

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #67

"Resurrection Morning: Order of Events"
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Matthew 28:1-8:

Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

INTRODUCTION: All four Gospel writers agree that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead on Sunday, the first day of the week. They also agree that Mary Magdalene was the first witness of the empty tomb and the first to see the resurrected Christ. But like the crucifixion accounts, the resurrection accounts differ in a number of particulars. Only Matthew reports an earthquake and the rolling away of the stone from the tomb (Matthew 28:2). Since Matthew also reported an earthquake at the crucifixion (27:51), the second earthquake may show the equal significance of the resurrection. Matthew and Mark speak of one angel at the tomb (Matthew 28:5; Mark 16:5), whereas Luke and John speak of two angels (Luke 24:4; John 20:12). Matthew and Mark report only the women visiting the empty tomb, while Luke and John tell of a visit by Peter (Luke 24:12), with John referring to a footrace between Peter and John to the tomb (John 20:3-8).

As we examine the order of the events occurring on the resurrection morning and the appearances of Christ after His resurrection, let us see how all of these things were preordained in order by the sovereign decree of God. None of them were conditioned upon the wills of men or angels. Jesus, over and over again chose to whom He would reveal Himself and when and where He would do so. He could have placed Himself in mid air and revealed Himself to the crowds numbering approximately two million. Free will evangelists must explain why He did not do so. In their attempts to do so, they run headlong into the doctrine of unconditional election. God reveals Himself to whom He is pleased to do so, because it seems good in His sight to do so. In Matthew 11:25-27, ***"Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know***

the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”

When the four Gospel accounts are combined, the order of events on the resurrection morning seem to be as follows:

A. IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS ON THE FIRST DAY, THE WOMEN WENT TO THE TOMB OF JESUS TO ANOINT HIS DEAD BODY, EVEN THOUGH THEY DID NOT KNOW HOW THEY COULD GET INTO THE TOMB.

1. Mark 16:2,3 - ***“Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’”***

a. The time of their arrival.

(1) Matthew 28:1 - ***“Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn.”***

(2) Mark 16:2 - ***“Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.”*** (Note: Sunrise).

(3) Luke 24:1 - ***“Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them came to the tomb . . .”***

(4) John 20:1 - ***“Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark.”***

b. These can all be harmonized by saying that their trip to the tomb began while it was still dark and by the time they arrived, the sun was rising.

2. Mark 16:1 - ***“Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.”***

a. The names of the women.

(1) There were four in number: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Solome.

(2) Luke 24:10 adds Joanna - ***“It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna,***

Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the Apostles.” Joanna was the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward. (Luke 8:3).

3. Luke 23:55 - ***“And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid.”*** In addition to the women who are named, here we have an uncertain number which came with them. (Cf. Luke 24:1).

B. THE WOMEN FOUND THE STONE HAD BEEN REMOVED BY AN ANGEL (Matthew 28:2).

1. The earthquake - No sooner had the women reached the tomb than they found the stone had been moved by a great earthquake. They must have felt this while on the way to the tomb. This was the second miraculously caused earthquake in connection with Jesus’ death and burial, the first one having occurred at the moment of His death (Matthew 27:51). The earthquake was caused by an angel from God who descended from heaven and rolled away the stone and sat on it.

2. The angel - This shows that God has mediated His power over the earth’s created matter to angels. They are truly the movers and the shakers over the physical elements of the galaxies and the earth. The angel moved the stone, which Mark says was very large or great (Mark 16:4), not to let Jesus out, but to let the women and the Apostles in. The angel’s appearance was like lightening and his garment as white as snow.

The guards were so startled that they shook and became paralyzed with fear. Then they became unconscious like dead men. NOTE: What will the wicked feel when they see Jesus coming again with clouds of angels? It is interesting to observe that the guards who were standing guard over a dead man, themselves became as dead. Verse eleven tells us they recovered and went to tell the authorities what had happened.

The angel then tells the women not to be afraid because Jesus had risen from the dead and was going into Galilee. They were told to come and see the place where the Lord had lain. They were then told to go and tell His disciples. Mark’s account says they were to inform Peter in particular (Mark 16:7). Luke’s account states there were two angels in human form (Luke 24:4).

C. MARY MAGDALENE HURRIES TO TELL PETER AND JOHN WHO RUN TOWARD THE TOMB (John 20:1,2).

1. An important clarification is given to us by John. In John 20:1-2 he informs us

that Mary Magdalene was so disturbed by the empty tomb that she immediately left the scene before the angels appeared. Thus we read, ***"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.'"***

In her statement to Peter and John, she has concluded that someone has either moved or stolen the body of Jesus. It could perhaps have been Joseph or Nicodemus, the friends of Jesus, or it could have been the Romans or the Jews, the enemies of Jesus. In either case, it is clear that she is not aware that Jesus has arisen from the dead. She would later return to the tomb alone where she would see the angels, and be the first one to meet the risen Lord.

2. Peter and John both began to run to the tomb. John ran faster and came to the tomb first. ***"Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first."*** (John 20:3, 4).

D. MEANWHILE, MARY, THE MOTHER OF JAMES, SALOME, AND THE OTHER WOMEN ENTER THE TOMB AND SAW THE ANGELS WHO ASSURED THEM THAT JESUS HAD RISEN FROM THE DEAD. THEY RAN FROM THE TOMB TO INFORM HIS DISCIPLES.

"But the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.' So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word." (Matthew 28:5-8).

E. PETER AND JOHN ARRIVE AT THE TOMB, ENTER, AND OBSERVE, AND THEN LEFT - John 20:4-10.

1. ***"So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes."***

2. As we have seen, John arrives first but for some unknown reason, John stopped outside the tomb and looked in, but did not enter. ***"And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in."*** (John 20:5).

3. Upon his arriving, Peter immediately entered the tomb, and saw nothing but the linen burial clothes lying inside. Unlike Lazarus, who needed help getting out of his grave clothes after his resurrection (John 11:44), Jesus' resurrected body simply passed through the linen wrappings just like it would soon pass through a wall in a locked room (John 20:19, 26).

4. John then enters the tomb. As he observes the empty tomb, the undisturbed grave clothes, and the neatly rolled up face cloth, this was enough for him to believe. We are then told that ***"they went away again to their homes"*** (20:10).

F. MARY MAGDALENE NOW RETURNS TO THE TOMB.

John 20:11-18 - ***"But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, 'Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him, 'Rabboni!' (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her."***

1. After Peter and John left the tomb, Mary now returns and is standing outside the tomb. As we have seen, she apparently had arrived at the tomb before the other women. Seeing that the stone had been moved, she concluded that someone had either stolen or moved the body of Jesus. She immediately ran and reported the news to Peter and John. Now driven by an overwhelming sense of grief and loss, she returns to the tomb. By this time Peter and John had come and gone. She did not cross paths with them or the other women on her way back to the tomb, and so did not yet know about the undisturbed grave

clothes or the message of the angels.

2. As Mary stands there weeping, she stoops down and looks into the tomb. Like the other women, she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. She could not recognize them as angels, since they had assumed human form (Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4). They asked her as to why she was weeping? She replies, **"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."** Her despair existed from not knowing where the Lord's body was at. She believed He was still dead. She had come to anoint His dead body, not to see Him alive from the dead.

3. Mary was consumed with grief, and this kept her from recognizing Jesus at first, supposing He was the gardener. NOTE: Grief, as an emotion, can alter our perception of reality. It magnifies the past, distorts the present, and hides the future. The sorrowing person, often absorbed and almost submerged in grief, is preoccupied with thoughts of duties toward the departed one. I know of a man whose wife died, and after forty years since she had died, he had never moved anything in her bedroom. He is dead while he is living. Grief has been permitted to destroy his life.

4. After stating the reason for her grief, she turned around and saw Jesus, but did not recognize the sound of Jesus' voice nor His physical appearance. She supposes He is the gardener. Gardeners did their work in the orchards early in the morning. If this man was the gardener, then he would likely know of the activities which had taken place at the garden tomb before she arrived. Mary asked the supposed gardener where he had taken Jesus' body. Her only concern was for the suffering, dead and buried body of the Christ. In her devotion to Him she overlooked her weakness and said, **"I will take Him away."** She did not consider the impossibility of this task. Somehow she would move His dear corpse to an honorable tomb. How grief clouds our thinking and leads us to pursue unwise activities.

5. One word causes her to awaken from her grief and despair. "Mary!" Her sorrow, tears and fears fled when He spoke her name. She knew then that He was alive. No matter how impossible, He was alive! When He spoke her name, He brought to her the assurance of His love, care and understanding. The impact of Jesus' presence made on Mary is best noted in her first expression of devotion. She called Him by the title that meant the most to her. **"Rabboni"** occurs only here and in Mark 10:51 where it is translated **"Lord."** It is taken from the word "rabbi" which means "teacher." Jesus had delivered her from seven demons, but she did not call Him her "healer." To her the fact that He had taught her the way of life was most important. He was her teacher and she was His disciple. NOTE: To be taught by a God-fearing teacher is one of the greatest blessings which God can bestow upon

a person.

6. In verse seventeen, Jesus makes a statement which has been puzzling to many. In the King James Version it is rendered **"Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father."** The word used here is *"hupto"* and means to "cling to" or "adhere to." The New King James Version translates it as **"Do not cling to Me."** John MacArthur explains the meaning of Jesus' words in this manner.

Mary was expressing a desire to hold on to His physical presence for fear that she would once again lose Him. Jesus' reference to His ascension signifies that He would only be temporarily with them, and though she desperately wanted Him to stay, He could not. Jesus was with them only for 40 more days and then He ascended (Acts 1:3-11). After He went to the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit ("the Helper") so that they would not feel abandoned. (*MacArthur Study Bible*, p. 1627).

7. Mary was then told by Jesus to go and tell the rest of the disciples that she had seen the risen Lord and that He was in the process of ascending back to the Father. Thus in verse 18 we are told, **"Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her."**

We must now close this lesson and pick up at this point in the next. Let us be careful to remember that the first person which our Lord revealed Himself to after His resurrection was Mary Magdalene. If the question be asked as to why He chose her, the answer is, it was by His own sovereign choice. Sovereign election and predestination are found throughout the Bible, and we are the losers if we fail to see it as such.