

Lesson 7

The Resurrection of Our Lord

The Holy Gospel: Mark 16:1–8

Mark's account has been the Church's Easter Gospel from its early centuries. It is concise, but provides all the basic facts. Mark identified three women—the same ones he mentioned earlier as having served Jesus in Galilee, having watched at the cross, and having witnessed His entombment. Matthew named only two; Luke added Joanna and referred to “the others with them.” They had purchased *arōmata*, liquid spices, the night before, and had risen before sunup to go and complete the burial. There was still some element of urgency in their minds, for they needed to complete the task before the onset of decomposition would make it impossible. They were so preoccupied with their preparations that they didn't think of the heavy stone that blocked the entrance to the tomb until they were approaching the garden. The disciples and the women evidently knew nothing at this time about the request of the chief priests for a guard and a seal, which had been approved.

The stone—*lithos*, not *petros*—was a hewn, flat, circular slab, which stood upright in a groove outside the tomb. It could be rolled away up a slight grade and held in place with a block to allow entry and, unblocked, easily rolled down again to the low spot in the groove, where it prevented entry. Matthew says an angel came and removed the stone and sat on it. Evidently it lay flat on the ground near the entry.

The women were confronted by an angel messenger. The NIV and the ESV say they were “alarmed”; the King James Version (KJV), “frightened”; the Revised Standard Version (RSV), “amazed”; the NEB, “dumbfounded.” The Greek verb allows all of these, but the last probably describes their state of mind best.

107. Identify five elements that make up the angel's Easter message to these dumbfounded women. What does each of these elements say to us for our own Christian faith?

108. Only Mark has “tell His disciples *and Peter*.” Why would it be Mark who would include that specification of Peter? What is the significance of the angel's mentioning Peter specifically?

Before His suffering, Jesus had told His disciples, “After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee” (Mark 14:28). Now they were reminded of this. Later, in Galilee, Jesus appeared to, and interacted with, all of His faithful followers.

109. How many saw Him at the same time on that occasion? (See 1 Corinthians 15:6.) Why was it important that the risen Jesus was seen by all the faithful as they were gathered together?

The women were seized with “trembling and astonishment” as they left the tomb. *Ekstasis* refers to a state of mind beyond self-control. They were still dumbfounded because of the awesome experience and its importance. At first they said nothing, probably because the disciples were not all in one place. Later, when they were all together, the women reported what they had seen and heard, as they had been commanded to do.

The Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 25:6–9

Isaiah 24 ends with the promise that “the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings on the earth, on the earth. . . for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem” (vv. 21, 23). These surely were reassuring words. Assyria had conquered the Northern Kingdom, Israel, and had deported major elements of the population for settlement elsewhere. Her armies then pressed southward into Judah, overwhelming its northern villages. Jerusalem itself was threatened. Isaiah steadfastly prophesied that Jerusalem would be saved, and encouraged its people and their leaders to trust in the Lord instead of political alliances.

In chapter 25, the prophet praises the Lord for this assured deliverance. Its first verses use terminology that called to mind the Lord’s strength in fighting for Israel in the destruction of Jericho and the conquest of Canaan, and His mercy toward Israel in settling them in the Promised Land. Verses 6–9, the heart of the chapter, gives the praise an eschatological, universal thrust.

110. Which mountain was Isaiah referring to with “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine”?

111. What is the “covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations”? What is especially striking about the fact that Isaiah says that on this mountain, the Lord of hosts “will swallow up death forever”?

112. For whom will the sovereign Lord wipe away the tears from their faces and take away their reproach? (See Revelation 21:1–4.)

113. What impact is added by the prophet’s ending with “for the LORD has spoken”?

114. How does this Old Testament Lesson tie in with today’s Holy Gospel?

The lesson ends with a short song of praise that displays the attitude of all who have been tested and have learned that the Lord's promises are sure and certain. Read the words aloud together: "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation!"

The Epistle for the Day: 1 Corinthians 15:1–11

1 Corinthians 15 is the Bible's great "resurrection chapter." It gives us detailed instruction about the event that is the keystone in the arch of our Christian faith and the foundation of our own living hope.

The world to which Paul was commissioned to bring the Gospel of Jesus was shaped by Greek culture and philosophy. The traditional world view of Greek thought was one of dualism, which saw the realm of spirit as essential reality and the material world as no more than its temporary, imperfect, even evil, reflection—a dimension in which the spirit operated, or was "imprisoned," for a time. To the Greek mind, the concept of the immortality of the soul or spirit made sense, but the idea of a resurrection of a material body not only did *not* make sense, but was seen as undesirable. As the verse that follows this pericope indicates, some of the Corinthian Christians were denying the possibility of a resurrection of the dead.

This dualistic worldview is not peculiar to the ancient Greek world. The Eastern religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, also see spirit as the ultimate reality, and speak of earthly incarnations and reincarnations as the means by which individuals move upward toward absorption into the universal spirit. The New Age movement in our own society also focuses on the spirit and incorporates ideas of reincarnation into its philosophy.

The Christian faith is decidedly not dualistic. Christian teaching reflects the Genesis account as it sees God's creation of the material world, and also our human physicality, as good—but corrupted by sin. God's action in Christ was not just to rescue *souls* from a material world, but to rescue *people*, body and soul, from their bondage to sin and death. The creeds reflect this with "I believe in the resurrection of the body." The Christian hope in Christ is for continued personal identity as human beings, not just immortality as spirits. The Bible speaks of our being given new bodies like that of the risen Jesus, which will be just right for life in the new heaven and new earth in which righteousness will dwell (see 1 Corinthians 15:51–57; Philippians 3:20–21).

Since the Christian hope is based directly on the saving work of the Son of God, Paul began his instruction about the resurrection of the dead with a review of some of the evidence to support the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. He reminded his readers that they had received, and had taken their stand on, the Good News of Jesus, which he had preached to them. But he wanted them to know that it is not enough to *have* received and to *have* believed. The faith must be continued and applied to all aspects of life.

115. What happens if we do not "hold fast to the Word"? How may we get a firmer grip on the Word and its saving message to us?

116. Why did Paul recount for his readers the appearances of the risen Jesus to various individuals and groups? Why did Paul include the fact that once Jesus appeared to more than 500 of His disciples at one time? Why did Paul end, for emphasis, with his own personal experience with the risen Jesus?

117. What point did Paul make about life with God and service to God by using himself, his calling and service as an apostle, as an example? Why is it often true in the life of the Church that the great champions for Christ are those who come to faith and life in Him only through a great personal struggle? How may we grow in our awareness of the presence of our living Lord in our daily lives?