



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

New Testament Survey

Lesson 16 – Our Risen Savior and Lord

Jesus' Resurrection from the Dead

After Jesus died and was buried, He was made alive again and descended into hell to proclaim His victory. This descent into hell was not part of His humiliation, but it was the first step in His exaltation. 1 Peter 3:18-20 tells us: **"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, by which also He went and preached (made a proclamation) to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah."** Colossians 2:15: **"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He (God) made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in Him (Christ)."**

Then, early Sunday morning Jesus rose from the dead. No one saw Him. After Jesus had left His grave, the angel came to roll the stone away and to frighten the guards. The women who had come to anoint Jesus' dead body with spices were the first to see the empty tomb and to hear the Easter message of the angels: **"He is not here, for He is risen"** (Matthew 28:6). When Mary of Magdala saw the stone rolled away, she immediately ran to get Peter and John. When Peter and John ran to the grave, they found it empty, but they did not see any angels.

During the forty days after His resurrection Jesus appeared alive many times to His disciples, both as a group and individually. The Bible mentions the following appearances, which are listed in their probable order:

1. To Mary of Magdala, on Easter Sunday. She at first thought Him to be a gardener (Mark 16:9-11, John 20:11-18).
2. To some of the other women, on Easter Sunday, as they were returning from the tomb (Matthew 28:9-10).
3. To Cleopas and his friend, on Easter Sunday afternoon, as they walked to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13, Luke 24:13-35).
4. To Peter alone, on Easter Sunday afternoon (1 Corinthians 15:5; Luke 24:34).
5. To ten of His apostles, plus Cleopas and other disciples, on Easter Sunday evening (Thomas absent) (Luke 24:36-49, John 20:19-24).
6. To the eleven apostles, and perhaps other disciples, one week later, in Jerusalem (Thomas present) (Mark 16:14-15, John 20:26-29, 1 Corinthians 15:5).
7. To seven apostles, by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-23 – the "third time" v. 14).
8. To over 500 disciples at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).

9. To His apostles on a mountain in Galilee, where He commissioned His disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-20, 1 Corinthians 15:7). (It is very likely that this occurred at the same time as the appearance listed as #8.)
10. To His brother James, who with His other brothers was now associated with His disciples (1 Corinthians 15:7).
11. To many of His disciples at the Mount of Olives, where He ascended to heaven (Mark 16:19, Luke 24:50-52, Acts 1:6-11).
12. To the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, after His ascension (1 Corinthians 15:8).

Why did Jesus have to rise again? Wasn't His work finished when He died on the cross?

Jesus' resurrection is God's announcement to the whole world that the sins of the world have been removed. Jesus went to His death with the sin of the world on His back, and He could not rise again from the dead unless He had fully atoned for all this sin by His suffering and death as man's Substitute. Thus, the resurrection of Jesus proves that His mission was a success and not a failure. Jesus succeeded in doing what no mere man could ever have done: He fully atoned for the sin of the world.

The letters of the New Testament are full of the joy of Jesus' resurrection. This was the really important good news. It changed Jesus' followers from sad and defeated disciples of a condemned criminal into the joyful and bold ambassadors of the Son of God, with the message of the forgiveness of sins for the whole world. Paul wrote later: **"If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished"** (1 Corinthians 15:17-18). **"And we are found false witnesses of God"** (1 Corinthians 15:15). Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, there is no Christian Gospel.

Read the listed passages as you study each of the events below:

No bone broken (John 19:31-37)

The murderers of the Messiah were careful not to break the Sabbath laws. Jesus' body was taken down before the Sabbath began.

Sometimes it was days before the person who was crucified died. But Jesus died soon of His own free will. Since Jesus was already dead, the soldiers did not break His bones, as they did the other two criminals so that they would die quickly, and the bodies could be removed before the Sabbath began.

Both the fact that His bones were not broken and that He was pierced with a spear had been foretold in prophecy, thus proving to us once more that Jesus is the true Messiah.

Jesus is buried (Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42)

Joseph and Nicodemus were two secret disciples. They now confessed Jesus openly and stepped forward to bury His body. The fact that they were rich men fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 53:9.

The guard (Matthew 27:62-66)

Even though Jesus' disciples did not believe Jesus' prophecy that He would rise on the third day, Jesus' enemies remembered it and took precautions to prevent anyone from stealing His body so they could claim He had been resurrected.

Jesus rises from the dead (Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-9; John 20:1-2)

On Saturday evening some of the women had bought spices for Jesus' dead body, but by Sunday morning Jesus was no longer dead. He escaped from the tomb, an earthquake took place, bodies of dead believers came out of their tombs, an angel rolled the stone away, and the guards fled in terror. These things were unable to keep the Lord of life among the dead.

When Mary of Magdala saw that the stone was rolled away, she feared foul play and went to get Peter and John. The other women proceeded to the grave and found the tomb empty. Two angels told them what had happened and reminded them of what Jesus had said. Jesus had risen from the dead, as He said He would. He is alive now!

Peter and John (Luke 24:12; John 20:3-10)

John outran Peter to the tomb but was not bold enough to go in. Peter came and entered the tomb and found it empty. There was no sign of any struggle or foul play. But they did not see Jesus nor did they hear any message from an angel.

"Mary" (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18)

Mary of Magdala returned to the tomb and found it empty. She thought Jesus' body had been stolen, and she wept. Two angels asked her why she was crying. And then Jesus Himself appeared to her to comfort her. Jesus asked her why she was weeping, but at first she thought He was the gardener. When He said "**Mary**" to her, she knew that it was Jesus. She then told the other disciples that she had seen Jesus, but at first they did not believe her.

The other women see Jesus (Matthew 28:9-10; Luke 24:9-11)

As the other women returned from the empty tomb, Jesus met them and reminded them that He had told them He would rise, and that they all would see Him in Galilee, as He had promised. But the other disciples did not believe the women's story either.

The guards (Matthew 28:11-15)

Perhaps the best proof of Jesus' resurrection is the lie told by these guards: that they had been sleeping when the disciples stole Jesus' body. Can you find any holes in their story? They were paid for this lie.

On the way to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-35)

Even though they had already heard that Jesus' tomb was empty and that angels had told the women that Jesus had risen, Cleopas and an unnamed disciple were sad as they walked to Emmaus on Sunday afternoon. A Stranger joined them and scolded them for being sad when there were so many Old Testament prophecies that talked about the sufferings of the Messiah, which be followed by triumphant glory. They did not know that this Stranger was the risen and living Jesus until they ate with Him in Emmaus. But Jesus then vanished, and they quickly returned to Jerusalem to tell the others what had happened.

Behind locked doors (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-48; John 20:19-23)

Out of fear, Jesus' apostles and other disciples tried to hide from the Jewish authorities who had called for Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus came through the locked doors and greeted them with the message of peace. Gradually they became convinced that He had truly risen from the dead and that He was alive before their very eyes. He showed them His hands, His feet, and His pierced side to prove that He was indeed the very person who had been crucified. He showed them that all of these events had been foretold in the Old Testament.

On this same evening Jesus gave His disciples the authority to forgive sins and retain sins in His name. This same power of the keys to open and close heaven is given to us now as Jesus' disciples.

Thomas sees Jesus (John 20:24-29)

Thomas had not been with the others on Easter Sunday. He did not believe what the others said about Jesus' resurrection. One week later Thomas was with the others, and Jesus came in the same way as before. Thomas received the proof he said he needed, and he confessed: "**My Lord and my God!**" (v. 28). Jesus then pronounced a blessing on all those who would believe in Him and in His resurrection without actually seeing Him in the flesh. This means all of Jesus' followers today, including us. Jesus' disciples then went to Galilee to see Him again at the place appointed by Him.

Breakfast with Jesus (Matthew 28:16; John 21:1-14)

Seven disciples went fishing and caught nothing until Jesus appeared and told them where to cast the net for a catch. The result was 153 fine fish and breakfast with their risen Lord. Now we are fishers of men.

“Do you love Me?” (John 21:15-24)

Peter had denied Jesus three times. Now he was given the opportunity to confess Him three times. Jesus then told Peter that he would be put to death by crucifixion for Jesus' sake.

“Make disciples!” – The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18)

Having full authority over all things in heaven and earth, Jesus, on a mountain in Galilee, commissioned His disciples to make more disciples among all nations everywhere by baptizing them and teaching them His Word. The teaching was to be thorough, covering all the things they had learned from Jesus. Jesus promised to be with them and their successors even to the time of His return at the end of time. This continues to be our assignment from our Lord and Savior even now and will remain our assignment until Jesus appears again visibly on the Day of Judgment.

Jesus goes up to heaven (Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:49-52; Acts 1:3-12)

At the Mount of Olives Jesus ascended visibly into the sky. He will return in the same way. We should not think of Jesus as being enclosed or limited to a certain spot in the heavens. The right hand of God is everywhere. His sitting at the right hand of God means that He has all power, that He is everywhere, and that He can be present with His blessings wherever He wants to be – for example, where two or three of His followers are gathered together in His name He is there.

Jesus is the promised Savior (John 20:30-31; John 21:25)

We are reminded by these words that the purpose of the Gospels – and in fact of the whole Bible – is to convince us that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. This means that He is also *our* Savior from sin and that He wants to be the Lord of our lives.

Questions

1. What is meant by Christ's descent into hell?
2. Why did the guards tell a lie about Jesus' empty tomb?
3. Why were the women going out to see Jesus' tomb?
4. Who remembered Jesus' promise that He would rise on the third day?
5. Why is it so important that Jesus rose from the dead in His body?
6. Why did Jesus appear to so many people after He rose from the dead?
7. Why did the Stranger call the two walking to Emmaus fools?
8. What did Jesus' disciples say about the reports of the women that Jesus had risen?
9. What authority did Jesus give His disciples on Easter Sunday evening?
10. How did Jesus spend His first forty days after He rose?
11. What convinced Thomas that Jesus had risen from the dead?
12. What is meant by the Great Commission?

13. What is meant by sitting at the right hand of God?
14. Why did the apostle John write his Gospel?