

They Still Didn't Believe: Faith is a Choice

Scriptures for Today

Mark 16:1-15

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. 2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. 3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? 4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. 5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. 7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. 8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. 9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. 10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. 12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. 14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. 15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Introduction — Easter and the Resurrection

Easter is about one thing: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and rose again the third day. That is one of the greatest events in the history of this world right now.

Most people that won't believe think, if they had been there, they would have believed. They think if they saw the empty tomb or saw Jesus alive, there would be no doubt at all. They believe faith would be automatic IF they could only see it with their own physical eyes.

But the Bible shows us something very different than what these people think would happen. I want to show you today that the people who were there, who heard the reports, and even those who saw Him, still struggled with unbelief. That tells you something important about human nature.

They Heard — And Didn't Believe

The Gospel of Luke has 24 chapters. In the last chapter of the book of Luke, we see the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the third day from his death, women came to the tomb of Jesus. They found the stone rolled away, they entered in, and found NOT the body of Jesus. Two men stood by them and told them: "HE IS NOT HERE. HE IS RISEN."

These two men, angels, told them to remember what Jesus had already told you. Jesus had already told them directly, before He died, that He would be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and arise from the dead on the third day. This was the third day. They remember His words and went to tell the apostles of Jesus Christ. Watch what happens here.

Luke 24:10–11

It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. 11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

These women came and told the disciples exactly what happened. They gave them the truth. They told them Jesus was alive. And what was the response? The Bible says it seemed like idle tales or fairy tale. That means they thought it was nonsense. They dismissed it and did not believe it. So, THEY HEARD and didn't BELIEVE.

They Were Told Clearly — Still Didn't Believe

Mark 16:9-11

Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. 10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

They did not just hear a rumor. They heard that Jesus was alive and that He had been seen. That is very clear information right there. Just as you can see the word of God today with your very own eyes.

"And she (Mary Magdalene) went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept." She tells them that He's alive. She tells them that she has seen Him. And yet the Bible says they believed not. That means this was not a lack of information. This was a refusal to believe what they heard.

Jesus Himself had already told them what would happen. But they didn't believe Him and they aren't believing Mary Magdalene either. And then they won't believe the other women either.

So multiple people up to this point, after Jesus arose from the dead, have told the disciples who were previously WITH Jesus. And they won't believe. After all the miracles they had seen with

their very own eyes, done by Jesus, they still won't believe He's risen from the dead. They had seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. But they won't believe.

Multiple Witnesses — Still No Belief

Look at the very next verses in Mark 16 with me. Watch this. You're going to see more witnesses telling them the same thing.

Mark 16:12–13

After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

Now there are multiple witnesses. Different people are saying the same thing. The message is consistent. Jesus is alive. And still, they did not believe. You might be here today and not believe that Jesus died, was buried, and arose from the dead.

Jesus could show up here right now and you still wouldn't believe in Him. And you might be thinking, "Oh no, not me." Well His very own disciples who were with Him wouldn't believe He was risen from the dead! People are telling them that have seen Him. He's alive. He's risen. But they just won't believe it. But watch what happens next in Mark 16.

Jesus Rebukes Their Unbelief

Mark 16:14

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

Now Jesus Himself appears to the 11 disciples and rebukes them. "He upbraided them" or is telling them how wrong they are to not believe. They did not believe the witnesses. Eye witnesses at that. They saw Jesus with their own eyes. He spoke to them. Those witnesses came and told them, and they wouldn't believe it.

The problem was not lack of evidence. The problem was hardness of heart. Sometimes people harden their hearts so much that it doesn't matter what you tell them. For example, you can tell people that the earth is not flat. They can see all the evidence with their very own eyes, and yet they won't believe it. They will still believe the world is flat.

Another example. You can tell people that believing, trust, or faith IN Jesus is the only way to receive the gift of everlasting life BUT they will still say you must say a prayer to be saved. They will say that you must ask to be saved even though the greatest witness of all, the Word of God, says to believe only and receive everlasting life in that exact moment. They just won't believe.

Why? Because a hardened heart won't believe. You can have and see all the evidence in the world. You can give them proof. They won't believe it. Atheists who don't believe there's a God of all creation can see all the proof with their own eyes, but they won't believe it. Hardened hearts and stiff necks.

Now watch what happens next. They see Him. Surely they will believe when they see Him with their own eyes.

They Saw Him — And Still Doubted

Matthew 28:16-18

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

This is the most powerful part. They all saw Him. They were looking at Jesus Christ alive after the resurrection. And still, some of them doubted. That means seeing is not enough for many people. Jesus told them. Others told them. Jesus shows up to them in person. And they still doubt and won't believe.

Thomas — I Will Not Believe

John 20:24-25

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Thomas is just like the others. After the disciples believe, they tell Thomas that Jesus is alive. "We have seen the Lord." Thomas makes it very clear. "Except I shall see, I will not believe." He has to see it with his own eyes. That's a decision that he made. God doesn't make you believe. God doesn't force you to believe.

The Bible shows us belief is not automatic. It is a choice. And not believing the word of God is sin. And many times, we won't believe what God tells us. His very own disciples, the ones closest to Him, would not believe.

Why Didn't They Believe?

They had evidence. They had witnesses. They had Scripture. They even had Jesus in front of them. But the issue was not evidence. The issue was their heart. Jesus said they were slow of heart to believe.

Luke 24:25-27

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

The entire Bible tells us all about Jesus Christ. He says so right there. But some people won't believe that either. Jesus is THE only way to heaven. Jesus is THE only way to life everlasting. He says so over and over again in the Bible. Will you just simply believe Him?

Listen please: Jesus died for all your sins. He was buried. His soul was not left in hell. And He arose from the dead on the third day victorious over death and hell. He fully paid for all of our sins. And you MUST believe that to be saved. Don't harden your heart or stiffen your neck when you hear the word of God. Just believe it quickly. Don't be slow to believe.

The Resurrection Does Not Force Faith

This is what Easter shows. Jesus rose from the dead. He was dead. He died. Three days and three nights later, He arose from the dead. He arose in that same but glorified body. The tomb was empty. People saw Him. And still, not everyone believed. That means the resurrection does not force belief on anyone. You get a choice.

Some worshipped. Some doubted. Same moment. Same evidence. Different response. That means belief is a choice. Every one of us in here are different. You get a choice. You get the choice of heaven or hell. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Simply believe IN Him alone for salvation, and He will save you in an instant.

You can believe that or not. Today, I hope you'll believe that. Don't be foolish. Don't be slow of heart to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Practical Applications

1. **Hearing the truth is not enough.** The disciples heard and still did not believe.
2. **Seeing proof is not enough.** They saw Jesus and still doubted.
3. **Belief is a decision.** You choose how you respond to the truth.

Do not wait for more evidence. The truth has already been given. Don't be one of those people that need more evidence. God has already showed you enough. He gave you life.

Conclusion

On that first Easter, the greatest miracle in history had just happened. Jesus was alive. The tomb was empty. The proof was there.

TRUE WORDS
Baptist Church 
Revelation 21:5

Topical Sermon

Mark 16:1-15

And still some did not believe. That means the question today is not about evidence. The question is simple.

Will you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

Let's pray.