

*Where we start . . .*

We live “post-resurrection;” that is, the resurrection of Jesus is an event behind us in time. With that in mind, what do people need to grasp or know about the resurrection?

If someone asked you to share what you thought about Jesus’ resurrection, what would you say?

*What we read . . .*

As three women entered Jesus’ tomb, they were met by a messenger who told them what they needed to know about Jesus’ resurrection. Read what he said in Mark 16:1-8.

How does the messenger identify Jesus? What does he highlight by the way he speaks about Jesus?

After announcing that Jesus has risen, the messenger calls attention to “the place where they laid Him.” What might be the value of that?

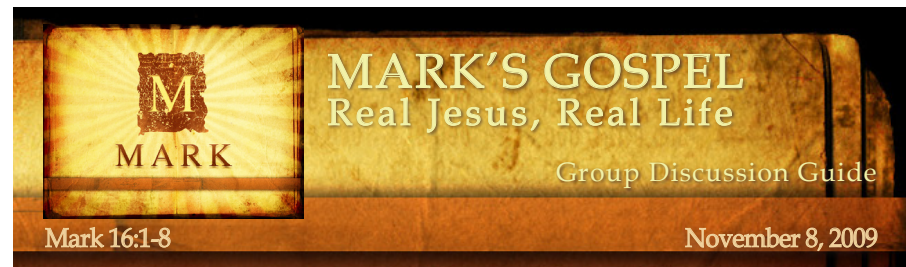
The messenger gives the women an assignment to take a message to Jesus’ disciples. What is the substance of that message?

*Why this matters . . .*

Why is it important to speak of “Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified one” when we talk with others about the resurrection?

Why is it important to think well about “the place where they laid Him” when we talk to others about the resurrection?

Why should we not forget that this all happened “just as He told [us]” when we talk to others about the resurrection?



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*Diving in . . .*

When the women showed up at Jesus' tomb, they were expecting to find the body there and were planning on anointing the body. They were surprised by a messenger (an angelic messenger) who offered them a few words of explanation. He told them a few key elements of the meaning and message of the resurrection, and we want to unpack what this messenger said to them, to better help us think and speak about this incredible event.

*Discussing . . .*

For many Christians and church-goers, the resurrection of Jesus is an idea we affirm and a refrain we sing. That is not bad, but is that enough? Are we thinking well and deeply about what Paul identified (in 1 Corinthians 15:14) as one of the most significant defining elements of our faith? The opening questions are not intended to put anyone on the spot, but they are aimed at getting a discussion going about just how we *do* think and talk about the resurrection.

As we turn to the passage in Mark, in one sense Mark gives us very little about the resurrection. He reports the words of the messenger (which, drawing on what we know from the other Gospels was an angel). There, in the messenger's words, we get the relatively simple affirmation: He is risen (16:6). But that affirmation is tucked inside a number of statements made by the messenger that might actually help us think better about the resurrection than we often do.

First, the messenger identifies Jesus. When addressing these women, he could have said "You seek Jesus, who delivered you, Mary, from demons," or "You seek Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph," or "You seek Jesus, the Messiah." But he doesn't say any of these things. He says: You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.

By referring to Jesus "of Nazareth" the messenger is, minimally, clarifying a particular Jesus. Jesus was a more common name in Jesus' day than we probably realize. So, some further identification is appropriate. But there might be more here. To speak of Jesus of Nazareth underscores the idea of "Jesus, the guy from around these parts." This seems to highlight Jesus' humanity; He was *from here*.

The expression "who was crucified" might be better rendered "the crucified one." The words don't speak so much so of the past event but of the

ongoing condition. It is not that Jesus is still on the cross, but He will always be the "crucified one." We not only "serve a risen Savior" as the Easter song reminds us; we serve a "crucified one." He is, in one sense, defined not only by the resurrection but by the permanent reminder of the cross.

When we speak about Jesus, we must not overlook the almost inconceivable truth that Jesus was a man; he walked this planet. That is not a "nice story;" it is reality. He was from a particular place, a particular town, at a particular time in history. Our Jesus is a real person. Secondly, when we talk to people about Jesus and His resurrection, we cannot lose sight of the truth that it is a "crucified one" who is risen. The story is not just about the wonder and glory of the resurrection but about the one who still bears the marks of the crucifixion because He came to die. The resurrection flows out of the cross; the risen one is the crucified one. He is both "now risen" and "the crucified one." So, when we speak about Jesus, we need to speak about who He really is and what He really did.

When the messenger reports that this Jesus is risen, he doesn't simply tell them. He actually extends to them an invitation. What does he invite them to? He invites them to "check it out for themselves." "[Jesus] is not here. See the place where they laid Him" (16:6). What is the impact of these words?

The resurrection is not merely a wonderful idea or a great thought. The resurrection is a fact of history, an event that happened in time and space. The invitation to "see" is a call to truly know this reality. Sadly, we sometimes lose sight of this essential insight. We sometimes share the resurrection as if it is a great idea; but it is actually a monumental event. Do we speak with bold confidence about the resurrection as if it is the defining world shaking event that it is?

The messenger then instructs the women to go and tell the disciples "that [Jesus] is going before you to Galilee" and that "there you will meet Him, just as He said." Now, clearly, there was an in-time fulfillment of these words as the disciples did meet up with Jesus later in Galilee. But there might also be something else here to see.

For Jesus to be "going before" the disciples to Galilee suggests that He is still active. He is not waiting for them to act. He is continuing His ministry. He is still leading and serving them. He is still preparing things for them. And, He is doing all of this just as He said He would. In these words there are a few additional hints of how we need to think about the resurrection.

The resurrection means that Jesus is still real and alive and active. He is not merely a "great ideal figure" of history. After the resurrection, He continued to be active. And the resurrection means that all that Jesus said will, in truth and in time, come to pass just as He said. When we share with others about the resurrection, we need to underscore (as did the messenger) that the resurrection means that Jesus is still active in this world and that everything He said He would do (including coming into the world to save sinners!) He does and will continue to do.