

RESURRECTION DAY – 2020!

Hallelujah! Standing Again!

This week we will leave our study in *John* and turn to the gospel of *Mark* to look at his account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *Mark* was most likely the earliest of the four gospels to be recorded. In Mark's account of the night Jesus was arrested we read in *Mark 14:51-52 (ESV)* ⁵¹ *And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him,* ⁵² *but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.* We do not know, but since the Gospel of *Mark* is the only one of the four Gospels that records this event, the author could have been writing about himself.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Christian faith! Without it we have no hope for this life nor the life to come.

In the 1970's, one of the first Easter musicals John and I participated in was *Celebrate Life*. It was the beginning of times when worship styles in church were changing. The musical included the choir chanting from the balcony: He is Alive. He **is** Alive. He **IS** Alive!!

The 'old ways' of celebrating Easter are still close to my heart. Probably like many of you, the singing of the hymn Christ Arose was a highlight of Easter Sundays gone by. I grew up in a small church where an off-key piano was the only instrument we ever had. I never really knew if it was the piano or the pianist that was off-key. But, I can still feel the vibrations of that piano as the pianist thumped out the notes of Christ Arose and my mother who led the singing would shout out 'Everybody sing'! Up from the grave He arose with a mighty triumph o'er His foes. He arose a victor from the dark domain and He lives forever with His saints to reign. He arose He arose. Hallelujah. Christ arose! It was not the finest of music, but, I know that the music was genuine worship to me and the others in that church building. Let's get back to the heart of worship and celebrate Jesus.

The Greek term for resurrection – *anastasis* literally means "to stand again." In the pagan world, resurrection was associated with the cycle of nature. Even now, spring is evidence of nature's standing again. To the pagans, resurrection could also mean the survival of the spiritual part of a person after death. There is a difference between resurrection and resuscitation. In the Old Testament, Elijah performed resuscitation on the widow of Zarephath's son. Elisha performed a resuscitation on another widow's son. In other words, these people were brought back to life but they eventually died again. Jesus restored life to Jairus' daughter and to Lazarus. Peter restored life to Dorcas, and Paul restored or resuscitated Eutychus. But, in these raisings, there was no suggestion that the person would not die again. And obviously, they are not still living today. The resurrection of Jesus was different - it happened one weekend and His ability to resurrect became available to all mankind.

The agony in Gethsemane is over, and the suffering on Golgotha past; now comes the burial in the tomb.

Read Mark 15:42-47 (ESV) ⁴² *And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath,* ⁴³ *Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council,*

who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ *Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead.* ⁴⁵ *And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.* ⁴⁶ *And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.* ⁴⁷ *Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.*

We know from John's gospel that Joseph of Arimathea was accompanied by Nicodemus. Nicodemus was the one who came to Jesus by night and along with the disciples was the first to hear the message of **John 3:16**.

It was common practice by the Romans to leave a corpse on the cross to be fed upon by the birds. But, the Jews were shocked by such pagan behavior. Joseph and Nicodemus had to hurry in their burial preparation of the lifeless body because the Sabbath was near. If the Sabbath had begun, according to Jewish law, the body would have to be left on the cross for a 24-hour period.

Isaiah prophesied of Jesus in **Isaiah 53:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.* This prophecy was fulfilled when Joseph, a rich man, placed the body of Jesus in his own never used tomb!

Pilate was surprised that Jesus had died so quickly. Jesus had died within nine hours which is a relatively short period of time as compared to the days it sometimes took. Jesus was brutalized before He ever reached the cross.

There was a centurion who was present at the crucifixion of Jesus who said in **Mark 15:39 (ESV)** ³⁹ *And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"* We cannot be positive that it was the same centurion who relayed to Pilate that Jesus was indeed dead, but it does seem likely. A centurion was an officer in the Roman army who was in charge of 100 soldiers.

The executioners' 'merciful' (if you can call it that) alternative to waiting to die on the cross was to break the victims' legs so they would die more quickly. We are told in **John 19:33-34** that instead of breaking Jesus' legs, His side was pierced since they had determined that Christ was already dead. This fulfills **Psalms 34:20** and **Zechariah 12:10**. Also, **Exodus 12:46** reveals that the bones of the Passover lamb for the Passover meal were not to be broken providing a picture of the true Passover Lamb who is Jesus.

Jesus' body was wrapped in linen. It was the most common fabric used in the Ancient Near East. **John 19:39-40** adds that the body was wrapped in cloths with about 100 pounds of spices. The Shroud of Turin has long been in possession of the Roman Catholic Church and appears to be the burial cloth of someone who was crucified. It carries the imprint of a man with bloodstains in the area of his wrists and feet, slash marks on his back, and wounds on his forehead. Not only does the evidence suggest a crucifixion but also points to something that has defied natural explanation. The fact that the image remains in the cloth in the form of a

photographic negative has led some to attribute it to a sudden burst of resurrection energy. I don't know about all of that! But, I know that the shroud is empty now!

Read Mark 16:1-3 (ESV) ¹ *When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.* ² *And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.* ³ *And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"*

It is probably accurate to say that the women who were last at the cross were the first at the tomb. Nicodemus brought a large quantity of spices, but these good women did not think that enough. They didn't care if a big stone with a seal on it blocked the entrance but they were concerned about how to move it. That was a worry would quickly be forgotten! And on top of that, they were about to find out that they had 'wasted their money' on spices!

Read Mark 16:4-8 ⁴ *And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large.* ⁵ *And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.* ⁶ *And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him."* ⁷ *But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."* ⁸ *And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

These women followers had supported Jesus and traveled with Him and they stayed until the bitter end on the day He was crucified. Now that the Sabbath was over they were free to go to the tomb. The men followers did not feel 'comfortable' going there. The women chose to go to the tomb alone. Despite all the women had done for Jesus and how they loved Him, they fell short in fully understanding **Mark 9:31 (ESV)** ³¹ *for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise."* They were going to the tomb for the purpose of anointing a body rather than seeing Jesus alive!

Mark says that one person in a white robe met the women at the tomb. Mark does not directly identify the *young man* as an angel, although his supernatural character is made clear. Luke mentions two men in shining raiment. They were angels – messengers from God. Mark probably emphasized only the one angel because his words were so overwhelming: *He has risen; he is not here.* And what were they supposed to do? They were to go and tell! The same thing that each of us is commanded still to do today.

Peter is mentioned as one who specifically needs to be told the angel's message. Once the Twelve's self-appointed spokesman, he is now hiding in shame because he denied Jesus the night He was arrested. Peter thinks of himself as a cowardly traitor, that Jesus is dead, and all is lost. He needs to know Jesus is standing again.

Mary Magdalene does tell the disciples that Jesus' body is gone and she doesn't know where it is (**Luke 24:9** and **John 20:2**). After Peter and John check the tomb for themselves (**John 20:3–9**), Jesus meets Mary by the tomb (**John 20:11–18**). She then returns and tells the disciples Jesus has risen. However, there's no account that the women told anyone else along the way.

The most reliable manuscripts of the Gospel of *Mark* end here. Check your Bible and you will see that chapter 16 goes through verse 20

Some Bibles inform the reader that verses 9-20 are not in the oldest and best manuscripts. Keep in mind that there is nothing inaccurate in verses 9-20. Read it for yourself. This gospel was writing around 68 A.D. and verses 9-20 are found in manuscripts that were dated about 170 A.D. The additional verses let us know that the women did tell what they had seen just as is recorded in *Matthew* and *Luke*. It is easy to understand that they might not speak of what they saw at first. Often when something of great concern happens, we do remain silent in the beginning out of fear. After the initial shock wears off, we become willing to speak.

Herschel Hobbs believes that *Mark* did conclude his gospel with verse 8. Hobbs suggests the reason Mark intentionally ended his story in such an unusual manner and so abruptly was to leave his readers, as those original visitors to the tomb, confronted with the unexpected surprise of the announcement of Jesus' resurrection. The women went to the tomb looking for a dead Jesus of Nazareth who was buried. When they arrived, they were confronted with the divine messenger's awesome announcement that Jesus is alive. Hobbs points out that when we are unexpectedly confronted with the divine working of God in the midst of ordinary human affairs, we like the women on that Resurrection morning, are trembling, bewildered, silent, and afraid as we hear the voice of the angel say, **HE IS RISEN!**

The Conqueror of Death Stands Risen from the Dead!
Stand with Jesus and Live Forever!