

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

I've shared with you my testimony; that I came to a crisis of faith after graduating seminary. I realized Christianity stands or falls on the evidence for the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. I studied the evidence and am convinced it overwhelmingly proves Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead settling for all time and eternity that He is the Messiah King and Savior.

But we must admit that following the course of events of the resurrection as recorded in the four Gospels can be confusing. So I hope our study this morning will help all of us better understand how the events of that incredible day unfolded.

Jesus was crucified and buried on Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 30AD. Keep in mind that in the Jewish reckoning of time, a new day begins at dusk when three stars can be seen in the sky. For convenience, I've generalized that as 6PM. A second fact is that in Jewish reckoning, any part of a day constitutes the whole day. Therefore, according to Jewish reckoning, Jesus was in the tomb three days.

Jesus' followers rested on the Sabbath. As the Sabbath came to a close we read in Matthew 28:1...

*MATTHEW 28:1 (ESV)*

**Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.**

*The dawn of the first day* was not early morning, but dusk, around 6PM! As Sabbath ended and the first day of the week began, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James went to see the tomb. They saw the tomb sealed and guarded. After visiting the tomb, they were joined by Salome. After Sabbath, some shops opened in the evening. Mark tells us...

*MARK 16:1 (ESV)*

**When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.**

Their plan was to go to the tomb the next morning (which was still the first day of the week) and complete the burial procedure.

Clearly, these ladies did not anticipate the resurrection even though Jesus predicted His crucifixion and resurrection many times.

During the wee hours of Sunday morning, Jesus rose from the dead. We read in Matthew 28:2-4...

*MATTHEW 28:2-4 (ESV)*

**And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.**

No doubt the earthquake shook people awake. After the earthquake, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb alone. She was the first to discover the empty tomb.

*JOHN 20:1-2 (ESV)*

**<sup>1</sup> Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”**

Mary assumed the tomb was empty because Jesus' body had been moved, not because He had risen. She ran from the tomb to the place the disciples were staying to tell Peter and John of her discovery.

In the meantime, after sunrise, Mary, the mother of James, Salome and some other women went to the tomb per their plan to complete the burial process for Jesus.

*LUKE 24:1-8 (ESV)*

**1** But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. **2** And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. **5** And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? **6** He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, **7** that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” **8** And they remembered his words,

These dear ladies were the first to receive divine confirmation of the resurrection. Immediately, they left the tomb to go tell the disciples what they had experienced.

*LUKE 24:9-12 (ESV)*

**9** and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. **10** Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, **11** but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

Peter, James, John and the other disciples did not believe Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James nor did they believe Salome. To us this seems incredible and insulting. But in first century Jewish culture, women were not considered reliable witnesses; they were not permitted to testify in court. This brings us to a very important point. If, as some opponents of Christianity claim, the resurrection is a fabrication of the disciples or the early Church, the disciples would never have used women as witnesses of the resurrection! The fact that

Mary Magdalene will be the first eyewitness of Jesus resurrected is powerful proof of the historicity of the resurrection!

Even though they didn't believe the ladies' report, Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves (John 20:2-10). Luke 24:12 tells us...

*LUKE 24:12 (ESV)*

**But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.**

He still didn't believe.

After Peter and John left the tomb, Mary Magdalene returned.

*JOHN 20:11-18 (ESV)*

**11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.**

After this encounter with Jesus, Mary Magdalene again went back to the disciples to tell them everything. Mark tells us...

*MARK 16:9-11 (ESV)*

**9 Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.**

In her joy, Mary Magdalene hugged Jesus like she would never let Him go. Jesus said to her...

*JOHN 20:17 (ESV)*

**“Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”**

After appearing to Mary Magdalene, Jesus ascended to heaven to sprinkle His blood to cleanse the heavenly tabernacle. Lucifer/Satan defiled the heavenly tabernacle in the course of his rebellion (Ezekiel 28:11-19). While the earthly tabernacle could be cleansed by animal blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22), the heavenly tabernacle required cleansing by better blood, innocent human blood. Hebrews 9:11-12 describes what Jesus did that Resurrection morning:

*HEBREWS 9:11-12 (ESV)*

**But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.**

After completing this high priestly work, Jesus returned to earth and appeared to the women who were then able to freely to touch Him.

*MATTHEW 28:9-10 (ESV)*

**And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”**

The fact that the second appearance was also to women and not to men strengthens the argument that the Gospel accounts are genuine. Any Jewish author fabricating a story would not have written it this way but the Gospel writers reported the truth.

Jesus had an inner circle of disciples – the Twelve – and an outer circle of disciples such as the 72. After appearing to the women, Jesus appeared to two disciples of the outer circle one of whom was named Cleopas. Cleopas may actually have been Jesus’ step-uncle, the brother of Joseph, Jesus’ stepfather. Mark tells us...

*MARK 16:12-13 (ESV)*

**After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.**

These were the two on the road to Emmaus. What is significant here is that these eyewitnesses were men, yet the disciples still did not accept their testimonies. In their report to “the eleven” they reported that Jesus had also appeared to Peter. Luke 24:33-35 tells us...

*LUKE 24:33-35 (ESV)*

**<sup>33</sup> And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, <sup>34</sup> saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.**

Peter was the first disciple of the inner circle to see Jesus resurrected. Jesus may have wanted this private meeting to comfort Peter after

Peter's failure in denying Jesus. When Jesus predicted Peter's failure He also assured Peter he would be re-established. This private meeting probably was a step in restoring Peter.

As Cleopas and his companion were reporting their experience, Jesus appeared.

*LUKE 24:36-43 (ESV)*

**36 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate before them.**

Initially, the Apostles still did not believe Jesus had risen from the dead; they thought He was a ghost! Jesus finally convinced them by having them see and touch His wounds and watch Him eat food; not things a ghost would do.

This concludes the events that took place on Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 30AD, the first day of the week, Resurrection Sunday. Jesus will appear to the disciples a second time for the sake of Thomas (John 20:24-29). 1 Corinthians tell us Jesus met with James (His half-brother) and was seen by over 500 men at one time. We also need to remember that Jesus stayed with His disciples in Galilee so that He walked on the earth 40 days after His resurrection and before His ascension.

The literal, physical resurrection of Jesus is absolutely critical to our salvation. First, it proves we have been justified. Romans 4:24-25 tells us...

*ROMANS 4:24-25 (ESV)*

**<sup>24</sup> It (a righteous standing before God) will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, <sup>25</sup> who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**

His resurrection proved He had paid for our sins in full and that all who believe in Him by faith are justified (declared righteous before God).

Second, the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead guarantees power for service. Ephesians 1:17-20 teaches us...