

Buried—But Risen!



SABBATH AFTERNOON

A TOMB UNIQUE: Some of the most famous structures on this earth are tombs. Consider the great pyramid of Egypt: 100,000 men are supposed to have worked for 20 years to build it. To this day we do not know how the 23 million massive stone blocks, weighing an average of two and one half tons, were set in place. But the great pyramid, like the others in its class, was built out of a concern for death. It provided burial chambers for the Pharaoh; it is a monument to death. So is the beautiful Taj Mahal of India, built by Shah Jahan for his favorite wife, Mumtaz. With its gleaming white marble, inlaid precious stones, gardens, and reflecting pools, the Taj Mahal indeed is a magnificent monument. Inside the Taj Mahal repose the bodies of Shah Jehan and Mumtaz. How different is the story that we celebrate in this week's lesson. The simple, rock-cut garden tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, the tomb where Jesus was laid, is more wonderful than the pyramid of Cheops or the Taj Mahal. And that's because—His tomb is empty!

The Week at a Glance: Why is it important to know that Jesus truly died on the cross? Who were the first ones to know that Christ had risen? What is the evidence that He rose from the dead? How do the arguments against the Resurrection used by skeptics fail?

Scripture Passage for the Week: *Mark 15:42–16:20.*

Memory Verse: “‘Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him' ” (*Mark 16:6, NIV*).

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 25.*

“He Was Buried” (*Mark 15:42-47*).

The Scriptures had predicted that God’s servant would make “his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death” (*Isa. 53:9, NIV*). Jesus was a poor man who owned only one item of value—the seamless tunic for which the Roman soldiers gambled (*John 19:23, 24*). It seemed highly unlikely that He would be buried in a rich person’s tomb, but so it turned out. Two members of the Sanhedrin, the highest council of the Jews, came forward after Jesus’ death to publicly identify themselves with Jesus. Mark mentions Joseph of Arimathea, but John’s Gospel tells us that Nicodemus—he who had secretly talked with Jesus under cover of night—accompanied Joseph (*John 19:38-42*).

In 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 Paul quotes an early formulation of the gospel. This statement includes the words “he was buried.” Why was it important to the first Christians to include this fact?

The New Testament throbs with the certainty that Jesus rose from the dead. Throughout the book of Acts the preaching of the apostles comes back to two ringing affirmations: Christ is risen, and He has poured out the Holy Spirit. So, the formulation of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3 ties together three facts: 1. Christ died for our sins. 2. He was buried. 3. He rose again.

Thus, the burial of Jesus is not a minor matter. It underlines the truth that He truly died—did not merely faint or swoon (as some critics and skeptics have suggested)—and thus makes the resurrection a glorious miracle. Only in the context of His death can we understand the importance of His resurrection.

Read the following texts. What common point are they all emphasizing, and is that important to our faith? *Lev. 17:11, Matt. 26:28, John 19:40, Rom. 5:6-8, 6:4, 1 Cor. 5:7.*

The Bible is clear: Christ died for our sins, and His death is a crucial component for the plan of salvation. Without it, there would be no atonement, no redemption, no eternal life for those who, otherwise, would be forever lost. That’s how crucial His death is to us and to our hope for the future. It’s His death that helps guarantee the final annulment of ours.

He Is Risen! *(Mark 16:1-11).*

Who were the first people to be told that Jesus had risen from the dead? What effect did the empty tomb have on them? *(Mark 16:1-8).*

In Jesus' time women had a lower status in society, but not before God. Mark singles out the women who ministered to Jesus, first in Galilee and then in Jerusalem. They stood looking on the cross as He died; they were not ashamed to be identified with Him *(Mark 15:40, 41)*. Some of these women bought spices to anoint His body and came early on Sunday morning to the tomb for this purpose. These devoted followers became the first to hear the incredible news that Jesus had risen from the dead.

For many scholars the fact that women were the first to see Jesus helps affirm the authenticity of the accounts. If they wanted to make up the story, why have not some powerful religious or political leader in Palestine, as opposed to a few "lowly" and "unimportant" women of no real social class, first taken notice of the empty tomb? Would not that have been a more powerful way of making their point?

Note, too, how the effect on the women of the news of the resurrection of Jesus corresponded with the impression made by Jesus throughout the Gospel of Mark. Over and over we have seen how people were amazed at His miracles and teaching. Now came the crowning miracle, the supreme proof that He was what He claimed to be. Although the women did not yet understand fully, the sight of the empty tomb filled them with wonderment.

To whom did the risen Lord first appear? Again, how does this help affirm the authenticity of their accounts of Jesus? *(Mark 16:9-11, John 20:1-18).*

As women were the first to be informed of the Resurrection, so it was to a woman that Jesus first appeared. And what a woman! According to the views of many people, her past excluded her from polite company. But she who had been forgiven much loved much; thus it is not surprising that Mary Magdalene was first at the tomb that Sunday morning. And to her, Jesus chose to reveal Himself.

We are all, to some degree, impacted by the social prejudices against certain people. Which ones poison your soul? From what you've seen today (women of no great class being the first ones privileged with the news of a risen Savior), how do you think God views those prejudices, and what can you do through God's grace to be purged of this unholy and un-Christian attitude?

Appearances of the Risen Lord *(Mark 16:12-18).*

Jesus appeared not only to people who feature prominently in the Gospel account but also to some about whom we would know nothing had He not chosen to reveal Himself to them. In this regard we see another instance of Jesus' interest in all His disciples, whether or not they were leaders or well known.

To whom did Jesus appear as they were walking along the road? *(Mark 16:12, 13).* Study the extended story in **Luke 24:13-32.** What lessons can you learn from it?

To whom else did Jesus reveal Himself as the risen Lord? *(Matt. 28:16, 17; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:33-49; John 20:19-29; 21:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:4-8).*

Each Gospel writer supplies information about the appearances of the risen Christ that the others do not. The four accounts, however, confirm that Jesus truly rose from the dead. Differences in some details are minor and consistent with what might be expected from eyewitness accounts. While we probably cannot be sure as to the exact order of events, we may be confident of the following list of appearances of the risen Lord:

1. To Mary Magdalene *(Mark 16:9, John 20:15-17).*
2. To the other women after they had left the tomb *(Matt. 28:9, 10).*
3. To Peter prior to the walk to Emmaus *(Luke 24:34, 1 Cor. 15:5).*
4. To two disciples on the way to Emmaus *(Mark 16:12, Luke 24:13-32).*

5. To the disciples in the upper room *(Mark 16:14, John 20:19-24).* But Thomas was not present.

Additional appearances after the Resurrection day:

6. To the eleven, Thomas being present, in the upper room a week later *(John 20:26-29).*
7. To seven of the disciples as they were fishing on Lake Galilee *(John 21:1-3).*
8. To about five hundred *(1 Cor. 15:6).*
9. To James *(1 Cor. 15:7).*
10. To the eleven immediately prior to the Ascension *(Mark 16:19, 20; Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:4-12).*

Notice the variety of the appearances of Jesus. What does this suggest about the certainty of His resurrection? What does this tell us about the evidence God has given to us for belief? How do these accounts help strengthen your faith in the whole plan of Salvation?

The Crowning Miracle

What was the earliest attempt to refute the Resurrection? (*Matt. 28:11-15*). What answer would you give to those who bring it up today?

As we studied in last week's lesson, the religious leaders took steps to see that Jesus' disciples would not be able to steal the body. With Pilate's permission they sealed the tomb and posted a guard (*Matt. 27:62-66*).

How did this attempt to prevent the Resurrection only strengthen the evidence for it?

During the course of the centuries, other "explanations" have been advanced to explain the empty tomb, such as (1) Jesus did not die on the cross; He merely swooned and later revived in the coolness of the tomb; and (2) His "appearances" to the disciples did not actually happen—the disciples longed so badly for Him to rise again that they imagined they saw Him risen from the dead. This psychological explanation is a "wish-fulfillment" theory, because it argues that the disciples' wish led to fulfillment of their hopes.

What evidence of Scripture disproves the theory that Jesus did not really die? (*John 19:31-35*). How might you defend the Resurrection with someone who argues that the disciples only imagined that He came back to life? (*Acts 1:3, 4*).

The Gospel accounts of the Resurrection repeatedly emphasize that the disciples' frame of mind was just the opposite of that demanded by the "wish-fulfillment" theory. Jesus' followers did not expect Him to rise again, and they did not believe those who brought reports of His resurrection (*see Matt. 28:17; Mark 16:11, 13; Luke 24:11; John 20:24-29*).

Two great facts help refute all attempts to explain away the resurrection of Jesus. First, the body of Jesus disappeared; something happened to it, despite the tomb's being sealed and a guard in place. The easiest way for Jesus' enemies to debunk the new religion would have been to point to Jesus' corpse—but they could not. Second, after Calvary, the disciples were broken and dispirited. After His resurrection, they were filled with confidence and power and went out in the name of Jesus. What made the difference? They had seen the risen Lord.

Why is Christ's resurrection so important to you?

The Commission *(Mark 16:15-20)*.

We have been referring to the “appearances” of the risen Lord, but that term is inadequate to describe what happened. Jesus not only was seen, He spoke, answered questions, even ate with the disciples. These were meetings with His followers rather than appearances.

Over how long a period did these meetings of the resurrected Jesus and His followers take place? *(Acts 1:3)*.

Think about how long that time is. How did this time help strengthen them for their mission?

According to Mark *(16:14)*, even after the Resurrection Jesus had to “upbraid” them for their unbelief and hardness of heart toward those who had first reported His resurrection. The Greek verb means more literally “to reproach” or “to disparage”; that is, He had to speak firmly to them for their doubts. How little humanity has changed! Probably every one of us could give accounts of how God has worked marvelously in our lives, only to have us a short time later manifesting “unbelief and hardness of heart.”

According to Mark, what commission did Jesus give to His disciples? How does that commission parallel what we as Adventists believe is our commission? *See Rev. 14:6*.

The last two verses of the book of Mark present an interesting contrast. Jesus has now ascended to the Father in heaven, sitting down at the “right hand of God,” a phrase that means His position of authority. And yet, at the same time, the texts talk about “the Lord” working with His church, “confirming the word with signs and wonders.” In other words, though up in heaven, through His power and authority Jesus is still close to His church, close to His people, giving them what they need, to do what He asks of them. Those words should have been a comfort to the early church, just as they should be to us now.

Notice the phrase “confirming the word.” How has God confirmed “the word” in your own life and experience? Share with the class how He has done that for you. It would be interesting to compare accounts. What can you learn from one another’s experiences?

Further Study: Study again Mark 15:42–16:20, along with the parallel accounts in Matthew 27:57–28:20, Luke 23:50–24:52, and John 19:38–21:25. Read Ellen G. White’s “In Joseph’s Tomb”; “The Lord Is Risen”; “Why Weepst Thou?”; “The Walk to Emmaus”; “Peace Be Unto You”; “By the Sea Once More”; “Go Teach All Nations”; and “To My Father and Your Father”; in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 769–835.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** We’re given a great deal of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, evidence that should strengthen our faith. What other evidence have we been given that helps “prove” the truth of Christianity? How much evidence do we ultimately need? If we have evidence, why then the need for faith? Discuss in class.
- 2** Christianity would seem to have a most unpromising foundation for a world religion—a founder who died young and whose work was rejected by much of the prevailing religious establishment. Nevertheless, it is the world’s greatest religion, and Jesus is the most influential Person who has ever lived. Why?
- 3** Mark 16:19 talks about Jesus up in heaven. What other verses talk about Him there? What do they tell us that He’s doing in heaven, now that His earthly work is over?
- 4** How well is your church fulfilling the commission that Jesus gave at the end of Mark? What can you do, personally, or as a church, to be more involved in this divine commission?

Summary: What a close to this fast-moving, action-packed account. The greatest miracle, the most incredible act comes at the end of the story. His enemies crucify Jesus, and He is buried, but He comes back to life. As the risen Lord, He has all power and all authority, over all the earth, to the end of the age. And we, His followers, carry on His work as we eagerly await His return.

Finding God in the Qur'an

J. H. Zachary

Amin picked up his Bible and his Qur'an and went to visit an Adventist pastor. "Pastor, I have spent a lot of time studying these two books. After reading a Protestant pamphlet describing the salvation that comes to sinners through Jesus' death on the cross, I took a series of Bible studies and was baptized."

"The more I have compared the Bible and the Qur'an the more discouraged I have become. The Bible clearly teaches about clean foods and the seventh-day Sabbath. My church friends worship on Sunday and eat pork."

"Why did you come to me?" the pastor asked.

"A friend told me that I should go to the Adventist church if I wanted to find someone who follows the Bible's teachings."

Amin told the pastor how his family and neighbors forsook him after he became a Christian. His family disowned him, took away his portion of the family land, and cut him off from sources of cash. Now he wondered whether he had done the right thing to become a Christian.

The pastor spoke with Amin at length about God's plan of salvation, God's laws, and the grace of Jesus that saves sinners. Amin began studying the Bible with the pastor. For a year they met together and discussed what the Bible really said. Then one day Amin told the pastor that he was convinced that Adventist Christians follow God's teachings. He asked the pastor to rebaptize him, this time into the Adventist Church.

Amin shared the good news of salvation with others. "I now understand how anyone can know that God has forgiven him, how we can know we are saved. Because of Jesus, I know I am ready to meet Jesus in the final judgment. Jesus is my Savior, my Lord, and my Judge. He has given me assurance that I am accepted into His family and one day will live with Him in heaven," he testified.

Village friends who once rejected Amin now listened to his enthusiastic testimony. Amin showed them basic truths about God from the Bible and the Qur'an. Before long Amin had organized a small group of believers. He taught them how to share the good news about forgiveness and salvation through Jesus, and the Sabbath. Today a group of 50 believers meets in Amin's village.

J. H. Zachary is a coordinator for outreach among the Muslim and Jewish populations in North America. Amin continues to witness in an unnamed country in the Middle East.

The topic for third quarter's study is experiencing Jesus Christ as Lord by Derek Morris. In this set of lessons we will consider what it means to experience Jesus Christ as Lord in every aspect of our existence.

Lesson 1—Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: Our Need for a Savior (*Rom. 3:9-26*).

MONDAY: Heaven's Greatest Gift (*Luke 1:26-38, John 1:1-18*).

TUESDAY: God's Perfect Plan (*Isa. 53:3-7*).

WEDNESDAY: Responding to God's Grace (*1 Cor. 1:18-31*).

THURSDAY: Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord (*Acts 9:1-19*).

Memory Text—Luke 2:10, 11, NKJV

Sabbath Gem: This week we'll explore both the importance and the consequences of the crucial question: Have you received Jesus both as Savior and Lord?

Lesson 2—Lord of Our Priorities

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: The Earth Is the Lord's (*Gen. 1:1*).

MONDAY: Redeemer God (*Isa. 44:22*).

TUESDAY: The Example of the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 4:34*).

WEDNESDAY: First on Your Agenda (*Luke 6:46*).

THURSDAY: First in Your Day (*Mark 1:35, Ps. 5:1-3*).

Memory Text—Matthew 6:33, NKJV.

Sabbath Gem: Jesus asks us to give Him unrivaled first place in our lives.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.