

The Risen Lord



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mark 15:42–47, Mark 16, Col. 2:10–12, 1 Cor. 15:1–8, Dan. 9:24–27, John 20:11–18.*

Memory Text: “But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him’ ” (*Mark 16:6, NKJV*).

The crucifixion of Jesus destroyed the hopes and faith of His disciples. It was a dark weekend for them as they not only grappled with their Master's death but feared for their own lives, as well (*John 20:19*).

In Mark 16, the final chapter in this Gospel, we will look at what followed His death.

First, we will look at the timing of Jesus' resurrection and why the women came to the tomb on that Sunday morning. Adventists have sometimes shied away from resurrection morning because of the way it is misused to support Sunday sacredness. We will instead see how we can rejoice in the Sunday resurrection, despite the false theology that has, unfortunately, arisen from it.

Second, the lesson explains the first verses of Mark 16, linking these words to a theme that runs through the entire book. Our studies on Monday and Tuesday will look at these concepts.

Third, Wednesday and Thursday will examine the rest of Mark 16 and consider the mission it sets before us. This study will close with a challenge to the reader of Mark to take the gospel throughout the world.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 28.

Rejoicing in the Resurrection

Read Mark 15:42–16:6. What happens here, and why is this story so relevant to the resurrection narrative?

All the Gospel writers agree that Jesus died on the day that they identify as the “preparation” (*Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42*). Most commentators understand this as a reference to sunset Thursday through sunset Friday. Jesus died late on Friday afternoon and was then quickly buried before sunset.

During the Sabbath, the Lord rested in the grave, and all of Jesus’ disciples rested, as well. “And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment” (*Luke 23:56, NKJV*), a rather strange action if, in fact, Jesus had lessened, at least in their minds, the obligation to keep the fourth commandment.

On Saturday night, the women bought spices, and on Sunday morning, they went to the tomb with the desire to complete the typical burial process. Of course, Jesus was not there!

As early as the second century, Christians saw significance in the fact that Jesus rose on Sunday. This became the basis for Sunday sacredness. But is that what the New Testament teaches?

Read Colossians 2:10–12. What is the New Testament memorial of Jesus’ resurrection?

Not a word in the Bible hints at Sunday sacredness as a memorial of the Resurrection. That memorial is baptism. “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (*Rom. 6:4, NKJV*).

Regardless of the false theology regarding Sunday worship, as Adventists we must rejoice in the Sunday morning resurrection of Jesus. Jesus has triumphed over death, and in His resurrection, we have the surety of ours.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (*1 Pet. 1:3, NKJV*). Look at the certainty Paul had about the resurrection of Jesus. How can we have that certainty, as well?

The Stone Was Rolled Away

Read Mark 16:1–8 and 1 Corinthians 15:1–8. What do these passages have in common?

The story of the resurrection appears in each of the Gospels. Each Gospel writer presents the story from a different perspective, but they all contain the core concepts that appear also in 1 Corinthians 15:1–8.

Four ideas appear again and again—died, buried, risen, seen. In Mark, “died” and “buried” are in chapter 15. The “risen” and “seen” appear in chapter 16, but with a twist. Mark 16:7 speaks of a meeting in Galilee, and there you will see Him (*see John 21*).

Some people find it incredible that Christians believe in a risen Lord. But the evidence for His resurrection is substantial and consistent with reason.

For starters, all one has to do is believe in God as the Creator (*see Genesis 1 and 2*) and the idea of the resurrection, of a miracle, becomes reasonable. The God who created the universe, and then life on earth, certainly had the power, if He chose, to resurrect Jesus. The existence of God doesn’t make the resurrection of Jesus inevitable, only reasonable.

Next, the tomb was definitely empty. Even atheist historians accept that fact. If it were not, the claim about His resurrection would fail right from the start because the existence of His body there would destroy any claims of His having risen.

Next, the explanation that His disciples stole the body does not work. The disciples surely couldn’t have gotten past the guards. And even if they had done so and got the body, why were the disciples never arrested for stealing it? The answer is that the religious leaders knew that the disciples had not done it.

Also, numerous people testified that they saw the risen Christ. Many, including the disciples, did not at first believe. And one very solid enemy, Paul, not only claims to have seen the risen Lord but that this experience changed the whole trajectory of his life—in very radical ways, too.

Finally (though there are many other reasons), how does one explain the rise of the Christian church, founded by people who claimed to have seen the risen Lord? Why would these people have been willing to die for what they knew was a lie? Their consistent testimony, both right after His death (*Acts 3:15*) and years later (*1 Pet. 1:3*), provides powerful evidence for His resurrection.

What would you say if someone were to ask you, What evidence do you have for Christ’s resurrection?

The Women at the Tomb

“The women who had stood by the cross of Christ waited and watched for the hours of the Sabbath to pass. On the first day of the week, very early, they made their way to the tomb, taking with them precious spices to anoint the Saviour’s body. They did not think about His rising from the dead. The sun of their hope had set, and night had settled down on their hearts. As they walked, they recounted Christ’s works of mercy and His words of comfort. But they remembered not His words, ‘I will see you again.’ John 16:22.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 788.

Read Mark 16:1–8. What happened, and how did the women first respond?

From the beginning of the Gospel, the reader knows that Jesus is the Messiah. But in the text itself, the first non-demon-possessed person who proclaims Him the Messiah is Peter in Mark 8:29. And this profession doesn’t happen until halfway through the book.

All throughout Mark’s Gospel, Jesus tells people to keep quiet about who He is or about a healing that He did for them. In Mark 1:44, He tells a leper to tell no one of his healing. In Mark 5:43, He tells Jairus and his wife to tell no one of the raising of their daughter. In Mark 7:36, He tells a group not to tell people about His healing of a deaf and mute man. And then He commands His disciples not to tell people that He is the Messiah (*Mark 8:30; see also Mark 9:9*). No doubt the main reason for Jesus’ telling them to be silent was to allow Himself the time to finish His ministry according to the time prophecies of Daniel 9:24–27.

Now, in this scene, even after they had been told that Jesus had been raised, the women, fearful and amazed, fled from the tomb and, at least at first, didn’t talk about what had happened either.

The silence, however, didn’t last long. By the time we reach the end of the book of Mark, we read this: “And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs” (*Mark 16:20, ESV*).

Thus, the motif of being silent about Jesus and about who He is and what He has done is shattered. The book ends with them preaching “everywhere.”

**Why must we not keep silent about Jesus and what He has done?
Who can you tell today about Jesus and the plan of salvation?**

Appearing to Mary and Others

Read Mark 16:9–20. What do these verses add to the Resurrection story?

Almost all of Mark 16:9–20 has parallels to other passages in the New Testament—Mary Magdalene at the tomb seeing Jesus (*Matt. 28:1, 9, 10; John 20:11–18; compare with Luke 8:2*); two disciples see Him in the countryside (*Luke 24:13–35*); the 11 disciples are commissioned (*Matt. 28:16–20, Luke 24:36–49, John 20:19–23*).

The first person to see Jesus alive was Mary Magdalene (*John 20:11–18*). Other women saw Him, as well (*Matt. 28:8–10*). It is significant that the first people to see the risen Lord were women. Because women in the ancient world did not have high status as witnesses, if the story were fabricated, it would have been much more likely to name men as the first witnesses. But it is not men, not the Twelve, but a woman. She goes to tell the good news to the disciples, but, not surprisingly, they do not believe her testimony, most likely because it seemed fantastic and also, unfortunately, because Mary was a woman.

Apologists for the resurrection story of Jesus have used this fact, that of women being the first ones to have seen Jesus, as powerful evidence for the veracity of the story.

What happens in Mark 16:14 that makes no sense if this story were a fabrication?

Of course, if they were making the story up, why would they have made themselves look so bad? Jesus had to rebuke them for their “hardness of heart.” The Gospel accounts, from the time of His arrest to His appearances after the Resurrection, depict the followers of Jesus in a very negative light—fleeing, denying, disbelieving, and so forth. This would make no sense if the story were made up.

In contrast, their later bold and unwavering proclamation of the risen Christ, and the hope it offers everyone, presents powerful evidence for the veracity of their claims.

How can we protect ourselves from falling into the spiritual trap of doubt and unbelief? Why must we daily link ourselves to the risen Christ?

Go Into All the World

Read Mark 16:14–20. What did Jesus say to His disciples when He appeared to them, and what do these words mean to us today?

The first words of Jesus to His disciples are recorded only in indirect discourse in Mark 16:14. He rebukes them for their unbelief and hard-heartedness. This question of unbelief is not simply a modern problem. As we already have seen, the original disciples of Jesus struggled with belief (*Matt. 28:17, John 20:24–29*), and they were with Jesus in the flesh and saw, again and again, the miracles.

But by various proofs, He demonstrated to them the reality of His resurrection. Then their testimony, combined with the evidence summarized in Monday’s study, forms a firm foundation for faith.

Jesus then commissions His disciples to take the gospel to the world. His command is expansive. They are to go to the entire world and proclaim the gospel to all creation. Jesus then explains the outcome of their work for weal and for woe—believers will be saved, unbelievers condemned.

Jesus also describes signs that will accompany the disciples’ work—casting out demons, speaking new languages, protection from harm, and healing the sick. Some people have mistakenly interpreted Mark 16:18 as an affirmation for Christians to show their faith by picking up poisonous snakes. No such presumptuous action is authorized here. What Jesus is describing is protection when one is involved in mission, such as Paul’s service for others, as in Acts 28:3–6.

Of course, the Bible does not teach that Christians will always be protected from harm. At times God sees fit to work a miracle to further the gospel cause. But sometimes Christians suffer because of their witness. In that circumstance their patient endurance is another sign to unbelievers of the power of faith.

And then, after doing all He did here, “He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (*Mark 16:19, NKJV*). Jesus ascended to sit at the right hand of God, the place of supreme power, for Jesus had defeated all the forces of evil.

Notice the last verse. Though they went “everywhere,” preaching the gospel, they did not go alone. “The Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen” (*Mark 16:20, NKJV*). He was with them then and promises to be with us now as we continue the work they started.

“I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (*Matt. 28:20, NKJV*). What comfort can, and should, we take from this promise as we, too, seek to proclaim the gospel “everywhere”?

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “ ‘The Lord Is Risen,’ ” pp. 779–787; “Go Teach All Nations,” pp. 818–828, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life. In our Saviour the life that was lost through sin is restored; for He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will. He is invested with the right to give immortality. The life that He laid down in humanity, He takes up again, and gives to humanity. ‘I am come,’ He said, ‘that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.’ ‘Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ ‘Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.’ John 10:10; 4:14; 6:54.

“To the believer, death is but a small matter. Christ speaks of it as if it were of little moment. ‘If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death,’ ‘he shall never taste of death.’ To the Christian, death is but a sleep, a moment of silence and darkness. The life is hid with Christ in God, and ‘when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.’ John 8:51, 52; Col. 3:4.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 786, 787.

Even atheist historians, those who cannot accept the reality of the Resurrection, admit not only that Jesus had been killed but that after His death many people claimed to have seen the resurrected Christ, and as a result they began the nucleus of what became the Christian church. Some, in an attempt to explain why they claimed this, said that Jesus had a twin brother or that the early disciples hallucinated, thinking that they saw Jesus. Others said that Jesus never really died but only swooned and then, later, revived. Another person claimed that aliens came down and took the body. For a look at all these arguments and how they don’t work, see Clifford Goldstein, *Risen: Finding Hope in the Empty Tomb* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2021).

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Why would the disciples have lied about the resurrection of Jesus? From all that we know, they faced nothing but hatred, alienation, and persecution for their belief. What would they have gained by making this story up?
- 2 What evidence of Jesus’ resurrection is most convincing to you? Share your reasons with your class.
- 3 Dwell more on the great hope that Jesus’ resurrection offers us. Read 1 Corinthians 15. How much importance does Paul put on the resurrection of Jesus?

A Church Built on Garbage

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Purna faced a seemingly impossible task. He had volunteered to plant a church in an unentered district of a major South Asian city, and he didn't know where to start. He had moved to the district after volunteering to serve as a Global Mission pioneer. But how could he share his love for Christ with his non-Christian neighbors?

"God, please help," he prayed.

Purna prayed for a week, but he still didn't know where to start. But he did know one thing. He couldn't stand the stench on the road outside his house. Piles of garbage and puddles of dirty rainwater mingled on the road. One morning, he saw that the garbage had blocked the gutters, and filthy water was overflowing onto the road. He decided to do something. Taking a long bamboo pole, he began picking away the trash from the gutters.

As he worked, the neighbors noticed.

"Did the city government send you to clean the road?" someone asked.

Purna replied that he had not been hired to clean the road and that he simply lived on it. The neighbors were impressed. Nobody had ever cleaned the road before.

"You're a good man," a neighbor said. "We need you here."

"Don't ever leave here," another said.

As he cleaned the road, Purna became a local celebrity. Everyone knew him and was talking about him. People invited him into their homes.

As he met the neighbors, he learned that one man was paralyzed on his left side. Purna, who had been trained in massage, offered to help. The man agreed, and Purna began to give massages. Every time they met, Purna prayed and then gave a massage. The man recovered fully.

Neighbors were amazed to see the man in such good health.

"Who healed you?" they asked.

"Oh, it was the good man who cleans our road!" the man replied.

Then the neighbors really wanted to get to know Purna. They began to ask for prayers and massages.

Today, Purna has accomplished the seemingly impossible and planted a church. Eleven people have been baptized, and 20 others are studying the Bible. "Please pray for God to help us serve Him more and more," Purna said. "Even today, I am cleaning the road. If I see garbage stuck in the drains, I clean it up."

Purna lives in a veiled country that Adventist Mission is not identifying so as to protect his work among a population often hostile to Christianity. Learn more about Global Mission pioneers on the Adventist Mission website: bit.ly/GMPioneers.

During this quarter, we will be studying the Gospel of John, a finely crafted masterpiece. It is the Word of God, as artfully expressed by the apostle John.

It is unique among the four Gospels, often focusing attention on the personal interactions between Jesus and just one or two people. Many of these stories appear only in John.

As with the entire Bible, the Gospel came by the will of God rather than by the will of humanity. John was merely the willing instrument whom the Holy Spirit used to convey many crucial themes: the Word (*logos*), light, bread, water, the Holy Spirit, oneness, signs, testimony, and prophecy. These themes mutually enhance and illuminate one another throughout the Gospel.

But let us not miss the big picture while examining the details. May our study of John's Gospel, written by E. Edward Zinke and Thomas Shepherd, carry us back to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal. The details have a role, which is to point us toward the big picture, and in John that big picture is a divinely inspired revelation of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Lesson 1—Signs That Point the Way

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The Wedding at Cana** (*John 2:1–11*)

MONDAY: **The Second Sign in Galilee** (*John 4:46–54*)

TUESDAY: **The Miracle at the Pool of Bethesda** (*John 5:1–9*)

WEDNESDAY: **Hard Hearts** (*John 5:10–16*)

THURSDAY: **Jesus' Claims** (*John 5:19–47*)

Memory Text—*John 20:30, 31, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: John calls Jesus' miracles "signs"—miraculous events that point toward the deeper reality that Jesus is the Messiah.

Lesson 2—Signs of Divinity

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The Feeding of the Five Thousand** (*John 6:1–14*)

MONDAY: **"Surely, He Is the Prophet"** (*John 6:14*)

TUESDAY: **The Healing of the Blind Man: Part 1** (*John 9:1–16*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Healing of the Blind Man: Part 2** (*John 9:17–34*)

THURSDAY: **The Resurrection of Lazarus** (*John 11:38–44*)

Memory Text—*John 11:25, 26, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: Jesus not only said things that revealed His divinity but backed up His words with works that manifested His divinity.

Lessons for People Who Are Legally Blind The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free in braille, on MP3 disc, and via online download to people who are legally blind individuals who cannot hold or focus on ink print. Contact Christian Record Services, Inc., Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097. Phone: 402-488-0981, option 3; email: info@christianrecord.org; website: www.christianrecord.org.