



Part 29: Word ALIVE

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Background Notes ▾

PURPOSE: To present the events following the central event of our faith: the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

AUTHOR: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John the Evangelists.

DATE: Jesus was 33 when he was crucified. Now he is eternal.

STYLE: As with all stories based on eyewitness accounts, the four Gospels use different styles and sources to retell the resurrection appearances. An angel at the tomb in Matthew and Mark tells the women that Jesus is risen, while Luke and John record two angels. But all four Gospels witness to the miracle of the resurrection. Jesus appears bodily, not “spiritually.” This was no resuscitation, and his body did physically impossible things.



Opening Quotes

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” Lk 24:5

“Go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Jn 20:17

“O foolish men and slow of heart...was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Lk 24:26

“As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” Jn 20:21

“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” Jn 20:23

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” Jn 20:29

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.” Jn 20:30

“Children, have you any fish?” Jn 21:5

“‘Simon, do you love me?’... ‘You know that I love you.’... ‘Feed my sheep.’” Jn 21:15

“Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” Mt 28:19

| the BIG PICTURE | | ← : LAW, History, Writings, Prophets | | ← : key covenants in our Father's plan | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | 12 Periods ▾ | Plot ▾ | Other books related to period ▾ | | stories in each period ▾ |
| BC | 🌀 THE BEGINNINGS | GN 1-11 | Ps 8, 104 | | Creation, Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah's ark, Tower of Babel |
| 1850 | 🔥 THE PATRIARCHS | GN 12-50 | | | Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Melchizedek |
| 1250 | ⚠️ EXODUS FROM EGYPT | EX | | | Moses, the burning bush, the plagues, passover, exodus |
| 1200 | ♣️ JOURNEY TO CANAAN | NM, Jos | LV, DT | | Sinai desert, 10 commandments, Levites, Law, Joshua |
| 1100 | 👤 THE JUDGE CYCLE | Jg | Ruth | | 12 tribes, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel |
| 1030 | ☆ KINGS & PROPHETS | 1 & 2 S | 1 Ch, Ps, Prov | | Saul, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, the Temple |
| 1000 | ■ THE DIVIDED KINGDOM | 1 Kg | 2 Ch, Prov, | | Israel (N), Judah (S), Elijah & Elisha, Isaiah, Assyrian exile |
| 721 587 | ⊖ BABYLONIAN EXILE | 2 Kg | 2 Ch, Tob, Hos, Am, Hab, Is, Jer, Lam, Jl, Mic, Zp, Jon, Nah, Ob, Ez, Dan, Bar | | Babylonians, “major” prophets, Isaiah (to Israel), Jeremiah (to Jerusalem), Ezekiel (to the Exiles) |
| 538 | ⚙️ THE RESTORATION | Ezr, Neh | Est, Judith, Hag, Zech, Mal, Job, Ecc, Songs | | Cyrus, 2 nd temple, 2 nd Law, “minor” prophets, new writings |
| 163 63 | 🕯️ THE REPURIFICATION | 1 Mac | Dn, 2Mac, Sirach, Wisdom | | Greeks, Maccabean revolt, Hasmonean Dynasty, Romans, Jewish sects (Pharisees, Saducees, Zealots, Essenes) |
| AD | ✝️ JESUS CHRIST | LK | MT, MK, JN | | Incarnation, Good News, New Law, Cross & Resurrection |
| 33 70 | 🕯️ APOSTOLIC CHURCH | Acts | Rm, 1&2Co, Ga, Ep, Phil, Col, 1&2Th, 1&2 Tm, Ti, Phm, Hb, Ja, 1P, 2P, 1,2&3J, Jd, Rv | | Pentecost, council, journeys, epistles, Body/Bride of Christ |



The Story of Part 29: Back to LIFE



Johanna, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to anoint Jesus' dead body with spices, a Jewish custom which they could not carry out the day after his crucifixion, since it was the Sabbath. If only he were alive to do good on that Sabbath the way he used to! But when they got there, the stone was rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. Two men in dazzling white were there. "Why do you seek the living among the dead? Jesus is risen," they told the women.

Running to the apostles, the women told them the body was gone! Peter and the others (thinking them crazy) ran to the tomb and found it empty. It dawned on them that Jesus had prophesied that he would rise from the dead.

Jesus himself then appeared to Mary Magdalene. At first she thought he was a gardener, until he called her by name. When she recognized him, she clung to him. "Do not cling to me," he told her, "for I have not yet gone up to the Father. Go and tell the others that I am returning to my God and your God," he told her.

He then appeared, again unrecognized at first, to two men on the road to Emmaus. "What's up?" he asked them (in so many words). "Haven't you heard?" they responded, and proceeded to tell him the bad news that the one on whom everyone had pinned their hopes and dreams, the one who would redeem Israel, was dead, and even the body was missing. Jesus then explained to them the suffering the Messiah had to undergo. When they arrived at their destination, he sat and broke bread with them. It was then that they recognized him! When he left them, they asked "Were not our hearts burning within us as he explained the Scriptures?" When they reached the eleven apostles, they found that the risen Jesus had already appeared to Peter as well!

In spite of the fact that the apostles had been gathering behind locked doors (fleeing the Roman and Jewish authorities), Jesus would suddenly appear in their midst! Knowing their thoughts (were they seeing things?), he invited them to touch him, showing them his wounds, no longer bloody, but glorious to behold. The apostle Thomas wasn't there and refused to believe it, until Jesus appeared again, and showed him his wounds. "My Lord and my God!" the "doubting Thomas" exclaimed. "You believe because you see," Jesus told him, "but blessed are those who believe without seeing." He breathed on them the Holy Spirit, telling them that as the Father sent him, he was sending them. He conferred on them the authority to forgive sins, telling them to forgive sins and pass on his teachings. The Gospels tell us that not everything he said and did were recorded because that would take a mountain of books, but that these things were recorded so that future generations (that's us) would believe.

In another curious incident he appeared again by a lakeside to his apostles, again unrecognized at first.

"Couldn't catch any fish, children?" he asked. "No," they responded. "Try again," he told them. When they did, they caught so many fish the boat nearly sank. "It's him!" John recognized. Peter couldn't maintain himself and jumped into the water to swim to Jesus on the shore! "Do you love me?" Jesus asked Peter three times (kind of to undo Peter's triple denial of Jesus earlier!) "You know I love you!" was Peter's response. "Then feed and watch over my sheep," the Lord responded, and with that, Peter, the chief apostle, whom Jesus had named "the Rock," had his unique pastoral role in Christ's Church confirmed. To this day, we look to Peter's successor (the Popes) to faithfully guide us into what is and what is not the authentic teaching of Christ. Jesus then said of another apostle, John, the "beloved disciple," that he would be the only one to "remain until I come." We know now from history that indeed it would be John alone who would not suffer martyrdom as the Church became established. Instead, he who would take care of Mary, Jesus' mother, and it is most likely from him and his descendants (the Church Fathers Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna and Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons) that we receive the sacred traditions regarding Mary.

"All authority over heaven and earth has been given to me," said Jesus in his last moments to his disciples, and he commissioned them to teach and baptize all the nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, "and, behold, I am always with you, until the end of time." The Gospels then tell us that he "opened their minds" so that they could understand all of the Scriptures. Starting from Jerusalem, they were to wait for a power that Christ would send to them from on high. He lifted his hands to bless them, and then ascended in front of them, returning to the Father in heaven.

And so the Good News was to be taken to the ends of the earth. Jesus Christ died and rose according to the divine plan of salvation, with an invitation to repent and accept the forgiveness of sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Signs will accompany you," he had promised the apostles, and sure enough, when they finally received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (which we will discuss next time), they went forth, completely transformed from frightened peasants into bold evangelizers, and performing miracles in Christ's name, given the power to convert lives to Jesus, as well as sharing in his suffering (the majority of them would be martyred).

It is because of these men working with the Holy Spirit that we today place all of our hopes and dreams in the pierced hands of this one man, now risen, until he returns as promised to bring us all to the infinite bliss that is the eternal communion with Him and His Father. 📖



Defending the Faith: The Resurrection

"What matters is that you follow Jesus' teaching, not whether he literally rose from the dead."

Paul doesn't seem to agree with the above statement (1 Cor 15:14-19)! The message that turned the world upside down was not "Love your neighbor." It was that a man who claimed to be God had risen from the dead, and that anyone who believed in him would rise too. This distinguishes Jesus from all other religious founders: the bones of Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Lao-Tzu, and Zoroaster are still buried in the earth. Jesus' tomb is empty.

Only a historically real resurrection can account for two hard pieces of evidence: the New Testament, and the Christian religion. The only other possible explanations are: hallucination, myth, conspiracy, or swoon theory (the idea that Jesus wasn't completely dead). Here's the answer to each possibility:

1. Swoon theory: No one short of an angel can roll away a tombstone that size without being noticed by Roman guards whose jobs (and general well-being) depended on carrying out their orders. Also, the water that came out of Jesus' lungs when they pierced his side (as any physician will attest) is an indicator of asphyxiation – Jesus suffocated to death. And the apostles only recognized the risen Jesus after he did certain things. How could they not have recognized who it was if he was half-dead, staggering, and covered with bruises!

2. Hallucination theory: Hallucinations don't appear to 500 people at once (1 Cor 15:3-8), they don't last for forty days (Act 1:3), they don't eat (Lk 24:38-42), and they can be seen but not touched (Mt 28:9).

3. Conspiracy theory: What made eleven peasants, who were not exactly known for intelligence, become transformed from scared rabbits who ran away, denied their Master, and huddled behind locked doors in fear and confusion, into bold saints who chose to be hated, scorned, persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, exiled, crucified, beheaded, boiled alive, roasted, and disemboweled? Not exactly an attractive set of perks! Here's the clincher: *No one*, saint or sinner, weak or strong, Christian or heretic, ever confessed, freely or under coercion, that the resurrection was really made up. Would you die – for a *lie*?

4. Myth theory: The only way to believe the swoon, hallucination, or conspiracy theories is to fudge the data (that is, alter the Scriptures). Myths typically present themselves as such (unlike 2 P 1:16). Myths are verbose and dramatic (unlike Mark's laconic account of the resurrection). And there are too many passages that, without some good explanation, undermine the credibility of Jesus as God: He calls his chief apostle "Satan" (Mk 8:33), he says things like "Why do you call me good" (Mk 10:18), he doesn't seem to know the end of the world (Mt 24:36), he can't tell who touches him (Lk 8:45), he has problems working some miracles (Mk 6:5), and he even seems to lose faith (Mk 15:34)! There is only one reasonable explanation to these "mythically incorrect" passages: the writers wrote down what happened, whether it made sense or not. And historically speaking, there was really no time for a myth of that scale to develop. Skeptics have been flustered by archaeological and forensic finds that have pushed the Gospel dates from the fourth century back to the very first. And finally, no one can call Jesus a myth without resorting to a double standard, for they accept other historical figures based on written records which pale in comparison to the Gospels, both in terms of the number of writings, and the shortness of time between the person's life and the writings.

5. Historical Resurrection: Any objective explanation of the New Testament and Christianity must consider the possibility. Except for calling Jesus an alien, or suggesting that we all really live in the "Matrix", the usual motive for disbelieving the resurrection is not one of reason but of *implication*. If this man really rose from the dead, then his claim to be God would be credible, heaven and hell would be real, and we would be truly accountable for every word and deed *to him*.

Jesus' resurrection is more than historical, for it is not an event that is stuck in the past. It is also present. The Good News is not simply that he rose, but that *he is risen*.



Expressing the Faith:

Were Not Our Hearts Burning Within Us?

He met them along the road to Emmaus...

*Were not our hearts burning within us?
Were not our hearts burning with fire?*

*Jesus is risen, is with us, is risen!
Jesus is risen, is with us today!*

*Jesus is the Lord!
Jesus is the Lord!*

↗ **Next time: "Act 1: Peter"** ↖