



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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Jump Start # 1065

Mark 16:9-11 *“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. She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.”*

Mark gives us a sad picture of what was taking place the days after the death of Jesus. The apostles were together. They were weeping and mourning. It seems that their world had ended. Then reports came in. First, from Mary Magdalene and then the two men walking on the road to Emmaus, they had seen Jesus. He was alive. They couldn't believe it. There are several lessons here.

First, the credibility of this text. Most Bibles will footnote this section of Mark, or off set it in brackets, with a note that these verses are not in the oldest manuscripts (MSS). The oldest manuscripts are as close to the originals as we can get. There are many places where the oldest manuscripts are missing things. This has cause some to wonder if people later added things to the Bible. Those manuscripts are OLD. For centuries they were not housed in climate controlled glass cases. They were handled, read, copied and passed around. Those manuscripts were scrolls. It makes sense that the last pages would be the first to go. Later in this chapter Mark records Jesus' words about baptism. Tossing this page out as something that was added later, removes the call to be baptized. There are plenty of other verses that show the necessity of baptism. There is plenty of other textual evidence that supports these verses. The evidence is there. These verses belong.

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Second, Jesus first appeared to Mary. In the first century world, a woman's word wasn't very credible. In court, a woman's word wasn't enough to convict. If someone was making all of this up, they would have had Jesus seen by prominent people, who would have been men. The fact that Jesus first appeared to a woman shows the authenticity of the story. Mary doesn't matter. What Mary says doesn't count. It does to God. It says this, because this is the way it happened.

Third, the pitiful apostles were all doubters. We give Thomas a lot of grief, calling him, "Doubting Thomas," but the whole lot were doubters. Jesus had stated that He would be raised. Now two independent reports, from two different places, attest to that. They wouldn't believe. Doubt and fear go together. Those two can blind us to what is so obvious and before us. Doubt closes our minds. Doubt gives up. Doubt refuses to see proof. For the apostles, their world was over. The lessons about the coming kingdom, the prophecies about the son of man sitting on David's throne-gone. Over. Jesus was dead and in their minds He remained in the grave. Hope was vanished. What would they do now? Go back to their old lives? What about all those miracles? What about all those lessons? What was the point? They heard Him forgive sins? Wasn't He God? Were the Jews right? How could He die? Doubt and fear can take us into a really dark hole. It's hard to climb out. Some never do. With doubts come questions. The "why's" and "how come's" follow doubt. If those are not answered seriously, the towel is usually thrown in. People give up. They are overcome with doubt. I see this today with some people. Our jobs are not to suppress questions, but to answer them. We need to give real answers to real questions. Some people have hard hitting questions. We may be afraid of their questions. It could be our own doubts coming out. Let them ask. Let them ask anything. Find the Bible answers. Be honest. God would not leave the apostles in doubt. Soon after this, Jesus showed Himself to the apostles. Thomas wasn't there. We are not told why. His love and doubts might have forced him to be alone. He missed Jesus. Tomorrow we will follow what Thomas did.

Fourth, the apostles were in the position that their audiences would be. Witnesses came to the apostles with reports of seeing the resurrected Jesus. At this point, all the apostles had was their word. Witnesses reported. They had to believe. They couldn't. Weeks later, these same apostles become the witnesses. They will tell the world about the resurrected Christ. The world will have to believe their reports. The apostles learned and experienced what it was like to have nothing but the reports of others. Today, that's where we are. We believe, not because we saw, but because we believe the reports of witnesses. We believe what John said when he wrote that they seen, heard, and touched with their hands the Word of life. Believing credible witnesses. Believing the New Testament account. That's where our faith is. That's exactly what the apostles had to deal with.

I believe. What powerful words those are. In the early days of the church, some would be given a chance to deny those words. When they didn't they were tossed to the lions or tied to a stake and set afire. Even in death, they refused to change their minds. The pain of torture was not greater than the conviction of their hearts. I believe. I believe when others are shouting a different story. I believe when the tide of public thought puts me in the minority. I believe when others accuse me of being narrow. I believe.

Powerful words, I believe. I believe changes me. I believe influences my choices. I believe defines me. I believe.

Roger Shouse

