

# CHAPTER 16

In this chapter, we have a short account of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus: and the joys and triumphs which it furnished all believers with, will be very acceptable to those who sympathised and suffered with Christ in the foregoing chapters. Here is,

- I. Christ's resurrection notified by an angel to the women that came to the sepulchre to anoint him (v. 1-8).
- II. His appearance to Mary Magdalene, and the account she gave of it to the disciples (v. 9-11).
- III. His appearance to the two disciples, going to Emmaus, and the report they made of it to their brethren (v. 12, 13).
- IV. His appearance to the eleven with the commission he gave them to set up his kingdom in the world, and full instructions and credentials in order thereunto, (v. 14-18).
- V. His ascension into heaven, the apostles' close application to their work, and God's owning of them in it (v. 19, 20).

## MARK 16:1-8

### THE WOMEN AT THE SEPULCHRE

Never was there such a *sabbath* since the sabbath was first instituted as this was, which the first words of this chapter tell us was *now past*; during all this sabbath our Lord Jesus lay in the grave. It was *to him* a sabbath of *rest*, but a *silent* sabbath, it was to his disciples a melancholy sabbath, spent in tears and fears. Never were the sabbath services in the temple such an *abomination to God*, though they had been often so, as they were now, when the chief priests, who presided in them, had their hands full of blood, the blood of Christ. Well, this sabbath is over, and the first day of the week is the first day of a new world. We have here,

- I. The affectionate visit which the good women that had attended Christ, now made it to his sepulchre — not a *superstitious* one, but a *pious* one. They set out from their lodgings *very early in the morning*, at break of day,

or sooner; but either they had a long walk, or they met with some hindrance, so that it was *sun-rising* by the time they got to the sepulchre. They had *bought sweet spices* too, and came not only to *bedew* the dead body with their tears (for nothing could more renew their grief than this), but to *perfume* it with their *spices*, v. 1. Nicodemus had bought a very large quantity of *dry spices, myrrh and aloes*, which served to dry the wounds, and dry up the blood, ~~John~~ John 19:39. But these good women did not think that enough; they bought spices, perhaps of another kind, some perfumed oils, to *anoint him*. Note, The respect which others have showed to Christ's name, should not hinder us from showing our respect to it.

**II.** The care they were in about the rolling away of the stone, and the superseding of that care (v. 3, 4); *They said among themselves*, as they were coming along, and now drew near the sepulchre, *Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very great*, more than they with their united strength could move. They should have thought of this before they came out, and then discretion would have bid them not go, unless they had those to go with them, who could do it. And there was another difficulty much greater than this, to be got over, which they knew nothing of, to wit, a guard of soldiers set to *keep* the sepulchre; who, had they come before they were frightened away, would have frightened them away. But their gracious love to Christ carried them to the sepulchre; and see how by the time they came thither, both these difficulties were removed, both the *stone* which they *knew of*, and the *guard* which they *knew not of*. They *saw that the stone was rolled away*, which was the first thing that amazed them. Note, They who are carried by a holy zeal, to seek Christ diligently, will find the difficulties that lie in their way strangely to vanish, and themselves helped over them beyond their expectation.

**III.** The assurance that was given them by an angel, that the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead, and had taken leave of his sepulchre, and had left him there to tell those so who came thither to enquire after him.

**1.** They *entered into the sepulchre*, at least, a little way in, and saw that the body of Jesus was not there where they had left it the other night. He, who by his death undertook to pay our debt, in his resurrection took out our acquittance, for it was a fair and legal discharge, by which it appeared that his satisfaction was accepted for all the purposes for which it was

intended, and the matter in dispute was determined by an incontestable evidence that he was the Son of God.

2. They saw a *young man sitting on the right side* of the sepulchre. The angel appeared in the likeness of a *man*, of a *young man*; for angels, though created in the beginning, grow not *old*, but are always the same perfection of beauty and strength; and so shall glorified saints be, when they are *as the angels*. This angel was *sitting on the right hand* as they went into the sepulchre, *clothed with a long white garment*, a garment down to the feet, such as great men were arrayed with. The sight of him might justly have encouraged them, but they were *affrighted*. Thus many times that which should be matter of comfort to us, through our own mistakes and misapprehensions proves a terror to us.

3. He silences their fears by assuring them that here was cause enough for triumph, but none for trembling (v. 6); *He saith to them, Be not affrighted*. Note, As angels rejoice in the conversation of sinners, so they do also in the consolation of sinners. Be not affrighted, for,

(1.) “Ye are faithful lovers of Jesus Christ, and therefore, instead of being *confounded*, out to be *comforted*. *Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified*.” Note, The enquiries of believing souls after Christ, have a particular regard to him as *crucified* (<sup>400</sup>1 Corinthians 2:2), that they may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings. His being *lifted up from the earth*, is that which *draws all men unto him*. Christ's cross is the ensign to which the Gentiles seek. Observe, He speaks of Jesus as one that *was crucified*; “The thing is *past*, that scene is over, ye must not dwell so much upon the sad circumstances of his crucifixion as to be unapt to believe the joyful news of his resurrection. He was *crucified in weakness*, yet that doth not hinder but that he may be raised in power, and therefore ye that seek him, be not *afraid of missing* of him.” He *was* crucified, but he *is* glorified; and the shame of his sufferings is so far from lessening the glory of his exaltation, that that glory perfectly wipes away all the reproach of his sufferings. And therefore after his entrance upon his glory, he never drew any veil over his sufferings, nor was shy of having his cross spoken of. The angel here that proclaims his resurrection, calls him Jesus that *was crucified*. He himself owns (<sup>401</sup>Revelation 1:18), *I am he that liveth, and was dead*; and he appears in the midst of the praises of the heavenly host as a *Lamb that had been slain*, <sup>402</sup>Revelation 5:6.

(2.) “It will therefore be good news to you, to hear that, instead of anointing him dead, you may rejoice in him living. *He is risen, he is not here, not dead, but alive again. We cannot as yet show you him, but hereafter you will see him, and you may here see the place where they laid him. You see he is gone hence, not stolen either by his enemies or by his friends, but risen.*”

4. He orders them to give speedy notice of this to his disciples. Thus they were made the apostles of the apostles, which was a recompence of their affection and fidelity to him, in attending him on the cross, to the grave, and in the grave. They first came, and were first served; no other of the disciples durst come near his sepulchre, or enquire after him; so little danger was there of their coming by night to *steal him away*, that none came near him but a few women, who were not able so much as to *roll away the stone*.

(1.) They must tell the *disciples*, that *he is risen*. It is a dismal time with them, their dear Master is dead, and all their hopes and joys are buried in his grave; they look upon their cause as sunk, and themselves ready to fall an easy prey into the hands of their enemies, so that there remains no more spirit in them, they are perfectly at their wits' end, and every one is contriving how to shift for himself. “O, go quickly to them,” said the angel, “tell them that *their Master is risen*; this will put some life and spirit into them, and keep them from sinking into despair.” Note,

[1.] Christ is not ashamed to own his poor disciples, no, not now that he is in his exalted state; his preferment doth not make him shy of them, for he took early care to have it *notified* to them.

[2.] Christ is not extreme to mark what *they* do amiss, whose hearts are upright with him. The disciples had very unkindly deserted him, and yet he testified this concern for them.

[3.] Seasonable comforts shall be sent to those that are lamenting after the Lord Jesus, and he will find a time to manifest himself to them.

(2.) They must be sure to tell Peter. This is particularly taken notice of by this evangelist, who is supposed to have written by Peter's direction. If it were told the disciples, it would be told Peter, for, as a token of his repentance for disowning his Master, he still associated with his disciples; yet he is particularly named: *Tell Peter*, for,

[1.] It will be good news to him, more welcome to him than to any of them; for he is in sorrow for sin, and no tidings can be more welcome to true penitents than to hear of the resurrection of Christ, because he rose again for *their justification*.

[2.] He will be afraid, lest the joy of this good news do not belong to him. Had the angel said only, *Go, tell his disciples*, poor Peter would have been ready to sigh, and say, “But I doubt I cannot look upon myself as one of them, for I disowned him, and deserve to be disowned by him;” to obviate that, “Go to Peter by name, and tell him, he shall be as welcome as any of the rest to *see* him in Galilee.” Note, A sight of Christ will be very welcome to a true penitent, and a true penitent shall be very welcome to a sight of Christ, for there is joy in heaven concerning him.

(3.) They must appoint them all, and Peter by name, to give him the meeting in Galilee, as *he said unto you*, <sup>4152</sup>Matthew 26:32. In their journey down into Galilee they would have time to recollect themselves, and call to mind what he had often said to them there, that he should suffer and die, and *the third day be raised again*; whereas while they were at Jerusalem, among strangers and enemies, they could not recover themselves from the fright they had been in, nor compose themselves to the due entertainment of better tidings. Note,

[1.] All the meetings between Christ and his disciples are of his own appointing.

[2.] Christ never forgets his appointment, but will be sure to meet his people with the promised blessing in every place where he records his name.

[3.] In all meetings between Christ and his disciples, he is the most forward. *He goes before you*.

**IV.** The account which the women did bring of this to the disciples (v. 8); They *went out quickly*, and *ran from the sepulchre*, to make all the haste they could to the disciples, *trembling* and *amazed*. See how much we are enemies to ourselves and our own comfort, in not considering and mixing faith with that Christ hath said to us. Christ had often told them, that *the third day he would rise again*; had they given that its due notice and credit, they would have come to the sepulchre, expecting to have found him risen, and would have received the news of it with a joyful assurance,

and not with all this terror and amazement. But, being ordered to tell the disciples, because they were to tell it to all the world, they would not tell it to any one else, they showed not any thing of it to any man that they *met by the way*, for *they were afraid*, afraid it was too good news to be true. Note, Our disquieting fears often hinder us from doing that service to Christ and to the souls of men, which if faith and the *joy of faith* were strong, we might do.

## ◀◀ MARK 16:9-13

### CHRIST'S APPEARANCES

We have here a very short account of two of Christ's appearances, and the little credit which the report of them gained with the disciples.

**I.** He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to her first in the garden, which we have a particular narrative of, ◀◀ John 20:14. It was she *out of whom he had cast seven devils*; much was forgiven her, and much was given her, and done for her, and she *loved much*; and this honour Christ did her, that she was the first that saw him after his resurrection. The closer we cleave to Christ, the sooner we may expect to see him, and the more to see of him.

Now,

**1.** She brings notice of what she had seen, to the disciples; not only to the *eleven*, but to the rest that followed him, *as they mourned and wept*, v. 10. Now was the time of which Christ had told them, that they should *mourn and lament*, ◀◀ John 16:20. And it was an evidence of their great love to Christ, and the deep sense they had of their loss of him. But when their *weeping had endured a night* or two, comfort returned, as Christ has promised; *I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice*. Better news cannot be brought to disciples in tears, than to tell them of Christ's resurrection. And we should study to be comforters to disciples that are mourners, by communicating to them our experiences, and what we have *seen of Christ*.

**2.** They could not give credit to the report she brought them. They heard that *he was alive*, and had been seen of her. The story was plausible

enough, and yet *they believed not*. They would not say that she made the story herself, or designed to deceive them; but they fear that she is *imposed upon*, and that it was but a fancy that she *saw him*. Had they believed the *frequent* predictions of it from his own mouth, they would not have been now so incredulous of the report of it.

**II.** He appeared to two of the disciples, *as they went into the country*, v. 12. This refers, no doubt, to that which is largely related (~~☞~~ Luke 24:13, etc.), of which passed between Christ and the two disciples *going to Emmaus*. He is here said to have appeared to them in *another form*, in another dress than what he usually wore, in the form of a *traveller*, as, in the garden, in such a dress, that Mary Magdalene took him for the gardener; but that he had really his own countenance, appears by this, that *their eyes were holden, that they should not know him*; and when that restraint on *their eyes* was taken off, immediately they *knew him*, ~~☞~~ Luke 24:16-31. Now,

**1.** These *two* witnesses gave in their *testimony* to this proof of Christ's resurrection; *They went and told it to the residue*, v. 13. Being *satisfied* themselves, they were desirous to give their brethren the *satisfaction* they had, that they might be comforted as they were.

**2.** This did not gain credit with all; *Neither believed they them*. They suspected that their eyes also deceived them. Now there was a wise providence in it, the proofs of Christ's resurrection were given in thus *gradually*, and admitted thus *cautiously*, that so the assurance with which the apostles preached this doctrine afterward, when they ventured their all upon it, might be the more satisfying. We have the more reason to believe those who did themselves believe so slowly: had they swallowed it presently, they might have been thought *credulous*, and their testimony the less to be *regarded*; but their *disbelieving* at first, shows that they did not believe it afterward but upon a full conviction.

## ~~☞~~ MARK 16:14-18

### THE APOSTLES REPROVED AND COMMISSIONED

Here is,

**I.** The *conviction* which Christ gave his apostles of the truth of his resurrection (v. 14); He *appeared to them* himself, when they were all together, *as they sat at meat*, which gave him an opportunity to *eat and drink with them*, for their full satisfaction; see ~~400~~ Acts 10:41. And still, when he appeared to them, he *upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart*, for even at the general meeting in *Galilee*, *some doubted*, as we find ~~401~~ Matthew 28:17. Note, The evidences of the truth of the gospel are so full, that those who receive it not, may justly be *upbraided* with their unbelief; and it is owing not to any weakness or deficiency in the proofs, but to the *hardness of their heart*, its senselessness and stupidity. Though they had not till now seen him themselves, they are justly blamed *because they believed not them who had seen him after he was risen*; and perhaps it was owing in part to the *pride of their hearts*, that they did not; for they thought, “If indeed he be risen, to whom should he delight to do the honour of showing himself but to us?” And if he *pass them by*, and show himself to *others* first, they cannot believe it is he. Thus many disbelieve the doctrine of Christ, because they think it *below them* to give credit to such as he had chosen to be the witnesses and publishers of it. Observe, It will not suffice for an excuse of our infidelity in the great day, to say, “*We did not see him* after he was risen,” for we ought to have believed the testimony of those who did see him.

**II.** The *commission* which he gave them to set up his kingdom among men by the preaching of his *gospel*, the glad tidings of reconciliation to God through a Mediator. Now observe,

**1.** *To whom* they were to preach *the gospel*. Hitherto they had been sent only to *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, and were forbidden to go into *the way of the Gentiles*, or into any city of the Samaritans; but now their commission is enlarged, and they are authorized to *go into all the world*, into all parts of the world, the habitable world, and to *preach the gospel* of Christ to *every creature*, to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; to every human creature that is capable of receiving it. “Inform them concerning Christ, the history of *his life*, and *death*, and *resurrection*; instruct them in the *meaning* and *intention* of these, and of the advantages which the children of men have, or may have, hereby; and invite them, without exception, to come and share in them. This is *gospel*. Let this be *preached* in all places, to all persons.” These eleven men could not themselves

preach it to all the world, much less to *every creature* in it; but they and the other disciples, seventy in number, with those who should afterward to be added to them, must *disperse* themselves several ways, and, wherever they went, carry the gospel along with them. They must send *others* to those places whither they could not *go themselves*, and, in short, make it the business of their lives to send those glad tidings *up and down the world* with all possible fidelity and care, not as an amusement or entertainment, but as a solemn message from God to men, and an appointed means of making men happy. “Tell as many as you can, and bid them tell others; it is a message of universal concern, and *therefore*, ought to *have* a universal welcome, because it *gives* a universal welcome.”

**2.** What is the *summary of the gospel* they are to preach (v. 16); “Set before the world life and death, good and evil. Tell the children of men that they are all in a state of misery and danger, *condemned* by their prince, and *conquered* and *enslaved* by their enemies.” This is supposed in their being *saved*, which they would not need to be if they were not *lost*. “Now go and tell them,”

**(1.)** “That if they *believe the gospel*, and give up themselves to be Christ's disciples; if they *renounce* the devil, the world, and the flesh, and be *devoted* to Christ as their prophet, priest, and king, and to God in Christ a their God in covenant, and evidence by their constant adherence to this covenant their sincerity herein, they *shall be saved* from the guilt and power of sin, it shall not *rule* them, it shall not *ruin* them. He that is a true Christian, shall be saved through Christ.” *Baptism* was appointed to be the *inaugurating* rite, by which those that embraced Christ owned him; but it is here put rather for the *thing signified* than for the sign, for Simon Magus *believed* and was *baptized*, yet was not *saved*, <sup><483></sup>Acts 8:13. *Believing with the heart, and confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus* (<sup><500></sup>Romans 10:9), seems to be much the same with this here. Or thus, We must *assent* to gospel-truths, and *consent* to gospel-terms.

**(2.)** “*If they believe not*, if they receive not the record God gives concerning his Son, they cannot expect any other way of salvation, but must inevitably perish; *they shall be damned*, by the sentence of a *despised* gospel, added to that of a broken law.” And even this is *gospel*, it is good news, that nothing else but unbelief shall damn men, which is a sin against the remedy. Dr. Whitby here observes, that they who hence infer “that the infant seed of believers are not capable of baptism, because they cannot

believe, must hence also infer that they cannot be saved; *faith* being here more expressly required to salvation than to baptism. And that in the latter clause baptism is omitted, because it is not simply the want of baptism, but the contemptuous neglect of it, which makes men guilty of damnation, otherwise infants might be damned for the mistakes or profaneness of their parents.”

**3.** What power they should be endowed with, for the confirmation of the doctrine they were to preach (v. 17); *These signs shall follow them that believe*. Not that all who believe, shall be able to produce these signs, but some, even as many as were employed in propagating the faith, and bringing others to it; for signs are intended *for them that believe not*; see ~~442~~ 1 Corinthians 14:22. It added much to the glory and evidence of the gospel, that the preachers not only wrought miracles themselves, but conferred upon others a power to work miracles, which power *followed* some of them that believed, wherever they went to preach. They shall do wonders *in Christ's name*, the same name into which they were baptized, in the virtue of power derived from him, and fetched in by prayer. Some particular signs are mentioned;

**(1.)** They shall *cast out devils*; this power was more common among Christians than any other, and lasted longer, as appears by the testimonies of Justin Martyr, Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian Minutius Felix, and others, cited by Grotius on this place.

**(2.)** They shall *speak with new tongues*, which they had never learned, or been acquainted with; and this was both a *miracle* (a miracle *upon the mind*), for the confirming of the truth of the gospel, and a *means* of spreading the gospel among those nations that had not heard it. It saved the preachers a vast labour in learning the languages; and, no doubt, they who by *miracle* were made *masters of languages*, were *complete* masters of them and of all their native elegancies, which were proper both to *instruct* and *affect*, which would very much recommend them and their preaching.

**(3.)** They shall *take up serpents*. This was fulfilled in Paul, who was not hurt by the *viper* that *fastened on his hand*, which was acknowledged a great miracle by the barbarous people, ~~445~~ Acts 28:5, 6. They shall be kept unhurt by that *generation of vipers* among whom they live, and by the malice of the *old serpent*.

(4.) If they be compelled by their persecutors to *drink any deadly poisonous thing, it shall not hurt them*: of which very thing some instances are found in ecclesiastical history.

(5.) They shall not only be preserved from hurt themselves, but they shall be enabled to do good to others; *They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*, as multitudes had done by their master's *healing touch*. Many of the elders of the church had this power, as appears by ~~5084~~ James 5:14, where, as an instituted sign of this miraculous healing, they are said to *anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord*. With what assurance of success might they go about executing their commission, when they had such credentials as these to produce!

## ~~4183~~ MARK 16:19-20

### THE ASCENSION

Here is,

1. Christ *welcomed* into the *upper world* (v. 19): *After the Lord had spoken* what he had to say to his disciples, he *went up into heaven*, in a cloud; which we have a particular account of (~~4109~~ Acts 1:9), and he had not only an admission, but an abundant *entrance*, into his kingdom there; he was *received up*, received in state, with loud acclamations of the heavenly hosts; and he *sat on the right hand of God*: sitting in a posture of *rest*, for now he had finished his work, and a posture of *rule*, for now he took possession of his kingdom; he sat *at the right hand of God*, which denotes the sovereign dignity he is advanced to, and the universal agency he is entrusted with. Whatever God does concerning us, gives to us, or accepts from us, it is *by his Son*. Now he is glorified with the glory he had before the world.

2. Christ *welcomed* in this *lower world*; his being *believed on in the world*, and *received up into glory*, are put together, ~~5086~~ 1 Timothy 3:16.

(1.) We have here the apostles working diligently for him; they *went forth, and preached every where* far and near. Though the doctrine they preached, was *spiritual* and *heavenly*, and directly contrary to the *spirit* and *genius* of the world, though it met with abundance of opposition, and was utterly destitute of all secular supports and advantages, yet the

preachers of it were neither *afraid* nor *ashamed*; they were so industrious in spreading the gospel, that within a few years the sound of it *went forth into the ends of the earth*, ~~see~~ Romans 10:18.

(2.) We have here God *working* effectually *with them*, to make their labours successful, by *confirming the word with signs following*, partly by the miracles that were wrought upon the *bodies* of the people, which were divine seals to the Christian doctrine, and partly by the influence it had upon the *minds* of the people, through the operation of the Spirit of God, see ~~see~~ Hebrews 2:4. These were properly *signs following* the word — the reformation of the world, the destruction of idolatry, the conversion of sinners, the comfort of saints; and these signs still follow it, and that they may do so more and more, for the honour of Christ and the good of mankind, the evangelist prays, and teaches us to say *Amen*. Father in heaven, thus let thy name be hallowed, and let thy kingdom come.