

Bread & Wine



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BREAD & WINE

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Address: 5632 Gantt Road
Sarasota, FL 34232
Tel: 941 922 6007
Email: bw@bethelcomchurch.org

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Address all correspondence to ***the Editor, Bread & Wine***, 5632 Gantt Road, Sarasota, Florida 34233.

Editor: *Russ Atmore*
Associate Editor - Web: *Jim White*
Editorial Assistant: *Kaitlin Atmore*

The Editor welcomes any submitted articles for publication subject to editorial approval.

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Cover Picture: Emmanuel College in Cambridge, England where so many Puritans studied.

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Important Notice:

Commencing in January 2008, Bread & Wine will only be available as an online magazine on the Bethel Community Church website. All Bread & Wine issues are currently available online.

Editorial

Russ Atmore

In this issue of Bread & Wine, we have included two articles by two outstanding Puritans. First of all, there is Thomas Boston, the Scottish Puritan. He was born in 1676 and died in 1732. He was spiritually awakened at the age of eleven as he listened to the preaching of Henry Erskine, the father of the two great Erskine brothers, Ralph and Ebenezer. He used to walk four or so miles every Sunday to hear the Word of God preached, often through foul weather. Boston entered Edinburgh University and graduated in 1694 with a Master of Arts. After some further theological study, he was licensed to preach in 1697. Boston's study habits were simply awesome. His Sunday preaching schedule was rigorous. He preached three services on Sunday with a rigorous week of visitation and preaching. Boston had to bury six of his ten children. His wife suffered greatly from depression. His last sermons were from his death-bed. Boston's literary output was prodigious. His works run to 12 volumes; some 7500 pages in total. This is the kind of men we need today.

The other Puritan, Thomas Brooks is my favorite Puritan. He was born in 1608 and entered Emmanuel College in Cambridge in 1625 (see front cover picture). He appears to have left before graduating. He was ordained as a preacher in 1640 and then became the chaplain to the Parliamentary fleet and served for some years at sea. Brooks said that he would not exchange his years at sea for all the riches of England. After the civil War, he served as minister of St. Thomas the Apostle and then in St. Margaret's, New Fish Street. This church was the first church to be burned to the ground during the great London Fire of 1666. He died in 1680 and was buried in the famous cemetery called Bunhill Fields where so many great Puritans were buried (John Bunyan, John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, to name a few). John Reeve said of Brooks at his funeral that he had "a sweet nature, great gravity, large charity, wonderful patience and a strong faith." Thomas Brooks' works run to 6 volumes (some 3000 pages). They are simply breath-taking. His work, "Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices" is superb. A fellow minister said of Thomas

Brooks, that he had a "body of divinity in his head and the power of it in his heart." We need preachers like Thomas Brooks today.

As usual, we include our famous quiz for your consternation.

Soli Deo Gloria

"I preach as though Christ was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead today, and was coming back tomorrow."

Martin Luther

Useful Directions For Reading and Searching the Scriptures

Thomas Boston

- 1.** Follow a regular plan in reading of them, that you may be acquainted with the whole; and make this reading a part of your private devotions. Not that you should confine yourselves only to a set plan, so as never to read by choice, but ordinarily this tends most to edification. Some parts of the Bible are more difficult, some may seem very barren for an ordinary reader; but if you would look on it all as God's word, not to be scorned, and read it with faith and reverence, no doubt you would find advantage.
- 2.** Set a special mark, however you find convenient, on those passages you read, which you find most suitable to your case, condition, or temptations; or such as you have found to move your hearts more than other passages. And it will be profitable often to review these.
- 3.** Compare one Scripture with another, the more obscure with that which is more plain, 2 Pet. 1:20. This is an excellent means to find out the sense of the Scriptures; and to this good use serve the marginal notes on Bibles. And keep Christ in your eye, for to him the scriptures of the Old Testament look (in its genealogies, types, and sacrifices), as well as those of the New.
- 4.** Read with a holy attention, arising from the consideration of the majesty of God, and the reverence due to him. This must be done with attention, first, to the words; second, to the sense; and, third, to the divine

authority of the Scripture, and the obligation it lays on the conscience for obedience, 1 Thess. 2:13, "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."

5. Let your main purpose in reading the Scriptures be practice, and not bare knowledge, James 1:22, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." Read that you may learn and do, and that without any limitation or distinction, but that whatever you see God requires, you may study to practice.

6. Beg of God and look to him for his Spirit. For it is the Spirit that inspired it, that it must be savingly understood by, 1 Cor 2:11, "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God." And therefore before you read, it is highly reasonable you beg a blessing on what you are to read.

7. Beware of a worldly, fleshly mind: for fleshly sins blind the mind from the things of God; and the worldly heart cannot favor them. In an eclipse of the moon, the earth comes between the sun and the moon, and so keeps the light of the sun from it. So the world, in the heart, coming between you and the light of the word, keeps its divine light from you.

8. Labor to be disciplined toward godliness, and to observe your spiritual circumstances. For a disciplined attitude helps mightily to understand the scriptures. Such a Christian will find his circumstances in the word, and the word will give light to his circumstances, and his circumstances light into the word.

9. Whatever you learn from the word, labor to put it into practice. For to him that has, shall be given. No wonder those people get little insight into the Bible, who make no effort to practice what they know. But while the stream runs into a holy life, the fountain will be the freer.

The Fear of The Lord

Russ Atmore

We are in desperate need of reverence for the Lord. The folly of so many is directly due to their lack of reverence for God. The fear of the Lord is absent from their lives. This is not the fear that refers to being afraid primarily, but the fear of high esteem, of reverence, of worship. It is true that men should fear God in the sense that they should be afraid and terrified of God since they are sinners. Disobedience brings the fear of God into our lives (Gen 3:10). Fear demoralizes (1 Sam.13:5 - 8) and fear paralyzes (Matt.28:4). Godly fear on the other hand sanctifies us (Ps. 19:9) or cleanses us. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). It is the beginning of wisdom because it requires wisdom to fear the Lord. It is required of us that we demonstrate godly wisdom throughout our lives (Prov. 10:27). To the fear the Lord means we hate evil (Prov. 8:13) and it is a fountain of life (Prov. 14:27). Godly fear instructs us in wisdom (Prov. 15:33). Even Messiah is one who is described as fearing the Lord (Isa. 11:3). Peter reminds us of our heavenly and earthly responsibilities, "...Fear God. Honor the emperor" (1 Pet. 2:17).

Israel was told over and over again by Moses to fear the Lord (Deut. 6:13; 10:12; 31:12; cf. Josh. 24:14). Failing to fear God brings dire consequences, namely; God's rebuke and discipline. Fearing God or having reverence for God can be demonstrated in so many ways. Husbands loving their wives, wives submitting to their husbands, children obeying their parents, servants giving their due worth to their masters, loving our neighbors, gathering to worship God regularly – these all demonstrate biblical responsibilities, but it is possible to supposedly do these things, and not do them at all. Such an attitude would indicate callousness and hardness of heart, and such a heart needs repentance. It's possible to come to church and for your heart and mind to be occupied with many things other than with God. That is irreverence for God.

What can we do to ensure that we are not guilty of losing reverence for the Lord? First, we can make sure that we make use of all the means of grace at our disposal (e.g. the Bible, Lord's Supper, prayer and fellowship with God's people). It is these things that God has given to the Church so that we might have a relationship with Him. Second, establish for yourself a routine pattern of reading, meditating on the Bible, praying and seeking to witness to others. Third, ensure that the Lord's Day is not treated lightly. There must be no sporting activities engaged in on Sunday for this is in direct violation of the spirit of the Lord's Day (remember the responsibilities, promises and threatening of Isaiah 58:13, 14). Fourth, we must consider our actions, motives, and thoughts very carefully. How have we dishonored the Lord Jesus Christ? We must take great care in our use of time. Time is a great gift given to all of us. Use it wisely and for the Lord.

Christians should ensure that they are able to be mentored or disciplined. We must be a teachable people. Selfishness and pride will keep us from our obligations to the Body of Christ. Most folk who are guilty blame others. They will either accuse God's people of being judgmental or hypocritical. These are the very things the Pharisees accused Jesus of.

If you feel that other believers are judgmental or critical of you, you should examine your own life and its responsibilities first to see whether you are at fault. This is such a lame excuse that Christians use and it raises very serious questions about actual salvation. If you feel that you would rather be somewhere else other than meet with God's people you have a serious problem and are in danger of not being saved. Take care to fear God first and the rest will take care of itself. To ensure that we fear the Lord, make a resolution that you will be committed to God and that you will avail yourself of all the means that He has given you in order for you to serve him.

Do not be like ancient Israel who murdered the prophets of God (you can do this in your heart) and refused to heed the counsel of God. Our God is a consuming fire to us a Christians, not just to unbelievers (Heb 12:29) and remember, "the Lord will judge His people...it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. 10:30, 31). If you have received the light of God's grace make sure that you stand in it. Start today on the path of wisdom – fear the Lord.

“Miss Christ and you miss all.”
Thomas Brooks

Helps Against Temptation

Thomas Brooks

Satan is a spirit of mighty abilities; and his abilities to lay snares before us are mightily increased by that long experience of his. He has had time enough to study all those ways and methods which tend most to ensnare and undo the souls of men. He has made it his whole study, his only study, his constant study to find out stratagems to entangle and overthrow the souls of men. When he was but a young serpent, he did easily deceive and outwit Eve; but now he is grown that 'old serpent' as John says in Rev. 12; he is as old as the world and is grown very cunning in experience. If Satan has such a world of devices to ensnare the souls of men, then, instead of wondering that so few are saved, sit down and wonder that any are saved, that any escape the snares of this cunning fowler.

I intend to set before you some special helps against all his devices.

Now, to prevent objections, I shall first lay down this proposition:

Though Satan has his devices to draw souls to sin, yet we must be careful that we do not lay all our temptations upon Satan, that we do not wrong the devil, and father upon him that is to be fathered upon our own base hearts. Man has such an evil root within him, that were there no devil to tempt him, no wicked men in the world to entice him, yet that cursed sinful nature that is in him would draw him to sin, though he knows beforehand that the wages of sin is eternal death.

The whole frame of man is out of frame: the understanding is dark, the will cross, the memory slippery, the affections crooked, the conscience corrupted, the tongue poisoned, and the heart wholly evil, only evil, and continually evil. Should God chain up Satan, and give him no liberty to tempt the sons of men to vanity or folly, yet they would not, they could not but sin against Him by reason of that cursed nature that is in them. Satan has only a persuading sleight, not an enforcing might. He may tempt us, but without ourselves he cannot conquer us. In every sin our hearts carry the greatest stroke: the fire is our wood, though it is the devil's flame. Satan can never undo a man without himself; but a man may easily undo himself without Satan. Don't excuse yourself by your accusing him.

Now for the helps I want to offer.

1. Walk by rule. He that walks by rule walks most safely, most honorably, most sweetly. When men throw off the Word, then God throws off them, and then Satan takes them by the hand, and leads them into snares at his pleasure. He that thinks himself to be too good to be ruled by the Word, will be found too bad to be owned by God; and if God do not or will not own him, Satan will by his stratagems overthrow him. They that keep to the rule, shall be kept in the hour of temptation, Rev. 3:10, "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee in the hour of temptation."

2. Take heed of grieving the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of God that is best able to discover Satan's plots against us; it is only He that can point out all his snares, and enable men to escape those pits that he has digged for their precious souls. Be sure the Spirit be not grieved by your enormities, nor by your refusing the cordials He sets before you, nor by slighting and despising His gracious actings in others.

3. Labor for more heavenly wisdom. Though there is no fear of knowing too much, there is much fear in practicing too little. There are many knowing souls, but there are but a few wise souls. There is oftentimes a great deal of knowledge where there is but little wisdom to improve that knowledge. Ah! souls, you have need of a great deal of heavenly wisdom to see where and how Satan lays his snares, and wisdom to find out proper remedies against his devices, and wisdom to apply those remedies seasonably, inwardly and effectually to your own heart, that so you may avoid the snares which that evil one has laid for your precious souls.

4. Make present resistance against Satan's first motions. It is safe to resist, it's dangerous to argue. Eve argues, and falls in paradise; Job resists, and conquers upon the dunghill. He that will play with Satan's bait, will quickly be taken with Satan's hook. The promise of conquest is made over to resisting, not to arguing: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," James 4:7. Ah, souls! were you better at resisting than at disputing, your temptations would be fewer.

5. Labor to be filled with the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of light and power; and what can a soul do without light and power "against spiritual wickedness in high places?" (Eph 4:12). That is a sweet word of the apostle, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18); i.e., labor for abundance of the Spirit. He that thinks he has enough of the Holy Spirit, will quickly find himself vanquished by the evil spirit.

Satan has his snares to take you in prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in strength and weakness, when you are alone and when you are in company, when you come on to spiritual duties and when you come off from spiritual duties; and if you are not filled with the Spirit, Satan will be too hard and too crafty for you, and will easily and frequently take you in his snares, and make a prey of you in spite of your souls. Therefore labor more to have your hearts filled with the Spirit, than to have your heads filled with notions, or your shops

with wares, your chests with silver, or your bags with gold; so shall you escape the snares of this fowler and triumph over all his plots.

6. Keep humble. A humble heart will rather lie in the dust than rise by wickedness, and sooner part with all than the peace of a good conscience. Humility keeps the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting, and snares of his spreading; as the low shrubs are free from many violent gusts and blasts of wind which shake and rend the taller trees. The devil has least power to fasten a temptation on him that is most humble.

He that has a gracious measure of humility, is neither affected with Satan's proffers nor terrified with his threatenings. It is reported of Satan that he should say thus of a humble man: You do always overcome me; when I would exalt and promote you, you keep yourself in humility; and when I would throw you down, you lift up yourself in assurance of faith.

God has said that 'He will teach the humble,' that 'He will dwell with the humble,' and that 'He will fill and satisfy the humble.' And if the teachings of God, the indwellings of God, the pourings-in of God will not keep the soul from falling into Satan's snares, I do not know what will. And therefore as you would be happy in resisting Satan and blessed in triumphing over Satan and all his snares, keep humble; I say again, keep humble.

7. Keep a strong, close, and constant watch (1 Thess 5:6). A secure soul is already an ensnared soul. That soul that will not watch against temptations, will certainly fall before the power of temptations. Satan works most strongly on the fancy when the soul is drowsy. The soul's security is Satan's opportunity to fall upon the soul and to spoil it, as Joshua did the men of Ai.

The best way to be safe and secure from all Satan's assaults is, with Nehemiah and the Jews, to watch and pray, and pray and watch. By this means they became too hard for their enemies, and the work of the Lord did prosper sweetly in their hands. Remember how Christ did chide His sluggish disciples, "What! could ye not watch with Me one hour?" What, can you watch with Me, how will you then die with Me? Satan always keeps a crafty and malicious watch, 'seeking whom he may devour.' Shall Satan keep a crafty watch, and shall not Christians keep a holy spiritual watch?

8. Engage not against Satan in your own strength, but be every day drawing new strength from the Lord Jesus. Undoubtedly, that soul that engages against any old or new temptation without new strength, new influences from on high, will fall before the power of the temptation. You may see this in Peter; he rested upon some old received strength— "Though all men should deny Thee, yet will not I," and therefore he falls sadly before a new temptation, denying Christ thrice that had thrice appeared gloriously to him.

Ah, souls! remember this, that your strength to stand and overcome must not be expected from grace received, but from the renewed influences of heaven. You must lean more upon Christ than upon your duties; you must lean more upon Christ than upon your experience; you must lean more upon Christ than upon your graces, or else Satan will carry you into captivity.

9. Be much in prayer. Prayer is a shelter to the soul, a sacrifice to God and a scourge to the devil. There is nothing that renders plots fruitless like prayer; hence says Christ, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Ah, souls! take words to yourselves and tell God that Satan has spread his snares in all places and in all companies; tell God that he digs deep and that he has plot upon plot, and device upon device, and all to undo you; tell God that you have neither skill nor power to escape his snares; tell God that it is a work too hard for any created being to work your deliverance, unless He put under His own everlasting arms; tell God how His honor is engaged to stand by you, and to bring you off, that you be not ruined by Satan's plots; tell God how the wicked would triumph if you should fall in his snares; tell God if He will make it His honor to save you from falling into Satan's snares, you will make it your glory to speak of His goodness and to live out His kindness.

Many a man by a common hand of providence escapes many a snare that man has laid for him, but yet escapes not the snares that Satan has laid for him. Many men are lifted up above the snares of men by a common hand of providence, that are left to fall into the snares of the devil by a hand of justice. Deliverance from Satan's

snares does carry with it the clearest evidence of the soul and heart of God to be towards us (Psa 140, 141). This world, this wilderness, is full of snares: all employments are full of snares, and all enjoyments are full of snares. In civil things, Satan has his snares to entrap us; and in all spiritual things he has his snares to catch us.

Satan, who acts by an untiring power, and who will never let the saints rest till they are taken up to an everlasting rest in the bosom of Christ, is so powerful and subtle that he will often make the greatest and dearest mercies to become our greatest snares.

How should the consideration of these things make your soul say with the church, "Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountain of spices," and to love, and look, and long for the coming of Christ. Till you are taken up in the bosom of Christ, your comforts will not be full, pure and constant; till then Satan will still be dealing you blows and spreading snares

to entangle you; therefore you should always be crying out with the church, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Taken from: *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*

“Christ is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory”
Thomas Brooks

A Sower Went Out To Sow **(Mark 4:1 – 9)**

Russ Atmore

Scripture

Mark 4:1 – 9

Key Verse

“and he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Mark 4:9

Theme

Whenever Jesus preached to outsiders He always did so in parables (see Mark 4:11, 12, 34). Parables reflect the life of Jesus’ kingdom and they hold up our lives before that standard. They drive us to examine our own lives in the light of Jesus and His kingdom. The parable of the Sower and the Seed is probably the most well known parable. At the same time it is shocking in its application.

Exposition

Mark 4 opens with the Lord Jesus again at the sea and teaching. It says “again” simply because Jesus had done this before (see 2:13; 3:7). He is beside the Sea of Galilee, but we do not exactly where he was located. Due to the large crowd, Jesus gets into a boat and pushes off from the shore and then sitting in the boat, he begins to

teach the crowd about His kingdom. Mark tells us that Jesus was teaching many things in parables. The Sower and the Seed was one among many on this day that Jesus taught the crowd. Why did Mark only record this particular parable? Perhaps because of its penetrating revelatory nature! Parables have the power to work behind the scenes in the hearts and minds of the people. You might leave after having heard a sermon by Jesus and know that He was communicating just to you by the force of the parable. Parables hold us up for examination. At the same time, you might hear a parable and not make the connection because your heart was stubborn and hard, and you refuse to believe that Jesus was speaking to you. Such were the religious leaders of Jesus' day. In other words, you might come away saying that Jesus had told nothing but stories again. Jesus was a story-teller par excellence, but His role in the telling of the story was that ultimately He was the Judge and you would be judged by your response to the story or parable.

Jesus startles his hearers with the attention-getting words of "Listen, a sower went out to sow" (vs. 3). The usage of this word by Mark points to the fact that Jesus was not simply saying that there was a sower or farmer sowing his seed, but that you needed to hear the entire story to know what this sower did and what He represents. What does a sower sow? Seed, obviously! Where does he sow this seed? There are a number of options that Jesus provides. There is the path where the birds come down and eat the seed (vs. 4). There is rocky ground where there is not much soil so it immediately springs up promising much but delivering nothing (vs. 5). When the sun comes up the heat of the day withers the growth because there is no sustaining root (vs. 6). Other seed lands among the thorns, and as they grow together the thorns dominate and choke the seed so that it is barren (vs. 7). Then there is seed that lands on good soil which is rich and deep (vs. 8). The grain grows and produces a variety of harvests (some thirty fold, etc). The wide variety of landing places for the seed occurs because in ancient times the sower scattered the seed freely with his hand, this way and that. It was unavoidable that the seed should be scattered in a different locales.

Jesus closes His parable with the famous injunction to listen with ears wide open (vs. 9). If you have ears, and since we all have ears, we are called upon to do something about the parable. At this point the hearers are awakened that there must be some meaning to the parable. Some will see it and receive it as a story. Others will be perplexed (as were the disciples who perceive that there must be more to the story).

Application

The ability to respond to the parable determines who is spiritual or not. The interesting variety of the yield, some thirty fold, sixty fold, and hundredfold is what should grab the attention of the hearer. There is the change from singular (seed) to plural (seeds). This is an indication of the variety of hearts. The soil represents the human heart. Mathew's account (Matt. 13:1 – 23) points to the heart condition of the many hearers. The parables were used in fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9, 10, not that the hearers might understand and be saved, but that the hearers would stand condemned for their rejection of what was told them. It is crucial to understand this prophecy of Isaiah in the context of the Jews rejection of Christ in the first century. Their unwillingness to hear leads to an unwillingness to heed, and ultimately will lead to apostasy and doom.

These first nine verses set the stage for the penetrating analysis by the Lord Jesus of the human condition. We must always have our ears open to the word of Christ, and be ready to respond.

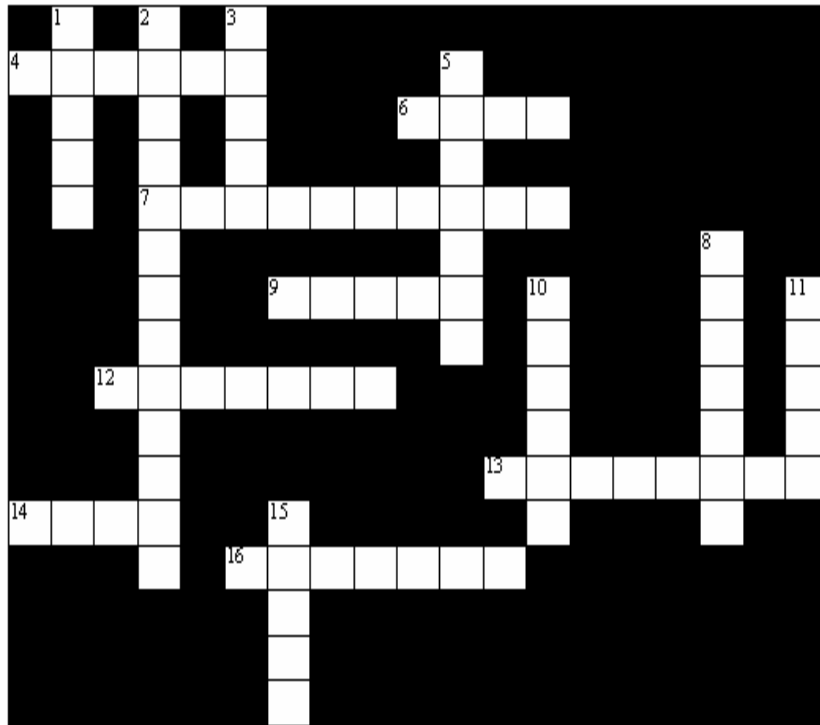
“The greatest temptation to come out of hell is live with no temptation.”

Samuel Rutherford

Bible Quiz

Kaitlin Atmore

New Testament People



Across

- 4. This Roman governor condemned Jesus
- 6. This man became known as Paul after Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus
- 7. Jesus visited the house of these sisters (2 names)
- 9. Christ
- 12. This disciple was a tax collector
- 13. He climbed a tree to see Jesus
- 14. He had a vision and wrote in down in the Book of Revelation

16. Jesus brought this man back to life

Down

1. The disciple Peter's other name

2. She found Jesus' tomb empty (2 words)

3. This disciple walked on water with Jesus

5. John the _____

8. This man was the first Christian stoned to death

10. This disciple was known as "Doubting _____"

11. This disciple betrayed Jesus

15. He tempted Jesus