



RESURRECTION

Course 4, *The Promised One*, Lesson 11

The Problem: What does the Resurrection of Jesus mean for us? The resurrection of Jesus Christ stands at the heart of the Christian faith. It is more than a historical event—it is a divine declaration of victory over sin, death, and the powers of darkness. His triumph assures us of hope beyond this life and invites us into a transformative relationship with Him.

When Jesus rose from the grave, He shattered the hold of sin and death over humanity. Paul wrote, "*Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*" 1 Corinthians 15:54-55. Because Christ conquered the grave, we no longer need to fear death—it is not the end but a transition into eternal life with Him. His resurrection affirms that redemption is not just an idea but a reality, offering forgiveness and restoration to all who believe.

The resurrection is not only about Christ—it is about us, too. Through Him, we are given the opportunity for spiritual rebirth. "*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new is here!*" 2 Corinthians 5:17. His triumph over sin enables us to walk in righteousness and freedom, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever felt weighed down by failure or regret? The resurrection proclaims that no past mistake is too great for God's mercy. Just as Christ left the tomb behind, we, too, can leave behind the burdens of sin and step into His transforming grace.

Ultimately, it is impossible to explain Christianity apart from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What actually happened from the moment Jesus breathed His last until He was seen by His disciples the following Sunday? By carefully examining the biblical accounts and organizing the events in chronological order, we find that *only the reality of the resurrection* provides a coherent and truthful explanation.

Objectives:

- I. We note the significance of Christ's burial.
- II. We note the meaning of the Sabbath rest in the tomb and its importance for the truthfulness of the resurrection story.
- III. We study the events of resurrection on Sunday.
- IV. We note the significance of the appearances of the risen Christ.
- V. We emphasize the Bible teaching that Christ's resurrection has made possible the resurrection of the dead at the end of human history.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S BURIAL

Jesus' burial in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was observed by numerous witnesses, making it undeniable that those present fully recognized the reality of His death. Given the circumstances—His crucifixion, the careful handling of His body, and the presence of both His followers and His opponents—it is inconceivable that anyone could have mistaken His condition or overlooked the certainty of His passing.

The Word:

1. What two men are mentioned as taking part in the burial of Jesus? John 19:38-39

2. What women followers of Jesus observed the burial? Luke 23:55; Mark 15:47.
3. What was used to close the tomb? Matthew 27:60.
4. What did Pilate give the Jewish authorities permission to do so as to protect the tomb from being tampered with? Matthew 27:62-66.

Explanation: Had there been any indication that Jesus was still alive when His grieving followers removed Him from the cross, they would never have wrapped His body in linen cloths, placed it in the tomb, and sealed the entrance with a large stone. Instead, they would have done everything possible to revive Him. The evidence leaves no doubt—Jesus was truly dead, and the swoon theory fails to account for these undeniable circumstances.

The following day, the tomb was sealed, and a Roman guard was stationed to ensure its security. If Jesus had somehow survived, escaping from a sealed tomb under watchful guard would have been impossible. Equally implausible is the claim that His disciples could have stolen the body. The authorities would not have ordered the guard and seal unless they were certain His body remained inside. Once secured, there was no realistic opportunity for the disciples to retrieve it without detection.

Furthermore, Luke records that Jesus' followers prepared spices and ointments late on Friday afternoon, intending to bring them to the tomb on Sunday morning (Luke 23:56). Their actions demonstrate their full belief that Jesus had died, further invalidating any suggestion that He survived crucifixion. The details surrounding His burial and the extensive security measures make alternative explanations—such as theft or survival—highly improbable.

Relevance: Apart from a miraculous resurrection, there was no natural possibility of Jesus' body being removed from the tomb. The circumstances of His burial and the intentional precautions taken to guard it strongly affirm the reality of the resurrection, refuting attempts to explain it away.

II. THE SABBATH REST

The Sabbath had been observed by God's people for generations, yet its significance was profoundly magnified between Christ's crucifixion and His resurrection. As He rested in the tomb, the Sabbath became a symbol of both completion and divine rest—just as God rested after creation, Christ rested after completing the work of redemption. In that sacred pause, the universe stood still, reflecting on the depth of His sacrifice. Then, as the new week dawned, His resurrection proclaimed hope, victory, and renewal, marking the beginning of restored fellowship between humanity and God.

The Word:

5. What did God do on the seventh day of creation week? Genesis 2:1-3.
6. What name was given to the day on which Jesus was crucified? Luke 23:54.
7. What did Jesus and His followers do between crucifixion Friday and resurrection Sunday? Luke 23:56; compare Exodus 20:8-11.

Explanation: The Sabbath was established by God at the conclusion of creation week as a sacred day of rest. When the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai, the Sabbath was reaffirmed as the fourth commandment, serving as a continual reminder of God's creative power (Exodus 20:8-11). Just as God rested on the seventh-day Sabbath after creation, Jesus rested in the tomb on the Sabbath following His completed work of redemption—securing salvation through His sacrifice.

Luke 23:56 emphasizes that Jesus' followers "*rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandment*," affirming their faithful observance of this sacred institution. The Greek word *paraskeue*, which in modern Greek signifies Friday, confirms that Jesus was crucified on that day. Consequently, the "*Sabbath according to the commandment*" falls directly

between Friday and Sunday. This chronology provides a clear and consistent understanding of the timing of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

Relevance: If Jesus intended His followers to observe a different day of worship after His death, the Gospels would have clearly indicated such a change. Yet, both Jesus and His disciples honored the seventh-day Sabbath even after the crucifixion. Luke, writing years later, makes no mention of a shift in Sabbath observance—he simply affirms that Christ's followers continued keeping the seventh-day Sabbath as commanded. Likewise, John, the last Gospel writer, who had ample opportunity to address any change in worship practices, provides no indication that Sunday replaced the Sabbath. Instead, his Gospel, written near the end of the first century, reinforces Christ's consistent observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. If such a change had occurred, John, writing decades later, would have certainly acknowledged it. His silence on the matter underscores the enduring sanctity of the Sabbath and the absence of any biblical mandate for a new day of worship.

III. THE EVENTS OF RESURRECTION ON SUNDAY MORNING

Throughout His ministry, Jesus repeatedly foretold His death and resurrection, yet His disciples struggled to comprehend His words. Their expectations were shaped by the hope that He would establish political dominion and restore Israel's power. In the midst of these aspirations, the deeper purpose of His mission—the redemption of humanity—was lost on them. Only after His resurrection did they fully grasp the significance of the events He had so carefully prepared them for, realizing that His victory was far greater than any earthly kingdom.

The Word:

8. In what terms had Jesus predicted His resurrection from the dead? Matthew 12:39-40; Matthew 16:21; John 2:19-21; 10:17-18.
9. Who arrived first at the tomb early on Sunday morning? What did she find? What did she do? John 20:1-2.
10. When they received Mary Magdalene's message, what did Peter and John do? John 20:3-10.
11. After Mary had been there and gone, who arrived next at the tomb and received a message for the disciples? Luke 24:1-12.
12. After delivering her message to the apostles, where did Mary Magdalene go? What happened? John 20:11-18.
13. As the other women were going to tell the disciples of what they had seen, who met them? What did He allow them to do that He had asked Mary not to do? Matthew 28:8-10.

Explanation: Throughout His ministry, Jesus endeavored to prepare the disciples for His death and resurrection. In speaking of His resurrection Jesus said it would occur:

"After three days." Mark 8:31; Matthew 27:63; 12:40.

"The third day." Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 24:21, 46.

"In three days." John 2:19-21; Matthew 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58.

All three phrases are equivalent. The Jewish inclusive system of reckoning time involved counting a whole day (24 hours) at the beginning or end of a period, even though the event described occupied only part of a day. Jesus was placed in the tomb sometime after 3:00 p.m. on Friday. Hence, Friday was Day 1. He was in the tomb for the full 24 hours of the Sabbath; that was Day 2. He rose very early on Sunday morning, Day 3. By Jewish reckoning, He was in the tomb for 3 days. Considering this system of computing time, it is true to say that Jesus rose "after three days," "the third day," in three days." By Jewish reckoning, He was "*three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" (Matthew 12:40) because the part of Friday that He was in the tomb represented the first 24-hour period, and the part of Sunday represented the third 24-hour period.

On the basis of the evidence in the Gospels, it is impossible to argue, as some have, that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday and was a full 72 hours in the tomb. We are clearly told that He rose "*early the first day of the week*" Mark 16:9. This day was identified as "*the third day since these things were done*" Luke 24:21. Luke emphasizes that He rose "*from the dead the third day*" Luke 24:46, and Paul agrees. See 1 Corinthians 15:4. Then His death and burial must have occurred on Friday.

The Resurrection Morning is a moment of unparalleled significance in the Christian faith, and each of the four Gospels provides unique details that together paint a powerful and complete picture. Below is a timeline, harmonizing Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John:

1. Before dawn on the first day of the week, several women approach Jesus' tomb to anoint His body.
 - Matthew 28:1 – Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" set out as the day begins.
 - Mark 16:1-2 – Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bring spices for His burial.
 - Luke 24:1 – "The women" bring prepared spices.
 - John 20:1 – Focuses on Mary Magdalene alone, coming "*while it was still dark.*"
2. Upon arriving, the women find the *large stone* rolled away from the entrance.
 - Matthew 28:2 – An *angel of the Lord descends*, causing an *earthquake*, and rolls the stone away.
 - Mark 16:3-4 – The women discuss who will move the stone, but find *it already rolled away*.
 - Luke 24:2 – They see the stone has been *removed*.
 - John 20:1 – Mary Magdalene sees the open tomb and rushes to tell Peter and John.
3. Inside (or near) the tomb, *angels* proclaim that Jesus has risen.
 - Matthew 28:5-6 – *One angel*, dressed in brilliant white, tells the women: "*He is not here, for He has risen.*"
 - Mark 16:5-7 – *One young man*, clothed in white, delivers the message.
 - Luke 24:4-7 – *Two angels* appear and remind the women of Jesus' prophecy.
 - John 20:12-13 – *Two angels* sit inside the tomb, speaking with Mary Magdalene.
4. In fear and awe, the women rush to inform the disciples.
 - Matthew 28:8 – They depart "*with fear and great joy.*"
 - Mark 16:8 – The women are trembling and amazed.
 - Luke 24:9-11 – They tell the *eleven disciples*, but their words seem like *nonsense* to them.
 - John 20:2 – Mary Magdalene tells Peter and John, saying, "*They have taken away the Lord.*"
5. Peter and John race to the tomb to see for themselves.
 - John 20:3-7 – John arrives first but doesn't enter; Peter enters and sees *linen wrappings* left behind.
 - Luke 24:12 – Peter sees the linen cloths and *marvels* at what happened.
 - John 20:6-7 – "*Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the kerchief (face cloth) that had been on His head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.*"
6. Mary Magdalene remains at the tomb, weeping. Jesus *appears*, though she does not recognize Him at first.
 - John 20:14-16 – Jesus asks why she is crying. When He calls her name, she realizes it is Him.
 - John 20:17 – Jesus tells her not to cling to Him but to go tell the disciples.
 - Mark 16:9 – Jesus appears *first* to Mary Magdalene.
7. As the other women hurry away, Jesus *meets them on the way*.
 - Matthew 28:9-10 – Here, Jesus meets a group of women after they leave the tomb. They immediately fall at His feet and grasp Him in worship, and Jesus does not forbid them. Instead, He reassures them and instructs them to tell the disciples.
8. Meanwhile, the Roman guards, who witnessed the angel, report to the Jewish priests.

- Matthew 28:11-15 – The chief priests bribe the soldiers to spread false claims that Jesus' body was stolen.

9. Later that day, Jesus walks with two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, but they do not recognize Him at first.

- Luke 24:13-32 – He explains prophecy, and they realize it's Him when He breaks and blesses bread with them.

10. That evening, Jesus appears to the gathered disciples.

- Mark 16:14 – Jesus is revealed to the eleven as they sit at table and he rebukes them for their unbelief.

- Luke 24:36-43 – They are terrified and think they have seen a spirit. He shows them His hands and feet, asks them to touch Him, *"for a spirit doesn't have flesh and bones, as you see that I have."* They are in a state of shocked awe and joy and wonder, so he asks them for some food, proving He is truly physically risen.

- John 20:19-23 – Though the doors are locked, He enters and grants them peace. He shows them His hands and sides. Then He bestows on them the Holy Spirit.

This timeline harmonizes the four Gospel accounts of the Resurrection day, showing how each writer highlights different aspects of the Resurrection story. John's Gospel uniquely emphasizes Mary Magdalene, while Matthew focuses on the angel's dramatic arrival and the guards' reaction. Luke and Mark provide additional witnesses, reinforcing the overwhelming evidence of Christ's victory over death.

Relevance: Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, just as He foretold—an undeniable truth that forms the bedrock of the Christian faith. Praise the Lord, we serve a living Savior! The resurrection is central to Scripture and cannot be reinterpreted or dismissed without rejecting the very foundation of Christianity. To deny Christ's resurrection is to reject both the prophetic evidence woven throughout Scripture—clear, objective, and well-established—and the conviction brought by the Holy Spirit, which reaches beyond the limits of scientific or historical proof.

Faith is built upon a solid foundation of truth, yet it remains faith because it responds to the deep, transformative conviction imparted by the divine Spirit. Embrace this truth, trust in the risen Christ, and receive the gift of eternal life—a promise secured by His victory over sin and death!

IV. THE APPEARANCES OF CHRIST

There were at least 14 different appearances of Christ after His resurrection to apostles or disciples as recorded in the New Testament. We have already noted His appearance to Mary Magdalene, His appearance to the other women, and His appearance to the eleven disciples. We can now list the other instances.

The Word:

14. What happened a week later? John 20:26-29; compare John 20:24-25.

15. What occurred later by the Galilee sea shore? John 21:1-23

16. What meeting took place on a Galilean mountain? Matthew 28:16-20

17. What experience was shared by 500 disciples? 1 Corinthians 15:6

18. What other disciple saw Him? 1 Corinthians 15:7

19. Who were with Jesus when He ascended? Luke 24:50-52

20. What experience did Stephen have? Acts 7:55-56

21. Whom did Paul see at the time of his conversion? Acts 9:5; 1 Corinthians 15:8

22. What vision of the risen Christ was given to John? Revelation 1:12-18

Explanation: The apostles and disciples provided a unified testimony that Jesus rose from the dead, appearing to them multiple times before His ascension—and even on special occasions afterward. To suggest that these encounters were mere hallucinations or imaginary visions dismisses the varied circumstances, personalities, and backgrounds of those who witnessed Him alive. Furthermore, questioning the sincerity of the biblical writers, who faithfully recorded these events, challenges historical credibility.

Some theologians have argued that Christianity can stand without belief in the resurrection, yet to deny this cornerstone truth is to undermine the integrity of the countless eyewitnesses who boldly proclaimed Christ's victory over death. If their testimony were false, the reliability of the New Testament—and the foundation of Christian faith—would collapse.

Thankfully, such skepticism is unfounded. The resurrection is supported by overwhelming historical evidence, but even more powerful than external proof is the inner conviction imparted by the Holy Spirit. His witness confirms that the biblical account is not only factual—it is the very heartbeat of the Gospel.

Relevance: Jesus is alive! As your risen Savior, He hears your prayers, forgives your sins, and remains ever-present as the source of your strength and confidence. Praise the Lord—because He lives, His love, grace, and blessings are yours to embrace each day!

V. JESUS' RESURRECTION MAKES POSSIBLE THE END-TIME RESURRECTION

The central message of the New Testament is one of hope and victory—because Christ has risen, the dead in Christ will be raised at the end of time. What a glorious promise! His resurrection not only guarantees eternal life but also assures believers that they will be reunited with those who shared faith in Him on that blessed resurrection morning. In Christ, death is not the final word; it is a temporary sleep, from which He will awaken His faithful at His return.

The Word:

23. What would be our condition—and that of deceased believers—if Jesus had not risen from the dead? 1 Corinthians 15:17-19.

24. When will those who belong to Christ be raised from the dead? 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 51-54.

Explanation: Through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, sin and death entered the human race (Romans 5:12-18). Yet, through Christ's perfect obedience, sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection, the way to forgiveness and eternal life has been made available. Those who place their faith in Him will rise again, reunited with their loved ones who share the same hope. This is the blessed assurance that has sustained Christians through the ages—a hope so powerful that it compels believers to share its life-changing truth with others. In the risen Christ, redemption and restoration are available to all.

Relevance: Because of Christ's victory, fear no longer holds dominion over us. Death is no longer an end—it is merely a temporary sleep from which believers will awaken at the glorious second advent of Jesus. Yet there is a condition far worse than physical death: the rejection of Christ's boundless love, leading to spiritual separation. Even in this state, He offers immediate deliverance. Embrace Him as your living Redeemer, and you will receive forgiveness, restoration, and eternal security in Him. Whether alive or resting in sleep at His return, His promise remains sure—you belong to Him forever.

What does His resurrection mean for you personally? Does it fill you with hope? Does it inspire you to live with purpose? Today, let's rejoice in the truth that He is *alive*, that His love is unshakable, and that His victory is ours to claim.

The resurrection of Jesus demands a response. He did not rise for His own sake but to bring salvation to the world. When He appeared to His disciples, He gave them a commission: "*Go and make disciples of all nations*" Matthew 28:19. His victory is meant to be shared, inviting others to experience the life-changing power of His resurrection.

Prayer of response: Lord Jesus, thank You for the gift of Your resurrection. Thank You for conquering sin and death and offering us new life in You. Help us to live in the power of Your victory—walking in faith, sharing Your love, and trusting in Your promises. Fill our hearts with resurrection love, peace and joy today. Amen.

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. The disciples stole Jesus' body from the tomb.
 - b. All our hopes for the future depend on Jesus' resurrection from the dead.
 - c. It is even possible that Jesus never did die.
 - d. There is no such thing as Christianity if Jesus did not rise from the dead.
2. Discuss: How does Christ's resurrection impact our understanding of life, death, and the hope of salvation? In what ways does this event shape your personal faith and daily walk with God?

See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 779-817.

Further study: Throughout history, skeptics have put forth various theories to challenge Christ's resurrection. Below, we evaluate four of the most frequently debated objections.

1. The Falsehood (Theft) Theory

- Claim: The disciples stole Jesus' body and then falsely proclaimed His resurrection.
- Counterpoints:
 - Despair and Persecution: The disciples were reeling from grief and fear after the crucifixion—hardly the profile of conspirators willing to risk their lives for a lie.
 - Roman Guards: The tomb was secured by Roman soldiers under penalty of death, and they later reported the discovery of an empty tomb (Matthew 28:11-15). It is implausible that a stolen body could be kept secret amid such strict Roman oversight.
 - Martyrdom: The unwavering willingness of the disciples to suffer martyrdom supports their genuine belief in the resurrection.

2. The Swoon Theory

- Claim: Jesus did not truly die but merely lost consciousness, later reviving and leaving the tomb.
- Counterpoints:
 - Brutal Execution: Jesus suffered extreme physical abuse, was crucified, and was pierced by a spear (John 19:34; Mark 15:44–45), making it unlikely that He could have merely swooned.
 - Physical Impossibility: A nearly dead man could not have rolled away the heavy stone from the tomb (Matthew 27:60) or walked the distances reported in post-resurrection appearances (Luke 24:13–32) without significant signs of trauma.
 - Consistency of Testimony: The evidence of His death is supported by multiple witnesses (including Roman guards), and the subsequent ascension presupposes a miraculous resurrection rather than a revival from a near-death state.

3. The Vision Theory: This theory comes in two forms:

- a. Hallucination Hypothesis:
 - Claim: The disciples, overwhelmed by grief, experienced hallucinations of Jesus.
- Counterpoints:
 - Group Appearances: Multiple individuals and groups (e.g., the women at the tomb and the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24) reported seeing Jesus—a simultaneous collective hallucination is highly unlikely.

- Unexpected Timing: Since the disciples were not expecting Him to rise, it is hard to explain why intense emotional distress would produce a shared, vivid vision of Jesus.

b. Spiritual Vision Theory:

- Claim: Rather than a physical resurrection, divine visions were given to encourage the disciples.

- Counterpoints:

- Scriptural Affirmation: Scripture consistently presents the resurrection as a physical, bodily event (e.g., Jesus eating with the disciples in Luke 24:36–43 and showing His wounds in John 20).
- Theological Implications: If the resurrection were mere illusion, the foundational promise of eternal life, as affirmed throughout the New Testament, would lose its meaning.

4. Mythical Theories

- Claim: The resurrection account was borrowed from existing pagan myths.

- Counterpoints:

- Historical Risk: Early followers like Peter and other humble witnesses were willing to die for the truth of the resurrection—an action unlikely if it were merely a myth.
- Rapid Spread of Christianity: The explosive growth of the early Church, driven by firsthand testimonies, contradicts the notion that the resurrection is a later mythological invention.
- Eyewitness Testimony: The accounts contain specific details (such as the folded kerchief [John 20:7]) that are hard to attribute to a myth created centuries later.

Each theory, when scrutinized against historical context and scriptural evidence, introduces more questions than answers—reinforcing that the resurrection is not only historically credible but also the cornerstone of Christian faith. Moreover, how can one explain the extraordinary spread of Christianity in the first century if it were rooted in myth rather than reality? If the resurrection were a mere invention, someone would have had to craft the story, integrate it into the New Testament, and persuade thousands of people—including those who lived during Jesus’ time—to believe it despite an absence of eyewitness testimony. The idea that Christianity originated from mythical fabrications lacks historical credibility.