

Resurrection Sunday

A Harmonized Account

If Christ was not raised, His death was wasted and failed to pay the penalty for our sin, and our faith in Jesus is useless; it will accomplish nothing, and our sins are still counted against us and will send us all to hell. (1Corinthians 15:17-20)

We would still be dead in trespasses and sins and would forever remain spiritually dead and sinful.

But God *did* raise Jesus our Lord from the dead, “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” (Rom 4:24-25 NIV)

And because Jesus *does* live, we too enjoy new life and we can look forward to a perfect sinless life one day that will continue forever.

All four of the Gospels record the resurrection of Jesus, all of them confirming the main events of His resurrection but each one describing the story from their own unique perspective each contributing some fresh insight to what took place on that incredible morning.

This morning we will go through most of the events of that first resurrection morning blending together the details from the various different accounts to form a single harmonized message.

Matthew 27:59-66, “When Joseph had taken the body [of Jesus down from the cross], he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. ⁶¹And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb. ⁶²On the next day, which [was the Sabbath], the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate.

[This meeting was a violation of their Sabbath law which clearly forbid them to do any work or business on the Sabbath.]

⁶³[However, they said to Pilate], “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’ ⁶⁴Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him *away*, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first.”

[A study of these religious leaders and their past relationship with Jesus suggests that they were not afraid of the disciples stealing the body, but they were in fact afraid Jesus just might actually rise from the dead and they wanted to make sure He never got out of the tomb.]

“⁶⁵Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go your way, make *it* as secure as you know how.” ⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard [of Roman soldiers in place].”

All that the enemies of the Lord accomplished with this vain attempt to keep Jesus in the tomb was to ensure that there were a group of soldiers on hand to witness the resurrection of the Lord and that because of their guard there could be no other credible explanation for the empty tomb but that Jesus had risen indeed.

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 [Jesus’ body].

[Jewish tradition was to pour perfume and spices over the dead body to mask the odor of decomposition.]

²**Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they [traveled from Bethany which was about three kilometers away and] came to the tomb [just as the sun was rising].**

Matthew 28:2 - 4 “And behold, [as they were making their way to the tomb] 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 [so that all could look in and see that Jesus had risen from the dead and the tomb was empty]. ³[The angel's appearance] **was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.** ⁴**And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.** [These soldiers were powerless to keep the Son of God in the tomb.]

Remember that there was an earthquake when Jesus died (Mt. 27:51) and now again as He rises. All the city of Jerusalem felt the ground shake announcing the triumphant return of their King whom they had crucified.

Matthew 27:52-53, [With the earthquake] **"the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many."**

Matthew 28:11-15, **"Now...some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. ¹²When [the priests] had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³saying, "[If anyone asks what happened], tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' ¹⁴And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure."**

[It must have been a lot of money given, because this was a risky plan for the soldiers to agree to. Roman guards faced the death penalty if they ever fell asleep at their post and let their prisoner escape. The religious leaders could not deny the soldiers report, it is what they had feared would happen, but they stubbornly rejected the truth and instead sought for a cover-up to deny it.]

¹⁵So [the soldiers] took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

This brief report of this plot to try to hide the truth, gives insight into how it is possible today, in our present crisis, that professionals can be motivated with bribes to spread a story that they know to be untrue, and that they know contradicts the integrity of their profession and of their skills.

And it illustrates how rich and powerful men can ensure that there is no legal repercussions against those professionals who knowingly spread misinformation in order to hide the truth from the public.

Mark 16:3 – 4, **"And [as the women made their way to the tomb] they [were asking] themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' ⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large."**

Now upon seeing the stone rolled away Mary Magdalene panics and jumps to wrong conclusions and she rushes off to get the help of the men while the other women waited at the tomb for them to return.

John 20:2 – 3, **"[Mary] ran and came to Simon Peter, and [John], and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.' ³Peter therefore went out, and [John], and were going to the tomb."**

Meanwhile back at the tomb the women, who were waiting for Mary Magdalene to return with the men, decided to go into the tomb.

Mark 16:5, **"And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed."**

Matthew 28:5 – 8, **"But the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷And 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.”

⁸So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.”

But Peter and John, having been alerted by Mary, were already on their way to the tomb with Mary following close on their heels. They must have taken a different path, because it seems that they never met the other women, who were at this same time hurrying to tell them and the other disciples about the angel’s message.

John 20:4 - 18 “So they both ran together, and John outran Peter and came to the tomb first. ⁵And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying *there*; yet he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, ⁷and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.

[The original wording in the Greek language suggests that these burial wrappings were undisturbed, almost like a hollow cocoon. Obviously the body of Jesus had not been stolen but had somehow passed right through His grave clothes leaving them undisturbed. This ability to pass through solid objects is consistent with several other descriptions of Jesus’ resurrection body.]

⁸Then [John], who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. (John is the only disciple who believed in the resurrection without first seeing Jesus alive).

¹⁰Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. ¹¹But Mary [who had followed Peter and John to the tomb] stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. ¹²And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³Then 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.”

¹⁴Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, [perhaps silhouetted against the bright opening of the tomb] and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus 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.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus 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.’”

¹⁸Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.” [But according to Luke’s report, the disciples did not believe Mary or the other women who had seen the angel (Luke 24:10-11)]

When comparing the four gospel accounts there seems to be a second larger group of women who also arrive at the tomb later in the morning, after the sun had risen (Mark 16:2).

Perhaps one group were women who were staying in Jerusalem, and the others, women who were staying in Bethany.

The first group had gone while it was still dark (John 20:1). They are simply described as, “certain other women.”

Luke 24:1 - 8 “Now on the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, [the women who had travelled with Jesus from Galilee], and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb

bringing the spices which they had prepared. ²But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

[The earlier group of women, as soon as they entered the tomb had encountered only one angel sitting beside the grave clothes. Two angels appeared to this second group of women after they had already found the empty tomb and were standing around trying to figure out what had happened.]

⁵Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? [They were in a graveyard] ⁶He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” ⁸And they remembered His words.”

Matthew 28:9 “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.”

On the day before His death Jesus had made the following promise to His followers:

John 16:22, “You now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice and your joy no one will take from you.”

This everlasting joy is one of the greatest benefits that have come to us as a result of the resurrection of Jesus.

Matthew 28:10, “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 24:11 [But when the women reported these things] “their words seemed to the disciples like idle tales, and they did not believe them.”

The Bible tells us that later on resurrection Sunday Jesus also appeared to Peter who was alone agonizing over his cowardly denial of ever knowing Christ (Lk 24:34; 1 Co. 15:5); Jesus went out of His way to reaffirm Peter after Peter had denied Jesus three times.

And still later that resurrection Sunday afternoon we have the following eyewitness account:

Luke 24:13 - 46 “Now behold, two of [Jesus’ followers] were traveling that same day to a [nearby] village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴And they talked together of all these things which had happened. ¹⁵So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him [the Lord kept them from recognizing Him at first]. ¹⁷And He said to them, “What kind of conversation *is* this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?”

“¹⁸Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, “Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, [who does not know] the things which happened there in these days?” ¹⁹And [Jesus] 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, ²⁰and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.

²¹But 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. ²²Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. ²³When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive.

[They obviously did not believe the women's report, but assumed they had just seen a vision, a figment of their imagination.] **24**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."

[It seems that these two men had then left Jerusalem and begun their journey immediately after hearing Peter and John's report, before Mary Magdalene and the second group of women, had given their report of actually seeing Jesus, for they only mention the report of the first group of women who only saw angels, not Jesus Himself.]

25Then [Jesus] said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! **26**Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" **27**And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. **28**Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have [kept walking] farther. **29**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. **30**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. **31**Then their eyes were opened and they [recognized] Him; and He vanished from their sight."

32And 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?" **33**So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem [traveling in the dark], and found the eleven and those *who were with them* gathered together, **34**saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" **35**And they told about the things *that had happened* on the road, and how [they had seen Jesus].

36Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." **37**But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. [Most of them still cannot believe it is true.]

38And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

39Behold 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." **40**When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

41But while they still did not believe [because of] joy, and [amazement], He said to them, "Have you any food here?" **42**So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. **43**And He took *it* and ate in their presence [to prove to them that He was real and not a ghost]."

1 Corinthians 15:6-8, "After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once."

This morning let me ask you, "Do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?"

Do you believe that He is alive today and that He lives forever?

Will you confess Him as your Lord and your God?

Romans 10:9 - 10 says: "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. **10**For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

If Jesus did not come back to life and rise from the grave He would not have conquered sin or death or the demonic powers of hell, and those three great evils would forever conquer all of mankind with no hope of deliverance.

Without the resurrection the good news would be bad news, and there would be nothing worth preaching. Without the resurrection the gospel would be an empty, hopeless message of meaningless nonsense.

Unless our Lord conquered sin and death, making a way for men to follow in His victory, there is no salvation, there is no hope for justice, there is no hope for anything to get better in this world, there is no hope for meaning or purpose or for life.

Without the resurrection there is no good news to proclaim. (*John MacArthur, "First Corinthians", p. 410*)

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then sin won the victory over Christ and therefore sin would continue to be victorious over all men.

But now Christ is risen from the dead!

And the transformed lives of countless millions of believers since the time of Christ are evidence that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead and He lives today and undeniably His resurrection life gives power over sin to those who by faith receive Him.

Will you put your faith in Jesus today? Will you call on Jesus to give you His resurrection life? This is why He died and rose again, in order to pay the price for your salvation and to give you new life—His everlasting life.

All that you must do is by faith ask to be saved and by faith receive His life into yourself.

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