

## JESUS IS ALIVE!

Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-18; Mark 16:9-18, Luke 24:33-49, John 20:19-31; Acts 1:1-26

On the evening that Jesus was buried, the tomb was sealed and guards were posted to keep watch over it.

Three days later, on the first day of the week, early in the morning, a group of women who were followers of Jesus set out for the tomb. Among them were Mary the mother of James, and Mary Magdalene. They were bringing spices and oils to embalm the body and wondered how they would be able to roll back the large heavy stone covering the tomb.

Suddenly there was a violent earthquake as an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled back the stone covering the tomb entrance and sat on it. His appearance was as bright as lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so petrified they trembled and ran off.

When the women arrived at the tomb they noticed the large stone covering the entrance had been rolled back. As they entered the tomb they saw the angel and were alarmed.

‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified,’ the angel said. ‘He is not here, He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay.

‘Now go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee.”’

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell His disciples.

Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ He said. They came closer to him, clasped His feet and worshipped Him. ‘Do not be afraid,’ Jesus told them. ‘Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and they will see me there.’

The women rushed off to tell the disciples Jesus was alive. But the disciples did not believe them. Peter and John ran to the tomb to see what had happened.

John arrived first and stared into the empty tomb. He saw strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Simon Peter caught up and went straight into the tomb.

He also saw the strips of linen lying there, and the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Peter was puzzled and wondered what had happened. He did not understand from the Scriptures that it was God's plan for Jesus, the Messiah, to suffer, die and then be raised to life.

The disciples had not believed the report from the women who had visited the tomb, that Jesus was alive. Then later that day two of them had been walking to the nearby village of Emmaus when Jesus had appeared to them. They had rushed back to report the news. That evening the disciples locked the doors of the room they were in, afraid that the Jews might arrest them.

While they were still talking, Jesus himself stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' They thought they were seeing a ghost and were frightened.

Jesus said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and have doubts? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as I have.'

Jesus showed them the scars on His hands and feet where He had been nailed to the cross. The disciples were full of joy and amazement but still thought they were seeing a ghost. 'Do you have anything here to eat?' Jesus asked.

They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and Jesus ate it as they watched. They now knew they were not seeing a ghost.

Then Jesus started explaining from the scriptures that it was always God's plan the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus told them that in His Name repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. "You are witnesses of these things," Jesus explained. 'I am going to send the Holy Spirit who will give you power from on high.' Jesus then disappeared from their sight.

Now one of Jesus' disciples, Thomas, had been missing. When the others told him. 'We have seen the Lord!' he did not believe them. 'Unless I see and touch the nail marks in His hands and put my hand into the wound on His side, I will not believe', Thomas announced.

A week later His disciples were in the house again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked.

Suddenly Jesus appeared and said 'Peace be with you!' Then, turning to Thomas, Jesus said, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!'

Then Jesus told Thomas, 'You have believed because you have seen me. How happy are those who believe but have not seen me.'

The risen Jesus met a few more times with his disciples and followers, giving convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the Kingdom of God.

Once, while eating with them, Jesus commanded, 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which I have spoken about. John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

One day when Jesus was with them on the Mount of Olives he told them, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to rest of the world.'

After Jesus said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

As the disciples gazed upwards, suddenly, two men dressed in white stood beside them, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky?' they asked. 'This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'

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