

March 31, 2013 by Steve Brandon



It Really Happened

Mark 15:40-16:8

1. Jesus Really Died (15:50-47).
2. Jesus Really Rose (16:1-8).
3. You Must Believe!

As most of you know, we have a handful of neighborhood children come to our church every Tuesday and Thursday right after school. We call our event, "Kid's KLUB." We simply teach the kids the Bible. They have memorized a bunch of Psalms. They have memorized a short catechism. We have read through several children's Bibles. They hear the gospel often.

Well, a few weeks ago, as I was telling the children a story about Jesus. One of the children said, "Is this real?"

I think that for the first time, this child was grappling with the reality of what was taking place at Kid's KLUB each week. I haven't been gathering the children together to tell them some fairy tales. No, I have been gathering the children to teach them history. I have been teaching them that God created the heavens and the earth. I have been teaching them that God called Abraham out of all the families of the earth to be blessed. I have been teaching them of how Moses rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. I have been teaching them of how David was established as king of Israel, and how many kings after him failed to follow the Lord. I have been teaching them of how Jesus came and walked upon the earth. I have been teaching them of the things He said and the things He did. I have been teaching them of how He died for our sins and how He was raised on the third day. In other words, I have been teaching them what really happened.

And so, I told this child who asked this question, "Yes! It really happened! Everything that I have been telling you is real life."

See, the stories in the Bible are not fairy tales. They aren't mere fictional accounts. They are eye-witness testimonies to what really happened. Peter said it this way, "We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).

This morning, we are going to look at two facts of history. They have been well attested by many eye witnesses. In fact, I would well argue that more than 500 people saw each of these events take place. We even have the names of a dozen people who saw both of these events.

I'm talking about the death of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. These are two events of history that changed the world. We are gathered here this morning because of these two events. If Jesus Christ hadn't really died, and if Jesus Christ hadn't really rose from the dead, then there is no reason for us to meet here this morning.

In fact, Paul said it this way, "If Christ has not been raised, [our] faith is worthless; [we] are still in [our] sins. ... [and] we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:17, 19). If Jesus Christ hadn't really died, and if Jesus Christ hadn't really rose from the dead, we all might as well turn off the lights and go home right now!

But, such is not the case. Jesus Christ really died. Jesus Christ really rose from the dead. We have hope.

I think of an email I received this week from Bob Clinton, who we know works in Nepal and India with First Love International. It was regarding one of the children, Sabita, who has been struggling with a brain tumor for the past year or so. Bob writes,

Jaimasih! Most of you are aware that this is the Christian greeting in the Nepali language. This is how Christians hear say "hello" and "good-bye" to one another. "Jaimasih" literally means "Victory in the Messiah".

Tomorrow as we celebrate the resurrection of our Savior and his victory over sin and death, we will be burying the body of our dear Sabita. She "graduated" to heaven at 3:23 this afternoon. She was 22 years old.

...

Bobbie witnessed that when Sabita took her last breath, she suddenly looked up towards heaven. This young lady was special. She loved talking about her love for Jesus and she was always thinking about the needs of others. Bobbie had written a few months ago about when we had taken Sabita to the Boudha Children's Home. This was when she could still talk. We will never forget how she told the little boys and girls about her desire to become a missionary to tell others about Jesus. She then said, "I can't do that, so you have to!" It was a powerful thing to say and had all of us in tears.

...

The funeral and burial of Sabita is going to be difficult. I am sure that all of us will shed more tears. However, at the same time we will rejoice as we celebrate her life and remember what our Lord Jesus did so that we can have eternal life.

Sabita's earthly body has died, yet because she had put her trust in Jesus, she lives!

Jaimasih!

We do have hope. "It really happened!" This is the title of my message this morning: "It Really Happened!"

These matters are not of secondary importance. No, they are "of first importance." Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

The death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ are "of first importance," because it is through these events that our sins are forgiven. Upon the cross, Jesus took the penalty for our sins. He died as our sacrifice. The resurrection of Jesus gives us promise of eternal life. As death could not keep Jesus in the grave, neither will it keep those who believe in the grave either.

Today, we are going to look at the end of chapter 15 and the beginning of chapter 16 of the gospel of Mark. Beginning in Mark 15:40, ...

Mark 15:40-6:8

There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'" They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

My first point this morning is simply this:

1. Jesus Really Died (15:50-47).

There are some who deny that Jesus really died. This first theory is called "The Swoon Theory." Those who believe this say that Jesus "swooned." In other words, they say that He lost consciousness and appeared to be dead, perhaps in a comatose state, but He never really died. Therefore, they say, as Jesus raised from the tomb, it wasn't from a state of death, but from a state of unconsciousness.

Others try to deny the resurrection by saying that the disciples of Jesus went to the wrong tomb, which, of course, was empty, because Jesus wasn't ever in that tomb. Therefore, they say, the resurrection of Jesus was a vicious rumor because they went to the wrong tomb.

But, I think that we shall see from the text that such claims are entirely unwarranted. In fact, Mark's account debunks both of these theories. Let's pick it up in verse 40, ...

Mark 15:40

There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome.

Three of them are identified by name: Mary Magdalene, Mary, Salome. These women were prominent followers of Jesus during His life. Jesus had delivered Mary Magdalene of seven demons (Luke 8:2). It's only natural for her to follow Jesus closely. Mary was the mother of James and Joses (or Joseph - Matthew 27:56). Salome was the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 27:56). It's only natural for her to follow Jesus, as her sons were His disciples.

Verse 41 indicates that "there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem." Although Jesus had His twelve disciples, there were many women who also ministered to His needs as well. It was the women who were faithful until the end. All of His disciples deserted him.

The women watched the death of Jesus from a distance. They saw Jesus die. Later, we will see that they saw Him buried as well. Let's move on, ...

Mark 15:42

When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,

Jesus was crucified on Friday. This was also known as the "preparation day" -- the day when you work really hard before the Sabbath day; when you could do no work. The Jews begin their Sabbath on Friday at sundown. If you remember, Jesus died "at the ninth hour" (verse 34). That is, at 3pm.

They needed to take Jesus down from the cross and bury Him before sundown. That's why, if you remember, they broke the legs of the thieves who were crucified with him (John 19:32). They wanted them to die quickly so that they might be buried before sundown. But, Jesus had already died, so there was no need to break His legs (John 19:33). There was, however, need to get His body in the tomb quickly.

Enter Joseph of Arimathea. Verse 43, ...

Mark 15:43

Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

We know little about this man. We know that he was from Arimathea, but we aren't even sure where that is. Our best guess is that it was about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem. According to Matthew's account, Joseph was "a rich man" (verse 57). We see here that he was an influential man, "a prominent member of the Council" (verse 43). We also notice that he was a godly man, "waiting for the kingdom of God" (verse 43).

Apparently, Joseph had enough political clout to get a hearing with the governor, Pilate. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was a bit surprised that Joseph was asking for the body, because it was only 3 o'clock in the afternoon. It was only a few hours prior that Pilate had sent Jesus to be crucified. Normally, crucifixions take much longer than this. There's the flogging and the beating. There's the carrying of the cross. Then, there's the hanging. But, the agony that Jesus experienced in the garden, and being up all night had taken away His strength. He was only able to last three hours upon the cross? (Mark 15:25, 33).

Such time seemed too short for Pilate. So, Pilate wanted to make sure that Jesus really died. Verse 44, ...

Mark 15:44-45

Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

This verse flies in direct contrast to those would maintain that Jesus merely "swooned." Joseph of Arimathea knew that Jesus had died. And the centurion reporting to Pilate knew that Jesus had died. This may have been the very same Centurion who said in verse 39, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Notice that he didn't say, "Truly this man is the Son of God!" because this Centurion saw "the way He breathed His last" (verse 39). He saw the way that Jesus died. And said that Jesus "was" the Son of God!

And let me remind you that this Centurion had seen many people die on the cross. He knew when someone was dead and when someone was merely in a comatose state. Jesus didn't swoon. Jesus really died.

Furthermore, His disciples also knew the tomb in which he was buried. The details of the text bear this out. Look at verse 46, ...

Mark 15:46

Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Archeologists have found only a handful of rolling stone tombs in all of Israel. Graves and tombs have been found all over Israel. In fact, much of what we know about the culture of those days is because of the graves that have been dug up. But, there have only been a few graves discovered that have been rolling stone tombs -- so few, that is is more like three or four total. Of the handful that have been found, each of them date to within 100 years of the life of Christ. Although none of them have been found near Jerusalem.

Each of them have a round stone, from 4-6 feet in height, 1-2 feet thick, which rolls along a track. When it reaches the bottom of the track, the stone would completely cover the entrance to the tomb. Considering the size of these stones, it might take several people to roll it open and shut. They are expensive to make. Easier to build is some sort of a cave with a door. That explains why only a few of them have been found. It also explains why Joseph of Arimathea would have had such a tomb -- he had the means to build one.

In verse 47, we read, ...

Mark 15:47

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus were looking on to see where He was laid.

Two of these women were mentioned back in verse 40. Now, the important point here isn't the fact that it was only the women who were around. Nor is it the exact identification of these women. Nor is it the number of women that were near Jesus. Rather, the important point

comes in the role that they play throughout the narrative.

In verse 40 we read that they were "looking on from a distance." In verse 47 we see that they "were looking on to see where He was laid." In Mark 16:1 we see these three women actually came to the tomb with their spices to anoint the body of Jesus.

In other words, these women were in eyeshot of the body of Jesus from the cross to the grave. There were no switching bodies. There was no mistaking the grave. There was no mistaking where Jesus was buried. These woman saw the body of Jesus taken down from the cross. These women saw the body of Jesus carried to the graveyard. These women saw the body of Jesus placed in the tomb. These women saw the large stone rolled in front of the tomb and sealed shut. When the women returned to anoint the body of Jesus, they went to the right tomb.

There was no mistaking where Jesus was laid. Matthew's account of the event tells us that after Jesus had been placed in the tomb, they were "sitting opposite the grave" (Matt. 27:61). Surely, they were in grief, pondering all that had happened.

But, being a rare type of tomb, it would have been obvious to the women returning to the grave which one it was. They went to the right tomb.

Jesus Really Died (15:50-47). I labor this point because without His death, His resurrection means nothing. If Jesus didn't really die, then Jesus didn't really raise from the dead. He may have raised from something, but not from the dead. And in this case, we have no hope. Because we all are headed to the grave. And our hope is in the God who raised the dead. And if Jesus didn't die, then He didn't raise from the dead.

But, here's the good news, Jesus really rose from the dead! This is my second point, which carries us into chapter 16, ...
2. Jesus Really Rose (16:1-8).

Chapter 16, verse 1, ...

Mark 16:1

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him.

These were the same women who "watched Jesus die from a distance" (15:40). These were the same women who saw where Jesus was buried (15:47). And now, they had come to anoint His body.

That's why they were bringing spices. In the days of Jesus, bodies weren't buried in nice coffin. Rather, they were wrapped in linen cloths and placed away in a cave for a year or so. Then, after the body had deteriorated down to the bones, a second visit to the tomb would be necessary, to gather the bones and place them in an ossuary, or "bone box." This box was about 2 feet long, about 1 foot wide and a 1.5 feet high. It was long enough for the longest bone of the body, the femur, to fit. It was thick enough for the thickest bone of the body, the skull, to fit. It was tall enough for all of the bones to be placed in the ossuary.

And so, when the bodies were buried, they were covered with a hundred pounds (or more) of spices, so that the smell wouldn't be so unbearable. In the case of Jesus, there was no time to anoint the body with spices when His body was initially placed in the tomb. They had to be finished by sundown on Friday. That's why these women, each one carrying 30, 40, 50 pounds of spices, came to the tomb. They came to anoint the body of Jesus. Boy, were they in for a surprise.

When they had left the tomb earlier, surely they had returned home before the beginning of the Passover celebration, which would begin at sun down. They spent the Passover at home, not daring to walk the distance to the tomb during the Sabbath day, not daring to do the work of anointing the body.

They came to anoint the body of Jesus the moment the Sabbath was over. They came at their very first opportunity. But, verse 2, ...

Mark 16:2

Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

They came, looking for Jesus. They came early Sunday morning, as it was the day after the Sabbath. Their coming to the tomb was an act of devotion. They weren't simply coming to "look at the grave" as an observer. They were looking for the body of Jesus to anoint Him. They had work to do.

When these women came to the scene, they didn't find what they had expected to see. They were expecting to see a grave with a giant round stone covering the entrance to the tomb. At least that was the point of their discussion along the way, ...

Mark 16:3

They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

Rolling away the stone was a big job for a few women. It would have to be rolled uphill, out of the divot that had been carved into the ground. They were going to need some help. Perhaps they were hoping for the gardener of the cemetery to be around to come to their aid and help move the stone for them (John 20:15).

Their first surprise comes in verse 4, ...

Mark 16:4

Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.

This stone was no longer covering the entrance to the tomb. Rather, it was rolled away from the entrance and they could enter the tomb easily. But that wasn't the only surprise. Verse 5, ...

Mark 16:5

Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.

At this point, they didn't really understand what was going on. They had come to anoint the body of Jesus. But there was no body, only a young man sitting near where the body was laid.

From the other gospel accounts, we can safely say that this young man was an angel. Angels often appear as young men. This young man was "wearing a white robe." It's the sort of thing that you just don't have the opportunity to see every day.

It's understandable why "they were amazed." It's understandable why they were bewildered. It's not quite what they were expecting. Have you ever been in a situation when you were expecting one thing, but received another? It's a bit confusing. Verse 6, ...

Mark 16:6

And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; ...

First of all, this young man, this angel, seeks to comfort the women. He said, "Do not be amazed." This is far easier said than done.

For one thing, you simply don't encounter angels every day. For another thing, everything didn't quite seem right about the day. The stone rolled away. The Roman guard that had been placed before the tomb were gone. The body was gone. This young man just sitting there, seeming to know everything. They had every reason to "be amazed." He continued, ...

Mark 16:6

... you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified.

In saying these words, he was certainly comforting these women. He knew why they were there. I don't believe that this angel needed to be omniscient to know these things. He could also have observed what these women were carrying in their arms: perfume and spices. Certainly, the fragrance filled the air!

He knew that you only come to the cemetery with these things in your hands if you are coming to anoint a body. This angel knew about Who they were looking for. He knew that Jesus had been buried there. He knew where He was from -- Nazareth. He knew what happened to Him -- He had been crucified. And He knew that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. He continued, ...

Mark 16:6

... He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him.

And this is the good news of resurrection Sunday. Jesus has risen! He is not in the tomb. The grave could not hold Him!

If we had been there, we could have seen the place where they had laid Him! We could have seen that the body was gone! I suspect that they saw the same thing that Peter saw when he came running into the tomb a short time later. John records that Peter "beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the facecloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself" (John 20:6-7).

The significance of these wrappings demonstrate that nobody came to take the body away. For should the disciples or some grave robber steal His body, he would have taken away the linen wrappings as well. But, Jesus made His bed before He got up. Then the young man finished his little talk in verse 7, ...

Mark 16:7

But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'"

This angel told these women that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead and had gone on to Galilee. It's where they were to find Jesus. That's where they were supposed to go. This wasn't a great mystery. Jesus had told this in advance to the disciples.

Turn back to Mark 14 and verse 27. Jesus said to them [the disciples], ...

Mark 14:27-28

You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.' But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

The shepherd was indeed struck down. The sheep had indeed been scattered. But now, the shepherd has been raised from the dead. The next item on the agenda is to meet up with the disciples in Galilee.

Jesus wasn't off the scene. Jesus didn't disappear. No, He just relocated. He was alive and well. Jesus was crucified just outside the gates of Jerusalem. He would meet up with His disciples in Galilee, where they spent most of their time together. And next week, we will see them together in Galilee (Mark 16:14-18).

But here, notice that Jesus predicted His resurrection before it ever happened.

Mark 14:28
But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

Peter didn't believe what Jesus had said. Instead, he protested, ...

Mark 14:29
... Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.

It's almost as if Peter never heard verse 28, "after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." All he could hear about was the sheep scattering. The resurrection didn't compute. The same was true of the other disciples (14:31). This wasn't unique. The disciples were often informed of the resurrection. When Jesus first informed them of His death, burial and resurrection, Peter missed the resurrection as well.

In Mark 8:31, we read, "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." And how did Peter respond? Peter rebuked Jesus (Mark 8:32). They didn't understand the resurrection.

After the mount of transfiguration, we see the same thing. "As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant" (Mark 9:9-10). They didn't understand the resurrection.

The same thing takes place in Mark 9. "He was teaching His disciples and telling them, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.' But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him" (Mark 9:31-32).

The same thing takes place in Mark 10:33-34. After Jesus explains his suffering, death, burial and resurrection, the disciples are self-focused, wanting their own glory! It's as if they simply didn't believe what Jesus had planned.

Back in Mark 16, we see this angel reminding the disciples through these women that everything is going according to plan. The crucifixion was not some roadblock. Jesus was not crucified as His plans ran amok. No, everything is going according to plan, "just as he told you" (verse 7). In verse 8, we see the response of the women, ...

Mark 16:8
They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

This doesn't mean that they were silent about the things that they saw. Look down at verse 10. We read that Mary Magdalene "went and reported to those who had been with Him." Rather, the idea here is that they "said nothing to anyone [along the way back to the disciples]." They were deep in thought. But, when they met up again with the disciples, they told them everything. Yet, we still see the hardness of the disciples' hearts. Verse 13 says, "When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it."

John records how Peter and John took off like a lightning bolt to see the tomb.

John 20:3-9
So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

It's hard to believe. At this point, I want to direct the obvious application to you. Do you believe these things? Dead people don't normally rise. But, you must believe! This is my third point, ...

3. You Must Believe!

One of the greatest proofs of the resurrection is the progress in the faith of the disciples. You read the gospel accounts, and they were slow to believe in the resurrection.

Before Jesus appeared to them, they were afraid and unbelieving. John records how they were huddled up in a room behind locked doors, "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19). But, when they saw Jesus Christ alive and well, they turned completely around. Instead of being fearful and unbelieving, they were bold and believing!

All of the disciples embraced this historical reality that Jesus Really Died (15:50-47) and Jesus Really Rose (16:1-8). The death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus became their theme!

We don't have time today to work through these themes in the book of Acts. But, throughout the entire book, we see these themes surface again and again in their preaching. They spoke of the life of Jesus. They spoke of the death of Jesus. They spoke of the resurrection of Jesus, and what is required of us. They spoke these things at great cost to themselves. Peter and John were imprisoned for preaching these things. They were flogged for preaching these things. But Peter and John replied, "We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Eventually, it meant their death. Such was the fate of all of Jesus' disciples. Herod Agrippa put James to death with a sword in 44 A.D. You can read about it in Acts 12:2. Ten years later, in Phrygia, Philip was "scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified" (54 A. D.). Matthew was martyred with a battle-axe in Ethiopia in 60 A.D. James the son of Alphaeus was beaten and stoned by the Jews. Andrew went to Asia to preach. He was crucified on a cross that looked like an "X". Peter was crucified upside down in Rome, because he thought himself to be unworthy to be crucified after the same form and manner as his Lord was. Thaddeus was crucified in Edessa in 72 A. D. Bartholomew was cruelly beaten and crucified by idolaters in India. Thomas was thrust through with a spear in India. Simon the zealot was crucified in Britain in 74 A. D. (Foxe's Book of Martyrs)

Only two of the twelve disciples were not martyred for their faith. Judas betrayed Jesus. John lived out his days in exile on the island of Patmos.

I say these things not to say that believers in Jesus will be martyred for their faith. I say these things to convince you of the reality of the resurrection. Jesus Really Died (15:50-47). Jesus Really Rose (16:1-8). It's the only thing that can explain the change in behavior among the disciples, from hiding for fear of their lives to dying for their faith.

You don't put your life on the line for fairy tales. You put your life on the line only for the things that you are convinced of. One man said it this way, ...

After the crucifixion, Jesus' apostles hid behind locked doors, terrified they would be executed next. But something changed them from cowards to bold preachers. Anyone who understands human character knows people do not change that much without some major influence. That influence was seeing their Master, bodily risen from the dead. Christ appeared to them in the locked room, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and on the Mount of Olives. After seeing Jesus alive, Peter and the others left the locked room and preached the risen Christ, unafraid of what would happen to them. They quit hiding because they knew the truth. They finally understood that Jesus is God incarnate, who saves people from sin. ^[1]

It really happened! And I say, You Must Believe!

I say this because your life hangs in the balance. Turn in your Bibles to Romans 10.

Romans 10:9-10

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

The converse is also true: If you do not confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and do not believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will not be saved. Do you believe? You must believe!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 31, 2013 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Jack Zavada, <http://christianity.about.com/od/easter/a/7-Proofs-Of-The-Resurrection.htm>