



“WHO WILL ROLL AWAY THE STONE?” (MARK 16:3): THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN’S ROLE IN THE RESURRECTION AND NIGERIAN CHRISTIANITY

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Abstract

This study, “Who Will Roll Away the Stone?” (Mark 16:3) Theological and Socio- Cultural Reflections on Women’s role in the resurrection and Nigerian Christianity, explores the symbolic and theological implications of women’s witness in the resurrection narratives and their applicability for gender inclusion in Nigerian Christianity. The aim is to reinterpret Mark 16:3 through a contextual and feminist hermeneutic that highlights women as agents of divine emancipation and equality. Using a qualitative interpretive methodology, the study integrates biblical exegesis, theological reflection, and socio-artistic analysis. Primary sources include the resurrection narratives, while secondary data derive from African feminist theologians such as Oduyoye, Njoroge, and Kanyoro. Findings reveal that the rolled- away stone in the Gospel of Mark functions as a metaphor for disassembled patriarchal barriers and affirms the divine priority in women’s emancipation. The study further shows that Jesus’ post-resurrection commissioning of women reconfigures apostolic authority as embedded in faithfulness rather than gender advantage. It concludes that Nigerian Christianity must embody a resurrection- inspired theology by espousing inclusive ecclesiastical structures, reforming theological education, and promoting women’s full participation in ministry. Recommendations prompt churches to roll away institutional “stones” of rejection or exclusion and to affirm resurrection as God’s model for justice, equality, and collaborative renewal.

Keywords: African Christianity, Resurrection, Gender equality, Mark 16:3, Women.

Introduction

The resurrection of Jesus Christ stands as the foundation of Christian faith, signifying God’s ultimate power over death and injustice. Yet, within this redemptive event, women crop not simply as substantiations but as the first outriders of the philosophy (Matthew 28:5 – 8; Mark 16:2 – 8; Luke 24:1 – 8; John 20:1 – 12). Their question, “Who will roll away the stone for us?”

(Mark 16:3), continues to echo as a conceit for the enduring barriers that limit women’s agency in religious and social life. In the African context, it encapsulates the struggles of women constrained by theological, artistic, and institutional patriarchy (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992; Acha, 2015). From early Christianity to contemporary Nigerian churches, patriarchal interpretations of Scripture have confined women’s leadership. Bakoshi (2016) observes that numerous ecclesiastical systems still image Aristotle’s view that “a man is by nature fitter for command than a woman.” Likewise, Yoruba sayings similar as *oro obinrin ko se tele* “the words of a woman can not be followed” (Ampitan, 2012) support gender disparity.

Although women seem to constitute the majority in Nigerian population, their leadership openings remain minimum (Oloyede, 2023). Theological rejection is sustained by picky readings of Scripture that honour manly authority while ignoring Christ’s inclusive illustration. Socio-culturally, precolonial and traditional structures continue to define leadership legality in mannish terms (Asaaju, 2010). The African church, thus, stands at a theological crossroads while the resurrection affirms equality, church structures still reflect the patriarchal morals of age (Alana, 2011).

Mark’s gospel places the women’s question — “Who will roll away the stone?” — at the heart of the rejuvenation morning. Historically, it reveals physical limitation; theologically, it represents humanity’s battle with godly possibility. African feminist practitioners see the “stone” as a conceit for the socio-religious and institutional walls that continue to hamper women’s flourishing (Njoroge



& Dube, 2001). Yet, upon appearance, the women find the gravestone formerly rolled down, signifying godly action that precedes mortal trouble. The rolled-away gravestone therefore symbolizes God's intervention against patriarchal oppression, affirming that emancipation originates in divine, not mortal, action.

This study reinterprets the resurrection narratives through a theological-contextual lens, fastening on women as substantiations and agents of emancipation. Specifically, it (1) exegetes Mark 16:3 to uncover theological counteraccusations for gender equality, (2) examines parallels between biblical and African patriarchies, and (3) proposes a resurrection-inspired theology of inclusion for Nigerian Christianity. Employing a qualitative illuminative system that integrates biblical exegesis, theological reflection, and contextual analysis, the study foregrounds African women's voices such as Oduyoye (1995), Masenya (2004), and Adewale (2012), demonstrating that resurrection theology remains a vital paradigm for gender justice in the contemporary Church.

The Resurrection Narratives: A Biblical Overview

Synoptic and Johannine accounts of the resurrection:

The resurrection narratives enthrall a central position within the canon of the New Testament. Each gospel offers a distinct theological perspective, but all affirm the major reality of Christ's triumph over death. In the Synoptic accounts (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and the Johannine narrative, the foremost vouchers of this decisive event are women — specifically Mary Magdalene, Mary the ma of James, Salome, and Joanna (Matthew 28:1 – 10; Mark 16:1 – 8; Luke 24:1 – 10; John 20:1 – 18). Matthew records that “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the grave” and encountered an angel publicizing that Jesus had risen (Matthew 28:1 – 7). Mark's gospel situates the women's trip at daylight, pressing their anxiety over the monument sealing the grave (Mark 16:2 – 3). Luke expands the list of women and emphasises the angelic reproach — “Why do you look for the living among the dead” (Luke 24:5). John's account is more intimate, fastening on Mary Magdalene's particular hassle with the risen Christ (John 20:14 – 18).

Despite differences in detail, these narratives meet on one theological reality God entrusted the exposure of the revivification to women. According to Isaak (2006), the Lukan addition of multiple women “restores the quality of the socially marginalised as credible connections of godly exposure” (p. 1275). The diversity among the accounts reflects narrative independence rather than contradiction, emphasizing the authenticity of their substantiation (Keener, 1993, p. 183).

The document, “**The appearance of the Women**” rightly observes that while each gospel pen portrays the event differently, their convergence on womanish validation demonstrates theological intentionality “Despite the fact that women of Jesus' days were the first vouchers to the revivification and therefore could be regarded as the first missionaries of the church, moment they are still asking that question as they face the multitudinous roadblocks placed in their path.” Thus, the biblical validation challenges any attempt to silence women in ministry. It presents a God who dismantles societal prospects by revealing the most transformative verity of history through those supposed least credible in their culture.

Exegetical reflection on Mark 16:3 and the metaphor of the stone:

Mark's gospel preserves a detail of profound theological and representational resonance. As the women approach the grave, they ask, “Who will roll away the monument from the entrance of the grave?” (Mark 16:3, ESV). The “monument” (lithos) is further than a physical barricade; it's a narrative device that represents mortal limitation, anxiety, and finitude when defied with godly possibility. The question expresses the pressure between faith and impossibility — a recreating Markan motif that underscores godly action in the face of mortal helplessness (Moloney, 2020).

In verse 4, the women arrive to discover that “the monument had been rolled down.” This exposure reframes the narrative from fear to faith, from impossibility to godly accomplishment. Theologically, the rolled-away monument signifies God's prevenient action — God moves before mortal dogging, anticipating need and breaking walls. As Ngewa (1997) affirms, “The revivification of the Lord Jesus Christ is a major fact and has been substantiated by multitudinous unailing



evidences” (p. 367). Also, Wright (2020) argues that revivification faith “reconfigures mortal limitation within the horizon of godly power.” Therefore, the dumping of the monument is not incidental but pregnant it signals godly win over death, despair, and the unsexed scales bedded in culture.

For African women, this text carries profound contextual significance. It spectacles their lived struggle within patriarchal societies and ecclesial systems that constrain their agency. The “monument” symbolizes the enduring weight of cultural taboos, pastoral rejection, and institutional silencing that hinder women’s full participation in God’s charge. Asaaju (2010) identifies this as a “gender-vulgarized socio-cultural terrain” in which women’s creative and spiritual capacities are completely confined (p. 89). Contemporary African theologians have extended this **conceit**. Oduyoye (2021) describes the rolled-away monument as “the godly disturbance of patriarchal control and the declaration of women as mates in redemption.”

Ultimately, Mark 16:3 – 4 reveals that the revivification is not only a nonfictional event but a continuing godly pattern — God acts first to remove walls that hinder life and flourishing. The rolled-away monument stands as both a theological declaration of God’s liberating power and a missional imperative for the Church to strike the “monuments” of rejection, icing that every believer — especially women — shares equally in publicizing the risen Christ.

Women as the first witnesses and bearers of the resurrection message:

The elevation of women as the first vouchers to the revivification is one of the most radical and transformative confines of the gospel narratives. Across the Synoptic and Johannine accounts, women enthrall the narrative centre of exposure when the virile epigones retreat into fear and confusion. Mary Magdalene’s unvarying devotion — remaining at the grave while the others fled — epitomises fidelity awarded by godly exposure (John 20:10 – 11). In her hassle with the risen Christ, she becomes *apostola apostolorum* — the “backer to the apostles” — a title subsequently affirmed by Augustine and reclaimed in modern theological discourse (Ngewa, 1997, p. 365).

Luke 24:9 – 10 records that the women, including Joanna and Mary the ma of James, “told all these goods to the Eleven.” Yet, their communication was dismissed as “gibberish” (Luke 24:11). This response reflects the unsexed scepticism of the ancient Mediterranean world, where women’s substantiation carried no legal standing. As Alana (2011) observes, analogous redundancy “illustrates how patriarchy structures indeed the event of exposure” (p. 202). Contemporary African churches constantly reproduce this dynamic, where women’s voices remain uncredited in theological deliberation and ecclesial leadership (Oduyoye, 1992; Phiri & Nadar, 2022)

Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene decisively overturns this sense of rejection. His commission — “Go to my sisters and tell them” (John 20:17) — authorises her as the first cleric of the revivification, thereby resting Christian proclamation in a woman’s substantiation. This act radically subverts patriarchal scales by entrusting salvific proclamation to one whom society supposed unworthy of public speech. Feminist theologian Schaberg (2021) interprets this as “a deliberate inversion of unsexed authority, signalling that godly exposure transcends mortal constructions of power.”

As Acha (2015) notes, “Both biblical and African societies are well known for the marginalisation and domination of women,” yet Jesus’ ministry “accorded them the quality and recognition due to them” (p. 38). The revivification thus becomes an eschatological reversal those silenced by culture come the first forerunners of new creation. Their fastness at the grave inaugurates a new order in which validation is determined not by gender but by grace, affirming that the voice of the marginalised is necessary to the charge of the risen Christ.

Theological Reflections on Women as Witnesses of the Resurrection

Christ’s inclusion of women in redemptive revelation:

From the foremost stages of His ministry, Jesus of Nazareth deliberately included women as integral actors in the unfolding of God’s redemptive plan. In a first-century terrain marked by rigid



patriarchy, His conducts were both socially subversive and theologically revolutionary. Women analogous as Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Mary of Bethany not only followed Jesus but also handed material and spiritual support for His ministry (Luke 8:1 – 3). This addition stands in stark distinction to rabbinic conventions that barred women from theological instruction and public cult.

Jesus' encounters with women reveal a harmonious pattern of exposure and restoration. His dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7 – 29) converted a socially marginalised figure into a public theologian — the first to proclaim Him as Messiah to her community, also, His defense of the woman caught in infidelity (John 8:1 – 11) exposed the dissimulation of patriarchal judgment while affirming the woman's moral agency. As Kwok (2015) notes, "Jesus' exposure is intersectional; it discloses godly verity through those barred by systems of power.

In the resurrection narratives, this inclusive exposure reaches its climax. By revealing Himself first to Mary Magdalene and commissioning her to announce His victory, Jesus redefined apostolic authority as fastness rather than gender honour. Oduyoye (2021) argues that "the post- resurrection hassle inscribes women's experience within the canonical memory of redemption." Thus, Christ's addition of women is not incidental but **essential**, it reflects the truly nature of the gospel as a movement of restoration and equality. The revived Christ entrusts exposure to those previously barred, signalling that godly verity transcends patriarchal boundaries and inaugurates a new humanity rested in collaborative quality and cooperation.

Resurrection as divine affirmation of gender equality:

The rejuvenation of Jesus Christ represents not only the climactic event of deliverance history but also a godly declaration of equality among all humanity. In the revivification narratives, God vindicates those who remained faithful in the face of despair — women who, though marginalised by patriarchal structures, came the first forerunners of the new creation. Theologically, this event redefines mortal worth and authority, demonstrating that godly exposure and charge are not contingent upon gender, status, or societal honour. As Wright (2020) argues, "the resurrection is the introduction of a new social order in which the markers of power and rejection are rendered void."

In distinction to prevailing Greco-Roman and Jewish morals that silenced women's voices in legal and religious discourse, the risen Christ entrusted the foundational communication of faith — "He is risen!" — to women. This reversal is not incidental but **pregnant**, it symbolises God's disturbance of the unsexed scales that distort mortal connections. According to Schüssler Fiorenza (2021), "The revivification transforms structures of domination into networks of cult where mutuality replaces mastery."

African theologians also interpret the resurrection as a paradigm for liberation and equality. Oduyoye (2019) contends that "the resurrection is God's definitive statement that no life — female or male — lies outside the redemptive horizon of grace." This declaration challenges ecclesial and cultural systems that perpetuate rejection under theological guise.

Therefore, the resurrection event becomes a theological declaration of godly equality — an ontological recalibration in which women's voices, previously muted by culture, are divinely authorised to annunciate life over death. In affirming women as first vouchers, God sanctifies equality not as a sociological aspiration but as a soteriological verity natural to the gospel itself.

Implications for theology, discipleship, and ecclesial witness:

The women's substantiation at the resurrection transforms Christian theology at its core, reorienting the understanding of followership and ecclesiastical substantiation. Discipleship, formerly interpreted through patriarchal fabrics of apostolic authority, is readdressed by the rejuvenation as radical inclusivity predicated in fastness rather than unsexed scale. In this reimagined paradigm, all who respond to the risen Lord — anyhow of coitus or status — are commissioned as substantiations of the philosophy. As Migliore (2021) affirms, "the rejuvenation reveals followership not as possession of power but as participation in the new humanity of Christ."



For the Church, this has profound ecclesiological counter accusations. The *missio Dei* — God’s mission in the world is deficient without the full inclusion of women as equal liaisons of the philosophy. Ademiluka (2007) observes that in Nigeria, women’s involvement in evangelism and leadership is necessary for a holistic Christian witness (pp. 83 – 84). Their benefactions extend beyond supplementary functions to essential theological and missional leadership, embodying what Phiri and Nadar (2022) describe as “transformative followership” that integrates justice, service, and predictive presence.

This recognition demands that ecclesiastical programs move beyond emblematic representation or token movables toward genuine structural addition. As Kanyoro (2020) contends, “a church that proclaims rejuvenation but denies women equal participation contradicts its own philosophy.” Similar reform involves not only ordination rights but also the metamorphosis of liturgy, leadership training, and theological classes to reflect the inclusive substantiation of the resurrection.

In substance, the resurrection authorizations a followership that glasses godly equivalency and an ecclesiology that embodies the new creation inaugurated in Christ. The Church’s credibility as the community of the risen Lord depends on its amenability to embody this inclusive calling within theology, ministry, and mission.

The Socio-Cultural Dimension of “The Stone” in the Nigerian Context

The stone as metaphor for gender barriers in African societies:

In African biblical hermeneutics, conceit serves as a ground between ancient textbook and lived environment, enabling Book to speak directly to social realities. Within this illuminative frame, the “stone” in Mark 16:3 becomes a symbol of the heavy, multilayered walls that obstruct women’s flourishing across sacred and temporal disciplines. The women at the grave brazened a physical handicap that imaged centuries of institutional rejection — an image that resonates deeply with African women who continue to face rooted socio-artistic and ecclesiastical constraints.

These “monuments” take numerous forms, patriarchal morals that limit women’s participation in church leadership, profitable marginalisation that restricts access to education, and theological systems that spiritualise inequality. Asaju (2010) observes that Nigerian social structures “confer artistic conceptions on women that limit their educational, political, and spiritual openings” (p. 89). Similar realities illustrate what Oduyoye (2019) calls structural sin — a collaborative mortal construction that resists God’s liberating will. The conceit of the gravestone, thus, functions not only as an elucidative image but as a theological charge of systemic injustice.

African feminist theologians have constantly argued that dismembering these walls requires re-imagining the philosophy as an instrument of liberation. Phiri and Nadar (2022) describe the continuity of gender rejection within African Christianity as “a contradiction of the rejuvenation faith that claims to set internees free.” Likewise, Kanyoro (2020) urges that “the rejuvenation event must be read as godly kick against every socio-religious order that entombs women’s eventuality.” The removal of the stone in the Gospel narrative dramatizes God’s action in capsizing similar rough systems. It proclaims that emancipation originates not from mortal authorization but from godly intervention. Wright (2020) interprets this act as “the sign that new creation has formerly broken into the old order, collapsing its scales from within.”

For Nigerian women moment, the rolled-away gravestone represents stopgap that the structures confining them — within riser, congress, and ménage likewise — can be displaced by the same godly power that opened Christ’s grave. In this sense, the resurrection is not only literal memory but continuing social vaticination. God acts decisively in history to strike every gravestone of patriarchy, summoning the church and society to share in that redemptive movement.

Traditional gender constructs and sayings:

Language functions as both a depository and a transmitter of testament, shaping how societies perceive identity, authority, and gender. In African societies, sayings serve as vehicles of artistic wisdom but also as instruments for buttressing social scales. The Yoruba adage “*oro obinrin ko se tele*” (It is not wise to follow a woman’s advice) encapsulates centuries of androcentric study



that delegitimises women's sapience and rational capacity (Ampitan, 2012, p. 382). Within traditional Yoruba cosmology, similar aphorisms codified manly dominance and institutionalised the rejection of women from decision-making in both domestic and religious surrounds. These verbal morals have endured, subtly shaping ecclesiastical stations toward womanish leadership and theological participation in contemporary Nigeria.

As Phiri and Nadar (2022) observe, "patriarchal language operates not simply as descriptive but as conventional — it constructs theological boundaries that confine women's places within respectable limits." When these unsexed sayings are uncritically absorbed into Christian theology, they distort the philosophy's liberative intent. They produce what Oduyoye (2019) calls a double jeopardy; women are both culturally and religiously silenced, marginalised first by tradition and again by ecclesiastical systems that baptise patriarchy in theological language.

However, the rejuvenation narrative offers a decisive theological notice of similar constructs. By commissioning women as the first outriders of the risen Christ, the philosophy redefines power not as dominance but as service and substantiation. Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992) argue that the philosophy "transforms social scales into communities of participated responsibility, where power is measured by one's capacity to serve rather than to control" (p. 98). This aligns with Schüssler Fiorenza's (2021) assertion that "the resurrection establishes followership of coordinates, nulling the patriarchal imagination that confines authority to men."

Proverbs similar as "*oro obinrin ko se tele*" (It is not wise to follow a woman's advice) therefore come theological counter-texts — monuments of how artistic language can obscure godly truth. The Church in Nigeria must engage in critical inculturation, discerning which artistic rudiments can be redeemed and which must be crucified in light of the rejuvenation. The risen Christ's protestation of women's substantiation calls for a verbal reformation; a metamorphosis of the proverbial imagination so that the language of faith reflects God's inclusive area rather than humanity's inherited scales.

Comparative insights: Biblical patriarchy and African patriarchal systems:

Both the biblical and African worlds are deeply marked by patriarchal hypotheticals about gender, authority, and leadership. As Acha (2015) observes, "the ancient world was a men's world and the biblical world was no exception" (p. 38). Within the Hebrew environment, patriarchy was institutionalised in family, tabernacle, and law, defining manly authority as divinely sanctioned, also, African societies historically confined women to inferior places in governance, heritage, and deification, frequently interpreting similar rejections as natural or sacred (Phiri & Nadar, 2022).

Yet, the philosophy does not affirm these systems — it transforms them. By revealing the rejuvenation first to women, God reconfigures the sense of authority from domination to service. Oduyoye (2019) insists that "the resurrection is a theological rupture that overturns every scale grounded on gender and class." This godly reversal challenges both biblical and African patriarchies, exposing their mortal origins. Therefore, a relative hermeneutic that boons emancipation over preservation invites African theologians to re-read Scripture through the lens of resurrection hope. In doing so, the Bible becomes not a tool for sustaining patriarchy but a substantiation to God's ongoing dismantling of all rough morals.

Women, Church, and Power in Contemporary Nigerian Christianity

Women's evolving roles in church leadership and ministry:

In the last few decades, Nigerian women have achieved remarkable visibility in ecclesiastical leadership, theological education, and social ministry. Historically confined to supplementary or probative functions, women now enthrall different clerical services across appellations — pastoral, predictive, and academic. The Methodist, Anglican, and several Pentecostal traditions have begun ordaining women, while the Roman Catholic Church has expanded women's participation in catechetical and executive ministries (Oloyede, 2023). These developments gesture a gradational shift from rejection to recognition, though representation remains uneven across ecclesiastical traditions.



Alana (2011) correctly observes that “the marginalised — women, children, and the poor — constituted the bottom pealed of society” (p. 202). This social position, deeply bedded in Nigeria’s artistic memory, continues to echo within church scales. Numerous women still encounter structural resistance when aspiring to leadership positions, not because of theological incapacity but because of settled gender bias. As Phiri and Nadar (2022) argue, “patriarchal ecclesiastical societies remain the single topmost manacle to the flourishing of women’s gifts within African Christianity.”

Nevertheless, womanish theologians and ministers have come catalysts of renewal. Through education and activism, Nigerian women similar as Dorcas O. Akintunde, Esther A. Ibanga, and Mercy Amba Oduyoye have shaped contextual theologies that challenge gender conceptions and advocate for transformative followership. Oduyoye (2019) interprets this emergence as an incarnation of rejuvenation faith — “a movement from the sepulchres of silence into the public proclamation of life.”

These advancements demonstrate that the question is no longer one of women’s capability but of institutional amenability. Migliore (2021) underscores that “authentic followership requires communities that image the inclusive patterns of godly grace rather than replicate social scales.” When churches affirm women’s leadership, they not only actualise the philosophy’s egalitarian impulse but also enrich theological imagination and pastoral effectiveness.

Thus, Nigerian Christianity stands at a vital moment to either consolidate the earnings of addition or retreat into patriarchal nostalgia. The evolving participation of women in ministry is not a sociological accident but a theological necessity — a personification of the rejuvenation’s liberating power, calling the Church to image the inclusive area inaugurated by the risen Christ.

Institutional and theological obstacles to inclusion:

Institutionally, numerous Nigerian churches remain constrained by patriarchal ecclesiology that interprets Book through androcentric lenses, buttressing manly-centered leadership models. Theological resistance to gender equivalency frequently stems from the misperception that feminist theology represents a temporal trouble rather than a biblical imperative. Bakoshi (2016) refutes this view, asserting that “gender inclusiveness is a biblical tradition” enhancing collaborative flourishing (p. 1). In the same way, Kanyoro (2020) argues that when churches deny women full participation, they “immure the philosophy within the walls of patriarchy.” The problem is thus hermeneutical, not doctrinal — arising from inherited interpretations rather than scriptural intent. Nigerian theological institutions must borrow contextual and feminist hermeneutics that centre women’s lived gests, enabling unborn church and scholars to interpret Book through the lens of justice and mutuality rather than domination. Only similar reformation can align doctrine with the inclusive vision of the resurrection.

Emerging examples of women’s transformation and leadership:

Despite enduring systemic and theological barriers, numerous Nigerian women have come transformative leaders in theology, mission, and education — embodying the courage of the women at the tomb. Scholars like Dorcas O. Akintunde have advanced gender-sensitive biblical interpretation, while ecclesial figures such as Rev. Esther Ajayi and Bishop Funke Felix- Adejumo exemplify inclusive spiritual leadership that islands faith and social reform (Adewale, 2012). Their ministries affirm what Oduyoye (2019) calls “the resurrection praxis of African women” — faith restated into visible action for justice and renewal. In the same way, Phiri and Nadar (2022) describe similar leadership as evidence that African Christianity’s future will be shaped by women’s voices. These exemplifications reflect a gradational but unrecoverable metamorphosis the “stone” of rejection is being rolled away, revealing a church decreasingly aligned with the inclusive spirit of the resurrection.

Toward a Resurrection- Inspired Theology of Gender Inclusion

The rolled-away stone as symbol of divine liberation:

The removal of the stone in Mark 16:4 serves as the hermeneutical key to a theology of emancipation embedded in the resurrection. It signifies not only Christ’s triumph over death but also God’s decisive intervention in dismembering mortal systems of oppression. As Wright (2020)



explains, the empty grave “signals the intrusion of godly power into the world’s structures of impossibility.” Theologically, the rolled-away gravestone announces that no spiritual, artistic, or institutional hedge can repel godly agency. For African women, this symbol affirms that emancipation originates in God’s redemptive action, not in mortal concession. Oduyoye (2019) interprets it as “the breaking open of all sepulchres — particular, artistic, and ecclesiastical — that confine women’s eventuality.” Therefore, the resurrection event becomes a continuing disclosure of godly emancipation, summoning African Christianity to share in God’s transformative movement of equality and renewal.

Resurrection theology as a paradigm for gender justice:

Resurrection theology proclaims not only the renewal of life but also the reordering of social realities in light of godly justice. To declare “Christ is risen” while immortalizing gender rejection is to undermine the ethical imperatives of rejuvenation faith. Njoroge and Dube (2001) correctly assert that rejuvenation belief must “restate into structures that affirm the full humanity of women and men likewise” (p. 77). This theological vision demands ecclesiastical metamorphosis — restructuring ministries, leadership, and doctrine around equivalency rather than scale. Schüssler Fiorenza (2021) argues that “the resurrection community is a followership of coordinates, not a reconstruction of patriarchal religion.” For Nigerian Christianity, this means embodying rejuvenation as praxis defying systemic patriarchy, reforming ecclesiastical policy, and nurturing inclusive theological education. Gender justice, thus, is not an external docket but a rejuvenation accreditation — a visible sign that the Church lives within the power of the risen Christ who makes all effects new.

The call for hermeneutical and ecclesial renewal in African Christianity:

A resurrection-inspired hermeneutic compels the African Church to re-read Scripture from the perimeters, where God’s liberating power is most easily revealed. This renewal entails (a) integrating feminist-biblical education into theological education, (b) constituting policy reforms that insure women’s full participation in ordained and lay ministries, and (c) incorporating women’s substantiation into liturgical festivity. As Oduyoye (1995) reminds us, “The resurrection must be seen not only as God’s act in history but as God’s pattern for mortal community” (p. 126). Similar hermeneutical and ecclesiastical renewal reclaims rejuvenation faith as a living paradigm for justice and collective mortal flourishing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of theological, biblical, and cultural insights:

This study has shown that the question “Who will roll the stone away?” encapsulates both the faith and the frustration of women in history and in Nigeria today. The resurrection narratives affirm women as primary witnesses of divine revelation, subverting patriarchal orders that continue to marginalise them.

Implications for Nigerian churches and theological education:

For Nigerian churches, resurrection theology demands a renewed ecclesiology rooted in inclusion. Theological institutions must integrate gender-conscious curricula and encourage contextual hermeneutics that read the Bible through African women’s experiences.

Recommendations for gender-equitable ecclesial praxis:

1. Ordination and Leadership: Churches should establish inclusive policies that enable women to serve in all ministerial offices.
2. Theological Education: Seminaries should mainstream feminist and contextual theology.
3. Liturgical Reform: Incorporate resurrection stories of women into worship narratives.
4. Advocacy: Christian organisations should champion gender justice as a gospel imperative.
5. Partnership: Encourage collaboration between men and women as co-labourers in the *missio Dei*.



Ultimately, the stone that hinders women's flourishing must be recognised not merely as a social construct but as a spiritual challenge. In rolling it away, God calls the Church to embody resurrection power—liberating, inclusive, and transformative.

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