

The Resurrection and Unbelief

Mark 16: 1-13 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The Resurrection

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. ² Very early on the first day of the week, **they *came to the tomb** when the sun had risen. ³ They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the **tomb**?” ⁴ Looking up, they *saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. ⁵ Entering the **tomb**, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. ⁶ And he *said to them, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. **He has risen; He is not here**; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. ⁷ But **go, tell** His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.’” ⁸ They went out and fled from the **tomb**, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

⁹ Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and **reported** to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹ When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they **refused to believe it**.

¹² After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. ¹³ They went away and **reported** it to the others, but **they did not believe them either**.

Introduction

What if, this morning, out of nowhere Jesus appeared and stood in our midst? Some of us would rejoice greatly; others may bow down and worship. More others may doubt their eyes whether He is real, or they are seeing a ghost.

We may not be much different from the folks in today’s text, after all. When Jesus was risen from the dead, the disciples refused to believe the testimony of the witnesses until they saw Him with their own eyes. Even when the risen Christ appeared in person in their midst, some of them doubted their eyes thinking that they were seeing a ghost.

Let’s dig in today’s text where we can learn a thing or two.

Contents

Very early on the first day of the week, they (three women) *came to the tomb (v. 2): Note here that they were carrying spices in their hands. They went to the tomb with one purpose: to anoint Jesus' body with spices (v. 1). Soon they discovered that the tomb was empty. Jesus wasn't there. He was gone.

I can draw an analogy here between the women and us. Like the women, some of us today would go to the wrong place looking for Jesus. Some of us would still carry spices in our hands looking for Jesus among the dead. *Let's go to the tomb*, you may say, to find Jesus. *Let's look for Him among the mortals*. But you won't find Him there. For instance, if you believe Jesus as a good moral teacher, or as a mere man, you won't find the true Jesus.

Why? Because Christ isn't there. Because He is not mortal. He is risen from the dead. He is alive. He is not just a good moral teacher, either. His resurrection and His immortality separate Christ from the rest of humans. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He is the Life eternal.

The lesson? If you seek Him, do not look for Jesus among the dead, among the mortals, or even the great men. Look for Him among the living. Among the resurrected. As God is the God of the living, so is Christ. He is risen. The same Christ brings us the good news: that we too will be resurrected. Resurrection is our hope. Resurrection day will be the day of eternal joy and gladness.

In verse 6, an angel of the Lord said to the three women,

Do not be amazed (v. 6): Do not be surprised when you can't find Jesus among the dead. Believe that He is risen. Believe in His resurrection. In fact, resurrection is nothing to be amazed about. It is nothing to Jesus. It is so natural. Did you know that during His ministry, Jesus raised the dead three times (young girl, son of a widow, Lazarus)? That was just the beginning. Later, He Himself rose from the dead. Nothing is impossible with God the Almighty. After all, if the God whom we serve and worship cannot raise the dead, we wouldn't believe in such a God, would we? Believe in the resurrection of Christ. Believe in yours, too. To those who refuse to believe in their own resurrection let along that of Christ, the day of reckoning is coming. For them, it will be the day of mourning, groaning, weeping, and fear. For eternity.

The angel spoke to the women,

He has risen; He is not here (v. 6): God has news for you this morning: *Christ has risen; He is not in the tomb*. By the way, if you look for a proof of Jesus' historical / bodily

resurrection, God says, *listen to the angel*. Believe in the testimony of the angel. Also, *listen to the women*. *Listen to the two men* who met the risen Christ on their way to Emmaus. *Listen to over 500 witnesses* as well to whom Jesus appeared in person (1 Corinthians 15:6). *Listen to Paul the Apostle*. One thing is common among these people: They are the witnesses of Christ's resurrection. Their testimonies are written in the Bible. That's all you got.

Well, if you want more tangible proof of His resurrection, in your favor, Jesus may appear to you in person. That would be glorious, wouldn't it? For most of us, however, God has given angels and witnesses, and their testimonies to hear and believe. We listen to the Gospel, for example, the written Word of God and believe in Christ's resurrection. We listen to the Word of God proclaimed—a.k.a. sermons—and believe in our own resurrection. Let me repeat: when it comes down to resurrection faith, God uses not science but relies on witnesses. E.g., *The sun had risen* (v. 2). How many of you did refuse to believe the truth that the Sun rises in the East until you actually saw it rise with your own eyes standing on the LBI beach with compass in your hand? For me, I believed in its rise in the East even long before I actually saw it rising in the East, because someone trustworthy told me so. God uses witnesses in the Bible to tell us the truth of resurrection.

So, the angel commanded the women to

go, tell His disciples (v. 7) **(of what you have witnessed here—Christ's resurrection!)**: So, Mary of Magdalene, one of the women, went to the disciples and told them so (v. 10). But they **refused to believe her account** (v. 11). On the same day, the Lord sent two more witnesses to the disciples with the same testimony: Christ is risen. But they did not believe the two men, either (v. 13). In a sense, I see the parallel between the disciples and some of our contemporaries who refuse to believe in Christ's resurrection.

Today, some folks refuse to believe in Christ's resurrection in the name of science, but let me tell you this. Such unbelief is nothing new: even long before we ever heard of the word 'science,' people still didn't believe Christ's resurrection. Proof? Christ's own disciples 2,000 years ago! Think of it: they are the ones who witnessed firsthand many miracles performed by their Master. Day after day for three years they saw miracle after miracle Jesus performed! Including three resurrections! Yet, they flatly refused to believe that Christ was risen.

Such stubbornness or foolishness, you may call it human nature. Perhaps, it has something to do with their little expectations: the disciples never expected or imagined seeing the Christ risen until it happened before their eyes. Neither did the women. Otherwise, why did the women bring spices to the tomb (v. 1)?

On the contrary, some folks out there never struggle with this issue of believing in the resurrection. I would call them truly blessed in Christ. Here's why: although they never met the risen Christ in person, even though they never had any special visions or dreams, and even though there's no scientific proof, they still believe in resurrection. All they did was to hear or read about the resurrection of Christ in the Bible, and they just believe it. To such folks, Jesus said: *Blessed are you who did not see, and yet believed* (John 20:29). If you believed in resurrection even if you have never seen the risen Christ, you are blessed. After all, if there's no resurrection, our faith is futile. I wouldn't be a Christian. In fact, we would be most pitied among all people.

One more thing, and I will be through. In today's text, I see **Jesus demonstrate kindness and patience** to His unbelieving disciples. Even today, the same Jesus appears to the believers and non-believers in a different form and different ways. E.g., The story of a Malaysian man to whom Jesus appeared as taxi driver in Saudi Arabia. This man was a Muslim. One day, he was on his pilgrimage to Mecca. In Saudi Arabia, at the airport, he took the cab. In their conversation, the driver asked the man if he knew Jesus. The man couldn't believe his ears! He was furious, thinking "Here I am on my pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia and this man tries to make me a Christian?!" He got off the cab, wrote down the license plate number, and called the religion police. When he called, they said, there's no record of such a driver or no license plate in the system as he described. This man was really confused. He ended his pilgrimage and came back home.

At home, one of his business partners was a Christian. One day, he was invited to his partner's house for dinner and when he entered the living room, he saw a portrait hanging on the wall. Lo and behold, it was the driver! The driver he saw in Saudi Arabia! He asked his Christian friend who's the man in the portrait. His friend said, "It is Jesus my Lord." Well, to make a long story short, the man eventually became a Christian due to his encounter with Jesus in a taxi. You never know how the risen Lord will appear to you.

Conclusion

Christ is risen. The stone was rolled away. The tomb is empty. He is alive among us. He loves you.

Believe in His resurrection. Confess with your mouth that He is your Lord. Walk with Him daily. Then, resurrection is yours. You will be forever blessed. Amen. Let's pray.