

44. His Resurrection: The First Day

The first four books of the New Testament, which we call the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, all tell about the life of Jesus, particularly his ministry, the last week of his life, his death and his resurrection. Each author tells, on the whole, the same facts, but, depending on what struck him most or what his readers needed, this one may provide more details relating to a particular situation, while another writer may include an event or word that the others choose to omit.

When we try to understand a series of historic events, it's always useful to have at our disposal the testimony of several people, because the various versions complement one another. When we look at the four versions of the day that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, they seem to contradict one another in certain details, but this is not the case. Today we will look at the testimony of Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20 on the subject of this very important day, but we are going to weave together the four narratives so that you can follow the events in chronological order. You will see that in the course of the day, not only did his disciples observe that the grave where his body had been placed was empty, but Jesus also appeared alive five times to individuals or groups who had known him very well before his death. They were all well qualified to testify about his resurrection.

Here, then, is the narrative of the Sunday that transformed his downhearted disciples and for two thousand years has filled the hearts of Christians with joy and hope:

Mark 16:1: "Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him."

Luke 24:1: "Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared."

Matthew 28:2-4: "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."

Mark 16:9: "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."

John 20:1-18: "[She] went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 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 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 (marveling to himself at what had happened.—Luke 24:12).

"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, (while they were mourning and weeping—Mark 16:10) that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her."

Mark 16:11: "And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe."

Mark 16:2-5: "Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, (Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them...—Luke 24:10) 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?' Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. (Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this...—Luke 24:3,4) they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. (Behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth.—Luke 24:4,5)."

Matthew 28:5: "But the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.'"

Luke 24:5: "They said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?'"

Matthew 28:6: "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Luke 24:6-8: "'He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" And they remembered His words."

Matthew 28:6,7: "And he said to them. 'Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples [and Peter—Mark 16:7] 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.'"

Mark 16:8: "They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Matthew 28:8-10: "So they... 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.'"

Luke 24:9,11: "Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest... And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them."

Luke 24:13-35: "Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, 'What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?' Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, 'Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?' And He said to them, 'What things?' So they said to Him, 'The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.' Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe

in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?' So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!' And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread [...but they did not believe them either. (Mark 16:11)]"

Luke 24:36-43: "While they were telling these things, [the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' (John 20:19)] But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.' When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet [and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. (John 20:20)] But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, 'Have you any food here?' So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence."

John 20:21: "So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'"

CONCLUSION

Apart from the death of Jesus, no event since the beginning of history has had more important consequences than his resurrection. In the lessons to come, we will see not only the historic certainty of this greatest of all miracles, but also what it proves once and for all.