

## He's Alive

Par Peter Amsterdam

It had been about three years since they had answered the call to follow Jesus. Each had his own story. Nathanael was told he was "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit." Peter and his brother Andrew heard the words, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men," while casting their nets into the sea. Matthew was sitting at his tax collector's booth. The years that followed had been the most exciting and intense years of their lives. Jesus was the most incredible person they had ever known, and they loved Him deeply.

The things they witnessed were incredible—many miraculous healings, deliverances from demonic forces,<sup>4</sup> the feeding of thousands with only a few loaves of bread and a few fish.<sup>5</sup> There was also the day when a funeral procession was coming down the street, and the Master was so moved by the dead man's grieving mother that He stopped the procession, touched the coffin, and the young man sat up alive.<sup>6</sup> And that wasn't the only time that Jesus brought the dead back to life. There was the girl who was dead when He entered the room and alive when He left it,<sup>7</sup> and also Lazarus, who had been dead for four days when Jesus called him from his tomb.<sup>8</sup>

There were times when He told such insightful stories—stories that held deep meaning and revealed great truths to those whose minds and hearts were open enough to understand them.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes He taught the multitudes who gathered round to hear what He had to say, and at one point those people were on the verge of taking Him by force to make Him king.<sup>10</sup> At other times, He took His closest followers away to a quiet place where they could rest and He could give them personal teaching.<sup>11</sup>

These were heady days indeed.

Of course, not every day was full of such wonder and excitement. Sometimes there was opposition. His religious enemies disagreed with what He taught and continually challenged Him, but His answers were filled with wisdom, power, and most of all love.<sup>12</sup> Everything about Him was rooted in love and compassion.

As time went on, the opposition grew stronger and His enemies more determined to stop Him. But then, right in the middle of all that, there was the day when crowds from Jerusalem, joined by thousands of Passover pilgrims, met Him outside the city walls, waving palm branches and shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David."<sup>13</sup> His religious opponents were afraid to touch Him because of His popularity, and feared that if the civil authorities had to step in, that would cost them their positions of prominence.<sup>14</sup>

Those days had been extraordinary—full of wonder, hope, excitement, learning, and love. His followers probably expected that things would continue that way for many more years.

Then suddenly, everything changed. Jesus was arrested, and less than 24 hours later He was executed as a criminal. Their dreams were dashed to pieces. The One they loved so deeply was gone. The life they had lived for the past three years was over. It seemed the future He had spoken of wouldn't work out. He was dead.

Sad, confused, and afraid, they hid behind locked doors. How abruptly it had all come to an end—the work they had participated in, the love they had come to know so well. Everything changed almost instantly. The future was bleak.

On the third day after His execution, early in the morning, some women who had followed Him visited His tomb, but His body wasn't there. When they told the other disciples, nobody took them seriously except Peter and John, who ran to the tomb and confirmed the women's story. He wasn't there! They didn't understand what had happened, but His body was gone.<sup>15</sup>

Suddenly Jesus appeared in the midst of the room where they were hiding, behind locked doors. The Man they had loved and followed, who had been brutally tortured and killed, was standing before them.<sup>16</sup>

He was alive!

He had risen from the dead and was back with them. His presence changed everything. Though He had been executed as a criminal, the fact that He was standing there alive validated everything He had told them about Himself: that He was "the resurrection and the life,"<sup>17</sup> that He would be killed but would be raised to life again three days later.<sup>18</sup> The truth of those words was now evident, because He was there, alive. His presence totally changed the context of the preceding days, and they knew their faith hadn't been misguided. God's plan hadn't been defeated after all.

Forty days later, Jesus ascended into heaven. He was no longer with them physically, but the Holy Spirit was sent to dwell within them—a constant presence guiding them in truth and love and in the sharing of all He had taught them and all they had witnessed during their time together.<sup>19</sup>

The wonderful days of living and working together with Him had come to an end, and the days of branching out and reaching out to others had begun. His being alive empowered them to move beyond what they had been used to, to let go of how things had been and to dedicate their lives to spreading His love and salvation to others. While it took time and adjustment, they did what He had instructed; they went to different cities and countries, meeting new people, making new friends, leading others to Him. They built communities of faith, they taught others what He had taught them, they engaged in the mission He had given them, day by day, heart by heart, year after year. They faced difficulties, trials, and tribulations, but they carried on even at the cost of their lives. In so doing, they profoundly affected the world of their day and every age since.

Although things had changed, and Jesus was no longer present bodily, He was still able to do miracles; to bring the dead back to life; to give incredible answers to those in need; to show love, compassion, and mercy; to bring the good news of salvation. Only now, instead of Him doing it in person, He did it through them. He continued to dwell in them and work through them, and He's been and continues to be just as alive in those who have loved and followed Him ever since.

Easter is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. It's a celebration of His defeat of death and hell and Satan. Jesus redeemed us from our sins. He lived and loved and died for us as individuals, and He's with us today in spirit just as much as He was with those He walked beside two millennia ago.

There was a short time when His disciples despaired, after Jesus had been crucified and was no longer with them, but that crisis was short-lived. The confusion, fear, and uncertainty passed once they realized that He was alive, and that His love, truth, compassion, words, and power were still there with them, even though their physical circumstances were different.

No matter what circumstances we are in, no matter what changes have occurred, no matter how difficult things may be, He's also alive in us. Wherever we are, His power and Spirit are with us. In whatever circumstance, in whatever situation, whether we are in our hometown or some far-flung country, He is with us and will work through us as much as we allow Him to. Let's show others that

He is alive by letting them see His Spirit in us, by letting them hear His words through our words, and by letting them experience Him through our loving actions, compassion, and empathy. Let's show them He is alive, even in today's mixed-up, messed-up world, by helping them connect with Him.

1. John 1:47
2. Mark 1:17
3. See Matthew 9:9.
4. See Matthew 4:23–24.
5. See Matthew 14:14–21; 15:32–38.
6. See Luke 7:11–16.
7. See Mark 5:35–42.
8. See John 11:38–44.
9. See Matthew 13:10–13.
10. See John 6:15.
11. See John 6:3.
12. See Luke 20:20.
13. See Matthew 21:6–9.
14. See John 11:47–48.
15. See Luke 23:55–56; 24:1–11; John 20:3–9.
16. See John 20:19–20.
17. John 11:25
18. See Mark 8:31; John 2:19–21.
19. See Acts 2:1–4; Matthew 28:19.