

He Is Risen



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 28:9, John 11:1-46, 20:10-18, Rom. 6:4-6, 1 Cor. 15:3-8.*

Memory Text: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen” (*Luke 24:5, 6*).

His name was Rebbe (for Rabbi) Menachem Schneerson, and at the time of his death in 1994, speculation was rife among thousands of Lubavitch Jews that the 92-year-old spiritual leader was the long-awaited Messiah. After all, they said, he claimed lineage to King David (and such a righteous man as the rebbe would not lie). His physical sufferings fulfilled, they said, the predictions of Isaiah 53; and the intravenous tubes in his body were a fulfillment of the predictions that the Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. All that remains, they believe, is for him to be resurrected from the dead.

So far, though, Rebbe Schneerson is still resting quietly.

Contrast this rebbe and his death to another Rebbe and His death, almost two thousand years ago. It's obvious which one is the real Messiah.

The Week at a Glance: What specific miracles did Jesus do that should have prepared people for His resurrection, were they open to it? How convincing is the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus? How does the resurrection of Christ form the foundation for our own? What happened at the Cross that has paved the way for our resurrection?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 26.*

Precursors

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus performed numerous miracles: healing those who were blind, feeding the 5,000, turning water into wine, curing leprosy, walking on water, casting out demons, mending deformities, stilling a storm, raising the dead, and so many other acts that, as John said, the world itself couldn't contain the books "that should be written" about what Jesus did (*John 21:25*).

Read the following texts. What miracles did Jesus perform here, and how do these acts fit in with the miracle of His own resurrection from the dead? See also *Matt. 11:5*.

Mark 5:35-43

Luke 7:11-17

John 11:1-46

What's so important about these accounts is they prove that the power attending Jesus and His ministry is so great that even the dead could be raised. Numerous times prior to the cross, Jesus talked about not just His death but His resurrection from that death (*see Matt. 12:38-40; 17:22, 23; 20:19*). Under normal circumstances, one could (and should) be a bit skeptical about someone who claimed that although he or she was going to die soon, three days after death he or she would be resurrected. Of course, Christ's situation was hardly "normal"; even more so, by doing what He did in raising the dead, Jesus gave His followers and all those who had heard about Him undeniable demonstrations of the power of God to raise the dead, thus making the promise of His own resurrection something that should have been easier for people to believe.

Read *John 11:25*. What's so important about what Jesus said here? Why, in the context it was given, were those words so powerful and so full of hope?

Most household dust is composed, really, of us; it's dead skin. Run a finger across a counter, and you'll be staring at your future, at least in the short term. What, however, is your long-term hope, and how is that linked to the resurrection of Jesus?

The Resurrected Christ

Leo Tolstoy wrote his great novel *War and Peace* about a number of aristocratic Russian families during the time of Napoleon's war against Russia in the early 1800s. The story itself, the characters, their lives, were a fabrication. He made them all up.

Now, imagine Tolstoy insisting that these people were, in fact, real and that they actually lived and did what he said they did. Imagine, too, that he was told by the authorities to stop telling people that his characters were real or that the police would throw him in jail or even kill him. Unless Tolstoy were insane, he'd stop, would he not? Why die promoting as truth a story you made up and know is a lie?

In a sense, this is the dilemma that the critics of the resurrection of Jesus face: Why would the Bible writers make up the story that Jesus was raised from the dead when He wasn't? It's not as if they became wealthy, popular, or successful by promoting this story; on the contrary, they faced ostracism, persecution, torture, jail, and, in some cases, death. Why go through all that for a story that you purposely concocted?

Below are some accounts of Christ's postresurrection appearances: **Matthew 28:9, Luke 24:33-49, John 20:10-23, John 21:1-14, Acts 1:4-9.** What transpired at these meetings? What hope did Jesus give them? Why would it make no sense for these people to have made up this story?

Jesus appeared numerous times to His followers. He obviously wanted them to be strong in their belief in whom He was and what He had done. It worked, too. They went from a band of dejected, scattered, and frightened people (*Matt. 26:56, Mark 14:50, Luke 24:17, John 20:19*) to a spiritually powerful group of men and women who boldly proclaimed the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and the world. Obviously, they believed that Jesus had been resurrected, for they dedicated the rest of their lives to proclaiming that truth. *See also 1 Cor. 15:3-6.*

Most of the world, however, has not seen the resurrected Jesus. Yet, we are asked to believe anyway. If someone were to ask you, Why do you believe in the resurrection of Christ, what would you answer?

Witnesses From the Grave

“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (*Matt. 27:52, 53*).

At the moment Christ died, Matthew records three events: (1) The veil in the temple was torn (*Matt. 27:51*), (2) the earth quaked and rocks split (*vs. 51*), (3) and graves were opened (*vs. 52*). It was, however, only after Jesus Himself had been resurrected early on the first day of the week that “many bodies of the saints which slept arose” (*vss. 52, 53*).

Why was it only after Christ’s resurrection, and not before, that these saints rose?

How appropriate that only after Jesus was resurrected would some of these saints be resurrected, as well: His resurrection was the guarantee of theirs (and ours). Through this act, the Lord has given the world (not to mention those who saw these people) even more reasons to believe in the power of His resurrection.

What did Matthew say that these resurrected saints did after they arose?

Outside of Matthew’s few verses, Scripture says nothing else explicitly about these saints. Who were they? What happened to them? What impact should they have made on those who saw them? (Remember what Jesus said in Luke 16:30, 31?) Ellen White writes that these were martyrs who had given their lives for the Lord and that they had been “raised to everlasting life” (unlike those whom Jesus had raised from the dead earlier, who were still subject to death) and that when He ascended to heaven He took them with Him: “They ascended with Him as trophies of His victory over death and the grave. These, said Christ, are no longer the captives of Satan; I have redeemed them. I have brought them from the grave as the first fruits of My power, to be with Me where I am, nevermore to see death or experience sorrow.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 786.

“Nevermore to see death or experience sorrow.” Dwell on what that means. Using your imagination (you’re going to need it), write a paragraph on what life will be like without death or sorrow. (See Rev. 21:1-5 for some hints.)

Paul and the Resurrection of Jesus

Though the apostle Paul speaks very little about the life of Christ, the death and resurrection of Jesus are constant themes in Paul's letters. These events are for him the foundation of the whole Christian hope.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 and then answer these questions:

- **What did Paul consider of *first importance*?**

- **Paul said that both Christ's death and resurrection were "according to the Scriptures." See also Acts 17:2, 3. Why is that so important? Who else tied these specific events to the Scriptures? See Luke 24:25-27.**

- **In verses 5-7 Paul spends a lot of time on one subject. What is it, and why do you think he emphasizes it so much?**

In the rest of 1 Corinthians 15 Paul stresses one point: Our hope of the resurrection from the dead rests on Christ's resurrection from the dead. As humans, we have no natural immortality (1 Tim. 6:15, 16). Death is an unconscious sleep (John 11:11, 1 Thess. 4:13), not some ascent or descent into another existence. The Lord is the Lord of life; death, therefore, is the enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), against which we, as humans, have, on our own, no hope of defeating. In the end, if death is not conquered, all for which we have lived ends in the grave. Paul says that without the resurrection, our faith is in "vain" (1 Cor. 15:17), from a Greek word that means "useless" or "of no purpose."

On the other hand, Christ was raised from death, He conquered death, and we can by faith become partakers of that same victory. He paid the penalty for our sin—which is death itself. Because that penalty has been paid, we don't have to face it ourselves; instead, as He was raised, we will be raised, too, and given the eternal life that was lost through sin but regained for us through Jesus. All we face now is a temporary sleep; the final punishment, the eternal punishment that sin already brings, has been taken care of for us at the Cross. The redeemed, either awake or asleep, are simply waiting for the consummation of what Christ has done for them. Our resurrection to eternal life is that final consummation.

Resurrection, Now and Then

Read John 5:24,25. Jesus seems to be talking about two *types* of eternal life here. What are they, and how are they tied together?

The Bible talks about a *resurrection* that believers can experience even prior to death. The one who believes in Jesus now has passed from death to life. What is a passage from death to life other than a resurrection? In other words, those who believe in Him go through a radical change, not just when they are brought from the grave, but they go through a change now, a born-again experience in which Christ becomes the center and focus of their life. It's such a radical life-changing experience that Jesus Himself links it with something as radical as the dead being raised to life at the end of time.

Read Romans 6:4-6. What is Paul saying here that parallels Christ's words in John 5:24, 25? Why does Paul use the imagery of Christ's resurrection?

For Paul, the death and resurrection of Jesus weren't just historical events, such as the death of Mary, Queen of Scots, is to us. Instead, they are living symbols of what we, ourselves, as followers of Christ, must experience in our own lives now.

Paul is saying that we, in a sense, must spiritually go through what Christ did: a death, not in a literal sense, but a death to self, a death to sin, a death to living for the flesh. But not only that, the same power that brought Jesus from the grave can bring us into "newness of life," a life where we are no longer under the dominion of sin and of the flesh. This is a crucial, inseparable part of the whole Christian experience.

If someone were to ask you, "Have you gone through what Jesus and Paul both talked about in the above verses?" what would you answer? If your answer were Yes, and you were then asked "What was that experience like?" what would you say? Also, is what Paul talked about a one-time experience, or is it something that must go on continually? Explain your reply.

Further Study: “During these days that Christ spent with His disciples, they gained a new experience. As they heard their beloved Master explaining the Scriptures in the light of all that had happened, their faith in Him was fully established. They reached the place where they could say, ‘I know whom I have believed.’ 2 Timothy 1:12. They began to realize the nature and extent of their work, to see that they were to proclaim to the world the truths entrusted to them. The events of Christ’s life, His death and resurrection, the prophecies pointing to these events, the mysteries of the plan of salvation, the power of Jesus for the remission of sins—to all these things they had been witnesses, and they were to make them known to the world. They were to proclaim the gospel of peace and salvation through repentance and the power of the Saviour.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 27.

“The miracle which Christ was about to perform, in raising Lazarus from the dead, would represent the resurrection of all the righteous dead. By His word and His works He declared Himself the Author of the resurrection. He who Himself was soon to die upon the cross stood with the keys of death, a conqueror of the grave, and asserted His right and power to give eternal life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Why didn't Jesus reveal Himself immediately to Cleopas and his friend as they walked mournfully to their home in Emmaus? Why did He first give them such a detailed study from the Scriptures concerning His death, burial, and resurrection? *Luke 24:13-32*.
- 2 Consider what a difference it made in the lives of the apostles that they served a risen Savior and not just a martyr whose memory they could revere. What difference does it make to you personally that you serve a risen Savior and are not merely honoring a deceased hero of ancient fame?
- 3 How do you understand the idea that those who believe in Jesus have eternal life now? What does that mean to you? How would you explain it, for example, at the funeral of a good Christian?

Growing a Family

by Jessica B. Tunnell

Growing up I wanted a bigger family, more brothers and sisters. One sister just wasn't enough for me. Sure, she kept me company and gave me someone to argue with, but I wanted more. I wanted an older brother to protect me and some cute younger siblings to watch grow up. But, as life sometimes goes, I didn't get what I wanted.

At least I thought I didn't. This weekend we had a baptism in Mongolia. As I watched five people follow Jesus' example in baptism, I realized that I do have a large family—in fact, it's huge.

As my dad, the pastor, introduced the five new believers, I studied their faces: an 80-year-old grandmother with a pouty little face; a 70-year-old man whose deeply tanned skin testified to years working under the Mongolian sun; two young women in their 20s; and a blind woman. Their faces radiated God's love and joy. Each person had a story to tell about how his or her life has been changed by God's love.

After the baptism as my new brother and sisters changed clothes, my dad, Dale Tunnell, explained how each of us fits into the worldwide Adventist family, which numbers 13 million. I thought, 13 million Adventists around the world, and we had just added five more!

We are like a big family, connected by the common thread of our faith. And like a family, we do not always agree on how to do things or what standards to uphold. But we do agree on one thing: that Jesus is our Elder Brother, and He died at the hands of humans so that He could one day take us home to live with Him and His Father forever.

I have millions of brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, and I just got five more that I'll be proud to call family.

But do you know what? I want more. I'm selfish, I guess, but I can't help it. I have God's love in my heart and the loving family I always

wanted. Now I want to share this love with others. I encourage you to be selfish, too. Don't just wish for more brothers and sisters; do something to make it happen. Share God's love with those you meet. Let's grow our family!



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