

John 20:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

Analysis

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord— Mary obeys Christ's commission immediately, becoming the first evangelist of resurrection. The Greek verb angelousa (ἀγγέλλουσα, "told/announced") shares roots with angelos (messenger/angel), highlighting her role as heaven's messenger bearing divine news. Her testimony contains two elements: personal encounter ("she had seen the Lord") and authoritative message ("he had spoken these things unto her").

John's emphasis on "the Lord" (ton kyrion, τὸν κύριον) rather than "Jesus" marks a theological shift. "Lord" acknowledges Jesus's divine authority, resurrection vindication, and exalted status—anticipating Thomas's climactic confession "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Mary's testimony moves from grief-stricken searching (v.15) to confident proclamation. True witness combines personal experience ("I have seen") with faithfulness to Christ's words ("he had spoken these things"). The other Gospels record the disciples' skeptical response (Mark 16:11, Luke 24:11), but John focuses on Mary's faithfulness to deliver the message regardless of reception.

Historical Context

Mary's role as first witness fulfills Jesus's earlier promise that His sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27). Early Christian preaching, as seen in Acts and Paul's letters, consistently emphasized resurrection appearances as foundational

evidence (Acts 2:32, 3:15, 1 Corinthians 15:5-8). While Paul's list of witnesses in 1 Corinthians 15 omits women (likely due to cultural prejudices about testimony), the Gospel writers faithfully record women as first witnesses despite potential embarrassment to male-dominated culture.

The church fathers honored Mary Magdalene's unique role. Hippolytus (3rd century) called her "apostle to the apostles." Eastern Orthodox tradition celebrates her as "equal to the apostles." However, later Western tradition unfortunately conflated her with the sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50 and Mary of Bethany—a confusion not supported by Scripture and corrected in modern scholarship. The historical Mary was a devoted disciple whose testimony launched the apostolic proclamation.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Mary's faithful witness despite potential skepticism model courage in sharing your testimony of Christ?
2. What is the relationship between personal encounter with Christ and authoritative gospel proclamation?
3. Why is Christ's resurrection the foundation of Christian faith, and how does this shape evangelistic priority?

Interlinear Text

ἔρχεται Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἀπαγγέλλουσα τοῖς

came Mary G3588 Magdalene and told G3588

G2064

Mary

G3137

G3588

Magdalene

G3094

and told

G3588

G518

μαθηταῖς ὅτι ἔώρακεν τὸν κύριον καὶ ταῦτα

the disciples that she had seen the Lord and these things

G3101 G3754 G3588 G2962 G2532 G5023

εἶπεν αὐτῇ

that he had spoken unto her

G2036

G846

Additional Cross-References

Luke 24:10 (Parallel theme): 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.

Matthew 28:10 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

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