

Luke 24:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

Analysis

And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

The apostles' response reveals natural human skepticism toward resurrection. The phrase **seemed to them as idle tales** (ephainonto enōpion autōn hōsei lēros, ἐφαίνοντο ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ὥσεὶ λῆρος) is devastating—lēros (λῆρος) means nonsense, delusion, old wives' tales. This rare word (used only here in the New Testament) expresses utter dismissal. The imperfect tense "seemed" (ephainonto, ἐφαίνοντο) indicates their continuing disbelief as the women testified.

The stark statement **and they believed them not** (kai ēpistoun autais, καὶ ἠπίσταν αὐταῖς) uses the imperfect tense for ongoing disbelief. Despite Jesus' multiple passion predictions, despite the women's consistent testimony, despite multiple witnesses, the apostles refused to believe. Their skepticism wasn't noble caution but culpable unbelief—Jesus had told them this would happen (Luke 9:22, 18:31-33), yet they dismissed clear evidence.

This verse actually strengthens the resurrection's credibility. Had disciples fabricated the story, they wouldn't record their own foolish unbelief or the women's superior faithfulness. The historical honesty is striking. More importantly, it shows that resurrection faith doesn't come naturally—it requires divine revelation and Spirit-given illumination. Even proximity to Jesus, hearing His predictions, and receiving eyewitness testimony proved insufficient without God opening minds to believe (verse 45).

Historical Context

First-century attitudes toward women's testimony contributed to the apostles' skepticism. Jewish law generally didn't accept women as witnesses in court. Josephus wrote, "Let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex." This cultural bias, combined with the inherent incredibility of resurrection, led to dismissal of the women's report.

Yet this skepticism actually serves apologetic purposes. The apostles weren't credulous fools predisposed to believe wild claims. They were hardened skeptics who required overwhelming evidence. Their transformation from scoffing unbelief (verse 11) to bold proclamation (Acts 2:14-40) demands explanation. The only sufficient cause is the risen Christ appearing to them repeatedly (Luke 24:34, 36-43, Acts 1:3, 1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does the apostles' initial unbelief teach about the human heart's natural resistance to supernatural truth?
2. How does their skepticism actually strengthen the historical case for resurrection rather than weakening it?
3. Why does Scripture honestly record the disciples' failures and foolishness rather than editing them out?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐφάνησαν ἐνώπιον αὐταῖς ὡσεὶ λῆρος τὰ ῥήματα
And **seemed** **to** **their** **as** **idle tales** ^{G3588} **words**
G2532 G5316 G1799 G846 G5616 G3026 G4487

αὐταῖς καὶ ἠπίστουν αὐταῖς
their **And** **not** **their**
G846 G2532 G569 G846

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 126:1 (Parallel theme): When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

Job 9:16 (Faith): If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.

Mark 16:11 (Faith): And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

Genesis 19:14 (Word): And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

Luke 24:25 (Faith): Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: