**HOPE!**

**Mark 16:1-8**

**2 Corinthians 12:2-4 “**I know a man [who] was caught up to the third heaven…he was caught up to paradise… He heard [and saw] inexpressible things, that man is not permitted to tell.”
 —**The Apostle Paul**

**In Revelation 21:3-5** John writes, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death [no more] mourning, [no more] crying, [no more] pain. For the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then [Jesus] said to John, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

* There is **ONLY** ONE event in the history of the world that can give a man any HOPE: **THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS OF NAZARETH**.
* Why is the resurrection so important? Because the **validity** of Christianity rests entirely upon this one historical event.

**1 Corinthians 15:12-20** “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified that He raised Christ from the dead… And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead…”

**Evidence** to support your belief that the resurrection **REALLY** happened! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

1. The fact that **women were the first to see the risen Christ** provides evidence to support the truth of the resurrection.
2. The fact that the **linen cloths** used to wrap Jesus’ body up like a mummy, or cocoon, were **collapsed** as if someone had risen right through them is evidence that caused both John and Peter to really believe and begin to understand.

**John 20:6-8** “*Then Simon Peter…arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally, [John]…also went inside. He saw and believed*.”

1. The fact that the lives of the disciples were so **radically changed** after they saw him in his risen body.
* Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we should be men who live with **great hope** and with **eager anticipation** for the day we all step into heaven (Paradise).

**Hebrews 6:19-20** “*We have this* ***hope*** *as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf*.”

**Charles Spurgeon** said, “**Christian, meditate much on heaven, it will help thee to press on, and to forget the toil of the way. This vale of tears is but the pathway to the better country; this world of woe is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss. And after death, what cometh? What wonder-world will open upon our astonished sight**?

**Joni Eareckson Tada**, a quadriplegic for more than 50 years, says, *I still can hardly believe it. I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in righteousness—powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the HOPE this gives someone spinal-cord injured like me? Or someone who is cerebral palsied, brain-injured, or who has multiple sclerosis? Imagine the HOPE this gives someone who is manic-depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the Gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible HOPE*.”

**Revelation 22:1-7, 20-21** *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

*The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the god of the spirits and of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servant the things that must soon take place.”*

*“Behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

*He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”*

*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*