



# A word on the Word

## *Easter message: Why should I read the Bible?*

*A monthly series on the Bible by Carrie Boren, Missioner for Evangelism*

Every year I am startled, jolted, provoked, challenged, and in utter awe of the Easter narratives. We join with the disciples in those early days of Jesus' resurrection and say with eyes wide open and mouth agape, "Oh, could it be? Could it be? YES! YES! He is RISEN!" From Mary's "Rabboni," Thomas' "My Lord and My God!" as he put his hand into Jesus' wounds, and John's "It is the Lord!" — we all stand in sheer amazement at Jesus' return, physically alive, from death. He is the Saviour, the Christ — the long awaited Messiah who has come to redeem a hurting and lost world. God came to our rescue and reunited us with Himself for eternity.

The vital witness that the Bible gives regarding the post resurrection accounts has overwhelmed me this Easter season. Some may think the Bible is no longer important since, even though God used to disclose Himself through the prophets' written and spoken word, He has now fully revealed Himself in the incarnate and resurrected WORD, God among us. The letter to the Hebrews states, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He has created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature, upholding the universe by His word and power" (Heb. 1:1-3 — RSV).

Therefore, we might conclude that the early apostles were no longer dependent on Old Testament scripture because they had the words of God through the lips of Jesus. A number of us might even assume, "God speaks to us through His Holy Spirit; so, there is no need to read the Bible." HOWEVER, the message and example of

the resurrected Jesus and the first apostles demonstrate that the written Word is as vital as ever to a follower of the one true God. Both the Old and New Testaments reveal God's character, our new nature in Christ, and God's goal of building His kingdom on earth through us.

Following His resurrection, Jesus emphasized the importance of Old Testament scripture to two of His followers when He appeared to them on the road to Emmaus. Since they did not recognize Him, He began to teach them about Himself. "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). Beginning with His first resurrection appearances, Jesus insisted that His followers must read and internalize God's written word in order to know Him fully and His purposes for our world and us.

The early apostles gave an excellent example of how we are to follow Jesus Christ. Reading the Old Testament was a vital part of their worship and new life in Christ. Furthermore, in their preaching, they used it to reveal fully the identity of Jesus. Hebrew scripture was central throughout Jewish history and during the time of Jesus. It defined the identity, destiny, and morality of the people of God.

N.T. Wright notes, "Israel's sacred writings were the place where, and the means by which, Israel discovered again and again who the true God was, and how his Kingdom-purposes were being taken forward. Reciting scripture was central to worship, not least in rehearsing God's Kingdom-revealing deeds and thus evoking praise and hope ... Again and again the point of scripture was that it addressed a fresh, prophetic word *to* Israel in the midst of its often very ambiguous 'experience,' breaking into Israel's own world of muddle and mistakes — doing, in fact, in verbal form what God himself was doing in

breaking into the world, and into Israel's life, in judgment and mercy ... Through scripture God was equipping his people to serve his purposes" (*The Last Word*).

The Risen Lord Jesus and His early apostles emphatically affirmed that, in order to equip themselves for God's work in the world, Christ's followers must immerse themselves in the written Word because it was and is the essential source for discovering God, ourselves, and our call to an obedient, holy, and abundant life.

The Word of God is more than a collection of stories or a reservoir of systematic theology. God's written and spoken Word has the power to change people's lives today. "The word of [God] is like an enormous reservoir, full of creative divine wisdom and power, into which the prophets and other writers tap by God's call and grace so that the word may flow through them to do God's work of flooding and irrigating his people. ... One of the many ways in which [the creator God remains present and active within the world] is through his living and active word, [and] one of the most powerful things human beings, God's image-bearers, can do is to speak. Words change things — through promises, commands, apologies, warnings, declarations of love or of implacable opposition to evil" (Wright, *The Last Word*).

All too easily, we can get distracted by the world's messages that God is uncaring and we are nobodies who have no purpose. Therefore, in order to be true "Resurrection" people this Easter season, we must meditate on the Word of God.

Take time this Easter season to root yourselves firmly in reality by reading the Bible.

The Lord is risen!

And you have His risen life in you! You are a child of God whom He accepts totally, forgives completely, and loves unconditionally.