

*Session 6*



# God Is Life-Giving

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## THE POINT

*The resurrection of Christ changes everything.*

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

There are words that change everything. They put in perspective all the moments that came before and redirect all that are to come. A minister says, “I now pronounce you husband and wife.” An ultrasound technician says, “There’s the heart beating!” The judge says, “Not guilty.” The doctor says, “You are cancer free.”

With just a few simple words, the world is transformed in a moment. There is hope where there was despair. There is a sense of new beginnings where it had seemed the world was coming to an end. The tables are turned, the script is flipped. It’s a brand-new day.

One Sunday morning, two thousand years ago, three frightened women heard a sentence that didn’t just change everything for them; it changed everything for everybody. This good news would topple empires. It would redraw

maps. It would alter eternity. It was the most life giving, paradigm shifting, world transforming sentence that has ever been spoken. It is the reason we are reading this session today. What was this sentence?

He has risen.

### QUESTION 1:

***What are some life-altering words you’ve heard spoken?***

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## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

### MARK 16:1-6

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they could go and anoint him. <sup>2</sup> Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise. <sup>3</sup> They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?” <sup>4</sup> Looking up, they noticed that the stone—which was very large—had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup> When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side; they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> “Don’t be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him.

Even though the Gospel of Mark itself was anonymous, it was accepted in the early church that John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10) was its author. Since he wasn’t one of Jesus’s disciples, biblical scholars believe the apostle Peter was most likely his primary source, as the two developed a close relationship in Rome before Peter’s execution around 64 or 65 AD (1 Pet. 5:13). This would mean Mark was written no more than forty or fifty years after the events it described.

This by itself is strong evidence that Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection are historical facts. Imagine you were writing a history of the late 1980s. In your history, you claimed that Ronald Reagan had been assassinated, but that three days later he had come back to life. There’s no way you could get away with such a claim, because there are millions of people still alive today who were alive during Reagan’s term. They would all line up to refute your story. So, if Mark had lied about Jesus’s resurrection while there were still so many living eyewit-

nesses that could have refuted him, his account would never have gained traction, much less be read and revered and studied today.

That’s only the beginning of the proofs Mark’s Gospel has to offer. Notice that chapter 16 begins with “Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome” bringing spices to the tomb, intending to anoint Jesus’s body. Like a good journalist, Mark called them by name, adding another detail that could have been easily refuted. What’s more, the mere fact that they were women demonstrates Mark was telling the truth. In first century Jewish and Roman culture, a woman wasn’t considered a credible witness, and her testimony wasn’t permitted in a court of law. So, if Mark had invented his story, he wouldn’t have had the first witnesses to the resurrection be women! But Mark wasn’t trying to convince his readers. He was merely laying out the facts.

The women had brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus since they weren’t able to do it

before the start of the Sabbath the previous Friday when He died on the cross. On the way, according to verse 3, the women were wondering how they were going to move the heavy stone that sealed the tomb. Once again, a writer making up a story would have written it to be more believable. They would have brought men with them to do the heavy lifting, or there would have been an explanation of how the stone had moved, or it wouldn't have been mentioned at all. Instead, verse 4 simply says the stone had already been rolled away.

When they entered the tomb, the women encountered a young man sitting on the right side. Matthew confirmed in his Gospel the young man was an angel (Matt. 28:5). In Mark 16:6, the angel addressed the women, saying, "Don't be alarmed . . . You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here." Here is the one detail even the most skeptical agnostic can't dispute: Jesus wasn't there. In all of history, no one has ever

credibly produced the body of Christ. What do you do with that truth? You could choose to believe Jesus's disciples stole His body. That was the story the religious leaders circulated, according to Matthew 28:13. But to believe that would also require you to believe Roman soldiers fell asleep on guard duty (an offense punishable by death) yet lived to tell about it.

You could claim the women went to the wrong tomb. But that would mean there was a "right tomb" somewhere that would have been found in a matter of days, if not hours.

We really are only left with one conclusion: *He has risen!*

#### **QUESTION 2:**

***Why do some find it difficult to acknowledge the resurrection of Jesus as historical truth?***

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## **1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4**

Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

If someone asked you, "What's the most important thing to know about the gospel?" what would you say? There are a lot of things you could say. You could talk about God's love and how He created us to be in a relationship with Him. You could talk about the need to confess your sin and repent. You could give a

testimony about how Jesus has changed your life. All of these are good and necessary things. But none of them includes what Paul said was "most important" in our understanding of the gospel (v. 3). You see, we don't have to decide for ourselves what's most important. The Bible has already told us. There are three essential

components of the gospel message Paul emphasized in verses 3-4:

**The Title.** First, consider the title Paul used for Jesus: “Christ” (v. 3). The term “Christ,” derived from the Greek *Christos*, means “Anointed One.” This title holds great significance for both Jews and Greeks. For Jews, it signifies the long-awaited Messiah foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures. In a city like Corinth, recognizing Jesus as the true Christ was a bold declaration that challenged the authority of the Roman Empire, which demanded allegiance to Caesar. Early Christians asserted their ultimate allegiance to Jesus, which was a radical stance in a culture where loyalty to the empire was expected.

**The Source.** Paul appealed to “the Scriptures” twice in verses 3-4, signifying his reliance on the authority of Scripture as central to the Christian faith. By grounding the gospel in the Scriptures, Paul emphasized that these events were divinely ordained as part of God’s redemptive plan. He likely had in mind Messianic psalms like Psalms 16 and 22, alongside the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah, especially Isaiah 52:13–53:12. The Old Testament is rich with prophecies, allusions, and symbolism pointing to Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection.

**The Message.** The core message is that Jesus lived, died, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Any complete explanation of the

gospel must include these elements. In the book of Acts, sermons by Peter, Stephen, and Paul emphasize this message.

Additionally, Paul defended his faith on multiple occasions before religious or government authorities (Acts 22:1-22; 23:1-6; 24:10-27; 25:1-12; 26:1-32). In each instance, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus were central to his message. Early in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul stated he “decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Later in chapter 15, Paul was straightforward: “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” (v. 17). This is a powerful statement. If Christ is a mere legend, He can’t save anyone. If He was just a great teacher, we might learn how to thrive in life but gain no hope for eternity. Without His atoning death, our sins would remain. If there were no resurrection, those who trust in Him would have wasted their lives. But Christ lived, died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. Therefore, we hold onto hope for eternity.

**QUESTION 3:**

***What are some ways we should hold to the gospel in our daily lives?***

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## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-22

<sup>20</sup> But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. <sup>22</sup> For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

# Engage

## BECAUSE HE LIVES

Jesus's resurrection isn't just a historical fact; it's a current reality.  
Beside each topic, share how Jesus's resurrection impacts your life:

**My home:**

**My work:**

**My relationships:**

**My decisions:**

**My problems:**

In Leviticus 23, the Lord gave instructions to the Israelites for how to celebrate the Feast of Firstfruits. It was to be celebrated on the day after the Sabbath, the week following Passover. In other words, on Resurrection Sunday.

The idea was that farmers would bring their first sheaf of harvested grain to the priests at the temple, who would then wave it before the Lord as an offering. It was an expression of gratitude to God for providing food, and an expression of confidence that the best was yet to come.

Paul made the most of his Jewish audience's familiarity with this feast to teach about the significance of Jesus's resurrection. In verse 20, he described Jesus's resurrection as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." In the same way, as the Feast of Firstfruits expressed both gratitude and anticipation, Christians could be thankful that Jesus's resurrection was a fore-taste of the resurrection that will happen for all of us who have died ("fallen asleep"). At the end of history, everyone will experience a resurrection. Both the righteous and the unrighteous will be raised to face judgment. Just as the Feast of Firstfruits expressed confidence in a greater harvest to come, so Christ's resurrection anticipates a greater resurrection of all humanity.

Now, let's get theological. You might be wondering what Adam has to do with Easter Sunday. After all, here we are trying to figure out why Paul suddenly brought up Adam in a conversation about Jesus's resurrection.

There's a doctrine in Christianity called the "federal" theory of substitutionary atonement. In a federal government, there are people—congressmen, senators, the president—who represent much larger swaths of the demo-

graphic: districts, a state, the nation. So, Paul was arguing that Adam represented all of sinful humanity. When Adam chose to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit, it brought sin into the world. This act affected everyone, making all humans born with a tendency to sin. Adam served as a substitute, but not the substitute we need. Because "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22).

But the resurrection of Jesus gives us a new representative. Because of our sinful nature (the result of Adam's choice), we can't fix our relationship with God by ourselves. That's where Jesus comes in. Jesus, through His death on the cross, took the punishment for our sins. He stood in the place of every person.

This promise is for all those who are "in Christ" (v. 22). Understanding this doctrine helps us see just what Jesus did. It's not just about following rules; it's about having a loving relationship with God despite our mistakes. This concept of federal substitutionary atonement emphasizes that God's grace is available to everyone who believes, offering hope and forgiveness.

**QUESTION 4:**

***How would you describe the relationship between Jesus and Adam?***

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**QUESTION 5:**

***How does the resurrection shape the way we think about life, death, and eternity?***

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## LIVE IT OUT

You have an opportunity today to respond to the life that is available to you because of the resurrection of Christ.

- **Personally.** Reflect on the significance of Jesus's resurrection in your personal life. Take time to thank God for His love and grace, recognizing that, through Jesus, you have hope for eternal life.
- **In your circle.** Share the message of the resurrection with friends or family. Have conversations about the importance of faith in Jesus and what His resurrection means for forgiveness and new beginnings.
- **In your spirit.** Engage in deeper theological study. Explore the implications of the doctrine of federal substitutionary atonement and how it influences your understanding of sin, grace, and redemption. Join a study group or take a class to better articulate and defend your faith, equipping yourself to discuss these concepts effectively with others.



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1. Josh McDowell Ministry, "Did Jesus Fulfill Old Testament Prophecy?" *Josh.org*, <https://www.josh.org/jesus-fulfill-prophecy/>