

SECTION 76

JESUS AROSE!

(Parallels: Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18)

TEXT: 28:1-10

1 Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. 3 His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. 6 He is not here; for he is arisen, even as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples, He is risen from the dead; and lo, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. 8 And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word. 9 And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail, and they came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. 10 Then saith Jesus unto them, Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why do you suppose Matthew bothered to begin this new section with the expression, "After the Sabbath"? Why not begin simply, "Now as the first day of the week was dawning"? Is there something important in mentioning the Sabbath here?
- b. Why do you suppose that the two Marys wanted "to see the tomb"? Had they not already done so before the Sabbath started, when they watched Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepare the body for burial?
- c. Do you think they went to the tomb on Saturday evening, i.e. when Sunday was beginning, or on Sunday morning? Defend your answer.
- d. The women were eager to care for the body of Jesus, whereas the men disciples only went to the tomb when called, and then, only two of them went. Why do you think the men acted this way? Does not this show a serious failure of love for Jesus?

- e. What was the purpose of the angel's coming? To let Jesus out of the tomb?
- f. If the guards were frightened so greatly by what they saw, is it not possible to suspect their later testimony, precisely because of the irrationality chargeable to their fear?
- g. Is there any evidence in the text that the soldiers fled from the tomb when the angel appeared? If so, what is the proof? If not, what does the soldiers' continued presence at the tomb suggest about their later testimony?
- h. Other Gospel writers document the presence of TWO angels present, whereas Matthew only mentions one. How do you harmonize this discrepancy?
- i. The guards are scared out of their wits but the women calmly listen to the angel's message. Should it not have been the other way around?
- j. The angel ordered the women to tell the disciples that the risen Christ was going before them to Galilee where they would see Him. Were the disciples expected to rush to Galilee right then, or what? After all, as things turned out Jesus appeared to them that very evening (John 20:19). What do you think the angel expected the disciples to do?
- k. Despite so many predictions of Jesus' resurrection, why did not the disciples remember them until after it occurred? Why must the angel remind them here?
- l. The women departed from the tomb "with fear and great joy." How do you explain this peculiar psychological combination of emotions? Admitting that some women could have experienced one emotion and others another, on what basis can the same person truly experience both at the same time?
- m. If Jesus planned to show Himself alive to the women, why did the angel tell them to communicate to His disciples that seemingly superfluous message that He would appear to them in Galilee? Did not the angel know what Jesus planned, or did Jesus get the arrangements mixed up, or what?
- n. Jesus forbade Mary Magdalene to take hold of Him, yet the other women are permitted to approach Him and take hold of His feet and worship Him. How do you explain this contradictory conduct on Jesus' part? Or is there a difference in the attitude of the women? If so, what is it?
- o. If Jesus planned to show Himself alive to the disciples that very

evening, why did He too tell the women to inform the disciples that He would appear to them in Galilee?

- p. Why do you think Jesus appeared first to the women? Could not Jesus have foreseen that the testimony of women would tend to be discounted in that male-dominated society, even by His own male disciples?
- q. The women ran to His disciples to bring them the glad news of Jesus' resurrection. (a) What would be the effect today, if every disciple were to show the same happy zeal to bring these glad tidings to a world that is perishing? (b) Why do you think we fail to do this?
- r. What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ mean to you?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

When the Sabbath was over at sunset on Saturday, Mary of Magdala and Mary, James' mother, and Salome purchased aromatic oils, so they could go to embalm Jesus' body.

Then, late Saturday night, as it was beginning to get light on Sunday morning, the women, Mary from Magdala and the other Mary, went to see about the tomb very early, while it was still dark.

Suddenly, a violent earthquake occurred, because an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, approached the tomb and rolled the stone aside and sat on it. His appearance had the dazzling brightness of lightning and his clothing was white as snow. The sentries were so terrified by him that they trembled and became rigid with fear.

Carrying the aromatic spices which they had prepared for the embalming, the women arrived at the tomb shortly after sunrise. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb for us?"

But when they looked up, they discovered that the stone—huge as it was—had already been rolled away from the tomb. So Mary of Magdala went running to Simon Peter and Jesus' dearest disciple, John, and informed them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have put Him!"

Meanwhile, the other women went on inside the tomb, but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they stood there not knowing what to think, suddenly, two men appeared to them in clothes that gleamed like lightning. In their fright the women instinctively bowed down with their faces to the ground. One of the angels appeared

as a young man sitting on their right, dressed in a white robe. This latter angel addressed the women.

“There is no need for alarm,” he said, “I know that you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was nailed to the cross. Why search among the dead for Someone who is alive? He is not here, because He came back to life again, just as He said He would! Come see the place where they laid Him! Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, ‘The Son of man must be delivered over into the power of wicked men, be nailed to a cross and come back to life on the third day.’”

The women remembered that He had said that.

“Now you must go quickly and tell His disciples and Peter,” continued the angel, “He has risen from the dead and that He is going back to Galilee ahead of you. You will see Him there, just as He told you. This is the message I was to give you.”

So the women hurried away from the tomb, frightened, yet overjoyed. In fact, they were overcome with trembling and bewilderment. They did not tell anybody a single thing, because they were afraid. They simply ran to give the news to His disciples.

[At this point John reports the arrivals of Peter and John, then of Mary Magdalene to the tomb. The men arrive first and enter the tomb, but apparently met no angels. Mary sees the angels, then Jesus. Cf. Mark 16:9.]

Then, as the women were going away from the tomb to tell the disciples, suddenly Jesus Himself met them and said, “Hello!”

Going up to Him, the women hugged His feet and worshiped Him.

Then Jesus said to them, “You need not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee. They will see me there.”

Returning from the tomb, they told all this to the Eleven and to all the others. Mary Magdalene, for example, told those who had been His companions, as they were sorrowing and weeping, “I have seen the Lord!” She also told them what Jesus had said to her. Now it was Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Mary, James’ mother and the other women with them who told this to the Apostles. But when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by Mary of Magdala, this story of theirs seemed to them sheer nonsense. They continued to disbelieve the women.

SUMMARY

On Saturday evening three women purchased embalming spices for use next morning. Then, early Sunday morning before daylight they start for the tomb. Meanwhile an angel comes to open the tomb. His coming shakes the earth and shocks the sentinels. The women arrive at the tomb at daybreak only to find the tomb already open. Mary of Magdala jumps to the conclusion that someone has moved the body. So, without actually examining the question farther, she runs to inform Peter and John. Meanwhile, back at the tomb, two angels inform the other women that Jesus is alive from the dead and that they are to inform Jesus' disciples. On their way to do so, Jesus appears to them and sent a message for His followers to meet Him in Galilee. Meanwhile, Peter and John race to the tomb, but do not see either Jesus or the angels. Mary of Magdala arrives later and sees both. Mary and the other women return to the apostolic group and report Jesus' resurrection, but no one believes them.

NOTES

ON THE THIRD DAY

28:1 Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. Although the accounts of the resurrection differ as to details, as sometimes happens in the case of valid testimony, the general picture of the events is substantially consistent. Such differences, rather than undermine the accounts, tend to confirm their authenticity, because exact superficial harmony would be suspicious precisely because contrived. If it could be shown that two witnesses claim to discuss the same event or detail and appear to contradict each other, then a real problem would exist. However, simple differences of detail are but evidence of honest, independent testimony.

A sound juridical approach is to assume the reasonable accuracy and honesty of the witnesses and attempt to see whether their witness can be harmonized into a unified account that is consistent. Otherwise, they get treated as dishonest or mistaken until proven correct, an improbable hypothesis in the light of the ease with which the opposition could have disproven their assertions, had they been honestly mistaken about, or, worse, concocting, anything they testify.

Our approach shall be to find that explanation which permits each witness to be treated as fundamentally honest and which alleviates any supposed divergence between the Gospels. Past attacks on harmonizing approaches assume that the harmonist must prove his theoretic explanation. On the contrary, given our present state of information, it only need be demonstrated that a plausible explanation of the supposed divergency exists to remove the charge of inconsistency or contradiction levelled against the Gospels. After all, were the resurrection the bold invention of shameless charlatans, surely its authors would have taken greater care to eliminate the many problems in the accounts so as to create the kind of strict, even if superficial, agreement that some minds find comfortable. (For an excellent harmonization, see Wilson, *Learning From Jesus*, 516-521; also James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 155f.; Butler, *Luke*, 576ff.; *John* II, 463ff.)

Late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week (*opsè dè sabbàtôn tēi epifoskousei eis mian sabbàtôn*). The ASV translation is particularly unfortunate here, because apparently self-contradictory and because Matthew is forced to contradict the other Gospel writers. The problems in this translation turn on two factors:

1. *Opsè* can mean "late."
2. *Epifòskô*, "to dawn," considered as a Hebrew idiom wherein the day begins at sunset, can refer to a time coincident with the closing of the preceding day (Luke 23:54).

If the time in question was *late on the Sabbath day*, Matthew means *sundown*, when Sunday begins, or "dawns," according to the idiom. However, this rendering leaves the impression that Matthew thought the resurrection occurred on Saturday, as opposed to the other witnesses who are certain it occurred on Sunday morning. But if *epifoskousei* ("dawning") be taken literally, Matthew means around *sunup*, in which case there is no justification for his reference to a time *late on the Sabbath day*, for that day ended at sundown the day before. Matthew certainly would not contradict himself in the same verse. Further, the final translation must recognize that his two expressions are two ways of referring to the same time. Two factors point the way out of the morass:

1. *Opsè* can be translated "after" (Arndt-Gingrich, 606; Blass-Debrunner, §164.4; Rocci, 1383). To render the phrase, "After

the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week" (RSV), better suits the context and harmonizes with the other Gospels.

2. *Epiphoskousei* can be taken in its natural, literal sense, rather than idiomatically.

Matthew treats the period of darkness which came to an end at dawn on Sunday as still belonging to Saturday, but actually after the Sabbath was over. That the moment in question is early Sunday morning is vindicated by the following considerations: (Cf. notes on 27:63f.; esp. on 12:40, my Vol. II, 708ff.).

1. Since the difficult expression can actually be translated and interpreted in harmony with the distinctly clearer testimony of the other Gospels who unequivocally place the resurrection appearances on Sunday morning, why should it not be so rendered?
2. The women who go to the tomb on Sunday morning are *Mary of Magdala and the other Mary*, who was also the mother of James, and Salome. (Cf. Mark 16:1.) Perhaps there were also others, like Joanna. (Cf. Luke 23:55—24:1, 10.) These wonder, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" (Mark 16:3). Now, if these same women had stopped at the tomb on Saturday evening as they were out buying burial spices (Mark 16:1), they would have encountered the soldiers guarding it. Granted that their timidity might hinder their seeking help from Roman soldiers and that they are probably thinking of assistance from some male disciples like Joseph or Nicodemus or others, yet, *they could not have wondered about any help at all*. Rather, had they seen the soldiers before arriving on Sunday morning, they would have worried about the soldiers' inflexibility that would not permit them to break the seal on the tomb in order to open it, even to embalm the body.
3. Mark has two definite notices of time, whereas Matthew only one. (Cf. 28:1 with Mark 16:1, 2.) Mark narrates facts that occurred on two successive days, on Saturday evening just as the Hebrew Sunday was beginning, then on Sunday morning about sun-up. Mark's distinction should be represented by two separate paragraphs. The assumption that Matt. 28:1 is parallel with Mark 16:1, or worse, derived from it, leads to the conclusion that Matthew thought that the resurrection occurred on *Saturday night*, whereas the other Evangelists place it as quite early on Sunday morning. (Cf. Mark 16:9; Luke 23:56; 24:1.) It also assumes that the women

purchased additional spices around dawn on Sunday morning on the way to the tomb, whereas Mark suggests that they took the spices which they had prepared the night before, i.e. on Saturday night.

4. The purpose of the women's coming is expressed vaguely as being *to see the sepulcher*. But were it limited to that, they could have come on Saturday night. Their intention is more fully indicated by their bringing the embalming spices (Luke 24:1; cf. 23:56; Mark 15:47; 16:1). Therefore, they think that they both *can* enter the tomb with no more serious hindrance than the heavy stone, and that they *should* do so to embalm a corpse. Their pre-dawn departure from their lodging indicates their haste to deal with a quickly decomposing body. So, they obviously know nothing about the seal or the soldiers and they do not expect Jesus to be risen. Luke 23:56 definitely states they rested on the Sabbath. Hence, although they could have recommended the embalming on Saturday night, it would have been an unusual time without adequate motive, since they would have to work on into the night by torch- or candlelight, when on Sunday morning an entire day would be at their disposal.

Matthew simply means that, although the women intended to complete the embalming, they waited until Sunday morning.

As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. Because some believe that Mark, Luke and John are hopelessly contradictory as to the time element involved, it is altogether appropriate to see that the translation makes considerable difference:

John 20:1: Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene **left** for the tomb early, *while it was still dark.*

Luke 24:1: But on the first day of the week, *at early dawn*, they **went** to the tomb. . . .

Mark 16:2: And very early on the first day of the week they **came** to the tomb *when the sun had risen.*

The Greek verb rendered in **bold face** in every case is *échomai* (= *elthon*), which means "come" or "go," according to context (Rocci, 770; Cf. Arndt-Gingrich, 310f.). The rendering to be utilized remains the translator's choice based on appropriateness to the situation. However, some translators ignore the problems

of harmonizing all available testimony and of assuming the witness to be telling the truth until proven false. Consequently, they created contradictions for readers unacquainted with this phenomenon in Greek. The supposed divergency is removed by simply using the other, completely appropriate alternative translation.

28:2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. *For* connects the earth tremor directly with the angel's coming, but it is not clear whether it was simply contemporaneous with his coming or caused by it. Because a *great earthquake* is an event which man can neither impede nor ignore, just as at His death, its occurrence at precisely this moment is not merely coincidental and must be judged an appropriate accompaniment—better: announcement?—of Jesus' resurrection. (See notes on 27:51.)

Evidently, the angel *rolled away the stone* before the women reached the tomb, since they found it already removed upon their arrival (Mark 16:4; Luke 24:2; John 20:1). The stone was rolled away, not to let Jesus out, but to let the resurrection's witnesses in! (Cf. Mark 16:5; Luke 24:3; John 20:6ff.) Leaving the sealed tomb was no problem for the Lord of life. (Cf. John 20:19, 26.) In fact, did Jesus arise when the angel came, or had He already left the tomb by simply walking away from it as simply as He entered the closed Upper Room? Precisely when Jesus emerged from the tomb is not stated. Rather, Matthew's silence implies that He had already risen. Matthew does not describe the actual resurrection of Jesus nor affirm that anyone witnessed it. So, those who became "witnesses to the resurrection" are actually witnesses of the accomplished fact, rather than of the event itself. (Cf. Acts 1:22.)

When *the angel . . . rolled away the stone*, he heaved the huge disk down onto the ground before he *sat upon it*. By this superb gesture the angel seems to express the heavenly authority with which the tomb's seals were broken and the great stone door opened. The grip of death is broken by heavenly power. And neither ancient nor modern scepticism have been able to reclose the open sepulcher of our Lord.

The angel is described by Mark and Luke as "two (young) men," because heavenly messengers are often described by their appearance in human form. (Cf. Gen. 18:2, 16, 22; 19:1, 5; Judg. 5:23; 13:6; Acts 1:10.)

Mark and Luke report the presence of two angels (Luke 24:4). It is difficult to decide whether Matthew is simply summarizing by referring to the most prominent speaker of the two, or whether another appeared later. Omitting to mention the other angel does not create a contradiction, since Matthew does not affirm there was *only one* angel. His evident purpose is to report the message the women were to announce. Two possible harmonizations exist:

1. Perhaps the women encounter the first angel outside the tomb where he had frightened the soldiers and rolled away the stone door. He then invites the women into the tomb to verify his word. They enter, but do not find the body. Instead, they encounter another angel seated on the right side of the ledge. Then, perhaps he arose and the women find themselves standing between two heavenly beings and are frightened (Mark 16:5; Luke 24:3ff.). Later, when Mary Magdalene arrives, she finds the two angels both inside the tomb (John 20:12).
2. Matthew does not affirm that the angel met the women outside, whereas Mark and Luke definitely affirm that they talked with an angel inside. Accordingly, the women ignored the fallen soldiers and rushed into the tomb and encountered both angels inside. Only one of them speaks (according to Matthew and Mark), but because the other confirms the testimony of the first, he may be said to have spoken (Luke 24:5). On this view, the angels arrived, one rolled away the stone and sat on it, thus frightening the guards. Then they entered the tomb. The women, upon arrival, found the two angels together inside.

The fact that the women encounter a varying number of angels, in different locations, standing and sitting, etc., is not at all irreconcilable with the sudden appearance of angels elsewhere in Scripture. The apparent contradiction between the Gospels is caused by each writer's reference to a different phase of the scene or to a different principle speaker. No writer claims to tell all he knows about the picture. Cross-questioning of the witnesses and writers is now no longer possible, but the hypothesis of a plausible harmony exonerates them from embarrassment of proven error.

28:3 **His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow.** The blinding flash of light from heaven took definite, human form. (Cf. Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4.) Unless this phrase contains Hebrew parallelism, because a distinction is made between *his appearance*

and *his raiment*, the former is thought to refer to his face. His total appearance resembles the angels of the Old Testament (Dan. 10:6) and the glorified Christ (17:2 = Mark 9:2f. = Luke 9:29; cf. Rev. 1:14ff.). The intense radiance reflected the glory of God whom he represented. (Cf. Exod. 34:29f.) *His raiment white as snow* resembles that of heaven's inhabitants (Rev. 4:4), not only the angels (Dan. 10:5f.; Luke 2:9; Acts 1:10; Rev. 10:1; 18:1) but also the saints (Rev. 3:4f.; 6:11; 7:13f.; 19:8) and God (Ezek. 1:26f.; Dan. 7:9).

28:4 and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men. Even if these guards were not on the crucifixion detail, barracks rumors could give them reason to be apprehensive about this night duty. Just when it was almost over, there was a sudden, terrific shaft of light from heaven and the ground under their feet waved violently. The sentinels found themselves face to face with the true guard of honor at the tomb of the risen Christ! The shock left them paralyzed with *fear of him*. Any opposing reaction on their part was effectively preempted by a force with which they were psychologically unprepared to cope. Although they *became as dead men*, it is not clear whether they were completely unconscious. Perhaps they were simply immobile, as if dead. This supposition argues that the guard did not flee immediately upon the arrival of the angel, but at some undesignated time later, after the women arrived. (See on 28:11.)

At this point the women arrive at the garden tomb. However, because of the great size of the stone used to close the tomb, they could see at a distance that the tomb door was already ajar. Without investigating further or pausing to reflect that perhaps the tomb's owner had returned to help complete the embalming, Mary Magdalene wrongly inferred that the tomb had been rifled, the body gone. On the basis of this mistaken deduction she left the women at the garden and rushed to inform Peter and John (John 20:1ff.). This detail explains how Jesus could appear first to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:11ff.), although she left for the tomb earlier with the other women (28:1). From Luke we learn that, besides Mary the mother of James and Joseph, there were others, among whom Joanna (Luke 24:10). If we may infer that the same women who bought the spices on Saturday night, also brought them to the tomb Sunday morning, then Salome came too (Mark 16:1f.). Disappointed that Jesus had failed, they still loved Him, and would now serve Him for the last time, though He were dead. (For their identification, see notes on 26:56)

and the Special Study: "The Brethren of the Lord," my Vol. III, 185ff.)

Because the guards were terrorized into immobility, the women who would have been impeded from entering the tomb before, can now procede.

28:5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. Although Matthew named only *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary*, the former is now gone to inform Peter and John. So, by saying *women*, our author incidentally confirms what the other Gospels affirm, i.e. the presence of the others.

The angel intended is the principle speaker. He *answered*, or addressed, their unasked questions and astonishment. *Fear not ye:* addressed to the women, the *ye (humets)* is emphatic. Although fright in the presence of the supernatural is a normal reaction, the women are not to be terrified like the guards. The women are also not to *fear* that something terrible has happened to Jesus' body. His authoritative assurances seek to calm them. *For I know that you seek:* this justifies his calming tone and language. He treats them as friends of his own Lord. That the angel described Jesus as *Him who hath been crucified* sounds oddly out of tune with the resurrection victory. But this old, old story is already a theme sung in glory (Rev. 1:5ff.; 5:9, 12; 7:9; 12:10f.). Further, he addresses women who mistakenly expected to find the Crucified One's dead body in this sepulcher.

28:6 He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

1. The IRREFUTABLE FACT: "*He is not here . . . come, see the place where the Lord lay.*" The heavenly message was backed by earthly proof.
 - a. This is tangible, circumstantial evidence of the reality. They were to examine the calm order of the linen wrappings and folded face-cloth and conclude that, were His corpse stolen, these items would have been missing. Instead, He Himself had removed the burial clothes, neatly set everything in order and left the tomb, unquestionably alive.
 - b. *The place where the Lord lay:* what humiliation for the Lord of glory! What infinite grace and love permitted Him to be brought so low! But because He entered into our death, He disarmed our fear of the tomb (Heb. 2:15).
2. The EXPLANATION: *for He is risen.* Were anyone but an angel

speaking, this would be simply a possible, logical implication of the empty tomb. But this is not merely an inference, but God's revelation of a fact. Without the intervention of human beings or angels, He left His grave behind Him forever (Mark 9:31; Luke 18:33; John 10:17f.). It is also true to translate, *He was raised (egérthē)*, since His victory is ascribed also to the Father (16:21; 17:23; Acts 2:24, 32; Rom. 8:11).

Those who attempt to explain the resurrection as a pure visionary apparition that projected messages from the other world to the brain of the early disciples, must face the eloquent fact of the empty tomb. Further, the actual messages that came were not simply to comfort the apostles that everything was going to be all right or simply that Jesus' soul was then living with God and sends His love. Rather, the angels and Jesus Himself transmitted the same central message that His physical body had left the grave alive.

3. The PROPHETIC WORD: *as He said.* (Cf. 16:21ff.; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:43-45). Despite His many predictions, the disciples' emotional rejection of His coming death blinded their minds to the truth. What they did not accept, they did not expect. But this deserved but gentle rebuke, however, comforts them, because their unbelief did not keep His often repeated supernatural promise from coming to pass: He faithfully kept His word! (Cf. Luke 24:6.) His resurrection put God's stamp of approval on everything He said or did, but it especially established Him as a true Prophet of God. (Cf. Deut. 18:15-22.)

28:7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples, He is risen from the dead; and lo, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. This story is so well-founded that they themselves may join in telling it too. An evil angel had communicated the message which brought sin and death into the world. Woman had been the first to believe and tell man and pass it on to the human race. Now the Lord's angel commissions woman to be the first to announce death's defeat to man. Let no man or woman consider themselves too lowly to be a humble link in God's chain to proclaim the Gospel to others.

But these are not "just incompetent, excited women liable to believe anything!" Their training in righteousness as disciples of Jesus should indicate much about their reliability and basic honesty. These women

proved themselves competent to testify to Jesus' resurrection by closely observing everything that involved His suffering. Their being devoted friends or aunts of Jesus only apparently disqualifies them by compromising their objectivity, for no scientific commission in the world could furnish a more accurate observation of the unique fact to which they testify. For the disciples, the character and stability of these women was already proven. For the enemies, the facts they report were already proven. (See on 28:11-15.) For the readers of the Gospels, the corroboration of their testimony with the many other appearances of Jesus consolidates their case.

The testimony of these women would be discounted by the male disciples, but not on the ground that these women were objectively incompetent. Certainly, Jewish bias against the testimony of a woman entered into the question. However, the men's refusal to believe the women arose, not from investigation of the women's evidence and competence, but from an emotional bias against the objective probability of the resurrection of Jesus. Whatever the origin of their opinion, it was nonetheless a prejudice. Similarly, men today reject the resurrection because of intellectual and moral prejudice against the possibility of the supernatural. Although the Lord Himself would grant "many convincing proofs that He was alive" (Acts 1:3), He rightly criticized the Apostles for rejecting the women's unassailable personal testimony (Mark 16:14). Jesus made the principle of credible witness the basis of His Gospel and a standing rule for all time (John 20:24-31, esp. v. 29; cf. Rom. 10:13-17; II Peter 1:12-18).

Lo, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him. This victory would yet be celebrated together with Jesus alive on earth at the glorious reunion in Galilee precisely on schedule, just as He predicted (26:32)! *He goeth before you* (*proagei*, present tense) does not mean that He is at this moment traveling to Galilee, but is used more generally to confirm His project: He is actually going there ahead of you, just as He promised. They understood this promise, *there shall ye see him*, as general, referring broadly to all the disciples. (Cf. Luke 24:9: "all the rest.") It does not intend to preclude the appearance of Jesus to the women just a few moments later (28:9). Since nothing is said of His intention to appear to the despondent, broken-hearted disciples that very day, they must simply act on a faith already severely tried. Even so, this precious hope aims to stir a joyous expectation in them.

Jesus' strategy in the choice of *Galilee* may have various motives:

1. If they shared the Jewish belief that the ghost of the departed hovered about the tomb for several days after death, in Galilee there would be no suspicion that the post-resurrection phenomena they observed were this sort of spectral apparition. (Cf. Edersheim, *Life*, II,631.) His appearances in Galilee, far from the scenes of horror surrounding His death and burial, would, therefore, tend to undergird the disciples' certainty of His resurrection.
2. After expecting the disciples to believe the testimony of those who had seen Him alive, He gave them their second lesson in acting by faith. For them to return to *Galilee* to see Him required believing the testimony sufficiently to make the trip without Him, just trusting Him to keep the well-attested appointment. In an atmosphere of faith it is easy to believe. But the physical act of walking to Galilee took them away from a highly charged ambient where people could expect apparitions to occur. It removed the powerful, psychological atmosphere that permits or induces the hallucination. His appearance in broad daylight at a great distance from places associated with His former appearances would increase their certainty that "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared."
3. The location facilitated His control over the choice of witnesses of His resurrection (Acts 10:40f.). First the Passover pilgrims are allowed to go home to their various lands and nations. Then, in the calm of an obscure mountain in Galilee, He could accomplish so much more by revealing Himself to a severely restricted number of disciples.
4. *Galilee* is home. (See note on 26:32.) In this brilliant touch of psychological appropriateness Jesus is revealed His genius and condescension to their weaknesses and need. His present task was to reconstitute the apostolic group, now fragmented because of His death (26:31f.). Judas was dead, Thomas alone in his dark world, the others with no unifying sense of mission left. Although He would reiterate the commission in Jerusalem both before and after the Galilean appearance (Luke 24:44; John 20:21f.), and although they would all return eventually to Jerusalem to witness His ascension and await the Pentecostal arrival of the Holy Spirit, His principle purpose for the time being for sending them to *Galilee* was to take them back home. He knew that in *Galilee*, they could form a clearer concept of their mission. While standing in and looking at the old, familiar scenes of Galilee, the very area where they had already labored successfully in His Name and by His

power—even in His absence—, they could more easily conceive of the feasibility of world evangelism. In *Galilee* a world mission did not appear so impossible, because they had labored there by His grace. So, even as He had commissioned them originally on a Galilean *mountain* and taught them (Luke 6:12ff.; cf. Matt. 5:1), so now He would take them back to their origins as a group, commission them, placing upon their shoulders even greater responsibilities and promise them even greater power (28:16-20; Mark 16:16ff.). In *Galilee*, they had tried their wings; in *Galilee*, they received their new, permanent commission to world evangelism. In this vividly suggestive, physical environment Jesus taught them to see that yesterday the target was *Galilee*, today it is the world!

There shall ye see him: Even the Jewish authorities knew that belief in the resurrection was not definitively determined by the empty tomb, because a desperate hypothesis of theft could still be concocted to explain that perplexing discovery. The irrepressible excitement of the Gospel was not the product of reports from reliable sources that His body had not been found in the tomb and that mysterious messengers had announced the resurrection as a fact. What convinced these men and women that He had risen was His concrete encounters with them as the Living One. Their close encounters with Him had a place and a date concerning which many, living witnesses could testify when and how these incidents took place. (Cf. I Cor. 15:5-8.)

Lo, I have told you. This solemn observation means that the angel's mission is completed so far as the women were concerned. Now, they must rise to obedience to their mission. Rather than take away man's initiative or responsibility, angelic messages increase it. To doubt the authenticity of his message would not be merely foolish but sinful. (Cf. Luke 1:19; Heb. 2:2.)

28:8 And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word. In obedience to the divine message, "they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8; contrast Matt. 9:31; Mark 1:45). Genuinely shaken by the angelic encounter, they fled from the scene of an event emotionally overpowering for them. Afraid to disobey the messenger of God, they paused to talk to no one until they could relay the good news to the disciples. Otherwise, they might have shouted the glorious news to everyone they met, despite Jesus' desire that this news not be proclaimed officially until Pentecost under the leadership of the

Holy Spirit (Luke 24:47-49). *With fear and great joy* is the paradoxical but psychologically real mixture of emotions felt by people who hear something too good to be true. "Can it be completely believed? And yet, if God's angel has told us, it must be true!" Although these women have stood in the majestic presence of the supernatural, they have heard the supremely joyous news that Jesus is no longer dead but gloriously alive and victorious! (Cf. Ps. 2:11.)

The women *ran to bring his disciples word*, their flying feet expressing their obedient love. Eagerly, they completed their responsibility, although their enthusiastic message was disbelieved (Mark 16:13; Luke 24:10f., 24f.).

Contrary to the view of those who place all resurrection appearances in Galilee, the women immediately found the disciples present in Jerusalem. There is no indication that they had fled home to Galilee or that the women had to run clear to Galilee to announce Jesus' resurrection. Rather, their message is that Jesus would go before them into Galilee, clearly implying that they to whom the message is sent are not in Galilee, i.e., yet in Judea. Many resurrection appearances to the disciples in the Jerusalem area are recorded as occurring on the same day as the resurrection itself. Without some previous arrangement or without adequately convincing motivation, the scattering of despondent apostles excludes their all gathering by chance on a mountain in Galilee.

The irrefutable fact demonstrated

28:9 **And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him.** Matthew does not state nor imply that Jesus appeared to them the instant they left the tomb, but merely at some unstated time after they had left it. Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, then, shortly thereafter, to these women (Mark 16:9; John 20:11ff.). They were on their way to obey the divine message when *Jesus met them*. The Second Coming shall take place precisely like this appearance: in the midst of duty we shall be surprised by His coming. (Cf. 24:36—25:13.) Although in comparison to the Hebrew greeting, "Peace be to you" (John 20:21, 26), the Greek communicates the happy nuance, "Rejoice," His quite ordinary greeting, *All hail (chairete)*, simply means, "Hello, everyone" or "Greetings, everybody." (Cf. 26:49; Acts 15:23; 23:26; II Cor. 13:11 "Good-by"; James 1:1; II John 10f.)

That Jesus should appear first to the women disciples, rather than to the men, is peculiarly fitting, because of their love. The disciples did not approach the cross nor take care of Jesus' body either before or after the entombment. Their fear, despondency, shock, left them immobile, while these loving women overcame their hurt and did what had to be done each time. The men could also have been given this reward of love, but only the women put themselves in a position to receive it. There is mercy with the Lord: these women were wrong not to believe His promise, and foolish to bring spices to embalm Him, but He forgave their blunder, and appeared to them anyway. All that they had admired in Him before now stands before them alive. Deeper awe and adoration are appropriately due Him, because He has qualified Himself as worthy of worship. (Cf. John 5:23.) They recognize that resurrection has altered the former relationship: they are beings unworthy of His presence. (Cf. Judg. 6:22f.; 13:21f.; Luke 5:8.) He is their exalted Lord and offer Him their hearts' adoration.

Perhaps they also desired to touch Him to assure themselves that He is the same Jesus they had known, loved and followed so long, once dead, but now very physically alive. The Good News was not that His sepulcher was found empty by unimpeachable witnesses. This circumstantial evidence supports the resurrection story, but is not the central truth. It was the personal knowledge of numerous, competent witnesses that Jesus had really died and was buried, but was later verified to be alive from the dead by many personal contacts with Him. These direct, tangible proofs demolish the charges that the early disciples were overly credulous, victims of auto-suggestion, mistaken identity and tense nerves. Here die the theories of mystical, psychic apparitions or fleeting glimpses of the risen Christ. These disciples were then present and debated these questions themselves and answered them. What they saw and personally touched led them to an absolutely unshakable conviction of His triumph over death. Consequently, one cannot resist their evidences today without himself becoming irrational. (Cf. Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-29; Acts 2:32f.; 4:20; 5:32; I John 1:1-3.)

Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene before He met the other women (Mark 16:9; Matt. 28:9). Some feel that, because she was sent on ahead of these women to bring the disciples the glad word (John 20:17ff.), by Jesus' delaying them here they were permitted to hug His feet and she not. This unnecessarily imputes partiality to Jesus.

Although He forbade Mary Magdalene to cling to Him, Jesus permitted these women to *take hold of his feet*. (John: *mé mou hàptou*; Matthew: *ekràtêsan autoû tous pòdas*) It would appear that the difference does not lie so much in the Greek words, as in the attitude of the women themselves. Mary gripped Jesus with a determination driven by desperation not to lose Him again. (Cf. Mark 5:18ff.; Luke 8:38ff.) But, by so doing, she also hindered Him from doing and being what, in His new state of being, must now become normal for Him. "She cannot keep Him on earth any more—she must prepare herself for His return to Heaven" (Butler, *Luke*, 581). In fact, all the disciples must dismiss from their minds the hope that everything would return to the unbroken fellowship of the past months. His mission was not yet complete without His return to Heaven. The loving embrace of His feet by the women is essentially the same act as that of Mary, but it is differently motivated, for she lovingly wanted to keep Him forever. They, however, *worshipped him*, letting Him be God, autonomous of their wishes, desires or will for Him. This same distinction still separates appropriateness from selfishness in discipleship today.

They came . . . and worshipped him. (Cf. 28:17). The disciples' spontaneous adoration of the risen Lord on that first day of the week became the joyfully accepted reason for regular celebration of Jesus' resurrection by the early Church. (Cf. Ignatius: *Magnesians* 9; Barnabas 15:8f.; Justin Martyr, *Apology*, I,67:1-3,7; *Dialogue*, 41:4; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2.) What would happen to the modern Church, if the first day of every week should once again produce the resurrection impact on us that it did on those early disciples?

28:10 Then saith Jesus unto them, Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me. Because of Jesus' victory over man's ancient, final enemy, death, this brief reassurance would mean so much more. His dispirited disciples can now live under constant tension of threats and intimidation, possibly ending up crucified or hideously butchered (10:26-33). But they shall overcome, not by wishful thinking or philosophical optimism, but with unshakable confidence in His resurrection power that gave them inexpressible joy full of glory.

With all His old gentleness, He showed Himself to be a Brother for the defeated and discouraged: *Go tell my brethren.* Who are these *brethren*?

1. Jesus' own kin, His half brothers, James, Joseph, Simon and Judas (13:55)? He did not consider their being less open to His message and ministry earlier (John 7:5) a hindrance to His appearing to James (I Cor. 15:7). He undoubtedly knew that appearance to them would determine their commitments to His program. James would become the great leader in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:13; Gal. 1:19) and Judas would pen the New Testament epistle bearing his name (Jude).
2. Jesus used this heart-warming term to identify Himself to His disciples as their Brother (John 20:17; Matt. 12:49; Acts 1:15; Rom. 8:16f., 29; Heb. 2:11-18). This view does not exclude the former, because the result of a message to His physical brothers would confirm their discipleship. He has just proven Himself Son of God, gloriously victorious over death, and yet He graciously elevated these unworthy earthlings to be His *brethren!* Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 992f.) notes that Jesus did NOT say:

“those habitual quarrelers . . . who promised to remain loyal to me no matter what would happen, but who when the crisis arrived left me and fled; . . . who, with one exception, were not even present at Calvary when I was laying down my life for them.” None of that. Instead, “my brothers,” those whom I acknowledge as members of my family, those who share the inheritance with me, those whom I love.

This warm human tenderness, so characteristic of Jesus, evaporated the women's nervousness and made them confident that He really is the same kind Master they had always known and loved. (Cf. John 15:14f.)

That they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me. Did Jesus intend that the disciples depart immediately? Apparently not, because John records two appearances in the Jerusalem area, one of which occurred a week later than this command (John 20:19ff., 26ff.). Nothing is said here about His not intending to see anyone in Jerusalem. He simply arranged to meet them in Galilee and He did so. Even so, why does Jesus tell the women to remind the disciples to depart for Galilee, when He could do it Himself at these two appearances?

1. In line with His original, heartening prophecy (26:32), Jesus Himself reminds them that He has kept His word about his resurrection. This bracing reminder begins drawing them out of their despondency even before He appears to them the first time there in Jerusalem.

2. Jesus is better than His word. Even if they were to expect to see Him in Galilee on the basis of the prophecy and its repetition here, He would graciously grant them a number of appearances even before that long-awaited happy reunion in Galilee.
3. The message is intended not merely for the Eleven or a few women, but for all His disciples or brethren. Even if He showed Himself alive to a few limited groups or individuals in Jerusalem, these appearances laid vital groundwork for appearances to His larger congregation in Galilee.
4. Once the feast was over, the greatest issue for these Galilean disciples might well have been the debate whether to return to Galilee at all. For them the question may have been their loss of face at home. For it was in Galilee, among their own kindred and acquaintances among whom they had evangelized widely in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, that they could imagine themselves most disgraced by the scandal of the cross. But Jesus must order them to return to that very province to face those very people, no longer ashamed, but aflame with a new passion that finds its only adequate explanation in the power of the risen Lord.
5. Jesus must insist on their going to Galilee, since it would be emotionally difficult for them to wrench themselves away from the precious scenes where their Lord had appeared to them. The same impulse to be near Him that drove the women to embrace the risen Lord would inspire them all to want to remain in the Jerusalem area.

Why give these first supernatural revelations and appearances to the women and not the eleven, even Peter and John? These women braved danger to be near Jesus' cross, follow His body to the tomb, return faithfully to anoint it with spices. Was this a form of special appreciation for their loyalty and love? (See on 28:9.)

On the other hand, God has always been using this method. In the face of masculine prejudice against the testimony of "a few excited women who tell tales of a reputed resurrection," God chose to utilize the weak things of the world to confound the mighty (I Cor. 1:27ff.). Whoever thought that a Lamb could overcome the great beasts of the world led by a dragon? Or that a small stone, hewn without human hands, could smash the colossal statue and grow into a mighty mountain that fills the whole earth (Dan. 2)? Or that in place of great, terrible beasts world dominion could be given to one like a mere son of man (Dan. 7)? Or that the first harbingers of the resurrection story could be *female*?! Not hardly what serious scholars, critical analysts

or scientific observers would have expected, but it is very much in harmony with the style of God. (See fuller notes on 21:16.)

For further study of the evidences of Jesus' resurrection, see Seth Wilson, *Learning From Jesus*, 508ff.; Paul Butler, *Luke*, 592ff.; *John*, II,463.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. Define the time of day involved in the expression, "Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week."
2. Show how Matthew's account of the arrival of the women at the tomb harmonizes with that of the other Gospels.
3. List all the women who went to the tomb, as named in all the Gospels.
4. Describe the arrival of the angel, what he did and what occurred at the time of his coming.
5. What was the reaction of the Roman soldiers guarding the tomb?
6. Quote the message of the angel to the women.
7. The angel affirmed, "He has risen." When did Jesus rise?
8. On what earlier occasions had Jesus predicted His resurrection, to which the angel could now point in confirmation?
9. Cite the message the women were to carry to the disciples.
10. Which of the women was not at the tomb when the angel spoke to the others?
11. What did the angel invite the women to do to satisfy themselves that Jesus had indeed arisen? What special value would this invitation have for them?
12. What was the women's reaction to their experience with the angel at the open, empty tomb?
13. On what mission did the angel send the women?
14. What amazing event briefly interrupted the women's carrying out their mission?
15. What was their reaction to this interruption?
16. What were they to do after this interruption?
17. Defend or deny: "The brethren of Jesus are His disciples."
18. List the prophecy(ies) that were fulfilled when Jesus arose. Do not limit your list of spokesmen for God to the Old Testament prophets.