

BIBLE SERIES: "EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"

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NT-44 11-16-2013



MATTHEW 28; LUKE 23; JOHN 19 – JESUS' RESURRECTION & LAST INSTRUCTIONS

We now come to the incredible resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—with hundreds of trustworthy witnesses!

How did it happen? The disciples basically had fled and given up. They just couldn't believe a person could rise from the dead on his own. This was not like Lazarus, where Jesus performed the miracle. Now Jesus was dead and they still didn't have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them to guide and empower them (John 14:17). There was no real leader among them, with Peter still shell-shocked and ashamed of having betrayed Jesus. The rest were hiding and trying to save their skins.

Yet, it was some of the women who felt they had to make sure Jesus would have a decent burial according to the Jewish rituals, covering His body with the proper spices and fragrances to offset the eventual bad odors. That was all they hoped to do, for they didn't believe He would resurrect from the dead. They also were not aware that soldiers had been placed there to protect the tomb.

So, on late Sabbath afternoon, just before sundown, Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Each of the Gospels adds some of the details, and unfortunately, most of the translators have done a very poor job since they did not recognize there were two "Sabbaths" that week--the First Day of Unleavened Bread on a Thursday, and then the weekly Sabbath. Remarkably, when this is taken into account, as the *Literal Translation of the Bible* does, the verses are clear and understandable.

Let's begin with John's account: "But **on the first of the sabbaths**, Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, darkness yet being on it. And she saw the stone had been removed from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, They took away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they laid Him" (John 20:1-2, emphasis added throughout).

We see here that Mary came to the tomb **while it was still dark** and the tomb was empty--since Jesus had already resurrected from the dead!

Matthew adds, "But **late in the sabbaths**, at the dawning into the first of the sabbaths, Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary came to gaze upon the grave." (Mt. 28:1). Notice there are multiple

Sabbaths mentioned here which deal with a Holy Day, the First Day of Unleavened Bread on Thursday, and then the weekly Sabbath.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary explains, "The day after the preparation (ASV). Usually explained as Saturday.....However, *this preparation day was the day before the Passover Feast day* (John 19:14, 31), which feast may have occurred that year **on Wednesday night**. Perhaps this accounts for Matthew's not using the term 'Sabbath' here, lest it be confused with Saturday. According to this view, the entombment lasted **a full seventy-two hours**, from sundown Wednesday to sundown Saturday. Such a view gives more reasonable treatment to Mt. 12:40. It also explains 'after three days' and 'on the third day' in a way that does least violence to either" (1962, page 984).

Also, the term, "at the dawn" just means "toward the beginning of a new day" as A. T. Robertson explains: "Both Matthew here and Luke (Luke 23:54) use dawn (*epiphosko*) for the dawning of the twenty-four hour-day **at sunset, not of the dawning of the twelve-hour day at sunrise**. The Aramaic used the verb for dawn in both senses. The so-called Gospel of Peter has *epiphosko* in the same sense as Matthew and Luke as does a late papyrus. Apparently the Jewish sense of 'dawn' is here expressed by this Greek verb" (*N.T. Word Pictures*, notes on Mt. 28:1).

The account continues by mentioning what happened as the women were arriving at the tomb, "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men [they fainted]. But the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.' So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples" (Mt. 28:2-8).

Mark adds, "Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when

the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed...Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons" (Mark 16:2-5, 9).

It is important to note when it says, "early the first day of the week," the comma, not found in the Greek, can alter the meaning. *The Expositor's Greek Testament* explains the phrase 'early the first day of the week' may be either 'connected with (having risen), indicating the time of the resurrection, or with (appeared), indicating the time of the first appearance." A. T. Robertson adds, "It is probable that this note of time goes with 'risen' (*anastas*), though it makes good sense with 'appeared' (*ephane*)" (*NT Word Pictures*, notes on Mark 16:9).

We know from the account of John 18:1 that Jesus resurrected *before* dawn, so a more accurate translation, as the *Montgomery Version* has it, "Now having risen, early the first day of the week he appeared first to Mary Magdalene."

Then Luke adds, mentioning two Sabbaths as well, "And on the **first of the sabbaths**, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bearing the spices they made ready, and certain others with them, and they found the stone having been rolled away from the tomb, and having gone in, they found not the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:1-3, YLT).

So Mary Magdalene was the first one to meet Jesus. John says, "Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him. Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple [John] outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to

the tomb first, went in also; and he saw *and believed*. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' Now when she had said this, she turned around and **saw Jesus standing there**, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, 'Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him, 'Rabboni!' (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, '**Do not** cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am **ascending** to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' 'Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her'" (John 20:2-18).

So, notice how much Jesus' resurrection relates to the wave-sheaf offering (waved as the Sabbath ended on the week of Unleavened Bread). He had not ascended yet to heaven, to be formally accepted by the Father as our sin-offering.

Now while Mary and the other women (Joanna and Mary the mother of James--Luke 24:10) went to notify the disciples, Jesus appeared to them again, and they were able to touch Him, meaning He had gone up to heaven, was received by the Father, and descended again, as Matthew records, "So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, 'Rejoice!' So they came and **held Him by the feet** and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren **to go to Galilee**, and there they will see Me'" (Mt. 28:8-10).

Mary heard her name being pronounced exactly as Jesus had always done, and she recognized Him as "Rabboni" or (My) Teacher.

Meanwhile, some of the terrified guards went to the Jewish authorities. Matthew relates, "Now while

they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, 'Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure.' So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day'" (Mt. 28:11-15). This is the first false report from the Jews to raise doubts about Jesus' resurrection. As we can see, the deceit was based on bribes. The guards knew it was a death sentence to claim they were sleeping on the job, so the chief priests assured them they would "appease" Pilate, who was known to accept bribes, and the guards received a hefty bribe for lying.

This argument has some glaring errors. First, if the disciples had stolen the body, they would only have a cadaver, since Jesus had been dead and sealed in the tomb for three days. Secondly, if the disciples knew this, would they have boldly proclaimed His resurrection, and many died showing great faith about it? Thirdly, how about the multiply sightings? As Paul brings out, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas [Peter], then by the twelve. After that He was seen **by over five hundred brethren at once**, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:3-8). Notice Paul mentioned some of those witnesses were still alive in his day, and could verify having seen a resurrected Christ.

So *the great difference* between other religious leaders and their teachings and Jesus Christ and His teachings is that **He rose from the dead** and was seen by hundreds of credible witnesses while the rest of the religious leaders simply died and like all flesh, just turned into dust.

Also, Jesus appeared for **over a month** to His disciples. As Luke writes, "The former account I made...of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He

through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, **to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days** and speaking of the things pertaining to ***the kingdom of God***" (Acts 1:1-3).

Then Jesus met two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus, a town seven miles from Jerusalem, and revealed Himself to them. They went back to Jerusalem to inform the eleven apostles. While they were there, Jesus again appeared to all but one of the apostles, **Thomas**. John writes, "Now Thomas...was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace to you!' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that *you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*" (John 20:24-31).

Jesus then appeared to His disciples and many others in Galilee and told them to wait in Jerusalem where they would receive the Holy Spirit (on Pentecost). He then concludes by giving them the Great Commission: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and ***make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them*** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ***teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you***; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt. 28:18-20). So end these Gospels.