

Our **GUIDE**

for little ones

Published by the
Protestant Reformed Sunday School Association
Writer: Don Doezema Artist: Connie Meyer
Designers: Judi Doezema & Brenda Brands

IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 56

Jesus' Appearance to the Women

Matthew 28:9 & 10

Peter and John had seen something stupendous in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea. The tomb of Jesus was *empty* — except for the grave clothes, which lay there *undisturbed*, as if the body had passed through them. They left the tomb, “wondering.” They wondered how a *death* and a *resurrection* could possibly fit into the work of the *Messiah*.

That was a huge question in the minds of Peter and John. Do you understand why? Do you wonder why it was so hard for the disciples to *learn*? What we must remember is that the disciples were living at the *very beginning* of New Testament history. And the disciples didn't understand that. They didn't know that the pictures of the Old Testament were *passing away* — passing away *before their*

very eyes — because those pictures were being *fulfilled by Jesus*.

That was a marvelous thing. Just think of it. Think of *lambs*. No more lambs had to be sacrificed on the altar — because the Lamb of God had died on the cross. And then think of the *throne* — the throne of *David*, in *Jerusalem*. That was a picture too, you know. The disciples didn't know that. They thought that that throne was the *real thing* — and that the Christ, the promised Messiah, would sit on it — in Jerusalem. But it was only a *picture* — a picture of Christ's rule ... at the *right hand of God*.

Note to Parents: These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

And then think of the *kingdom* — the kingdom of *Israel*, God's *special people* in Old Testament history. Was that just a picture too? Yes, it was. A picture of the *church* — Christ's spiritual kingdom.

Yes, Christ's *spiritual kingdom*. That's what the disciples had still to learn. And especially *this* — who is it that *belong* in that kingdom? Is it the *Jews*? Fact is, the Jewish nation had already *rejected* the King of the kingdom. They had shouted for all the world to hear, "We have no king but Caesar!" But if not the Jews, who *then*? The answer is (now listen closely) ... *nobody*. Not the Romans, not the Greeks, not the Jews, not ... *us*. Why not? It's because only those who are *righteous*, only those who are *holy*, as God is holy, can have a place in Christ's spiritual kingdom. All are *sinners* — every last one of us. Not one of us has a right to be in that kingdom. What we deserve is ... death, and the grave, and hell.

Are there, then, no citizens in that kingdom? Is Jesus a *King* without a *people*? No, Jesus *has* a people — a people chosen by God even before the world was created. But the King must *redeem* them — redeem them from the power of the devil. He must take their sins away. He must break, for them, the power of death and of the grave. *That's* what Jesus came to do. And that's what He *did*. On Calvary. And by rising, triumphant, from the grave. "He tore the bars away" — for *you*, and for *me*.

You know all those things don't

you? Peter and John didn't yet. They had to learn them. And it would not be easy. Jesus taught them slowly, and carefully. He let them see the grave clothes. And then He let them ponder that, for a day.

Jesus' first appearance, therefore, was not to *them*, but to the *women*.

Yes, the women were the first to see Jesus. As they were hurrying to the city to tell the disciples about the empty tomb and the message of the angels, they actually *met* the risen Lord. The women, therefore, will be the first to begin to learn what the resurrection of Jesus really *was*.

Most likely the women did not see Jesus first in the distance, walking toward them on the road from Jerusalem. No, He appeared *suddenly*, just ahead of them. He seemed to appear out of *nowhere*. Never before had Jesus done that. One thing these women would know for sure, therefore, was that Jesus was somehow *different*.

Not for a minute, however, did they wonder if this *really was Jesus*. They could see that the very same Jesus who had been put in the grave was now standing in front of them. The *same* ... but changed. That's what the women were learning.

Can you imagine how the women must have felt? Here stands their Lord and Master. So powerful is He that not even death and the grave could hold Him. He arose. Triumphant. More glorious than ever. Their *Lord!* No wonder, then, that they held Him by the feet and *worshiped Him*.

Yes, they *touched* Him. They were

not just seeing a *ghost*. His body was *real*. Not only could they see Him with their eyes, but they could touch Him with their hands. Their Lord had risen indeed.

Their *Lord*. How they had loved their Lord and Master! Always before they had *wanted* to be with Him — to *hear* Him, to *serve* Him. But what about ... *now*? So much *greater* does Jesus now appear, so much more *glorious*, so much more *divine*! He's the victor over *death* and the *grave*! Who can this be but ... *God*? And if *that's* true, then surely, the women thought, *we don't belong here*. Not sinners like *us*. Fear began creeping into their hearts.

"Be not afraid," Jesus said. The words, the sound of His voice — that was enough. Was He still the humble preacher from Nazareth? No. They could see that. There was no mistaking His greater glory. But, wonderful to behold, He was no less their loving Lord and Master. They knew that.

And it's even *better* than that. "Go," Jesus said, "and tell my *brethren*." Almost too good to be true! Just think of who was saying that. Jesus was standing there not as the flesh-and-blood man who had for three years walked and talked with a small group of followers on this earth. He was, now, the already *risen*, and soon-to-be *ascended*, Lord. A man — yes. The women could *see* that. But now so much more clearly *more than a man*. The women could see *that* too. And yet He calls His disciples ... *brethren*. That's you and me too. And the

women too. They and we are brothers and sisters of Him who sits now enthroned in the highest heavens. How do we know? He said so.

How long was Jesus with the women? Probably only a minute or two. But that's all they needed. They had seen the risen Lord. They believed. With "wings" on their feet they hurried on their way to tell the disciples — Jesus' *brethren*.



How Well Did You Listen?

1. What did the women do when Jesus appeared to them on their way to the city?
2. The women understood better, now, how great Jesus really is. What, then, did they think about *themselves*?
3. What did Jesus tell the women to do?

Wicked Unbelief

Matthew 28:11-15

Meanwhile, the soldiers who were guarding the tomb had made their way into the city in order to report to the chief priests what had happened at the tomb. The guards, you will remember, had been scared out of their wits. They were, in fact, probably still shaking when they told the chief priests about the earthquake, the bright angel that had come down from the sky, and the rolling away of the stone. There could be no doubt that these men were telling the *truth*.

The chief priests could see that.

They understood, too, that this was serious business. Surely the whole Sanhedrin will want to hear about it.



So they come together — the great men, the learned men, the wise men, the men who know the Scriptures. And they listen to the story of the guards. And they decide that it must be *true*. The earthquake, the angel, the opened tomb — all of that must really have happened.

Now they must face the more important question — what happened *inside the tomb*? Did they send someone to take a look? Did they know, then, about the grave clothes? Perhaps they did. We don't know. But, whether they did or not, the Sanhedrin was sure of one thing, and that is that the body of Jesus was *gone* from that grave. The tomb was *empty*.

And it was the third day. As Jesus had said. Some of these very men had once demanded that Jesus give them a sign from heaven — proof that He was really the Son of God. They remembered Jesus' answer. He told them that they would indeed be given a sign — the sign of the prophet *Jonah*. He would *rise on the third day*. Who but the *Son of God* can do *that*?

With the sign of Jonah staring them right in the face, the Sanhedrin must now decide what to do. They have the story of the guards — which they believed. They have one piece of evidence — a tomb that *they had themselves sealed and guarded* was now *empty*. Can there be any other explanation than this, that Jesus really *did rise*, and that an

angel from heaven revealed it by rolling away the stone? But wicked men will never believe that. They will never believe that a *dead person* can make himself *alive*. That's because they do not believe that *God ... became man*. They refuse to believe that *Jesus of Nazareth* is the *Son of God*. They refuse, therefore, also, to believe that He *arose*.

What then, about the empty tomb? Ah, yes, that was the problem — they couldn't explain it. All the evidence pointed to a *resurrection* — and in their hearts they must have *felt* the truth of it. But they will never admit it. There must be, they say, another explanation. Somebody must have *taken* the body. Who? Well, probably some of His disciples. And how could they have done that? Here the Sanhedrin runs stuck — because the guards say it didn't happen. Well, then, let's get the guards to change their story. Let's *bribe* them — to *lie*.

The guards liked that. They collected their money. And they lied.



News of the empty tomb must have spread like wildfire. And with it there were two stories, two reports. One — that Jesus had risen. The other — that the disciples stole the body. Which report, do you think, will the people believe?

How Well Did You Listen?

1. What did the guards tell the chief priests?
2. What did the chief priests tell the guards to do?

Touch Me Not

John 20:11-18

Two reports. One, that Jesus arose; the other, that His body was stolen.

The people believed the report of the guards. The body of Jesus, they were sure, has been stolen.

Does that surprise you? Does it surprise you that when there was clear proof of resurrection, the people would rather believe a *lie*?

It should not surprise us. Isaiah had predicted it. Isaiah, you will remember, was the Old Testament prophet who saw most clearly that the Savior would be despised and rejected of men, would be killed and be buried, and, yes, would rise. Were the people happy to hear the *gospel of Isaiah*? No. Listen to the prophet. “Who,” he asks, “hath believed our report?” And his answer, really, was, “No one!” No one, that is, except those to whom the arm of the Lord hath been *revealed*. Men’s eyes, you see, are blind. Those eyes must be *made to see*. That was true in Isaiah’s day. It was true in Jesus’ day. It’s true today. What is the answer of *human wisdom*, of *human reason*, to the *resurrection*? It’s always this: “It didn’t happen. There must be some other explanation for the empty tomb. Maybe His disciples stole His body. But He didn’t arise. That’s impossible. It didn’t happen.” That’s man’s answer.

Except for those who are given eyes to see. By Jesus Himself. Like to Mary Magdalene.

Mary came back to the garden in tears. She looked into the tomb. Inside were two angels. They ask, “Woman, why weepest thou?” “Because,” Mary answered, “they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.”

But it wasn’t so. Jesus’ body had not been stolen. In fact, the resurrected Lord stood, at that very moment, right behind Mary. He repeated the question of the angels: “Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?”

Hardly glancing at this other stranger in the garden, and thinking that He must be the gardener, Mary said, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.”

Jesus then called her by name. “Mary,” He said. Then Mary knew. She knew the voice that called her name, the voice that went straight to her grief-stricken soul. “Rabboni,” she cried, which is to say, “Master!”

But Mary did not yet understand the resurrection. She thought that her Master was *back* — back, that is, so that she could again sit at His feet and hear the words that were so precious to her, and so that she could again do things for Him to show how very thankful she was for what He had done for her. The old days are back, she thinks, and she wants them to go on and on forever. With this great desire in her heart, she may even have grasped Him by the feet, as if to say, “I’m never going to let you go.”



She was mistaken. She wanted to hold on to something that she must learn to give up. Jesus will gently teach her. “Touch me not,” Jesus said, “for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” Do not try to hold Me back. I have risen, not to remain in this world as before, but to go on to something better — something better for Me ... and for you. For I will ascend to My Father.

Was Mary disappointed? Most likely so. For she had wanted Jesus to stay on and on and on. But because she loved her Master and trusted His word, she did believe that something somehow better was in store for her because He would go to His Father. And on Pentecost, she will learn that it was really true. What she had imagined to be *loss* ... was really *gain* — *great gain*.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. What prophet predicted the unbelief of the Jews?
2. Whom did Mary Magdalene see outside the tomb in the garden? Who did she think He was?
3. How was Mary mistaken about Jesus’ resurrection?

How Well Do You Understand?

1. How did the women who saw Jesus know that He was now *different*?
2. How did the women know that He was the very

same Jesus who had been put in the grave?

3. Why would the women be *afraid* in the presence of Jesus?
4. Who are Jesus’ brethren?
5. Do you understand how Jesus’ *resurrection* (the “sign” of the prophet Jonah) was proof that He is the *Son of God*?
6. How was the empty tomb a problem for the Sanhedrin?
7. Why did Jesus tell Mary not to *touch* Him?

Memory Verse

Matthew 28:13 “Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.”

Follow the dots to draw a picture of an open tomb. Color the picture.

