

How the Resurrection Changed Everything for Women's Ministry

During the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus appeared to different disciples at various times, and on one occasion appeared to over 500 of His followers at once (see 1 Cor. 15:3-8). The gospel writers, however, are very clear in noting that it was Mary Magdalene to whom He appeared first after His resurrection.

The importance which the Gospel writers attach to this fact indicate that it was no accidental occurrence. Jesus knew that actions speak louder than words, and He purposely appeared first to Mary in order to make a clear statement about His estimation of women and their involvement in His kingdom.

We must remember that neither Jewish nor Roman courts of law in the first century would allow the testimony of a woman as evidence. The ingrained cultural prejudice toward women was also expressed in a prayer that Jewish men prayed that included thanks to God that he was not born a Gentile, a slave or a woman.

By appearing first to Mary Magdalene, Jesus was cutting through all the disdain and prejudice of his male disciples toward his female disciples. He thereby declared His equal acceptance of women and confirmed their ministry by sending her forth as the first witness and preacher of the most important event in all of human history.

The Apostle to the Apostles

When Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, He gave her certain, specific instructions. Matthew 28:10b (NKJV) records His words to Mary: "Go and tell my brethren." In other words, He sent

her on a specific mission defined by the words, "Go and tell."

Interestingly, the New Testament word "apostle" literally means "one who is sent" or "a sent one." Mary, therefore, was a "sent one" and as such received the first apostolic commission from the Lord after His resurrection.

Mary's apostolic commission was to go and tell the male disciples—the Twelve—that Jesus had risen. This raises the question as to why Jesus did not tell them Himself. Although He later appeared to the Twelve, He required that they first hear the news of His resurrection from the mouth of a woman. This is why that throughout history Mary has been called "the apostle to the apostles."

By appearing first to Mary and sending her on an apostolic commission to announce His resurrection to the male disciples, Jesus was making certain truths stunningly clear.

- God values the testimony of women as much as men.
- Women are not to be confined to the nursery and the kitchen.
- God-called women will teach men as well as other women and children.
- Men need to be willing to hear the word of God from the mouth of a woman.

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

"But," some will ask, "what about Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12 for women to be silent?" First of all, anything that Paul said must be interpreted and understood in the light of what Jesus said and did, not the other way around. Jesus is Lord, not Paul!

Second, a doctrine should not be formulated without giving equal consideration to the many Scriptures that show women functioning in leadership roles. From Miriam, Deborah and

Huldah in the Old Testament, to Mary, Lydia, Phoebe, Priscilla and a host of other women in the New Testament, there is overwhelming biblical evidence of women functioning on every level of leadership that cannot be ignored.

Finally, it is more than likely that the restrictions of these two verses are related to local, cultural situations and are not universal edicts pertaining to the whole church. These restrictions are, rather, on the same level as Paul's instructions concerning the wearing of veils (head coverings) in 1 Corinthians 11 and his admonitions for believers to greet one another with a holy kiss (a handshake or hug will do just fine in most cases).

To See True Revival, We Must Acknowledge the Gifts of Our Sisters

We must remember that it is the risen Lord, not the church, who calls and assigns gifts and ministries. The authority to minister is rooted in one's possession of a divine call or gift. Ordination is simply the church's recognition of that gift.

When John Wesley was challenged as to why he gave recognition to uneducated men and women preachers, he replied, "Because God owns them in the conversion of sinners, and who am I that I should withstand God."

Much of the church has refused to recognize the gifts of its female members and has, thereby, violated Paul's command in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 to "not quench the Spirit." As a result of this disobedience, many gifts have lain dormant while millions have perished without Christ, and the church has languished in defeat.

It Is Time for Action

It is time for action! It is time for the church to obey God and recognize the gifts and callings of its female members. It

is time for women to rise up and be obedient to the call of the risen Lord to “Go and tell.”

To read more about what Jesus taught about women by word and deed, read *Ten Things Jesus Taught About Women* by Dr. Susan Hyatt, available from Amazon and the Hyatt online bookstore at {eoa}

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