

Chapter 91

"Why seek ye the Living, among the dead?"

Matthew 28 v 1

Matthew 28 vv 5-8

Mark 16 vv 1-8

Luke 24 vv 1-10

That same morning when the keepers fled to Jerusalem, a few women were hurrying towards the sepulchre. They are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and a few other women. They had provided for the Lord Jesus while He had been going about preaching. They believed in Him. They had stayed until the very end near the cross. They saw how their beloved Master suffered. They saw how He died. They saw where He was buried. Then they had departed with hearts full of grief. Friday evening they had quickly bought some spices, but on the Sabbath day they had rested.

Now they are on their way to the tomb. They want to embalm the body of their Master. That is the last thing they can do for Him.

Had they known that the tomb was sealed and that Roman warriors were keeping watch, they would certainly have stayed at home. The watch had been set however after the women had departed, so they had no reason to think otherwise than that the stone was rolled before the grave and that was that! Now they were walking in the early morning twilight towards the sepulchre. All at once they say to each other: "Who shall roll us away the stone ... ?"

Oh, they hadn't given that a thought when they set out. But now it comes to their minds. They lacked the strength to dislodge that

heavy stone. That is work for men, not for women. Yes, that is a problem. How will they solve it? ... Yet on they walk.

When they get close to the sepulchre however, they see that the stone IS rolled away. Well, how ever has that come about?

An anxious thought arises within them. Would His enemies have broken open the tomb? Would the enemies of Jesus have stolen the body?

One of the women, Mary Magdalene, turns round at the sight and runs quickly back to Jerusalem to tell it to the disciples (John 20 v 2).

The other women go further and very soon come by the grave. Yes, the stone has been rolled away. They look at each other. Timidly they approach the opened sepulchre and step within.

There they start suddenly, for they see in the sepulchre two angels in shining garments (Luke 24). They become very frightened.

"Fear not ye," says the friendly voice of one of the angels, "for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified."

No, they have no need to fear and tremble like the keepers, for it is Jesus they are after.

The angel then continues: "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." and, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

After that the heavenly messenger points



The women at the open sepulchre

to the empty place and says: "Come see the place where the Lord lay. 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."

What joyful tidings for those mourning women! ... Yes, they are still rather afraid, and yet their souls are filled with great joy. Their Master lives. He is risen!

Look, there they hurry away. Very likely they left their spices and ointments standing by the tomb. They did not need them any more.

Luke 24 vv 11 and 12

John 20 v 3-10

In dull despondency the disciples are sitting together. Their Master is dead. He is buried, it is all over! They really had believed, that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, but ... now?

... They shrug their shoulders dejectedly. They no longer know what to think. Fearful doubts fill their hearts. Have they after all been deceived? Has everything, everything then been lies and deception? ... Deep in their souls a voice cries "No! No!" But ... when they look at this terrible ending, then ...? Again they shrug their shoulders, disheartened.

Yet they cannot become angry. Oh yes, for a moment they had been upset by Jesus' strange behaviour in the garden of Gethsemane, but that is all passed. Now deep sorrow fills their hearts. Tears well up in their eyes. Tears of grief, tears of sadness.

All of a sudden, however, they are shaken out of their gloomy meditation. Mary Magdalene comes in and brings them the news that the tomb is opened, that the stone is rolled away from the door.

Immediately Peter and John set out.

THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

- NEW TESTAMENT -

They must see this. They must know more about this. Peter rushes in front, driven by a secret alarm. What can have happened to the body of his Master? ... Stolen? ... He runs faster than John, and is soon a good way in front of him.

But the nearer Peter comes to the sepulchre, the slower his paces become. John catches up with him at last, runs past him and so arrives notwithstanding at the sepulchre first.

Now, why does Peter reduce his speed? Oh, you have some idea why, haven't you? Should he, who three times had denied his Master, run so fast now? ... After all, he "knew Him not"? ... Oh, the gnawing voice of his conscience made him bow his head in shame and involuntarily he slowed his steps. He does not turn back, however, but walks on.

John bends down as he reaches the opening and looks around searchingly. He sees the empty place; he sees the linen clothes; but he does not see the angels, though they were indeed present.

Peter, coming up to him, also bends down, looks, and enters the sepulchre. Peter does not see the angels either. When Peter has gone in, John follows. Look, there stand both men in silence.

They do not see a disorderly sight. The fine linen cloth in which their Master had been wrapped by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus is not lying untidily on the ground. On the contrary, everything is in order. The linen clothes are rolled up and lie at the foot end. The napkin which had been wrapped about Jesus' head is placed neatly apart at the head end. All this makes a deep impression upon John.

In the gospel according to John it says that he saw it and believed. Some say that he

believed that the body of Jesus was taken away, but there was no longer any need for him to believe that, for he could see that. After all, the grave was empty. Others say that he believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. And that is no doubt the case.

A little later they both return to Jerusalem, sunk deep in thought.

Mark 16 vv 9 and 10

John 20 vv 11-18

Close to the sepulchre stands a woman, weeping bitterly. That woman is ... Mary Magdalene. Whether she went there at the same time as Peter and John, or whether she came later alone, we cannot say. When both the disciples have left however, she still stands there.

She is weeping warm tears of grief. Oh, now that her Master is dead, she has lost everything. Formerly she had been a very unhappy woman, in Luke chapter 8 verse 2 it says that seven devils went out of her. But this pitiable woman had been loosed of those unclean spirits by the Lord Jesus. At the command of the Son of God the seven devils had had to release her. So it is no wonder that she loved the Lord fervently with all her soul.

Now her Master is dead. And when, as one last token of love, she wants to anoint his body, that too has gone. Her breast heaves with sobbing. Weeping, she bends and looks within the sepulchre.

She sees two angels sitting there, clothed in white.

"Woman, why weepest thou?" one of these heavenly messengers enquires of her.

And then comes her sorrowful reply:

THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

- NEW TESTAMENT -

"They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

She is so grieved and her eyes are so clouded by tears, that she hardly realises that they are angels who sit there in the tomb. That fact does not penetrate the sense of grief which has completely overpowered her.

All at once she hears behind her the sound of footsteps. She turns round quickly and sees a man standing there. She thinks that he is the gardener.

The Stranger asks: "Woman, why weepst thou? Whom seekest thou?"

Did you hear that? He does not ask: "What seekest thou?", but He asks: "Whom seekest thou?" He knew that she sought Him.

Mary Magdalene does not see the look of love which the Stranger gives her. She answers hurriedly: "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him. and I will take Him away."

Henceforth her life would be empty and miserable without Jesus, who had released her from the clutches of seven devils. If she could then have but His body.

For a moment more the Stranger remains silent. He knows what is going on in that grief-stricken heart. He knows her sorrow. Then He speaks just one word

His voice sounds emphatic: "Mary!"

And then? ... Oh, just look! With a cry of "Rabboni", meaning "Master", she falls on her knees before Him and will kiss His feet. All at once she recognises her beloved Master. She had quite failed to notice it, but now she beholds her Saviour and Redeemer. She had come to anoint a dead Jesus, but she received a living Jesus. The joy which now flows into her soul cannot be

described.

She wants to grasp His feet and kiss them, but Jesus does not allow her to do so. "Touch me not" He says.

Well now, why may she not do that? ... Well, Mary wanted to have Jesus always close to her, just as in former days. But that is ended, that can no longer be. Henceforth she must live through faith.

"Go to My brethren," the Lord commands her, "and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father: to my God, and your God."

Jesus calls those unfaithful disciples "My brethren"! They had been disloyal, they had forsaken Him in the greatest danger, but He never forgets or forsakes His disciples. He remains faithful! He never changes!

Look, there runs Mary, towards Jerusalem, to the disciples to inform them of the joyful news.

Matthew 28 vv 9 and 10

Meanwhile, the women who had been first by the sepulchre have got a good way towards the city. They are fearful and yet also happy. They hurry on. No, they say nothing to passers-by, they dare not. But they are going to bring the message to the disciples which they have received from the angels.

Suddenly they start. There in front of them, in the middle of the road, stands a Man - a stranger!

"All hail." Thus He greets them. They look, and ... a glow of joy comes into their faces. They recognise Him. This Stranger is ... the Lord Jesus, their beloved Master. In holy reverence

THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

- NEW TESTAMENT -

they fall before Him in worship and hold Him by the feet. They have heard and believed the angels' message and now they see their Master who arose from the dead. To these women also He says: "Tell My brethren."

This is the second time the Lord Jesus shewed Himself. First to Mary Magdalene by the sepulchre, and after that to the women.

A little later they come to the disciples, their eyes glistening with happiness.

"We have seen the Lord," they say joyfully.

And ... ? The disciples do not believe it.

"You delude yourselves," was very likely what they said, for in Luke 24 it says that the words of the women "seemed to them as idle tales". The disciples are so disheartened that they refuse to believe the glad tidings.

The women assure them that it certainly is no idle tale, but the absolute truth. It is no use however, the disciples will not accept it.

A little later Mary Magdalene enters and relates excitedly the same thing, but neither do they believe Mary Magdalene (Mark 16 v 11).

We may well believe that the women and Mary Magdalene told each other what they had seen. For them it has become a true Passover feast. The risen Christ had appeared to them. Through faith they could now behold Him, not only as the Son of God, as the King of Israel, but at the same time as their debt-paying Surety and Saviour.

The disciples and other followers of the Lord Jesus sit there with saddened, unbelief faces, and listen to all this. Yet they do not believe it. But they feel unhappy and sorrowful. The joy of the women makes them feel even unhappier, for grief gnaws deep in their hearts.

Two of them can listen to it no longer. They get up and go out. Where are they going? ... Well, you can read about that in the next chapter.