



He is Risen

The Harmony of the Gospels on the Resurrection of Christ

Did you know that the four gospels are in harmony about the resurrection of Jesus? Let us examine the following questions concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus from the four gospels.

1. How long was Jesus in the grave? Jesus said He would be in the grave “*three days and three nights*” (Matthew 12:40). This would be seventy-two hours. The accepted theory (Friday burial and Sunday morning resurrection) allows but two days and two nights, and this by reckoning the last hour of Friday as one day. Total: thirty-six hours--just half of the required time.

2. When were the spices bought? Mark says, when the Sabbath was past (Chapter 16:1). Luke says before the Sabbath commenced (Chapter 23:56).

3. How many women came to the tomb? Matthew says, two; Mark indicates, three; Luke, four or more; and John, one.

4. When did the women arrive? “*In the end of the sabbath,*” i.e., near sunset (Matthew); “*at the rising of the sun*”, (Mark); “*very early in the morning,*” (Luke); and (John), “*when it was yet dark*”. The last three all happened on the first day of the week.

5. What did the women do after

being told to go and tell the disciples that Jesus had risen? Those of Matthew’s account: “*with fear and great joy...did run to bring his disciples word*”; those of Mark’s: “*neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid*”; and Luke’s: “*returned...and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.*” Mary Magdalene for the second time, “*...came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord...*” (John 20:18).

6. Where, when, and by whom was Jesus FIRST seen after He had risen? Matthew says Jesus met the two Marys away from the tomb. This was “*In the end of the sabbath*”. John says, Jesus appeared to Mary alone at the tomb. This was on “*The first day of the week ...when it was yet dark,*” and is also referred to in Mark 16:9.

THE THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS

Now to answer the first question of the three days and three nights, we first prove the time of the resurrection and then, working backward, find out the time of burial. This is quite simple. In Matthew 28:1, we read that two women came, “*In the end of the sabbath*” to

see the sepulchre, “toward”--NOT “on”--the first day. They did not come to anoint the body of Jesus, but to see if the course was clear (apparently) for them to perform that service the next day. They knew the time was nearly due when the soldiers would leave the tomb, hence the visit (Matthew 27:63). As they came, “...*there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men*” (Matthew 28:2-4). The angel told the women not to fear, also that “*Jesus...is risen,*” and after inviting them to see the empty tomb, sent them to go and tell the other disciples the glad news. “*As they went...Jesus met them,*” thus confirming the fact of His resurrection, also the angel’s message to the disciples. This all happened as the Bible states, “*In the end of the sabbath*” (Matthew 28:1-10), and as this Sabbath is by Peter in Acts 10:40, and by Paul in I Cor. 15:4, called “*the third day,*” (two apostles who lived contemporaneously with Matthew and would therefore know) we have no hesitation in saying that the Sabbath and

“*the third day*” are in this case identical.

Now let us see upon which day Jesus was crucified and buried. In Luke 23:54 we read, “*And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.*” The crucifixion day, therefore, was followed by a sabbath, but what sabbath? If it was the weekly (7th day) Sabbath, Jesus was only twenty-four hours in the tomb, for He rose as we have just shown, in the end of that day. In John 19:31, however, the sabbath that “*drew on*” is called “*an high day*” and this is where we get the clue to the solution of the difficulty.

Jesus was crucified on Passover day. This happened on the 14th day of the month of Abib and was followed by “*the feast of unleavened bread*” which commenced on the 15th, and continued until the 21st day of the same month (Lev. 23:5-8). The first and last days of this feast were days of “*holy convocation*” or sabbaths; no servile work was to be done in them. The sabbath that “*drew on*” was one of these (i.e., the 15th of Abib), and not the weekly Sabbath at all. Jesus, therefore, lay in the grave two sabbaths, the first being the 15th of Abib, the “*high day*” that drew on, and the other, the weekly Sabbath. This fact enables us to solve the problem as to ...

WHEN THE SPICES WERE BOUGHT

thus clearing up what seems to be a flat contradiction between Mark and Luke. Mark says the women bought the spices “*when the sabbath was past*”. This, of course, was the “*high day*” sabbath mentioned in John 19:31, Luke 23:54, and Mark 15:42. Luke, however, (Chapter 23:56) says, “*they... prepared spices and ointments; and (then) rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.*” This was the 7th day. The women, therefore, bought and prepared the spices between the TWO sabbaths that Jesus lay in the tomb, and “*in the end of*” the latter, two of them came and found He had risen (Matthew 28:1-6). The day the spices were bought, therefore, was Friday.

Let us now put these conclusions in simple order. Jesus was crucified on Passover day (the 14th of Abib) and was buried as the “*high day*” sabbath (the 15th of Abib) “*drew on*”. (See John 19:31 and John 19:14 and 42, and Luke 23:50-54). When that high day “*sabbath was past*” the women bought and prepared the spices. (Compare Mark 16:1 with Luke 23:56, first clause). Thus, the spices were bought

on the 16th of Abib. This was followed by the 17th of Abib, which was *"the sabbath day according to the commandment,"* on which the women rested. *"In the end of"* this, the two Marys came to see the sepulchre and found that Jesus had risen. (Compare Luke 23:56, last clause, with Matthew 28:1-6.) Therefore, as the 17th of Abib was *"the sabbath day according to the commandment"*, now called Saturday; the 16th of Abib (when the spices were bought) was Friday; the 15th of Abib (the high day sabbath) was Thursday; and the 14th of Abib (Passover day) was Wednesday. Jesus, therefore, was buried in the end of Wednesday, as Thursday, the *"high day"* sabbath drew on, and rose in the end of Saturday, the 7th day, as the first day also drew on, having been in the tomb exactly three days and three nights, or seventy-two hours. The four gospels, therefore, are in complete harmony on the question of the three days and three nights, and Mark and Luke are in perfect accord as to when the spices were bought.

A few remarks are now necessary with reference to the word "dawn" found in Matthew 28:1. It says, *"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn*

toward the first day of the week". The Sabbath ends at sunset ("even," Leviticus 23:32), but "dawn" is near sunrise--just the very opposite. An average period of twelve hours forever separates them. Furthermore, the phrase, *"In the end... as it began"* will not permit any period intervening, much less twelve hours.

There is also something further to notice: *"as it began to dawn toward the first day"*, is clear evidence that the first day had not even commenced. "Toward" a day is not "on" it. What shall we do with it then? Just this: substitute the words "drew on," or "approached," for the word "dawn" as the same Greek word (epiphoskouse) is translated in Luke 23:54, and you get not only sense, but harmony, for, as the end of the Sabbath approaches, the first day of the week naturally "draws on."

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE FIRST DAY

Let us now consider the events of Sunday (the first day of the week). There are five recorded visits to the tomb on that day. They are as follows:

First, by Mary Magdalene *"when it was yet dark"* (John 20:1; Mark 16:9).

Second, Mary left and returned

shortly after with Peter and John (John 20:2-8).

Third, by the women of Luke, *"very early"*, literally at deep twilight (Greek *Batheos*, Chapter 24:1-9).

Fourth, by the women of Mark, *"at the rising of the sun"* (Chapter 16:2-8).

Fifth, by Peter again, this time alone. It would be after this that Jesus appeared to him. (Compare Luke 24:12,34, with I Cor. 15:5.)

But it is with the visits of the women, and what they saw and did, that we are chiefly concerned. They came as shown above, at different times and this explains why some saw one angel, and others two, in different positions in, and outside, the tomb. Further, the women being of varied temperament explains the apparently contradictory accounts of their actions; for while the women in Mark, being of a timid disposition, fled trembling and amazed, and said nothing to anyone, the women in Luke, on the other hand, acted apparently quite calmly, for after being reasoned with by the two angels, *"...they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest."* The two Marys of Matthew, who went to the sepulchre the preceding evening,

i.e., *"In the end of the sabbath"*, returned with *"fear and great joy...to bring his disciples word."* More could be said upon this, but the reader may readily perceive from these few remarks how all the so-called contradictions dissolve of themselves when subjected to quiet and careful consideration.

Now the reader will have noticed that there are two recorded appearances to Mary Magdalene. The first is in Matthew 28:1, and the second in John 20:15-18. The latter appearance is called the first only in the order of events on the first day (see Mark 16:9). This becomes abundantly clear on mature consideration. Mark is giving a consecutive narrative of the appearances of Jesus to various persons on that day. First, to Mary Magdalene; "after that," to the two disciples; and "afterward," to the eleven disciples. The appearance to Peter was apparently between the last two. The term "afterward" does not rule this out. Peter omitted to give details about his painful meeting between himself and Jesus whom he had previously denied with cursing and swearing, but when *"the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter"*, the horror of his offense so moved him that he *"...went out, and wept bitterly"* (Luke 22:61-62; Matthew 26:69-75).

Returning to Mary Magdalene, therefore, the query arises, How is it that Mary who had seen and spoken to Jesus and held Him by the feet, *"In the end of the sabbath"*, could say the next morning to Peter and John, *"They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him"*? (Compare Matthew 28:9 with John 20:1-2.)

There is but one answer to this. Mary had been made to doubt the evidence of her own senses. Do the Scriptures support this view? Let us see.

In Luke 24:11 we read, *"And their words (the women's) seemed to them (the apostles) as idle tales, and they believed them not."* Now three consecutive messages had been taken by the women to the apostles. First, that of the two women in Matthew 28:8-11; second, Mary's in John 20:18; and third, that of the women of Luke (four or more) in chapter 24:10. Those of Mark 16:8, said nothing to anyone; and the apostles' attitude towards the other women who preceded them seems to have had something to do with their silence, *"for they were afraid."* Now, if the apostles treated these consecutive and different messages as *"idle tales"*, with what scorn and ridicule must the first two women (one of whom was

Mary Magdalene) have been received.

When poor bewildered Mary came the next morning hoping to set all doubt at rest, and found nothing but an empty tomb, with not a single being, human or divine, to reassure her, she yielded to despair, and then came to the conclusion that the events of the preceding evening were illusions and that the body of Jesus had been "taken away." She then ran and told Peter and John her fears, who, when they came, saw and believed with her, *"For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead."* Returning home, they left Mary almost broken-hearted at the sepulchre weeping, and when the Lord saw her distress, it probably reminded Him of the pound of spikenard when she *"began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head"* and in Mary saw *"of the travail of his soul,"* and was satisfied (Isa. 53:11).

WHY THE ORTHODOX VIEW FAILS

Now it is simply impossible to harmonize the four gospels and at the same time hold the view that Matthew was recording what happened at "dawn" Sunday morning. This becomes perfectly

clear when we compare Matthew 28: 1-5 with John 20:1-18. The following differences in parallel columns make this manifest to the most casual reader.

After comparing the above extracts from Matthew and John, it must be evident to the reader that the two records refer to distinctly different visits. The two Marys arrived "*In the end of the sabbath*" (near sunset Saturday), while Mary Magdalene came alone, on the "*first day of the week...when it was yet dark*" (near sunrise Sunday), a difference of about twelve hours. But Orthodoxy assumes that both of these visits occurred on Sunday morning, so we must see how they fit. If the orthodox interpretation is correct, therefore, we must decide which visit was first, that of the two Marys in Matthew or Magdalene's alone, in John. To settle all doubt on the matter we refer to Mark 16:9, which declares that "*early the first day of the week,*" Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, John supplying the details connected with that appearance. Therefore, Mary's visit must be placed first, for "*when it was yet dark,*" precedes "*as it began to dawn*". This introduces us to a first rate difficulty.

John says Mary came and found the stone already rolled away and the tomb

empty, neither angel nor guard being present. The latter is proved by the fact that she was not challenged nor spoken to by anyone when she came; neither were Peter and John, who returned with her and entered the tomb shortly afterward. The two apostles went home again, leaving Mary at the tomb weeping; then two angels appeared to her; afterward Jesus, whom she supposed "*to be the gardener*". Having revealed Himself to her, she went and "*told the disciples that she had seen the Lord,*" bearing to them a message in every way different to that given to her and her companion the preceding evening (Matthew 28:10).

Now let us compare Matthew's account of the visit of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Chapter 28:1). Assuming they came (as Orthodoxy supposes), "*as it began to dawn*", it must FOLLOW all the things recorded in John 20:1-18.

But what did they see? Not the stone already rolled away, but an angel descend, roll it back, and sit upon it, also the guard present, all of whom were absent when Mary, Peter and John visited the tomb just before! Orthodoxy, therefore, compels us to conclude that the stone was put back after Mary's visit with Peter and John, and that the soldiers

returned to guard a tomb these three had previously entered and found empty! This clearly proves the fallacy of the accepted theory, for try how you will, you cannot place Matthew's account after the other three gospels and get agreement. The only way that you can is by placing the visit of the two Marys "*In the end of the sabbath*" near sunset, and Mary's alone, on the first day near sunrise as Matthew 28:1 and John 20:1 respectively demand.

THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED

Five days are distinctly mentioned in the gospel accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Beginning with the 14th of Abib, when Jesus ate the Passover with the disciples, these five days end with the "*first day of the week*". The latter being Sunday, the preceding four must be Saturday, Friday, Thursday, and Wednesday. As Wednesday, therefore, was Passover day, the 14th of Abib, the succeeding days were the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th, respectively. It is interesting to note that the first three of these were days of annual remembrance to the Jews, being specially ordered in Scripture. For example, the 14th of Abib was Passover

day; the 15th was the first of the seven days feast of unleavened bread, being an annual sabbath and the *"high day"* of John 19:31; the 16th was *"the morrow after the (annual) sabbath"* (Leviticus 23:11,15); while the 17th was the weekly Sabbath.

The events associated with each day are plainly set out below:

WEDNESDAY: 14th Abib. Passover day. The Crucifixion of Christ and His burial at its close.

In the evening, Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples (God's days begin at sunset.) He was taken prisoner in Gethsemane, and led away to the house of Caiaphas where the charges against Him were concocted. In the morning He was taken before Pilate, condemned and crucified. He was buried as *"the sabbath drew on"* (Luke 23:54). This sabbath was *"an high day"* (John 19:31,42).

THURSDAY: 15th Abib. First day of unleavened bread. Guard set at the tomb.

This is the *"high day"* sabbath (John 19:31) and *"the next day"* of Matthew 27:62, also the annual sabbath mentioned in Leviticus 23:11,15. In other words, the 15th day of Abib and

the first day of unleavened bread. The 21st day of Abib was also a sabbath, i.e., *"a day of holy convocation"*, no servile work was to be done. On this high day sabbath (15th) the chief priests asked for a guard to be set at the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66). It completed the first night and day in the grave.

FRIDAY: 16th Abib. Second night and day in the grave. Spices bought and prepared.

*"When the 'high day' sabbath (Thursday) was past"--*which brings us to Friday, *"the morrow after the sabbath"* (Leviticus 23:15)--the women bought and prepared spices to anoint the body of Christ. Having done this, they waited for the passing of the *"sabbath according to the commandment"* (Saturday), upon which they *"rested"* (compare Mark 16:1 with Luke 23:56). The first clause of verse 56 refers to the same time as Mark 16:1, namely, Friday, and the last clause to Saturday, the Sabbath that succeeded it.

SATURDAY: 17th Abib. Third night and day in the grave. Resurrection takes place near sunset.

"In the end of the sabbath" the two

Marys came to see the sepulchre. This time corresponds exactly with the time of Christ's burial. He was buried as the *"high day sabbath (Thursday) drew on"*, and the women came as the first day of the week (Sunday) drew on. The angel told the women that Jesus was risen (Matthew 28:1-6); and as they went to tell the disciples, Jesus appeared to them. Thus the resurrection, and the first appearance of Jesus, was *"In the end of the sabbath"*.

SUNDAY: 18th Abib. Five visits to the tomb and four appearances of Jesus to His disciples.

Although five visits to the tomb had been made, added to three appearances of Jesus and the message delivered by the women, confusion and unbelief prevailed in the minds of the disciples throughout the day until Jesus *"appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat"*. The first visit was by Mary Magdalene *"when it was yet dark"*; the second, by Mary accompanied with Peter and John immediately afterward; the third, by the women of Luke at deep twilight; the fourth, by the women of Mark *"at the rising of the sun"*; and the fifth, by Peter alone. Jesus appeared four times to different disciples during the same period. First, to Mary

Magdalene (John 20); second, to Peter (Luke 24:12); third, to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (verses 13-31); and fourth, to the eleven as they sat at meat (verse 36).

CONCLUSION

We have now finished our task. The Harmony of the Gospels on the Resurrection of Christ is fully established. The orthodox theory ought never to have been invented.