

## THE RESURRECTION

I. Putting the resurrection accounts together from the four Gospels, Acts 1 and 1 Corinthians 15, the sequence of events from the Resurrection to the Ascension included the following.

A. Just before day break, Mary Magdalene, Salome (the mother of James the elder and John), Mary (the mother of James the lesser and Joses, or Joseph), along with possibly some others set out for the tomb to anoint Jesus' body properly. Because the Sabbath had been fast approaching on Friday, they had done some preparation for the burial, but could not complete it. Mary Magdalene was apparently leading the group.

B. Sometime before they arrived, probably while they were on the way to the tomb, there was an earthquake, and an angel in dazzling white robes rolled the stone away from the tomb, which was apparently empty, as described by the Gospel according to Matthew.

- Jesus had apparently already arisen and passed through the stone with His now glorified body.

- The soldiers were terrified and, after being paralyzed by fear for a short time, fled.

C. The women came to the tomb very early in the morning, possibly even as the soldiers were fleeing. There were two angels there, one apparently inside the tomb and one on the rock outside. They told the women not to fear or be amazed, for Jesus had prophesied of His resurrection. They instructed them to tell the eleven remaining apostles to go to Galilee, where Jesus would meet them.

D. On the way back they met Jesus, who commissioned them to go to the apostles and other disciples and tell them of the resurrection. Apparently, Mary Magdalene, being a little behind the others because she had remained at the tomb weeping, saw Jesus first and thought He was a gardener. It is possibly, but unlikely that the encounter between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, described in the Gospel according to John, occurred later, after Peter and John arrived. But that encounter appears to have been the first one with Jesus.

E. The women were at first fearful, although at the same time, filled with an excited joy. They were initially hesitant to tell anyone about the event, so overawed they were and so unbelievable it seemed. However, possibly because of Jesus' reassurance, they went and told the apostles, and possibly told other disciples as well.

F. Upon hearing the news, the apostles did not believe them. But Peter and John ran to the tomb. They saw the empty tomb, and John apparently understood what had happened.

- Sometime during the day, but before evening, Jesus appeared to Peter alone or possibly in the company of John and other disciples. See 1 Cor. 15:5.

G. Meanwhile, the guards at the tomb went and told the chief priests what had happened. The chief priests bribed the guards to say that the apostles had stolen the body.

H. In the afternoon, Jesus appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, as described in

Luke 24:13-33.. These may have been the same disciples that Mark records Jesus meeting, or Jesus may have met more than one group of disciples.

I. In the early evening, apparently just after dinner, Jesus appeared to the eleven in the upper room in Jerusalem. He rebuked them for their lack of faith, for He apparently intended for them to trust the words of the women and go to Galilee to meet Jesus there. But He also gave them a dramatic commissioning to preach, baptize, forgive sins, and perform many signs confirming the Gospel.

J. Thomas was not with them at that time. Possibly because of his doubt, or possibly trying to make preparations, they remained in Jerusalem for a week. On the following Sunday, Jesus appeared to them again in the upper room, this time with Thomas present.

K They then proceeded to Galilee, where Jesus appeared to them for the first time while several of them were fishing. Here they received further instructions from Jesus.

L. Jesus appeared to others, and held further conversations with them during the forty days between His Resurrection and His

Ascension. St. Paul specifically describes an appearance to 500 disciples and to James alone. See 1 Corinthians 15:5.

M. By the end of this time, the eleven apostles had returned to Jerusalem. They went a short distance to Bethany to meet with Jesus for the last time. He gave them a final commissioning, told them to wait in Jerusalem until He sent the Spirit upon them and ascended into heaven.

II. None of the Gospels discusses all of these events.

A. The Gospel of Mark continues to focus on the real confrontation with evil. The Gospel of Matthew had three neatly distinguished sections, on the women, on the guards and on the eleven disciples. Luke, interestingly enough for a Gentile author, focuses very heavily on the fulfillment of Scriptures and ends with a scene at the Temple, as the Gospel began. John gives the most extensive discussion of the resurrection appearances, focusing much more on individual dialogues and encounters with Jesus, and especially on Peter and John

B. None of the Gospels describe either the Resurrection itself, or an appearance to Mary. They describe the effects of the Resurrection, especially the empty tomb and appearances of Jesus. And Acts describes Mary with the Apostles in the upper room between the Ascension and Pentecost.

1. The Resurrection was probably too sublime for human words.

2. A meeting between the risen Jesus and Mary may also have been too sublime to describe. Or, Jesus may not have appeared to Mary because she knew He would rise again, and she would be the model of all of those who do not see, but believe. See John 20:29.

III. The Gospel of Mark begins with a simple, straightforward description of an angel at the tomb speaking to Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of John and Joses.

A. As with the description of the crucifixion, Mark is very specific about names. It is likely that he was adding credibility to his account by naming specific eyewitnesses.

B. Jesus rose on the third day, in part to leave a time so that it would be clear that He was in fact dead. See Summa Theologica

III question 53, article 2. Also, by rising on Sunday, the first day of the week, rather than the old Sabbath, He was also establishing a new Sabbath that would at the same time indicate that there was the beginning of a new creation.

C. The young man at the tomb, whom Matthew and Luke refer to as an angel, gave the message that Jesus had been raised and would meet the disciples and Peter in Jerusalem.

1. Emphasizing Jesus' true humanity, Mark records that Jesus "was raised." See also Acts 2:24, Romans 8:11. John, emphasizing more Jesus' divinity, says that Jesus "rose from the dead," indicating that He rose of His own power. See John 10:18, 20:9. See also Summa Theologica III question 53, article 4.
2. The angel gave Peter a place of prominence, either because of his need for forgiveness due to the denials, or to reaffirm his leadership.
3. Jesus' public ministry began in Galilee, where Isaiah prophesied that light would come to those in darkness, see Isaiah 8:23ff. And here the new commissioning was meant to begin there.

IV. Jesus then appeared to Mary Magdalene, to two disciples, and to the eleven.

A. This section and the description of the Ascension (verses 9-20) was probably added later, as indicated by the change in language.

1. If the Gospel was originally used for the Easter Vigil and the baptism of new Christians, or to explain the Apostles' preaching, it may have ended at verse 8 to lead into the liturgical proclamation of the Resurrection, or the Apostles' witness to the Resurrection.
2. Later on, as it was used outside of this context, Mark or a disciple of his may have written the rest to give the Gospel a proper ending
3. It is possible that there was another ending, but no one has been able to find a text that probably works.
4. In any case the Council of Trent, in its decree on Sacred Scripture affirmed that all of the parts of the Bible in the

Vulgate (the classic Latin translation), including these last 12 verses, are a part of the inspired word of God.

B. Jesus appeared to the women on the way back from the tomb. As indicated in the Gospel according to John, Mary Magdalene was apparently the first one to see Jesus.

1. This assurance may have given them the courage to tell the apostles, which they were reluctant to do earlier.
2. In describing Mary Magdalene as the one whom Jesus had cast seven demons from, Mark continues to emphasize the conflict with evil.

C. Jesus then appeared to two disciples in the countryside. They were probably the same disciples that Luke described on the road to Emmaus. If so, the disciples that they spoke to were different from the eleven disciples, as indicated in the Gospel of Luke.

- The fact that Mark does not name them or describe the event indicates that these disciples were probably known better in Judea than near the center of the Empire.

D. Jesus then appeared to the eleven Apostles.

1. Although Mark does not describe Judas' death, his absence is evident.
  2. The apostles' faith in the resurrection began with their personal encounter with Jesus.
  3. Jesus rebuked them for failing to trust the message of the women, which they should have recognized as the fulfillment of Jesus' earlier prophecies regarding His death and resurrection. Despite this rebuke, Jesus confirmed the disciples' mission to the world.
- Jesus tied baptism into belief, treating the two as almost one.
- He indicated that, once the Gospel is preached, people must make a definitive choice.

- The fact that the commission covered the entire world indicates that the Apostles were to hand that commission on to others.

5. Jesus described four signs that would accompany the preaching of the Gospels (or five, if one separates handling snakes and taking poison with impunity).

- The implication is not that these signs will always occur, but rather than signs or those like them will help give credibility to the Gospel.

- St. Gregory the Great argued that miracles often accompanied the preaching earlier in the Church's history because the faith was weaker. As faith grows, the power of God is more spiritual, leading to a deeper conversion. See Homily 33 on the Gospels.

- The signs all indicate a new creation. Four of the signs (driving out demons, picking up serpents, and drinking poisons without harm, and curing illnesses) reverse disorders resulting from the Fall. Speaking new languages reverses the curse from the tower of Babel, see Gen. 11:1-8.

V. Mark's description of the ascension says He "was taken up to heaven." Ephesians 4:8-10 emphasizes more of His divinity, saying that "He ascended."

- But Mark also reaffirms the Son of Man prophecy of Daniel 7 by describing Jesus seated at the right hand of God.

- The Gospel ends with the Apostles, now confirmed with strength from the risen Jesus, able now to spread the Gospel to all lands.