

**Could you believe?** (Luke 24:1-11).

\* Dear Friends, finally the forty days of preparation for the celebration of Jesus' resurrection is left behind. Today, with the rest of the Christian world we've proclaimed the Resurrection, *Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!!!* The renowned slogan sounded so joyfully because our anticipation to proceed through the gate of death into everlasting life has received the amazing confirmation in Christ's glorious resurrection. According to the Scripture, Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. *Through him God reconciled all things making peace by the blood of his cross*, (Col 1:18-20). Amen. It is in Jesus' resurrection that our hope is all about. For the gift of this hope, let's say the words of sincerest appreciation.

\* Almighty and everlasting Father, give ear to the people of your redemptive work in Christ Jesus, as we bound to praise You for the glorious resurrection of our Lord. You gave us faith in Jesus as he is the true Passover Lamb who gave himself to take away our sins, who by his death has destroyed death, and by his rising has brought us to eternal life. Lord we believe, yet help our unbelief. For this hope we praise You, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

\* Friends, it is crucial for us to believe in Jesus Christ who is the Master of our future destiny, (Joh 11:25). When I think of the phenomenon of faith in the Lord Jesus, I see two important forces that effect our belief. They are the historical records about Jesus' life and the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. But even though we are all to believe in one true God and His own Son Jesus Christ, we still need to reinforce our belief on a regular basis in order to stand firm against the devil, his agents and our sinful flesh, (Eph 6:11). Today the Word and the Spirit draw our attention to Jesus' resurrection as the essential part of our salvation (1Co 15:12)

\* Now imagine yourselves as a writer who likes to draw a verbal masterpiece on account of Jesus' resurrection with all the specifics. Thinking of it, you probably want to rely on the information from all the Gospels, even from Peter's will do. This strategy helps to make your picture more vivid and believable to the listeners and the readers. Bearing in mind yours and my upstanding goal, we will start this project with good purpose.

\* At first, trusting in Luke as a reliable history researcher and a faithful companion of the apostle Paul, we received all possible information he gathered from eyewitnesses and first handwritings. Luke doesn't give as many details as John or Matthew, rather his painting focuses beyond the stone bed where the perplexed mind suddenly discovers world without end. From Luke we read that on the first day of the week, at early dawn, certain women went to the tomb, taking the spices with them.

After coming to that place, women saw the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, and when they

entered through the narrow doorway they did not find the body. While they were in doubt about it, they saw two men in shining garments. Being frightened they bowed their faces to the ground and they heard a man's voice, *"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee ...,"* (Luk 24:1-6). Luke draws our attention to the empty tomb that became even emptier after being lightened by the light shining from the of angels' robes. So there was no more illusion, the tomb was empty.

\* Significantly, the truth about Jesus as he said, *"I am the resurrection and the life,"* was evoked from the women's memory, (Joh 11:26). The truth about Jesus' suffering, death on the cross and his resurrection as he said, (Luk 18:33), was remembered! It had enlightened the having no hope with to having made on the incredible self-discovery, even though I will die, yet I will live because my Lord says, *everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die,*(Joh 11:26). Do you believe this, Martha? Steve, Ronald, Julia, Anastasia and the rest of the human clan, Do you believe this? *Yes, we believe, still Lord help our unbelief.* Friends, in contrast to the common unbelief held by many, this gathering demonstrates the work of the Word and the Holy Spirit in you while most the human race doesn't care.

\* All four Gospels, including Peter's, say that the entrance of the sepulcher was sealed with a heavy rock. What is more, the Jewish leaders asked Pilate for guards to keep the tomb secure, (Mat 27:62-66), because some leaders, as usual, were afraid of people. But, in spite of security, military preparations and inventions, nobody was able to prevent Jesus from leaving the sealed tomb! On the Lord's day, before dawn, the land and the military unit were shaken, the heavy stone was rolled away and the soldiers, being greatly distressed, hastened to Pilate and said, *"Truly he was the Son of God,"*(Gospel of Peter). But the fear of the people was greater than the fear of God, that is why the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to command the soldiers to zip their lips. Do you believe this?

\* Friends, the myth about the robbery of the tomb because of the sleeping soldiers is nonsensical. For example, on the occasion of a soldier sleeping while on guard duty, the records say that the soldier might be sentenced to death. This case is illustrated by (Act 12:19), where, after Peter's release from custody by the power of God, Agrippa ordered the death of the guards. Therefore, if the guards were sentenced to death after Peter's escape, then why was it not done in the case of the "robbery of the tomb"? Isn't it true that a servant is not greater than his master, (Joh 13:16). *Yes, it is true! We believe, still Lord help our unbelief.*

\* By the way, by means of common-sense no one can prove Jesus' resurrection because such a phenomenon has never been observed with the one exception, Jesus' resurrection.

More than 500 eye-witnesses observed Jesus after his resurrection from the dead, (1Co 15:5-8).

Those brothers went to the world and testified about that mystery to people like me and you, the poor and the rich. That is how the Church took root, and it keeps on making disciples of Jesus Christ around the world. Significantly, those first brothers also couldn't explain how dead Jesus became alive. They just pointed to what Jesus says about himself and about the entire human race. *"I tell you the solemn truth, the one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, but has crossed over from death to life, (Joh 5:24).* Do you believe this or you need more help? *Yes, we believe, still Lord help our unbelief.*

\* Now, on your hearing the words of Jesus about our resurrections we realize that they are conditional! Ours will not come to us inevitably due to a universal atonement; we still need to hear God's message and stop our unbelief. Friends, don't allow the devil and the false teachers to make you forgetful or careless. Saying this, I mean that we need to hear the Word of truth, follow after Jesus, and praise the Father for His Son and the Holy Spirit. Friends, following this rule on a regular basis we will not be ashamed. Do you believe this?

\* Significantly not only the righteous by faith will rise, but unbelievers as well. *Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment, (Joh 5:28,29).*

All dead will receive new bodies. I think, unlike the beautiful bodies of the righteous people, (1Co 15:42,43; Php 3:21), the evil will appear as vampires, ugly witches and monsters according to the devil's inner characters, as they were portrayed in a number of horror movies; although it is a mystery, (Joh 8:44 ;Rev 16:13; ). Could you believe this!

\* Now the picture of Jesus' resurrection and a few details on account of ours were drawn. However, some people love Grunewald's realism with preference to Rembrandt's illusionism, but I am none Grunewald or Rembrandt!!! Do you believe this??? Yes we believe!!! No more doubt, Alleluia!!!

Beloved, thanks be to the Lord for your belief; for to him alone belong all glory in his resurrection and our expectation; believing in Jesus we will never be ashamed!

Amen.