

BILL WEIMER

THE RISEN CHRIST

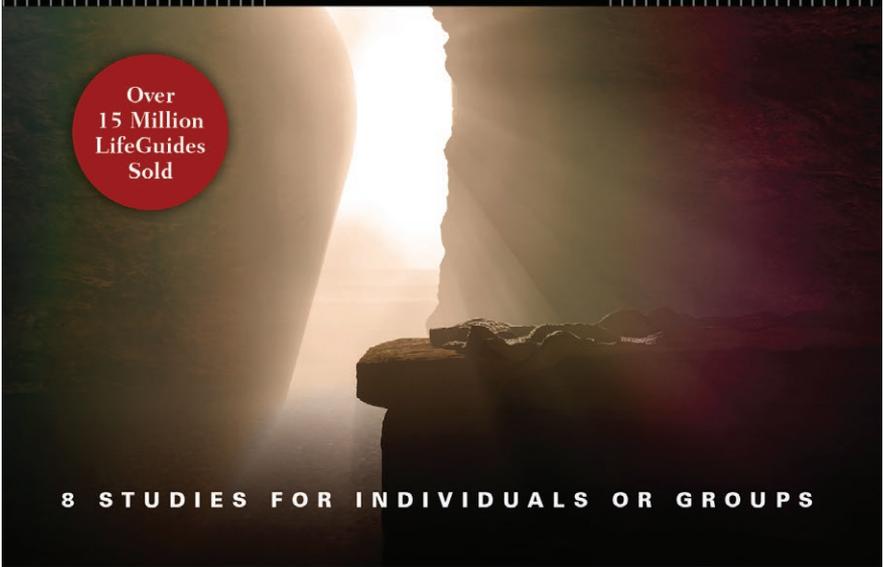
Jesus' Final Words on Earth



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WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

John 20:1-18

In 2010, it was discovered that some sixty-five thousand burial sites in Arlington National Cemetery—almost one-fourth of the military veterans' gravesites—had been grossly mismanaged. There were hundreds of unmarked graves in these hallowed grounds. Headstones were labeled incorrectly. Graves were found to be empty. Burial remains were moved without family knowledge or permission. Most of these inexcusable mistakes were done years ago. However, several gravesites involved military personnel killed in the more recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars. How shocking—at our nation's most-revered cemetery!

One appalling example concerned the cremains urn of Air Force Master Sgt. Marion Gabe, who served as an operating-room nurse during the Vietnam War and again in Operation Desert Storm. This urn was buried on top of another veteran's body. When the family of this latter service member visited the site, they discovered Gabe's headstone—not their loved one's! So cemetery workers relocated Gabe's urn and headstone, reburying her at another site without notifying her family. Thus, when Gabe's loved ones traveled to visit her burial site, her remains were gone.

Group Discussion. Why is such burial mismanagement at Arlington, or any cemetery, so upsetting to families, veterans, and all of us?

Personal Reflection. Have you ever sought the grave of a family member or close friend and had difficulty finding the precise burial location? What were your thoughts and feelings as you searched for the site and then finally found it?

In the first century, Jewish women would anoint a dead body with spices to assist the natural decaying process. The women in this passage loved and supported Jesus' life and ministry. They witnessed his agonizing death. Now they had come to anoint his body, in accordance with Jewish burial practices. They sought a dead Jesus, but a surprise awaited them! *Read John 20:1-18.*

1. Imagine you are one of Jesus' disciples during the time of his crucifixion. What would you think about his death and your future after it?

2. When Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb, what does she expect to see, and what persons does she encounter in the predawn darkness?

3. How do Mary's reactions to the empty tomb compare to those of Peter and "the other disciple" (vv. 1-10)?

4. "Mary stood outside the tomb crying" (v. 11). Do you think this was an appropriate response after all she had learned about Jesus? Why or why not?

| How did this affect or change you?

| 11. What did Mary do after interacting with Jesus?

| 12. How have Jesus' words to Mary Magdalene encouraged you in your faith?



Express your thanks and praise to God for this climax to Jesus' life and work on earth, and tell God your reactions to Jesus' resurrection!

NOW OR LATER

At times everyone feels disappointed, discouraged, depressed, or even defeated. What have you learned about Jesus from his encounter with Mary Magdalene?

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