

## The Resurrection and Unbelief

### Mark 16: 1-13 New American Standard Bible (NASB 1995)

#### 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. <sup>2</sup> Very early on the first day of the week, **they \*came to the tomb** when the sun had risen. <sup>3</sup> They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the **tomb**?” <sup>4</sup> Looking up, they \*saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. <sup>5</sup> Entering the **tomb**, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.’” <sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> She went and **reported** to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. <sup>11</sup> When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they **refused to believe it**.

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

#### Introduction

What if Jesus appears out of nowhere in this sanctuary? Some of us will rejoice; others may fall down and worship. More others may doubt their eyes whether He is real or a ghost.

We may not be much different from the folks in today’s text. When Jesus was risen from the dead, His own followers refused to believe the testimony of the witnesses. Even when the risen Christ appeared in person in their midst, some of them thought that they were seeing a ghost.

Today’s text will teach us about two things. The Resurrection and unbelief. Let’s go to verse 2.

#### Content

**Very early on the first day of the week, they (three women) \*came to the tomb** (v. 2):  
The three women had one purpose in their minds: to anoint Jesus' body with spices (v. 1).  
But soon they discovered that the tomb was empty. Jesus wasn't there.

I wonder if I can draw an analogy here. Like the women, some of us today go to the wrong place looking for Jesus. Some of us still carry spices in our hands looking for Jesus among the dead. *Let's go to the tomb*, they say. *Let's find Him among the mortals*. But you won't find Him. For instance, if you believe Jesus as a mere man and as a good moral teacher, nothing less nothing more, you won't find the true Jesus.

Why? Because Christ isn't there. Because He is not mortal. He is risen. He is alive. His resurrection and His immortality separate Him from the rest of humans. He is the Resurrection. He is the Life. He is the Life eternal.

The lesson? Don't look for Jesus among the dead or in the tomb. Look for Him among the living. Among the resurrected. God is the God of the living. You too will be resurrected. Resurrection is your hope. Resurrection day is the day of joy and gladness.

Let's go to verse 6. To the three women, *the young man wearing a white robe* (an angel) said,

**Do not be amazed** (v. 6): Do not be surprised when you can't find Jesus among the dead. Believe in resurrection. In fact, resurrection is nothing to be amazed about. It is nothing to Jesus. During His ministry, He raised the dead three times (young girl, son of a widow, Lazarus). 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, the day of reckoning is coming. It will be the day of mourning, 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: Christ has risen; He is not in the tomb. By the way, if you look for a proof of Jesus' historical / bodily resurrection, *listen to the angel*, God says. *Listen to the women*. Listen to the two men. Listen to over 500 witnesses to whom Jesus appeared in person. That's all you got.

For your faith in resurrection, Jesus may appear to you in person. That would be glorious, wouldn't it? However, to most of us, God has given us His messengers and witnesses: we listen to them. We listen to the Gospel, the written Word of God. We listen to the Word proclaimed—sermons. Let me repeat: when it comes down to resurrection faith, God relies on witnesses not on scientific proof. E.g., *The sun had risen* (v. 2). How

many of you refused to believe the truth that the Sun rises from the East until you actually saw it rise with your own eyes standing on the beach with compass in your hand? For me, I believed in its rise in the East even long before I actually saw it, because someone trustworthy told me so.

**The Illustration:** Think of a **Courtroom**. The judge and the jury were not at the crime scene. They didn't see the event happen with their own eyes. So how do they determine the truth? They rely on the "preponderance of evidence" and the "credibility of witnesses." If you have multiple witnesses who have nothing to gain and everything to lose by telling the truth, the court accepts their testimony as fact.

**The Bridge:** Our faith isn't a "blind leap" into the dark. It is a step based on the most robust "courtroom" testimony in history. You weren't there when Jesus rose from the dead, but the witnesses were—and they were willing to die for what they saw.

The angel commanded the women in verse 7,

*go, tell His disciples (v. 7) (of what you have witnessed here):* Mary of Magdalene, one of the women, went to the disciples and told them (v. 10). But they **refused to believe it** (v. 11). The Lord sent two more witnesses to the disciples. Once again, they still did not believe the witnesses (v. 13). In a sense, I see the parallel between the disciples and some of our contemporaries who don't believe in Christ's resurrection. Today, people refuse to believe in Christ's resurrection in the name of science, but let me tell you this. It is nothing new: even long before we ever heard of the word 'science,' people still didn't believe it. Proof? The disciples in today's text. Think of it: they are the ones who witnessed many miracles by Jesus with their own eyes. Day after day for three years including the resurrections Jesus performed. Yet, they flat refused to believe that Christ was risen.

Such tendency, or such stubbornness, you may call it human nature. Perhaps, it has something to do with their little expectations. **The Illustration:** There is a famous psychological study called the "**Invisible Gorilla**." Participants are told to watch a video and count how many times a basketball is passed. They are so focused on the ball that they fail to see a person in a gorilla suit walk right through the middle of the court. Half the people miss it entirely because they weren't *expecting* to see it.

**The Bridge:** The disciples weren't "bad" or "stupid"; they were just looking for a "passed ball"—a dead body to anoint. They missed the "gorilla"—the miracle of the Resurrection—simply because their expectations were too small for a God who defeats death.

The disciples never expected or imagined seeing the risen Christ until it happened before their eyes. Neither did the women on the first Easter. Otherwise, why have they taken spices to the tomb (v. 1)?

On the contrary, there are some folks out there who never struggled with faith in the resurrection. They are the blessed bunch, Jesus calls. They are truly blessed in their faith in Christ, even though they never met the risen Christ in person, even though they never had any special visions or dreams. All they did was to hear or read about the resurrection of Christ in the Bible, and they just believed it. To such folks, Jesus said: Blessed are you who believe in resurrection without seeing! (John 20:29). After all, if there's no resurrection, our faith is futile. We would be most pitied among all people.

One more thing, and I will be through.

**Jesus is very kind and patient enough:** to appear in a different form and different ways at different times. **The Illustration:** During World War II, ships used "**Dazzle Camouflage.**" It didn't make the ship invisible; it used complex patterns to make the ship look like something else—perhaps a smaller boat or a different heading—so the enemy couldn't get a clear shot.

**The Bridge:** Jesus often uses a kind of "Divine Camouflage." He doesn't always arrive in a lightning bolt or a cloud of glory. He comes in the "different form." Let me tell you a story of a Malaysian man.

E.g., He was a Muslim on his pilgrimage to Mecca. In Saudi Arabia, he took the cab, and 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, 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 such a driver or no license plate in the system as he described. He was really confused. He ended his pilgrimage and went 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 he! The driver 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

We began by asking what we would do if Jesus appeared among us today. The answer is: He has. He has appeared in the testimony of the women, the records of the Word,

and the presence of the Spirit in this room. You don't need to see a ghost; you just need to stop looking at the empty well and start drinking from the Living Spring.

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

Invite Him today into your heart. Walk with Him daily. You will be forever blessed. Amen. Let's pray.