



Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:22-36

CHRIST IS ALIVE!

"He is Alive! He is Alive! Jesus of Nazareth is alive!"

Women were the first to see Jesus of Nazareth alive after his death by crucifixion. Early on the first Easter morning they arrived at the tomb to continue the burial process used by the Jewish people of the first century. They found the tomb empty and ran to tell the disciples of Jesus. The plain truth is no one would believe that Jesus was alive until he saw Him with his own eyes. No one was expecting Him to be alive. They went expecting to find a dead man, a corpse, in the tomb.

- "Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons." When she recognized Jesus she reached out and grabbed Him. Jesus said to Mary, "Stop clinging to Me; for I have not ascended to the Father; but go and tell My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God'" (John 20:11-17). She went and announced it to the disciples saying, "I have seen the Lord" (v. 18). Mary ran and told the disciples and "they refused to believe it" (Mark 16:9-11). "These words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them" (Luke 24:11).
- Jesus greeted other women who had arrived soon after Mary Magdalene. "And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him." Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me" (Matthew 28:9-10).
- Late in the afternoon two of the disciples were walking to the town of Emaus discussing the events of the weekend. Their hopes were dashed to pieces because of the death of Jesus. A stranger joined them as they walked. They invited Him in for a meal. As Jesus broke the bread and blessed it "their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight." They hurried back to Jerusalem and went to the house where the eleven disciples were staying and told them their experience how they recognized Him. The disciples also told them, "The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon."
- While the two travelers were relating the story how they recognized Him in the breaking the bread, "Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace with you.'" "He showed them both His hands and His side" (John 20:19-20). They were "startled and frightened." Jesus said, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." Jesus showed them His hands and His feet. They gave Him a piece of boiled fish and He took it and ate it in their sight (Luke 24:33-43).
- Another disciple Thomas was not present that night. He refused to believe until he saw the feet and the hands of his crucified Lord. "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." With that attitude, Jesus let Thomas wait eight days. "After eight days again His disciples were inside a closed room, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (John 20:24-29).

Lord and my God!" (John 20:24-29).

- There was an occasion when all of the disciples were fishing on the Sea of Tiberias. Jesus after He was risen from the dead appeared one morning and taught the disciples (John 21).
- On separate occasions, Jesus appeared to Peter, to His half brother James, and to more than 500 people at one time, most who were still alive when Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians. Paul then says that he saw the resurrected body of Jesus when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Paul saw a real resurrected and glorified body.
- In Galilee Jesus again appeared to the eleven, "and when they saw Him, they worshipped Him." Jesus then commissioned them to be His witnesses to all nations. "And after He said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." They were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing.

R. W. Dale, pastor of Carr's Chapel in London, while studying these great passages of Scripture rose from his desk and began to pace back and forth in his study shouting out loud, "He's alive! He's alive! Jesus is alive! O, I want my people to know He is alive!"

For forty days, Jesus demonstrated Himself alive in Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem. Ten days later something astounding happened in an upper room in Jerusalem not far from the Temple. There was a sound like a violent, rushing wind that filled the house. There was no wind. It was just the sound like a tornado that they heard. Tongues like fire were distributing itself on them and resting on each one of them. The Holy Spirit filled them and they spoke spontaneously in other languages they had never learned. The sound brought people in Jerusalem out into the streets. The people heard the 120 speaking in their native dialects the mighty deeds of God (Acts 2). Some of the rabble mocked them thinking they had drunk too much sweet wine. Then Peter stood and preached his greatest sermon. He explained that what was happening was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Hebrew prophet Joel. Then he told them about Jesus.

GOD APPROVED THE LIFE OF JESUS (2:22)

Jesus was a man "approved of God."

With boldness Peter says, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22).

If what Peter said that day was not true, his listeners would have been ready to contradict and correct him. They would have put him to shame if he were not able to prove what he said.

He tells us about Jesus of Nazareth. He was a real man. He was not a superman, nor a phantom. He was a normal man, authenticated and approved by God to be what God wanted in man.

God authenticated Jesus by performing through Him "miracles, wonders and signs."

Journey through the Gospels and you see Jesus changing water to wine,

Journey through the Gospels and you see Jesus changing water to wine, saying "Peace be still" and calming the winds and the waves on a lake. You see Him multiplying loaves of bread and fish and feeding 5,000 men. Watch Him casting out demons and raising the dead. God was at work in Jesus authenticating Him. The word "attested" (NASB), or "accredited," (NIV), "approved" in the KJV suggest the idea of demonstration, appointment, accreditation. Jesus did these things by the power of God that resided in Him. Here is God at work in Him.

GOD APPROVED THE DEATH OF JESUS (2:23)

You murdered Him.

Peter continues "this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death" (v. 23).

The Roman executioner certified Jesus dead. Mark informs us Pilate refused to give the body up until he was certified dead by the Centurion (Mark 15:44-47). The Jewish religious leaders used the Roman Gentiles to kill Jesus.

The important fact is Jesus died. In fact, Jesus was dead before the wound to His side was inflicted by the soldier. The spear thrust between His right ribs probably perforated His right lung, the pericardium and His heart. There can be no question but Jesus was dead.

Jesus was "delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God."

The death of Jesus was part of the eternal plan of God for our redemption. It was the will of God. The cross was no accident in the plan of God. It was an essential event, programmed by God the Father before the beginning of time. Sin could be dealt with only by the death of Jesus.

Romans 6:23 tells us: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, you say, but Jesus was not a sinner! This is the reason why Jesus went to the cross. "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). Hebrews 9:22, "with out the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." The Apostle Paul reminds us, "He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

GOD RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD (2:24-35)

"God raised him up again" (v. 24a).

Only the resurrection power of God can raise the dead. Jesus rose from the dead in all the fullness and vitality of His person. God released Him from death's agony. He "put an end to the agony of death."

Impossible for death to hold Him in its power (v. 24b)

"God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (v. 24). The imagery is that of a hunter catching and binding his victims with nooses and cords. Christ broke the cords of death. He rose victoriously from the grave.

At least 3,000 people were listening to Peter give witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Not a single voice was raised in protest to what he was saying. Remember that it has been only 50 days since these people had seen Jesus of Nazareth crucified in this city. Not a single person challenged Peter's testimony. They knew the tomb was empty. They knew the authorities could not produce the body of Jesus. They had heard the rumors that Jesus had appeared alive before groups of people. Now they stand in mute silence as they listen to the testimony of one of those eyewitnesses.

Peter quotes Psalm 16.

Peter quotes king David's words in Psalm 16:8 H in Acts 2:25 28.

"For David says of Him, I WAS ALWAYS BEHOLDING THE LORD IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN. ' THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL ABIDE IN HOPE; BECAUSE THOU WILT NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW THY HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 'THOU HAST MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; THOU WILT MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH THY PRESENCE.'"

Peter makes it very clear that David was not referring to himself. "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day" (v. 29). These words of David cannot possibly refer to David, for he died and his tomb is in Jerusalem. Israel's great king was a prophet and was referring to one greater than David. Only in the resurrection of Jesus can these words be fulfilled. David foresaw Jesus as saying, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken." He lived His life continually in dependence on the power and authority of His Father. In Psalm 16:8 the idea is "I am keeping Him always before my mind's eye."

The indispensable thing Peter says is the resurrection was absolutely essential in view of the kind of life Jesus lived. Verse 25 tells us how he lived. "I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken." In verse 26, we have the results. "Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will abide in hope; because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay." Death could have no power over Jesus because of the kind of life He lived.

Only the Lord Jesus has ever been able to say that in the sense in which He said it. He was sinless. No angel is like Him. No man is like him. He is the sovereign Lord. He was tempted as other men, but without falling. There was perfect fellowship between God the Father and Jesus of Nazareth until the moment He cried out from the cross, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In that moment, the perfect intimacy was broken. Until then Jesus could say, "I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken."

Peter did not quote the exact words of the Psalm in the Hebrew. However, he did not alter the sense or meaning of the Psalm. Peter quotes the Septuagint (LXX) or Greek translation of the Hebrew Psalm.

David's "hope" is in the resurrection.

Verse 27 says "because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay." "Hell" in the King James Version translates a word that denotes "Hades." It is literally, "the unseen world." Here it refers either to death itself or to the abode of the dead. Goodspeed translates it "death," and Moffatt and the NIV translate "the grave." The word is not *Gehenna*, which is always translated "hell" in the New Testament. It is the place of eternal separation from God and eternal punishment.

Testament. It is the place of eternal separation from God and eternal punishment.

Peter is quoting David in Psalm 16:10. "For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay."

The Psalmist has in mind death and the grave. Sheol generally refers to the afterlife, the hereafter, or the realm of the dead when a person leaves this present form of existence. It can be equated with the grave. The imagery is that of an enormous, unyielding monster, standing with mouth wide open, ready to consume all of humanity.

The Psalmist has never seen a man escape the fate of being swallowed up by Sheol. However, the writer has conviction that the LORD God before whom he stands is the living God and Sheol will not master him.

This great statement of faith of David was never fulfilled in regard to him. It was fulfilled in Christ. David "foreseeing this spoke of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2:31). David speaks words that only Christ could properly speak. The Holy Spirit guided the spirit of David so that he gave shape and form to his utterance in such a way that what he concluded in the logic of faith reached a marvelous fulfillment in the resurrection of Christ.

David's bold faith was vindicated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is one of the greatest prophecies of the resurrection of Christ.

Moreover, verse 28 quotes David when it speaks of the resurrection life. "THOU HAST MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; THOU WILT MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH THY PRESENCE." Someone has said correctly, "Those who are 'in Christ' do most assuredly share in the fruits of His resurrection."

Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on the Psalms observes, "The words of the Psalm are a prophecy of David concerning Jesus, the Christ, who was promised as the heir to his throne, and whom by reason of the promise, he had prophetically before his mind David stands to his seed, the Christ and Holy One of God, who appeared in the person of Jesus. David, the anointed of God, looking upon himself as in Yahweh, the God who has given the promise, becomes the prophet of Christ; but this is only indirectly, for he speaks of himself, and what he says has also been fulfilled in his own person" (p. 1003).

In the great plan of redemption, "the hope which he cherishes for himself personally has found a fulfillment which far exceeds this. After his hope was found in Christ its full realization in accordance with the history of the plan of redemption, it receives through Christ its personal realization of himself also. For what he says, extends on the one hand far beyond himself, and therefore refers prophetically to Christ" (Keil and Delitzsch, p. 1003).

Verse 31 tells us death had no effect whatever upon Jesus Christ. "He looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY." Jesus did not go to Hades; He did not go to hell. He said when He died, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Death had no power over Him—none at all. It could touch neither His soul nor His body.

Peter and the 120 people with him could say we are witnesses to His resurrection. "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses" (v. 32).

Jesus is Lord (vv. 33 -36).

Peter turns the whole audience into witnesses of his claim. You are witnessing the proof of what David predicted would happen. The coming of the Holy Spirit is the crowning proof that Christ has been raised

predicted would happen. The coming of the Holy Spirit is the crowning proof that Christ has been raised from the dead and enthroned in heaven as the exalted Messiah (v. 33).

"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

Peter quotes Psalm 110:1. King David didn't ascend up into heaven, but listen to what he said. "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'"

The only conclusion you can come to is "God has made Him both Lord and Christ (the Messiah) —this Jesus whom you crucified" (v. 36).

Everything was of God. God demonstrated His perfection through His works. God delivered Him to death. God raised Him from the dead. God exalted Him to the throne. God gave Him the Spirit for those he represented and for all humanity.

Sin put Him on the cross. God gave Him to the world. Grace delivered Him to the cross. Grace raised Him from the dead. Grace exalted Him. Grace gives Him the Spirit for the very people who had rejected Him. Moreover, He, in His grace, gives His Spirit to us.

Visualize the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ into heaven.

Take a few moments and try to visualize the ascension of our Lord, not from the earthly side merely, but from the heavenly side. Try to see the ascension, not as they saw it who lost Him to sense and sight, but as they saw it who saw Him arrive in Heaven.

Jesus led the disciples out of the city, and then uttered these words, "You shall be My witnesses . . ." Then Luke says, "as they were looking, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." That is all. Now, quietly, for a moment or two, follow Him. Remember that He did not cease to be Jesus then —He was still Jesus of Nazareth. He was not dissipated into thin air. Jesus of Nazareth was lost to sight to those watchers on the hillside. They saw Him moving away from the earth in bodily form, and the cloud receiving Him. Can you follow Him?

To what place Jesus ascended, and how He moved to it —all these are entirely beyond us. We do know from God's Word that He went to be with His Heavenly Father. It is a place, and to that place Jesus of Nazareth ascended. He is there now. He has not lost His human form and never will, for God has taken humanity in Jesus into eternal being and relationship with Himself.

The risen Jesus of Nazareth has ascended to that central place of Divine manifestation at the right hand of God. I like to imagine that I am there when He arrived. There were spirits of men there. Moses, and Elijah, and Abel, and Abraham were there. There is David, and Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and a great host of others. All of humanity that had arrived before He came was there by the mercy and grace of God. He did not come by the mercy of God. He came in the inherent right of His own sinlessness. He alone was righteous in the sight of God. The Father sent Him to come and die for sinful man. Could it be that if there had not been higher work on hand for Jesus Christ to do, He might have gone on to heaven from the Mount of Transfiguration? He set His face toward Jerusalem knowing that He had to die for the sins of lost mankind. Imagine what it must have been like when Jesus returned to heaven. I believe the watching angels were filled with rapture when He came. All of the Old Testament saints were gathered there watching with anticipation and worship of the Lamb of God slain. All the hosts of those who were there by the mercy of God saw Him enter in.

Can you see yourself in that great company of the redeemed? In my thoughts, I am in that company. I look at Him and say, "Praise and glory be to our great God and Savior. Oh, thank you Jesus for being obedient to

Him and say, "Praise and glory be to our great God and Savior. Oh, thank you Jesus for being obedient to your Father. Thank you for dying for me. Thank you for dying in my place on the cross. Thank you for being my sacrifice for sin. Thank you Jesus who lives for ever more."

But why are there wound prints visible in the hands and feet of this Man? He comes having accomplished on His Cross the exodus. Remember His talking to Moses and Elijah at His transfiguration about His exodus that was about to be accomplished?

If He had failed, all of these Old Testament saints who were in heaven on credit must have left the heavenly places. For the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world in a Divine purpose. Now the deed is done. One great shout came from His lips. In a loud voice came one word *-etelesti!* We need three to translate it in English. "It is finished!" Done! Complete! In His hands and feet, are the scars representing all of my sins and your sins. At the right hand of God exalted is the Man of Nazareth.

It was "through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself to God." Moreover, it was an official act of God when He, the Man of Nazareth, passed into the heaven of heavens in the perfection of His humanity. He was wounded for you and me. There in heaven is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, representing us.

The conclusion to Peter's sermon is brief but powerful.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ (Messiah) *-his Jesus whom you crucified*" (v. 36). In the original language, *you crucified* are the last words of the sermon. Those two words must have echoed in their hearts.

Please observe the title given to Jesus. "Lord" means sovereign ruler of all things, King over all men and nations. He holds the key to life and death, heaven and hell. "Jesus" is His personal name. "Christ" is a title. It means the Messiah, the Promised Deliverer, the Anointed of God to deliver His people. This resurrected Jesus of Nazareth is the sovereign God.

Now what will you do with Jesus (v. 37 -38)?

The response of the people is given in verse 37. They were "pierced to the heart." They cried out to Peter, "Brethren, what shall we do?" It is a very strong word expressing emotional stress of various kinds. It suggests deep conviction. The literal meaning is "to pierce," "to stun," "to smite." It was used of horses pounding the earth with their hoofs. They were "broken in heart." They felt crushed. They became broken and stunned by the atrociousness of their sin and they cried out, "What must we do?" Like David they cried out, "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned."

The only solution is to "repent" (v. 38). Baptism is a symbolic act by which they expressed their repentance, confessed their faith in Christ and identified themselves publicly with Christ. When you are baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ," you are acknowledging Him as your savior. Only He can take away your sins and give you forgiveness.

It is as G. Campbell Morgan said many years ago, "There are some things you have to put in the first person singular. He loved *me*; He gave Himself up for *me*; for *me* He rose, for *me* He ascended, for *me* He received the Spirit, for *me* He poured that Spirit forth. There is the great and wonderful procession."

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