

The Resurrection  
Chapter 27

John 19:31-32, pages 315-316

John's chronology is different from that of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). In John, Jesus's death and burial takes place on the day of preparation. "Preparation" means the day that the Passover lamb is prepared and then eaten that night. In all the Gospels, the last meal that Jesus has with his disciples is on the evening before his crucifixion and burial. So John envisions the death and burial taking place on the day when the Passover lambs are being killed and prepared for the Passover meal. In fact, in John, Jesus dies in the afternoon of the day of Preparation at the same time that the Passover lambs are being slaughtered. Remember on page 267 John the Baptist had said of Jesus, "Look, The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" For the author of the Gospel of John, Jesus is the Lamb of God who dies with the other lambs. Since the Passover meal was eaten on the evening of the day that the lambs were slaughtered (the first day of Passover because Jewish days begin at sundown), Jesus's last meal with his disciples (where Jesus washes the disciples' feet but does not pass around the bread and cup) takes place on the day before the day of preparation. The short way to remember this is that in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus EATS the Passover lamb with his disciples. In the Gospel of John, Jesus IS the Passover lamb.

The reason that the next day after Jesus's crucifixion was a "special Sabbath" was that it was both the Sabbath and the day of Passover." When people were crucified they often lived for several days in terrible agony. There was a foot piece nailed to the upright on which the victim could push up with his feet to take the strain off his arms, which were carrying the whole weight of his body and to catch his breath because hanging from one's hands makes it difficult to breathe. If the legs are broken, the victims will suffocate more quickly. But the soldiers find Jesus already dead and therefore there is no need to break his legs. The Scripture that is fulfilled by this fact "Not one of his bones will be broken" is from Exodus 12:46 where instructions are given for the preparation of the Passover lamb. We are not sure what the blood and water that came out of the wound in Jesus's side symbolize in the Gospel of John. Some think they symbolize the sacraments of communion and baptism and that John is saying that the life of the church flows from the death of Jesus. Maybe, maybe not.

Only in John does Joseph of Arimathea have help burying Jesus---from Nicodemus, "the man who had earlier visited Jesus by night." Nicodemus brings 75 pounds of spices to wrap with Jesus's body, way more than enough. No wonder it took two of them. The custom of burying a body with aromatic spices was that the relatives and friends of the deceased would come around for several days to the tomb to mourn and the spices covered the smell of decomposition so that they could get close enough to do the ritual mourning.

Matthew 27:62 – 28:8 with Mark 16:1-3 inserted, page 316

Note that the purpose of sealing the stone that blocks the entrance to the tomb is to keep the disciples out so they can't steal the body. The women want to get in to anoint the corpse, but are worried about the size of the stone. So when the stone is rolled away it is so the women can get in, not so Jesus can get out. He's long gone before they arrive.

It's Matthew that tells about the earthquake and the angel who gives the resurrection message to the women before they can go into the tomb.

John 20:1-18

In John Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb alone first thing in the morning, finds the stone rolled away, then runs to tell Peter and "the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved," "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him." That is what prefaces the race of Peter and the other disciple to the tomb, which begins at the bottom of page 316. They find the tomb empty and the grave wrappings in place, but no angel with a message. The author of John explains that they had not made the connection between what they were seeing and the Scripture that (the early Christians believed) predicted Jesus's resurrection.

In John's version Mary does not go back to where the other disciples were (contrast with Matthew, where she joins the other women in running to tell the disciples the message of the resurrection). Instead in John she stands weeping at the tomb, where the risen Jesus finds her and asks what the matter is. At first Mary does not recognize him, but then he calls her name. In John 6:37 in the good shepherd discourse Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me." That does it. She turns to Jesus with joy, calling him "My teacher." He instructs her to tell "my brothers . . . I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Mary goes to take the message.

Luke 24:13-49

Only Luke has this story about Jesus's appearance to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They had heard that the tomb was empty and that some angels had said that Jesus was raised from the dead. Peter had gone to the tomb to check out the women's story and seen for himself that Jesus' body was gone, but according to Luke 24:11, the male disciples weren't buying the women's story. Angels, huh? Risen from the dead, huh? We don't think so!

So two of them just leave town. As they are walking the seven miles to Emmaus Jesus joins them and asks what they are so long-faced about. Their answer is that they had trusted a wandering teacher and miracle worker who they had hoped would "redeem Israel." Their hopes dashed, they are going to seek their fortune elsewhere.

Jesus interrupts their pity party with a Bible lecture in which he argues that the Old Testament predicted the suffering and death of the Messiah. But they don't recognize Jesus's voice or appearance. When they reach their destination they invite Jesus in for the evening

meal and when he breaks the bread and starts handing it out, they recognize him. At that point, he vanishes.

This is an important insight into the way that Luke understands the sharing of food (and, as we will see in Acts, the Lord's Supper). When the two disciples return to Jerusalem with their news, they report that "Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread." For the Christians hearing the Gospel of Luke read a generation later this was good news. They too could expect to recognize the presence of the Risen Lord in the sharing of bread and cup. The rest of the disciples tell them that Jesus had appeared to Simon Peter. This appearance is reported, but not narrated. It is clear, however, that Peter's testimony is more credible than the report of a bunch of women.

About that time, Jesus appears to the whole group, who at first think he is a ghost (this is a slow bunch). The reason that Jesus eats in front of them in this scene is because the belief was that angels and spirits might look like people but they would never be seen to eat or drink. This proves that Jesus is not an apparition. Then Jesus repeats the same Bible lecture to the whole group (page 319). What Luke is telling us here has been confirmed by scholarship. Prior to the resurrection there were no Jewish interpreters who believed that the Messiah would suffer, die, and be resurrected. None. No, not one. Rather, it was after it happened that the early Christians, instructed by the Spirit of the Risen Lord, discovered some Old Testament texts that did seem to predict the suffering, death, and resurrection of the heir to David's throne.

#### John 20:24-29, middle of page 319

The point of the Thomas story is similar to that of the Emmaus story. To all the subsequent generations of Christians who have thought to themselves, "If only I had lived during the time of Jesus it would have been so much easier to believe." The Thomas story says, "Not so much," and then pronounces a blessing on subsequent generations: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

#### John 21: 1-19

As this scene opens, Peter and the others have gone back to Galilee, not to proclaim the resurrection, but to fish. After Jesus cooks breakfast for them and gives them bread and fish we have the scene between Jesus and Peter. Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" The word "these" is neuter, so it refers not to the other disciples but to the equipment with which Peter makes his living. "Do you love me more than this stuff?" Three times Peter insists on his love for Jesus and three times Jesus instructs him to serve and care for Jesus's "sheep."

Matthew 28:16-20.

This is the passage that we call, “The Great Commission,” and it is the only Scripture that specifies baptizing “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus’s last promise after his last assignment in Matthew echoes the very beginning of Matthew’s Gospel: “I am with you always” reminds us of “‘and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).”

John 21:25 and 20:30-31

Here the Gospel writer conveys very important information to subsequent generations of readers (that would be us):

- (1) The Gospel writer knew a lot more material about Jesus than he included in this Gospel. In fact, there is so much material about what Jesus said and did that the whole world would not contain the written record.
- (2) Out of all the stories that the writer knew he selected the ones that he thought would best convey faith in Jesus the Messiah: “But these are written that you may believe . . .and have life.”

**And so friends, on this Easter morning, let us trust and receive the life that Christ’s resurrection makes possible to everyone.**