guards standing about the tomb fainted dead away. When they returned to consciousness, they fled to report to their superiors the miraculous event that had happened.

By the time the women arrived at the tomb, the guard was gone, the earthquake had ended, but the tomb was still open and the angel was still there. They were terrified and bowed before the angel, whose dazzling apparel indicated he was a messenger of God (Luke 24:4, 5).

The angel spoke to the women: “Do not be afraid: for I know that you seek Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spoke unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and lo, He goes before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him: lo, I have told you” (Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:6, 7; Luke 24:5-7). The first message of the resurrection of Jesus was spoken by an angel or the Lord.

The women fled from the tomb trembling with fear and filled with great joy. They spoke to no one until they had brought their message to the apostles.

The apostles could not believe the women: “*Their words seemed to them as idle tales*” (Luke 24:11). Peter and John ran to the tomb, found the stone rolled away and the body of Jesus gone, as the women had said. “What was the explanation?”

### **III. SEQUEL TO THE RESURRECTION**

Jesus appeared to His disciples once and again to prove that He had truly risen from death. He appeared to them at different times, under different circumstances, to different groups, and gave different demonstrations of His reality. They found it very difficult to believe that He was alive. Thomas was not the only doubter (John 20:24-29). Even as late as the giving of the Great Commission, some of the disciples continued to doubt (Matthew 28:16-20). But whether met with doubt or with assurance, Jesus was alive from death.

Jesus appeared five times on the day of His resurrection. (1) He appeared to Mary Magdalene and sent her to tell the apostles that He was risen and would ascend to God (John 20:11-18). (2) He appeared to at least five women, reminded them of His prediction of death and resurrection, and

told them to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee (Matthew 28:9, 10; Luke 24:1-11). (3) He appeared to Cleopas and another disciple as they walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus, explained all the Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament to them, and was made known to them in the breaking of bread (Mark 16:12, 13; Luke 24:13-32). (4) He appeared to Simon Peter (Luke 24:33-35; I Corinthians 15:5). (5) He appeared to ten apostles, Thomas being absent and Judas dead, and gave proof that He was alive (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25).

Jesus appeared at least six times after the day of His resurrection and before the time of His ascension to heaven. (1) He appeared to eleven apostles to convince Thomas (John 20:26-31; I Corinthians 15:5). (2) He appeared to seven apostles as they fished in the Sea of Galilee (John 21). (3) He appeared to five hundred on a mountain in Galilee, where He gave the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; I Corinthians 15:6). (4) He appeared to James, the half-brother of Jesus (I Corinthians 15:7). (5) He appeared to the disciples with another commission (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:38). (6) He appeared the final time on the Mount of Olives where the disciples witnessed His ascension back to the Father in heaven (Mark 16:19, 20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12).

There were three other appearances of Jesus after His ascension to heaven. (1) He appeared to Stephen, the first Christian martyr, at the time of his death (Acts 7:54-60). (2) He appeared to Saul, later called Paul, at the time of his conversion (Acts 9:1-9; I Corinthians 15:8). (3) He appeared to the apostle John at the time of the great revelation given on the isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:9-20; et. al.).

The appearances of Jesus were more than enough to prove that He is alive. He is the living Savior!

There was one great theme repeated over and over by the risen Lord Jesus. Matthew stated it, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations”* (28:19). Mark repeated it, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (16:15). Luke expressed it, *“Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations . . . and ye are witnesses of these things”* (24:47, 48). John worded it, *“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you”* (20:21). Luke concluded it in Acts when he wrote, *“Ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (1:8). That theme is called the Great Commission. It is in hearty obedience to that commission that the Christian finds his ultimate joy in “Serving the Risen Lord.”

1. What does Revelation 1:18 mean to you?
2. What does Romans 5:10 say about Jesus' resurrection?
3. What five benefits of His resurrection are listed in I Corinthians 15:12-20?
4. What do you know about the people who buried the body of Jesus?
5. What were the major time periods involved on the day of His burial?
6. Who were the first to know of His resurrection?
7. What was the message of the angels at the tomb?
8. What proof was given that Jesus is alive?
9. How is the Great Commission related to His resurrection?
10. How can you serve the risen Christ this week?