

# A (Harmonized) Chronology of the Resurrection Events

by David J. Fischer

The day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, with the help of Nicodemus, entombed the body of Jesus. Some of the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and perhaps others, watched. After leaving, some of them prepared additional spices to further apply to the body later. Others had to purchase spices the following day, after the Sabbath.<sup>1,2</sup>

Near dawn<sup>3</sup>, the day after the Sabbath, these women went to see the tomb to honor the body with their prepared spices and perfumes, despite being unsure of how they would open the tomb.<sup>4,5</sup>

As they were on their way, an angel of the Lord rolled away the stone and sat on it. His entrance was like an earthquake, his appearance was that of a man dressed in brilliant white clothing, with a face reflecting lightning.<sup>6,7</sup> The guards were frightened and they fainted.<sup>8</sup> The angel then vanished and the guards recovered enough to make their way into the city and report the events to the chief priests.<sup>9</sup> The priests paid off the guards and instructed them to spread the rumor that the disciples stole the body.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the guards apparently gone by this time, the women arrived at the tomb. Seeing the stone rolled away in the pale morning light, they entered the tomb, and found that the body was gone.<sup>11</sup> Then the angels appeared. Terror, confusion and grief; the women fell to the ground, bowing. Some women saw the one angel sitting to the right, others saw the one near the entrance, some saw both. The angels were like men, some would say young.<sup>12</sup> They seemed to wear dazzling clothing, like pure snow on a sunny day. The faces had the same brilliance, yet with the force and energy of lightning.<sup>13</sup> The angels told them not to be amazed, but to know that Jesus has risen and is not here. They invited them to look at the place where He had been laid, to see for themselves. Go, the angels declared, and tell the disciples (and Peter) that He has risen, and to go to Galilee where He will see you at Mt. ---.<sup>14</sup> Excited, scared, not fully comprehending what they had seen and heard, they ran to the disciples, not breathing a word of it to anyone on the way.<sup>15</sup> Mary Magdalene wanted to see Peter in particular.<sup>16,17</sup>

They arrived at the disciples and told them what they had seen. Mary Magdalene, having heard the words, yet didn't understand them, knew one thing for sure: Jesus' body was missing and she didn't know where it was at. This she told to Peter.<sup>18</sup> The other women, perhaps, gave a more coherent accounting of the angels to the disciples. Regardless, the disciples didn't believe them. Still Peter and John raced off to the tomb, to see for themselves.<sup>19,20</sup> John is a faster runner, but a more cautious man than Peter, and so arrived there first, but only looked into the tomb from the outside. But he could see the empty wrappings lying there. Peter arrived, and in typical fashion hurled himself into the tomb, and saw too the linen wrappings. John, emboldened, also entered. There was no body, and he believed.<sup>21</sup> They left, and returned to their homes.<sup>22,23</sup>

Poor Mary. She followed Peter back to the tomb and arriving at the tomb behind him and John, she stood weeping at the entrance.<sup>24</sup> When they left, she was completely alone with her grief. Still not understanding the angels' message she looked in the tomb again, possibly just the next of many hoping-it's-only-a-dream glances. And saw the angels again.<sup>25</sup>

One was at the head of the tomb, the other at the foot, and they asked her why she was crying. No longer fazed by even angels at this point, she wearily replied that someone had taken away her Lord and she didn't know where they had put the body.<sup>26</sup> She turned away to leave, and

nearly ran into a man standing there. He too asked her why she was crying. Thinking he was the gardener, she asked him if he had moved the body, and if so, please tell her where the body had been laid.<sup>27</sup>

"Mary!" He proclaimed.

She looked up and realized that He was Jesus! "Rabbi!" she cried and embraced Him.

Jesus told her to let go, for He must yet return the Father. Now go, He told her, and tell the others that all these things and more.

She left to return to the others, and announced that the Lord was alive, telling them what He told her, but again they didn't believe her.<sup>28</sup>

Sometime later that day, the other women were out, and Jesus greeted them. He reiterated what the angels said, to not be afraid, and tell the disciples to go to Galilee for they will see Him there.<sup>29,30</sup>

Some other time that day, Jesus appeared to Peter.<sup>31,32</sup>

Sometime after the women had told the group about the angels, most likely in the early afternoon, two men, Cleopas and a companion, departed from the group for Emmaus. The seven mile journey was passing quickly as they talked about the recent events. As they walked, a man joined them and asked what they were talking about. They ask if he really hadn't heard of Jesus or his crucifixion. They had hoped He was Israel's Messiah, and stranger yet, some women in their group amazed them earlier with reports of an empty tomb and angelic visions.<sup>33</sup> The tomb, they said, was confirmed as empty by some of the men, but there was no sight of Him. The man then called them foolish and slow of heart to believe what the prophets wrote. And beginning with Moses and the prophets, He explained to them everything concerning Jesus.<sup>34</sup>

As they approached the village, they invited him to join them for dinner, urging him to stay since it is getting toward evening. So he joined them. At dinner he broke the bread, blessed it, and began giving it to them. With this, the men's eyes were opened and they understood it was Jesus they had been walking with! And then He vanished. They asked each other, were not their hearts burning within them as He spoke and explained the Scriptures? So they got up put their things together, and set out to return Jerusalem, to tell the others about this amazing event.<sup>35</sup>

When they arrived, they found the eleven (except for Thomas, who was out) talking about how the Lord has really risen for Simon Peter had seen Jesus!<sup>36,37</sup> But when the travelers told the group they too had seen Jesus, no one believed them.<sup>38</sup> So they began to tell their story and while talking Jesus appeared before them!<sup>39</sup> The group was startled and fearful, thinking it was some sort of spirit. Jesus reproached them for their hardness of heart and unwillingness to believe those who had first seen Him. Even now, He asked, why are you are troubled and doubtful? Look!, He said emphatically. Look at My hands and feet; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as I do.<sup>40</sup> And then He asked for some fish. They had some, so He ate it.<sup>41,42</sup>

After Jesus had left, Thomas returned,<sup>43</sup> and the others told him what had occurred, but he refused to believe it, saying that only when he had seen the nail imprints in his hands, and put his finger there, and put his hand into his side, would he believe.<sup>44</sup>

Eight days later, the disciples, including Thomas, were together inside, the doors shut, when Jesus appeared. He spoke to Thomas, telling him to place his finger here in His hands and to reach his hand out to feel the wound in His side; and to believe. And Thomas believed.<sup>45</sup>

Sometime later, the disciples went to Galilee as the angels and Jesus had earlier said.<sup>46</sup> One night, Peter went fishing and Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two others joined him. The night passed fruitlessly with no catch, and dawn broke. Standing on the shore, a man called out to them, and asked if they had caught any fish. They replied, no. He told them to cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and they will find a catch. They did as he suggested, and soon the nets were so full they couldn't haul them in. John then said to Peter, that it is the Lord. Hearing this,

Peter put on his outer garment (having stripped for work) and threw himself into the sea and set out for the shore. The others, more sensibly, came in the little boat with the fish, being not far from shore.<sup>47</sup>

Getting to shore, they found a fire already roasting some fish and bread, and Jesus asked them to bring some of their fresh fish. Peter drew the net, which was intact, despite the tremendous catch. Jesus invited them to eat, and though they wanted to ask Him who He was, they didn't, because they knew it was the Lord. And this was the third time Jesus had appeared to the disciples as a group.<sup>48</sup>

After breakfast, Jesus made abundantly clear to Peter his task for the kingdom.<sup>49</sup>

Again in Galilee, later, the eleven went to Mt. ---, as Jesus had instructed, and there they worshipped Him. And yet even then, some had doubts.<sup>50,51</sup>

During this time, 40 days in all, in both Jerusalem and Galilee, Jesus appeared to many, showing that He was truly risen and teaching them about the Kingdom of God. So many things occurred that perhaps they couldn't have been written even if someone had tried.<sup>52,53</sup>

Finally, the disciples returned one last time to Jerusalem. And one evening Jesus gave them the Great Commission<sup>54</sup>, and told them to remain there until the Holy Spirit came upon them with power. He then led them about 2 miles outside of Jerusalem to Mt. Olivet, in Bethany.<sup>55</sup> There, He lifted His hands and blessed them, and while doing so departed from them for the last time. He was lifted up into a cloud, disappeared from their sight.<sup>56,57</sup>

As they stood there, staring up at the sky where Jesus had just been, two angels appeared, dressed in white clothing. The angels asked the men, why are they still gazing at the sky? This Jesus, they said, will return as He departed. And so the disciples returned to town with great joy. And now the upper room was filled, not with fear and anxiety, but with unified prayer. And they praised God in the temple continually.<sup>58</sup>

The disciples remained in Jerusalem, until the Holy Spirit came upon them with power. And that brought about significant growth in the number of believers.<sup>59</sup>

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Matt 27:61; Mark 15:47, 16:1; Luke 23:55, 56

<sup>2</sup> There are hints that there could have been two groups of women. Joanna was the wife of Herod's steward and was a private contributor to Jesus and the disciples, and was likely an affluent woman. Mary Magdalene had been demon-possessed so was almost certainly lower class and poor. <sup>2</sup> The other women were probably likewise stratified. Given the possibility of two distinct socio-economic classes of women, it is possible that some already possessed the spices whereas others needed to purchase them still. Also, it is possible there were different groups going to the tomb at different times, if they were not close friends, but merely acquainted through Jesus. This also illustrates a recurring issues, as does the next note, #3. The authors did not record the events exhaustively, rather they gave various details according to their purpose. Generally, not mentioning someone being somewhere does not mean they weren't there, just that the author didn't include it. Here, specifically, the various authors mentioned different women by name according to their goals. By combining the accounts, a fuller picture of the events develops.

<sup>3</sup> Is it light out or dark at dawn? Both, depending on your perspective, which is what's communicated in the different accounts.

<sup>4</sup> Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2, 3; Luke 24:1, 22; John 20:1

<sup>5</sup> The variations in women named are because the different authors just mentioned a few of the group according to their purposes.

<sup>6</sup> Matt 28:2, 3

<sup>7</sup> It is not stated explicitly in Matthew that the women saw the angel roll the stone away. Their traveling to the tomb could have been simultaneous with the angel account. Further, this passage, when aligned with the other Gospels, is seen as not having been intended to be strictly sequential. Some events seem to be concurrent, others with unspecified gaps between them.

<sup>8</sup> Matt 28:4

<sup>9</sup> There's no mention of the guards being there when the women arrive so it's reasonable to conclude they had already recovered and left. Since another account says the angels appeared to the women, I conclude that the angel disappeared before the women arrived.

<sup>10</sup> Matt 28:11-15

---

<sup>11</sup> Matt 28:1; Mark 16:4; Luke 24:2, 3, 23; John 20:1

<sup>12</sup> Given at least three women seeing unexpected angels in different positions of the tomb, I imagine that either not everyone was cognizant of both angels or they didn't tell about both angels when recounting the story.

<sup>13</sup> Presuming that a supernatural being is hard to describe, the angels are given strikingly similar depictions. As I suggest with my interpretive descriptions, I see no conflict.

<sup>14</sup> Matt 28:5-7; Mark 16:6,7; Luke 24:4-8, 23

<sup>15</sup> The phrasing in Mark indicates to me that they ran to the disciples without speaking to anyone along the way, not that they ran off, and never told anyone at all. That's pretty reasonable, since Mark is giving their account. Mary M. seems to have wanted to see Peter specifically.

<sup>16</sup> Matt 28:8; Mark 16:8; Luke 24:9; John 20:2

<sup>17</sup> John's description suggests that Mary M. had Peter in mind.

<sup>18</sup> At first it seems troubling to claim that Mary M. saw the angels, heard them say that Jesus was risen, and then tell Peter that she doesn't know where the body is. But I know there have been times when people have given me instructions and, despite having heard the words clearly, done something completely different, without realizing it until later. It is not unreasonable to think that Mary hadn't really processed the angels' unusual message yet, still reeling in her confusion.

<sup>19</sup> Matt 28:8; Luke 24:9-11; John 20:2

<sup>20</sup> John mentions both Peter & John, while Luke only mentions Peter. Another example of different perspectives.

<sup>21</sup> What did John believe? That Jesus was indeed missing? That He was risen? I'm not sure.

<sup>22</sup> Luke 24:12, 24; John 20:3-10

<sup>23</sup> It seems that they don't return to the house with the rest of the disciples right then, but go separate ways for a time, later rejoining the group.

<sup>24</sup> Mary probably ran or walked slower than Peter and John. It seems they were still there when she arrived, but perhaps they had left already. She clearly stood outside the tomb crying for a bit after they were gone.

<sup>25</sup> John 20:11-15

<sup>26</sup> She is still fixated on knowing where the body is. It may have been in this case that she didn't even realize they were angels in the moment, only understanding later, after recognizing Jesus.

---

<sup>27</sup> She didn't recognize Jesus here. Since this is a separate event from the Matthew account, there is no conflict. Also, not recognizing Jesus is a recurring theme. Throughout the accounts, Jesus is not recognized until He reveals Himself. Even then, some people are unsure of what's happening.

<sup>28</sup> Mark 16:9-11; John 20:15-18

<sup>29</sup> Matt 28:10

<sup>30</sup> I feel that this is my biggest leap. To maintain coherency with the Mark passage stating that Mary M. was the first to see Jesus, I place the Matthew passage after Mary sees Jesus on her return trip. Although a simple reading of Matthew seems to have the women seeing Jesus on the trip home, this entire section clearly not strictly sequential, as I observed earlier. So, I don't think I'm harming the text to distance this event from the morning events.

<sup>31</sup> Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5

<sup>32</sup> This is to harmonize with the 1 Cor passage. I have doubts that Paul intended that to be a chronological account. Even if he did, Paul doesn't mention every appearance of Jesus, showing he didn't intend the list to be complete. Given that, it's not a problem that Jesus appeared to the women before Peter. Those just aren't mentioned in the "creed" that Paul is repeating. While it is odd that the Gospels accounts don't give a detailed account of Peter's first encounter, there's no conflict with the event happening.

<sup>33</sup> It's interesting the two aren't recorded as saying anything about Mary or the other women seeing Jesus. Walking at a leisurely 2 mph, the seven mile trip would take about 3.5 hours. If evening is around 6 p.m., they left about 2:30 p.m. My question is whether they heard Mary M.'s or the other women's account of seeing Jesus. If not, that implies they left the house shortly after the women first reported seeing the angels, still early in the morning. That also requires that Peter and John (or some others) to have returned to the house before they left. That is interesting, since it my first thought was that Peter and John didn't return right away. If that's so, then perhaps the men had heard the women's' claims of seeing Jesus, but just didn't mention it out on the road, perhaps feeling crazy enough talking about angels and not wanting to mention the even more outrageous claim. Or perhaps Luke just didn't record them mentioning it. While that seems odd at first, it's not inconceivable.

<sup>34</sup> Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13-28

<sup>35</sup> Mark 16:13; Luke 24:29-33

<sup>36</sup> Luke 24:34

---

<sup>37</sup> The structure of this passage is confusing. It's not clear whether the clause is being spoken by the Emmaus travelers or the disciples. Given the 1 Cor passage, and noting that neither of the travelers was identified as Simon, I interpret it as the disciples talking about Simon Peter. However, it could be the travelers talking about themselves, without difficulty.

<sup>38</sup> It seems odd that the group, having proclaimed Jesus a being risen, doesn't believe that the travelers saw Him. Perhaps the group doubted that Jesus would have appeared to the travelers, seemingly "lesser" disciples, before coming to the 11. Or the group, despite their belief, was still struggling, as suggested as still occurring even later in Matthew 28:17. This sort of thing is also seen in Mark 9:24.

<sup>39</sup> Mark says they made a report, were doubted, and then Jesus appeared. Luke says as they were talking about these things Jesus appeared. It seems trivial to place them together as I've done to give a slightly more detailed picture of how the events unfolded, eliminating the apparent conflict.

<sup>40</sup> Mark, in typical blunt style, says "reproach." Luke, in typical detail, states it less bluntly, but still communicates that Jesus comments on their unbelief, showing His wounds. Which gives a little more details about how Jesus reproached them and reacted to their doubts.

<sup>41</sup> Mark 16:14; Luke 24:34-43; John 20:19-23

<sup>42</sup> I love this section. I think He did something so incredibly blasé just to help ease the tensions. It also comments directly on His physical manifestation - He wasn't just spirit.

<sup>43</sup> If Thomas was gone, why did Mark state that Jesus appeared to the 11 themselves? Both "11" and "12" and "the disciples" are used as general terms for the primary group of disciples and are not meant to express an exact count of who was where. John does the same thing in 21:14. Also, given Mark's consistent terse writing, it's not surprising that he didn't elaborate on Thomas not being there.

<sup>44</sup> John 20:24, 25

<sup>45</sup> John 20:26-29

<sup>46</sup> Since Galilee is about 80 miles north of Jerusalem, it seems odd that the disciples would have made the trip. But that round trip is part of the pattern shown in the Gospels of Jesus leading the disciples throughout the area. Traveling up there subsequent to the events in Jerusalem is not so strange as it first seems.

<sup>47</sup> John 21:1-8

<sup>48</sup> John 21:9-14

<sup>49</sup> John 21:15-23

---

<sup>50</sup> Matt 28:16, 17

<sup>51</sup> Many people think this is when Jesus appeared to the 500 that Paul mentions.

<sup>52</sup> John 20:30-31, 21:25; Acts 1:3; 1 Cor 15:6, 7

<sup>53</sup> This makes clear that the history is not exhaustive, and may imply that various details are not included in the recorded stories.

<sup>54</sup> This was probably given in various forms on multiple occasions. It 's just easier to recount it as a singular event.

<sup>55</sup> Mt. Olivet (the Mount of Olives) was less than 2 miles from Jerusalem proper. In essence, it was a suburb, and going there was not really "leaving" Jerusalem, so there is no conflict between Jesus' command to remain in Jerusalem and His leading the disciples out to Bethany for His ascension.

<sup>56</sup> Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 19; Luke 24:44-51; Acts 1:4-9, 12

<sup>57</sup> There is some question about the ascensions, specifically whether John 3:13 conflicts with Heb 11:5 & 2 Kings 2:11.

Both Jesus and Nicodemus are assumed to have know the Tanakh (the Old Testament) well, and would likely have recalled those passages during the discussion, which suggests that Jesus meant that what would happen with Him would be different from the cases of Enoch and Elijah. However, I do not know what the distinction is.

<sup>58</sup> Acts 1:9-14

<sup>59</sup> Mark 16:20; Acts 2:1-47