

July 2020

Frank W. Nelte

## **THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST**

All four gospels record the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But they don't all present the same details. And some people have a difficulty in putting it all together. So let's look at all of the relevant verses in the four gospels, and then see if we can come to understand the correct sequence of events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### **SOME BACKGROUND**

Two of the gospel writers, **Matthew** and **John**, were members of the 12 apostles. Of these two apostles, only John was an eyewitness of some of the key events regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Matthew did not personally witness the key events that define the timing of the events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But Matthew received immediate and direct understanding from the only two apostles, **Peter** and **John**, who were eyewitnesses to those key events.

To be quite clear: I am here talking about **the timing of key events that preceded the Sunday evening when Jesus Christ appeared to 10 of the apostles** (Thomas was not there, and Judas was already dead) in a closed room (see John 20:19). From that time onwards there are no significant disputes over what happened when with Christ's resurrection.

The confusion and the disagreements involve things that happened before Christ appeared to those 10 apostles. The confusion involves the actual timing of events surrounding Christ's resurrection, not the timing of events that took place 24 hours and more later.

So when we examine the four gospel accounts, we should keep the following in mind:

- 1) The Apostle **John** was **the only gospel writer who was an eyewitness** to some of those early events. So John recorded what he had personally witnessed, as well as what one or more of the women involved had told him and the other apostles.
- 2) The Apostle **Matthew** did not see those things himself, but he heard them directly from Peter and John, and from the women who had gone to the sepulcher.
- 3) The only other apostle who was an eyewitness, **Peter**, did not write a gospel account himself. But he certainly communicated what he had personally witnessed to the other apostles, and no doubt also to many other people as well.
- 4) Now **Mark**, the author of the second gospel account, did not witness any of these things himself. **Mark was not an eyewitness** of anything. He relied 100% on what other people told him. It seems quite likely that Mark got most of his information **from the Apostle Peter**, who was an eyewitness of Jesus Christ's entire ministry. And so the Gospel of Mark quite likely presents us with the Apostle Peter's perspective of Jesus Christ's ministry, including His death and resurrection. Think of Mark as the Apostle Peter's personal scribe.
- 5) **Luke**, the author of the third gospel account, only came along several years after Jesus Christ's

ministry. Luke had no personal knowledge of anything. And Luke was not a Jew. He had no Jewish background, and he didn't think like a Jew. **Luke got all of his information secondhand**, from people who had witnessed Christ's ministry a decade or more earlier. Luke would without question also have received **much information third-hand and fourth-hand**. And Luke did his best to sift out what was true, and to establish as best as he could a correct chronology for the things that had taken place.

But throughout the Gospel of Luke we find minor discrepancies with the other gospel accounts. My 2007 "Luke" article examines and explains over 70 examples of such minor discrepancies. The point is: Luke absolutely tried his best to get everything right, but, because he was forced to rely on what other people told him, he did get certain details mixed up here and there.

[**Comment:** The mistranslation in Luke 1:3 is thoroughly explained in that 2007 article entitled "Understanding The Gospel Of Luke", in the sub-section "The Introduction To Luke's Gospel: Luke 1:1-4". **Luke assuredly did not at all claim to have had "perfect understanding"**. That claim is a gross mistranslation. That article also discusses the 70 discrepancies referred to above.]

So the four gospels were written by **one eyewitness** for Jesus Christ's resurrection details, and **three non-eyewitnesses**. And that one eyewitness didn't see everything himself either; for certain details he had to rely on "the women" who had gone to the sepulcher.

## **A PROBLEM OF AMBIGUITY**

Next, we should also recognize that these accounts involve the potential for some ambiguity. And that potential ambiguity is due to the fact that at the time of Christ's ministry **the Greek world was not yet familiar with the concept of a 7-day week**.

Where in Jewish society the concept of the 7-day week had always been entrenched, going back to Moses and before Moses, this was not a concept that was used in Greek circles in biblical times. Thus in the Greek language of the New Testament period **there was not really a Greek word for this concept of a 7-day week**.

At a later time the Greek language coined the feminine noun "ebdomas, ebdomados" to mean "a week". And in modern Greek the word for "week" is the word "ebdomada".

**Latin also didn't have a word for "a week", and so in Latin a week was later simply designated by the expression "septem dies", meaning "seven days"**.

Coming back to the Greek language, the Greek word for "week" was simply formed from the word "ebdomos", which means "seventh". But in biblical times the Greek language did not yet use the word "ebdomas", and neither did the Latin language at that time use the expression "septem dies" to refer to "a week".

In Old Testament **Hebrew**, on the other hand, the concept of "a week" was clearly expressed by the word "**shabuwa**" (or "**shabua**"). This Hebrew word "shabuwa" is formed from the Hebrew word "sheba", meaning "seven" and "seventh". **This is totally distinct from the Hebrew word "shabbath"**, meaning "Sabbath", which word is formed from the verb "shabath", meaning "**to cease** from work or from activities".

The point is this:

**In Hebrew there is no connection at all between the word for "week" and the word for "Sabbath". These two words are distinct from one another, and not in any way related. While the Hebrew word for "a week" was clearly derived from a word that means "seven", the word for "Sabbath" was derived from a word that means "to cease from activities, to stop doing something". The Hebrew word for "Sabbath" has no connection with the number "7".**

This is something many people do not understand. **In Hebrew the words for "Sabbath" and for "seven" have nothing at all in common!** Don't be misled by reference works that tell you otherwise, because those reference works are influenced by a bias in favor of supporting Jewish non-biblical traditions (i.e. traditions based on the Talmud).

Now in post-New Testament Greek and Latin, the respective words for "a week" in both these languages were derived from words meaning "seven". But these new Greek and Latin words had not yet been coined by the time the New Testament was being written.

So here is what we need to understand:

Without New Testament Greek having a word for "a week", the gospel writers borrowed the word for "Sabbath" from the Hebrew language, and coined the **Greek** word "**sabbaton**". This is in spite of the fact that in Hebrew "Sabbath" has nothing to do with "week".

(Comment: As a matter of interest, this was also the case in the later Latin Vulgate translation of Jerome, where "**sabbatum, sabbati**" was used for both "Sabbath" and "week". This was also simply an adaption of the Hebrew word for "Sabbath". Only after Jerome's time did Latin accept the Greek word "hebdomas" for "week".)

Here is where **the potential for ambiguity** entered the picture:

The New Testament writers used the Greek word "**sabbaton**" to convey two completely different things! They used this word "sabbaton" to refer to **the weekly Sabbath**; and they also used this word "sabbaton" to refer to the concept of **a 7-day week**. Both concepts were foreign to Greek culture. And both concepts were conveyed in the New Testament by the one new Greek word "sabbaton". But we should recognize that there is a huge difference between "a Sabbath Day" and "a week". A period of "seven days" is not the same as a period of "one day", not even remotely.

The word "sabbaton" is used 68 times in the New Testament, and it is in the KJV translated **59 times** as "**Sabbath**" (or as "Sabbath day"), and **9 times** as "**week**". And a number of those translations in the KJV are clearly wrong!

It is always the context which has to make clear whether "sabbaton" should be translated as "Sabbath" or as "week". And **when a translator does not understand the context correctly**, then that translator may translate "sabbaton" incorrectly, as has indeed happened in a number of places. That is **a potential problem** of which we should be aware.

Let's look at an example that makes quite clear that "sabbaton" really is used in the New Testament with the meaning of "week". Here is Luke 18:12.

I fast twice **in the week**, I give tithes of all that I possess. (Luke 18:12)

The expression here translated as "in the week" is the Greek "**tou sabbatou**", the genitive singular of "sabbaton". This can potentially mean **either "of the Sabbath" or "of the week"**. The internal evidence of this verse makes quite clear that here the intended meaning has to be "of the week", since the

expression "to fast **twice** on one specific day (the Sabbath)" doesn't make sense. And furthermore, the Pharisees didn't have a custom of fasting on the Sabbath.

This example should suffice to make clear that the NT Greek word "sabbaton" can mean either "Sabbath" or "week".

So why is a Hebrew word that inherently means "**to cease from activities**" used in Greek and in Latin to convey the concept of "seven days"? This confusion was created by **the Pharisees**.

In order to justify their keeping of the Feast of Weeks (i.e. Pentecost) on Sivan 6, they unilaterally claimed that the Hebrew word "shabbath" supposedly **also** means "week". **This claim is patently false!** They willingly ignored that the Hebrew word for "week" is "shabuwa". They deliberately altered the meaning of "shabbath" to fit in with **their pharisaical traditions**.

Since New Testament Greek didn't really have a specific word for "week", and since the writers of the New Testament were aware of the fact that the Hebrew language scholars of their time (i.e. the scribes and the Pharisees) claimed that "shabbath" supposedly also means "week", therefore the NT writers likewise used the Greek word that had been taken from the Hebrew language (i.e. sabbaton) to mean both "the Sabbath Day", and also "a week", much like the non-Jew Luke used the non-biblical term "a Sabbath day's journey" in Acts 1:12, something that has no OT foundation whatsoever.

So when we see the word "sabbaton" in the NT Scriptures we will examine, then we need to be aware of the fact that this word could be a reference to either a Sabbath Day or to a week.

And if the translators did not really understand the text they were translating, then they might also mistranslate "sabbaton" into English, as they in fact did in several places. This means that they might say "Sabbath" when it should be "week", or they might say "week" when it should be "Sabbath".

Be aware of this potential problem.

Right, now let's look at the verses that tell us about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here are the key verses in each gospel account.

## **MATTHEW'S GOSPEL**

**In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first (*day*) of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. (Matthew 28:1)**

Here is the Greek text for this verse.

Opse de **sabbaton** te epiphoskouse eis mian **sabbaton** elthen Maria Magdalene kai he alle Maria theoesai ton taphon.

The Greek word "**sabbaton**" is used **twice** in this verse, and in both cases it is the **genitive plural** form of the neuter noun "sabbaton". (Greek has two different letters for "o", and the one used in both places here signifies the genitive plural form.) The genitive is the possessive form.

So in both places in this verse the word "sabbaton" must mean either "**of the Sabbaths**" (plural) or "**of the weeks**" (plural). The Greek word is not singular! It is plural! And therefore in this verse **neither of the two occurrences** can mean "**of the Sabbath**" (singular) or "**of the week**" (singular). The Greek word is

plural in both cases, and it is the genitive case in both places. So our English translation here has at least **two distinct mistranslations** in it.

That is a fact which cannot be disputed! So let's be logical here. Let's eliminate those options that are impossible. Here is what we have:

1) The **first** use of the word "sabbaton" cannot mean "of the weeks" simply because it doesn't make sense to say: "in the end of the weeks (plural) ...". Therefore **the first use of "sabbaton" must mean "in the end of the Sabbaths (plural) ..."**. That is the only option here!

This expression proves that **two Sabbath days** had passed! One Sabbath day was the Holy Day of the First Day of Unleavened Bread. And the other Sabbath that had passed was the weekly Sabbath Day. This is the only possibility. There are no other options.

### **Two Sabbath Days had passed!**

2) The **second** use of the word "sabbaton" in this verse can again mean **either "of the Sabbaths" or "of the weeks"**. This is either **a reference to the 7 weeks** that were to be counted towards Pentecost; or it is **a reference to counting 7 Sabbath Days** towards Pentecost. For counting "7 weeks" see Deuteronomy 16:9, and for counting "7 Sabbath Days" see Leviticus 23:15. Those are the **two different ways** the Bible tells us to count for Pentecost, and **both lead to the same result**.

We need to understand that any time after the Passover the Jews were focused on counting towards Pentecost. This counting started during the 7 Days of Unleavened Bread. So Matthew was saying either:

"... as it began to dawn toward the first (*day*) **of the weeks** ..."; or he was saying:

"... as it began to dawn toward the first (*day*) **of the Sabbaths** ...".

Matthew's statement didn't focus on one particular week or on one particular Sabbath. No, Matthew's statement focused on **seven** weeks, or on **seven** Sabbaths. When the biblical instructions are followed for these two options, then they both lead to the same result for determining the date for Pentecost ... a Sunday.

Now here in Matthew 28:1 I will settle for using the expression "of the weeks", though "of the Sabbaths" could in this specific verse also be considered to be correct. **It is the plural that is important here.**

So here is a corrected translation for Matthew 28:1.

**In the end of the Sabbaths, as it began to dawn toward the first of the weeks, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. (Matthew 28:1, corrected)**

Notice that Matthew does not tell us anything about the purpose of their visit, which purpose was to embalm the body. Matthew says nothing about the herbs and spices.

Next, we should focus on the fact that the Greek expression "te epiphoskouse eis mian sabbaton" basically means: "as it began to dawn **towards** ("eis") **the first of the weeks**". The first of the 7 weeks "towards" Pentecost started **after sunset on the Saturday evening**. (Counting towards the first of the 7 Sabbaths likewise started after sunset for the Sabbath that had just ended.)

Note that the word "**day**" is in italics because it **is not present** in the Greek text, and it must be deleted. The translators didn't understand what Matthew was saying. **Matthew wasn't talking about the first**

**"day" at all!** Matthew was referring to the start of the first **week** of the 7 weeks towards Pentecost. That was a significant event! This is a consequence of **following the instructions in Deuteronomy 16:9**.

Understand that "weeks" did not start in the morning around sunrise. **Weeks have always started in the evening**, after sunset at the end of the Sabbath. That is the only time when a week can start!

Next, the expression "as it began to dawn toward ..." tells us that this was **"towards sunrise"** on Sunday morning.

So when we understand Matthew 28:1 correctly, then Matthew is telling us that **the two Marys went to the sepulcher before sunrise on Sunday morning**. Keep in mind that they were in **a highly emotional state**, because Jesus Christ had died a very brutal death on the preceding Wednesday late afternoon. They were still in shock.

Consider:

**When you have been extremely stressed and very worried about something, have you ever caught yourself checking something over and over ... because your mind is not thinking logically and methodically? We might think of ourselves as having been in a state of shock when we experienced such situations. Well, the two Marys were definitely both in a state of extreme shock when they walked to the sepulcher before sunrise on that Sunday morning. They had witnessed a horrendous event, which very likely had made them sick to their stomachs.**

Let's understand that what these women had experienced was **the equivalent of us having to watch our own son or daughter or father or mother being crucified** and over a six hour period dying an excruciating death ... and all we could do is stand by helplessly! How logical and emotionally balanced would **we** be for the next three or four days? Would we perhaps do some things over that we had already done earlier ... because we couldn't think straight? Would we forget that we already knew the answers to certain questions?

We need to grasp that in situations of extreme stress **the human mind sometimes just doesn't accept certain information**. How often have you heard about a father or a mother who refused to accept that their missing child was dead ... because it was logically clear that in their particular circumstances their child could not possibly still be alive? Their minds tried to cling to any bit of information that held out hope that maybe, just maybe, their child was still alive ... when the objectively viewed facts said: their child is dead.

How would we feel in that type of situation, of **having helplessly watched our loved one die by crucifixion**, if someone said to us: why are you asking that question, when you already know the answer? Or they ask us: why are you looking there, when you've looked there already? Or they say: why can't you behave logically? How would we respond?

Let's try to understand **the extreme shock** to the system when we believe with every fiber of our being that the man standing in front of us is truly the Son of God, and we have witnessed miracle after miracle ... and then that man is brutally killed. It was an enormous shock for all of the apostles, and for all those women.

We need to also keep in mind that **none of the disciples expected Christ to be resurrected**, even though He had told them repeatedly that He would be resurrected. None of them were mentally prepared for Christ to be resurrected. That's why Peter said **"I go fishing"** even after he had seen the resurrected Jesus Christ (see John 21:3). Think also of Thomas who initially didn't believe that Christ had been resurrected (see John 20:24-25). It hadn't fully sunk in. They all had simply never really gotten the point

that Christ would be resurrected! **His resurrection then also came as a shock**, but an exciting, pleasant one.

It was a traumatic time for all of Jesus Christ's disciples, and we should recognize the emotional stress all the people involved were under.

Let's get back to Matthew.

Now how did Matthew know this information which he recorded in chapter 28? **It wasn't divinely given to him by God!** No, Matthew knew the information he recorded in Matthew 28:1 from what he himself had heard one or more of the women say about going to the tomb. **[Comment:** If you are wondering about 2 Timothy 3:16, then I suggest that you read my very lengthy article on that Scripture.]

Let's continue.

And, behold, there was **a great earthquake**: for **the angel** of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and **rolled back the stone** from the door, and **sat upon it**.(Matthew 28:2)

Okay, so the angel sits on the stone. And the stone is outside of the sepulcher. So where was this angel: inside the sepulcher or outside? This angel was outside the sepulcher, right? The Roman soldiers could see the angel, and they were paralyzed with fear.

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: (Matthew 28:3)

And for fear of him **the keepers** did shake, and **became as dead men**. (Matthew 28:4)

Now this earthquake did not happen on Sunday morning when the women went to the tomb. No, this earthquake had happened **at sunset the previous evening**. It coincided to the micro-second with Jesus Christ's resurrection. The earthquake was like the announcement of Christ's resurrection.

The expression "there was a great earthquake" is a translation of the Greek expression "seismos egeneto megas". In this expression the verb "egeneto" is in **the second aorist tense**. Here it should have been translated as "**there had been** a great earthquake". This is an equally correct translation for the aorist tense.

So chronologically verses 2-4 should have come before verse 1, because they applied to Saturday evening. So what? By using one of the two aorist tenses Matthew was making provision for mentioning something that had actually happened earlier.

Matthew was not an eyewitness to anything here. His focus was on telling us what the angel said to the women, not on when the angel had first appeared.

And **the angel** answered and said unto the women, **Fear not** you: for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. (Matthew 28:5)

He is not here: for **He is risen**, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. (Matthew 28:6)

That's right. Jesus Christ had been resurrected **exactly at sunset at the end of the weekly Sabbath**. And Christ then **instantly left the tomb**. He didn't stay around to check out the tomb like a tourist. He left immediately, like in one millionth of a second. The resurrected Jesus Christ didn't function like a human being. He was once again God, as He had always been for past eternity, before His human existence.

Now **technically speaking**, it makes no difference whether the women were there 10 minutes after sunset on Saturday evening (**which was not the case** with this incident Matthew is recording), or whether they came an hour before sunrise, at 5:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. It makes no difference. Either way **Jesus Christ was no longer in the tomb**.

And go quickly, and **tell His disciples that He is risen** from the dead; and, behold, He goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see Him: lo, I have told you. (Matthew 28:7)

**That was an instruction the angels gave the women on Sunday morning, not on Saturday evening after sunset.**

Let's look at the next verse:

And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy; **and did run to bring His disciples word**. (Matthew 28:8)

So Matthew here has the women **intending** to fulfill the instructions they had received from the angel. However, Mark, who received his information from the Apostle Peter, records this slightly differently. We'll see this in more detail when we examine Mark's account next. Mark says:

And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: **neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid**. (Mark 16:8)

What this tells us is that Matthew has skipped over some of the details for that Sunday morning. The point is: **first** the women fled and didn't tell anyone what they had seen. At some point **after that** Mary Magdalene was the one who "**ran**" to the disciples Peter and John. That is what we'll see in John's account.

Now the next verse:

And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And **they came and held Him by the feet**, and worshipped Him. (Matthew 28:9)

It should be clear that Matthew has again skipped over certain events that took place between verses 7 and 9. John records that when Jesus Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene alone, He said "**touch Me not** For I am not yet ascended to My Father ...".

This was an incident that Matthew simply did not record. Now since Jesus Christ did allow a number of women to touch Him "by the feet" in Matthew 28:9, it follows that **in verse 9** Matthew recorded **something that happened at a later time**. By then Christ had been to God the Father in heaven, and He had returned on the same day. And then it was permissible for the women to touch His feet.

Okay, so what has Matthew done here in his account? **Matthew has conflated all the things that happened on Saturday evening and on Sunday into an abbreviated account**. In plain English: Matthew has left out some details, which details we can gather from the other accounts. Is that a problem for you? Would you have insisted on a more thorough account, with more details and with more chronological precision?

Well, Matthew wrote what he wrote, and he included the details that made an impression on him, while leaving out other details.

Matthew too had experienced an extreme emotional shock when Jesus Christ died by crucifixion. And



when Matthew then about 20 years later wrote his gospel account, this is how he remembered those events.

The point is: the occasion when the women "held Jesus Christ by the feet" took place later, in circumstances that are **not recorded by the other gospel writers**. But chronologically it does not fit into the account immediately after the event in verse 7 (i.e. the angel speaking to the women). It was at a later time that some women saw Jesus Christ.

We have a similar thing with Paul's account. In 1 Corinthians 15:4 Paul refers to Jesus Christ's burial and resurrection. Paul totally ignores that Mary Magdalene saw Christ first, and he leaves out the women of Matthew 28:9. Paul simply lists Peter as the first one to have seen Christ (verse 5), and then the 12 apostles, and then Christ was seen by more than 500 people (verse 6), and then James, and then again the apostles (verse 7). This last reference would be referring to the occasion in Matthew 28:16-20.

Paul's list here is incomplete, just like Matthew's. Paul has left out some people who saw Jesus Christ on that first Sunday. Keep in mind that when Jesus Christ was resurrected, Paul was not yet a member of the Church. So Paul had no personal knowledge of those events.

Let's note one specific point regarding Matthew's record:

Matthew tells us that Joseph of Arimathaea placed the body in the tomb. And apart from telling us that Pilate placed a watch before the tomb, Matthew skips from late Wednesday afternoon to early Sunday morning, when the women came to the tomb, and then to later on that Sunday.

**Matthew tells us nothing about the women resting, then buying and preparing spices, and then resting again, before coming to the tomb on Sunday morning. This is in line with Matthew not having been an eyewitness to any of those events between Jesus Christ's death on Wednesday late afternoon, and then having Jesus Christ appear in their midst in a closed room on Sunday evening (see John 20:19).**

All these precise details don't feature in Matthew's account.

The other gospel accounts will fit certain other things into this very general framework that Matthew has presented. Later we'll put all these verses from the four gospel accounts together. For now let's move on to Mark.

## **MARK'S GOSPEL**

Mark's account is very likely based on information that Mark had obtained from Peter, since Mark himself had not experienced any part of Christ's ministry. Mark undoubtedly had also spoken to the other apostles and to the women that were involved in these events. Notice the following verses.

And when he (i.e. Pilate) knew *it* of the centurion (that Jesus Christ was dead), he gave the body to Joseph. (Mark 15:45)

And he (i.e. Joseph) **bought** fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher. (Mark 15:46)

Joseph had managed to still buy "fine linen" **before sunset** that Wednesday afternoon. After sunset it

would have been impossible to buy any linen anywhere in Jerusalem, because it would have been a Holy Day.

And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother of James* **beheld** where He was laid. (Mark 15:47)

The women were watching and very likely sobbing and all stressed out. This was at the end of the 14th day and **at the start of the 15th day, the First Annual Sabbath of the year**. In that particular week that Holy Day was a Thursday.

Jesus Christ had observed the Passover on Tuesday evening after sunset. Christ had then died on Wednesday late in the afternoon. Joseph had placed the body in the tomb pretty well at sunset on Wednesday, as the Holy Day (an annual Sabbath Day) was just beginning.

And when **the sabbath** (Greek = "**tou sabbatou**") was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother of James*, and Salome, **had bought** sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. (Mark 16:1)

Here "tou sabbatou" is the genitive **singular**, meaning either "of the Sabbath" or "of the week". What happened here is that the three women (i.e. Mary M & Mary the mother of James & Salome) **had observed the annual Sabbath**, the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on a **Thursday**. And **on the Friday**, when **shops were once again open**, then they could buy the sweet spices.

So here "tou sabbatou" **cannot refer to "when the week was past"**, because then the women would only have been able to buy the spices on Sunday morning ... and that would have been **too late!** By then Jesus Christ was already risen. Keep in mind that back then they didn't have 24-hour Walmarts for buying ready-made anointing spices. When the sun went down after a weekly Sabbath (or after a Holy Day for that matter), people in Jerusalem couldn't find any all-night shops to buy anointing ingredients. The women here would have had to wait till the next morning. And if it was "the week" that was past, then the Sunday morning would have been too late.

So here in Mark 16:1 "tou sabbatou" can only be a reference to "when the annual Sabbath was past", the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, **then the women bought sweet spices**. In this verse the expression "when the Sabbath was past" must mean "**when the Holy Day was past**".

So verse 1 takes us to Friday, the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that year. The women bought the raw ingredients, and they spent several hours on that Friday extracting the "sweet spices" to use as an anointing mixture for a dead body.

Then Friday evening approached, and so **the women again rested**, this time for the weekly Sabbath Day.

Now verse 2.

And very early in the morning **the first (day) of the week** (Greek = "**tes mias sabbaton**"), they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. (Mark 16:2)

Here "sabbaton" is again the genitive **plural**. There is no definite article for "sabbaton". The definite article "tes" applies to "first". The Greek expression "tes mias sabbaton" theoretically means either "**the first of weeks**" or it means "**the first of Sabbaths**". But it **cannot mean "the first of the week"**, singular! That is **a mistranslation**.

Since it was "very early in the morning", therefore:

If "sabbaton" here means "**of Sabbaths**", then this would have been **Saturday morning**. But that is not possible. Therefore this theoretical possibility must be rejected. The women would still have been "resting" very early on the Sabbath morning.

If "sabbaton" here means "**of weeks**", then this would have been **Sunday morning**. Weeks only start after sunset on Saturday evening. And "very early in the morning" would make this Sunday morning.

So here in verse 2 the only option is:

And very early in the morning of **the first of weeks** they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. (Mark 16:2)

The first of the 7 weeks in counting for Pentecost started Saturday evening after sunset. The expression "at the rising of the sun" identifies this as **Sunday morning around sunrise**.

Let's continue.

And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? (Mark 16:3)

They knew where to go because they had watched Joseph of Arimathea (with a helper) place the body in that tomb on Wednesday around sunset time (Mark 15:47). But until that Sunday morning they had not thought about the problem of rolling away the very heavy stone. That challenge hadn't occurred to them before then.

And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. (Mark 16:4)

It is **around sunrise Sunday morning**, and they go into the sepulcher.

And entering into the sepulcher, **they saw a young man sitting on the right side**, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. (Mark 16:5)

Okay, so **how** did Mark (or Peter for that matter) know that there was "a young man (i.e. an angel) on the right side"? One or more of these three women told Peter (and perhaps much later also Mark) that they saw "a young man".

Now Luke in Luke 24:4 says that they saw **two men standing** there. How are we to understand this? There are two possibilities.

**Either Luke got his details wrong and conflated this situation with the later situation**, where Mary Magdalene alone saw "two angels" (see John 20:12). This means that there was at this incident **only one angel** present.

**Or there really were two angels present, but when one woman saw the first angel, she was mesmerized by this experience, and she immediately looked down for fear, and therefore never saw the other angel. That is what she later faithfully told the apostles. The other two women, by contrast, may have looked all around and taken in the greater environment. They may have seen some things that escaped the first woman's attention. And so they might have seen both angels? If we had been in that situation, we would have been scared out of our minds; and it was pretty well the same for those women.**

In scary situations it isn't all that uncommon for different people to see and remember things slightly

differently than other people who also experienced those situations. We are all inherently subjective beings, and our feelings and perceptions and responses to various situations differ from the perceptions and responses of other people. That's reality.

So perhaps one woman saw only one angel, and one or both of the other women saw two angels? Who knows? Ultimately it doesn't really change anything.

At any rate, one angel then speaks to these women.

And he said unto them, Be not affrighted: You seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: **He is risen**; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. (Mark 16:6)

**It's Sunday morning around sunrise, and Jesus Christ had already been resurrected Saturday evening at sunset. The angel now gives an instruction to these women.**

But go your way, **tell His disciples and Peter** that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you. (Mark 16:7)

While I don't know this for sure, I suspect that the angel actually said: "tell Peter and His disciples ...". And Peter in dictating this to Mark turned that around to state: "tell His disciples and Peter", to not place undue attention on himself. After all, Jesus Christ had earlier clearly identified Peter as the leader amongst the apostles. Now it doesn't really make a difference which way it was said. It's just a thought. Either way the message is the same.

And they went out quickly, and **fled** from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any *man*; for **they were afraid**. (Mark 16:8)

Can you see that the women were scared? They were shaking and trembling with fear. This was another scary experience.

Notice that Mark says that "they didn't say anything to any man". This means that Mark here says that these women didn't actually do what the angel told them to do. They were supposed to tell Peter and the other apostles. But at least **initially they didn't say anything to anybody**, because they were scared.

This means that **these women only later told the apostles** what they had experienced. Now notice the next verse.

Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first (*day*) of the week (Greek = "**sabbatou**"), **He appeared first to Mary Magdalene**, out of whom He had cast seven devils. (Mark 16:9)

Here "sabbatou" is the genitive **singular** case. It means either "of the Sabbath" or "of the week". Here in this context "of the Sabbath" does not make sense, and therefore here "of the week" is correct.

The question is: why did the resurrected Jesus Christ first appear to Mary Magdalene? **Why?** This appearance had not been planned in advance. John's account will show us that Mary was very confused at this point. **She too did not yet believe that Jesus Christ had been resurrected**, in spite of having seen an angel, and in spite of having seen the empty tomb. This information had simply not yet sunk in! And so Jesus Christ spontaneously appeared to Mary **to encourage her**, and to help her to understand that He really had been resurrected.

Mark does not provide any specific details for this incident. We'll see some details for this event in

John's account.

Now Mark records verses 8 and 9 right next to each other. Is that how it happened? Verse 8 tells us that they "fled", and verse 9 tells us that Mary on her own saw Jesus, most likely somewhere in the vicinity of the tomb. Very likely there was **a time gap between these two verses**. Having "fled" at around 6:00 a.m., a very confused and emotionally charged Mary Magdalene may have decided half an hour or so later to go back again on her own?

It was then still only around 7:00 a.m. and as yet none of the apostles had been told anything by any of the women. And after seeing the resurrected Jesus Christ **Mary goes and tells the apostles** that she has seen Jesus Christ.

And she went and told them that had been with Him, as **they mourned and wept**. (Mark 16:10)

Yes, they were all still in shock and very emotional.

And **they**, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, **believed not**. (Mark 16:11)

So here **the apostles still didn't believe** that Jesus Christ had been resurrected. Think of this statement as having been dictated to Mark by the Apostle Peter. Peter was certainly also speaking for himself when he dictated "**they** believed not". The apostles may have told Mary: "**you just imagined that you saw Jesus Christ, and we understand your emotions here**".

John provides more details that fit in at this point.

So later that Sunday afternoon Jesus Christ also appeared to two other disciples.

After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told *it* unto the residue: **neither believed they them**. (Mark 16:12-13)

**They still didn't believe that Jesus Christ had been resurrected. They had a mental block towards Christ having been resurrected. They still didn't get it.**

Now let's look at Luke's account of these events. Keep in mind that **Luke relied completely on other people** telling him these things around two decades later. And Luke tried his best to piece it all together in a correct chronological sequence.

## **LUKE'S GOSPEL**

And he (Joseph) took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And **that day was the preparation**, and (the) sabbath (Greek = **sabbaton**) drew on. (Luke 23:53-54)

Here the Greek word "sabbaton" is the nominative **singular**. Also, the Greek text does not contain the definite article for "the". Luke did not say: "**the** Sabbath drew on". No, Luke only said: "**a Sabbath drew on**". There is no definite article! The Greek text only says "kai sabbaton epephosken" ... **no definite article** for "sabbaton".

Luke said "**a** Sabbath drew on" because he was referring to an annual Sabbath, the First Day of UB.

This day of Luke 23:54, a Wednesday, was the preparation for the Thursday Holy Day, an annual Sabbath. It was **the First Day of Unleavened Bread that was "drawing on"**, because the Passover had been observed the previous evening by Jesus Christ and His apostles. (The Pharisees at that time were preparing to keep their "Passover" that coming evening, even as the Jews today observe their "Passover" **on the 15th day** and not on the 14th day.)

Now Luke presents some vital information. With his non-Jewish outlook and perspective Luke provides information that is helpful for people who don't have a Jewish background.

So notice:

In verse 54 Luke told us that the Holy Day Sabbath was "drawing on" ... it was less than an hour away. Therefore immediately after verse 54 the women rested by keeping the annual Sabbath. **There was no time to buy and to prepare anything else** before the Holy Day started minutes later. All the women could do is go to their residences and keep the Holy Day.

In verse 56 Luke then tells us:

And they returned, and **prepared** spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day (Greek = **to sabbaton**) according to the commandment. (Luke 23:56)

The Greek words "to sabbaton" are the accusative singular, and here they can only mean "**the Sabbath**", since we don't "rest" for a whole week. Furthermore, here the Greek word "to" is **the definite article**. So here the meaning is clear.

Now after the women had rested on the Holy Day Sabbath, **they then bought spices and ointments**, which they spent several hours "preparing" to use for embalming purposes. This was an activity that at the very least took **several hours**. There was nothing "instant" about getting such "spices and ointments" ready. They didn't have blenders or any other electric kitchen appliances for this task. It was strictly manual work.

And **then they rested again**, this time to comply with the fourth commandment in Exodus 20. So Luke referred to the annual Holy Day as "**a Sabbath**", and he referred to the weekly Sabbath two days later as "**the Sabbath** according to the commandment". This is a subtle distinction.

Luke is telling us that the Sabbath which was "drawing on" in verse 54 was not "the Sabbath according to the fourth commandment". In verse 54 it was **a different category** of Sabbath days. That is, in verse 54 it was a Holy Day.

Let's continue with Luke's account.

Now upon the first (*day*) of the week (Greek = **ton sabbaton**), very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them. (Luke 24:1)

Here the Greek words "ton sabbaton" are again the **genitive plural**, meaning either "of the Sabbaths" or "of the weeks". However, the singular form "**of the week**" is again **a mistranslation**.

Luke was not talking about "the first day of the week"! And **Luke did not use the word "day"**! It just isn't there! Once again the translators didn't translate the Greek text faithfully.

Next, of the two theoretical possibilities "of the Sabbaths" and "of the weeks" the option "**of the Sabbaths**" is **not a possibility**! The reason is that very early on the first of the seven Sabbaths towards

Pentecost would have made this **Saturday morning**. But that **is not possible**. Therefore in this verse Luke meant "of the weeks".

So what Luke really said in this verse is:

Now **upon the first of the** (seven) **weeks** (in counting towards Pentecost), very early **in the morning**, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared (on Friday, after the Thursday Holy Day), and certain *others* with them. (Luke 24:1)

With the expression "and certain others with them" Luke is indicating that he himself wasn't sure just how many women went to the sepulcher that morning.

As mentioned earlier, "the first of the weeks" had started after sunset on Saturday evening. And "very early in the morning" indicates that **this was Sunday morning around sunrise**. So in practice this amounts to being "very early on the first day of the week". But that isn't an accurate translation of the Greek text; that is only **an interpretation** of the Greek text, and in this case it is luckily a correct one.

Let's continue.

And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. (Luke 24:2)

This agrees with the information we have already seen, and it adds nothing new.

And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. (Luke 24:3)

This tells us that when Luke wrote this around 20 or more years later, Luke himself had not spoken to any of the women that went to the sepulcher that morning, because they would have given him some specific details. So Luke only gives us a very general statement here.

**At this point it will be extremely helpful to you if you already understand the things I have explained in my 2007 article "Understanding the Gospel of Luke". There I present over 70 different examples from Luke's Gospel, and compare them to the eyewitness accounts presented in the other gospels, to show that Luke occasionally (i.e. over 70 times) got his details slightly mixed up. Read the article if you doubt me here.**

Luke didn't have any personal knowledge of what had happened. Luke had to rely totally 100% on **what other people had told him**. And regarding the events around Jesus Christ's resurrection Luke had heard many different accounts from many different people. And a major difficulty Luke faced was placing all of the correct things he had been told into their correct chronological context.

One person told him about the women who had gone to the tomb. Another person told him about the women's experiences in a slightly different way. Someone else told him about Peter going to the tomb. And several other people told Luke varying accounts about what Mary Magdalene had done and experienced that morning. You follow?

Everything these people told Luke was basically correct. But none of them gave Luke the whole picture from A to Z. And Luke tried his best to figure out what fits in where. And so occasionally Luke states something in a way that is slightly at odds with an account presented by an eyewitness apostle.

I am not trying to find fault with Luke. He took on a daunting task ... trying to record the life and ministry of a man whom he, Luke, had never seen. And without any visions from God, or any specific divine guidance, Luke was able to talk to many people who were "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (see

Luke's own introduction in Luke 1:1-2). Luke was forced to rely on those eyewitness accounts. And so the information Luke presents is correct, because the people he talked to were faithful and honest and sincere. But putting it all together in one chronological account was extremely challenging.

Now coming back to our topic: **the Apostle John** was a major eyewitness of the events around Christ's resurrection. So when we see slight differences between what John says in his account, when compared to what Luke says, then we should realize that John's account is the correct one. Keep in mind that it was **to the 11 apostles, and to nobody else** (Judas had already left the room), that Jesus Christ said:

But the Comforter, *which is* the holy spirit, which the Father will send in My name, it shall teach you all things, **and bring all things to your remembrance**, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

The only ones who could "remember" something were people who had personally "experienced" something in the first place. We can't possibly remember things we have never experienced.

So the holy spirit ensured that **John** and **Peter** and **Matthew** would have had an accurate recall of all the things they had personally experienced. But neither Luke nor Mark had that benefit; both of them had to rely on what other people told them. (Mark, however, had the benefit of Peter, whom the holy spirit empowered with an accurate recall, accurately telling him about Jesus Christ's ministry.)

So let's continue with Luke's account.

And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, **two men stood by them** in shining garments (i.e. angels): (Luke 24:4)

The women are inside the tomb. Mark said that they saw one angel, and here Luke says that they saw two angels. Where did Luke get "two" angels, when Peter had told Mark that there had been "one" angel? We have already discussed this matter in the section about Mark's gospel account.

Let's continue.

And as they were afraid, and **bowed down their faces** to the earth, **they said** unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? **He is not here, but is risen**: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. (Luke 24:5-7)

Here is perhaps a part of the answer to the discrepancy in numbers. As soon as she saw one angel, one woman had immediately looked down to the ground. And if there were indeed two angels present, then that woman didn't see the other angel.

One small detail Luke has got wrong here is that Luke states that "**they** said ...". The two angels didn't both speak in chorus. One of those two angels did the speaking. The two angels didn't take turns in speaking, like some modern TV news anchors taking turns. **One angel did the speaking.**

The point is that once again we have the statement that Jesus Christ had been resurrected before the women arrived at the tomb. So there is no new information here.

So these women tell the 11 apostles what they have seen (verse 9), and once again the apostles did not believe that Jesus Christ had been resurrected.

And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and **they believed them not.** (Luke 24:11)



Now notice the next verse.

**Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulcher; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. (Luke 24:12)**

Here Luke, dependent on what others had told him, presents a very general but incomplete picture. Luke did not realize that **two apostles** actually ran to the sepulcher. In fact, **the Apostle John ran faster than the Apostle Peter**. And John in his account presents the 100% correct details for this specific incident, because John himself was involved here.

Right, now let's look at John's account.

## **JOHN'S GOSPEL**

John was writing in the 90's A.D., when all the other apostles, including Paul, had long been dead. John was an eyewitness to these events, and **John added a number of correct details** that the other writers had not included. John had been personally more involved in the key events surrounding Jesus Christ's resurrection than any other writer. So in cases of minor discrepancies John's details are certainly more accurate and correct than any of the other accounts. **John wrote his gospel to set the record straight** for a number of things regarding Jesus Christ's whole ministry ... mainly by providing **missing information**.

So let's fill in some missing information.

And after this **Joseph of Arimathaea**, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and **took the body** of Jesus. (John 19:38)

Once again we see that Joseph takes the body. But Joseph was not alone.

And there came **also Nicodemus**, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and **brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes**, about an hundred pound *weight*. (John 19:39)

**These two Jewish leaders were coordinating their efforts. In effect Nicodemus might have said to Joseph of Arimathaea something like: "Joe, you get permission from Pilate to take down the body, and I'll bring a large bag of myrrh and aloes ready for use, which I have stored at home. Then I'll meet you at your tomb". They coordinated their activities.**

Then took **they** the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. (John 19:40)

Very likely these two men became a part of the Church in Jerusalem. And the Apostle John knew both of them personally. And they would have told John how they had done this together. That is how John knew that **two men** had been involved in burying Jesus in the tomb.

Clearly **the women did not know** that Nicodemus had already brought along all the essential ingredients for a proper burial in a tomb. Nicodemus was a secret disciple, and he didn't openly associate with Jesus Christ's other disciples until after the resurrection. So the women didn't know what Nicodemus had done.

**Had they known, then they would not have bought the same spices on the Friday, and then spent hours preparing those spices for use in a burial. The spices the women prepared were not really needed because Nicodemus had already taken care of that.**

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a **garden**; and in the garden a **new sepulcher**, wherein was never man yet laid. (John 19:41)

John points out that the sepulcher which belonged to Joseph was actually **quite near** to the place of the crucifixion. They didn't have to carry the body very far. So that would not have taken much time.

There laid **they** Jesus therefore **because of the Jews' preparation** (*day*); for the sepulcher was nigh at hand. (John 19:42)

Again it is "they", a team effort. They managed to get the body into the tomb just before sunset on Wednesday evening. That was still just before the Holy Day started. So then the sun set and the First Day of Unleavened Bread started.

Let's continue.

The first (*day*) of the week (Greek = "**ton sabbaton**") comes Mary Magdalene early, **when it was yet dark**, unto the sepulcher, and sees the stone taken away from the sepulcher. (John 20:1)

Here "ton sabbaton" is once again the **genitive plural**, meaning either "of the Sabbaths" (plural) or "of the weeks" (plural). But it does not mean "of the week" (singular).

John was saying either "**the first of the (seven) Sabbaths** comes Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher ..."; or John was saying "**the first of the (seven) weeks** comes Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher ...".

Now it could not have been "the first of the Sabbaths" because then Mary would have had to come on the Sabbath. She would have had to come early Saturday morning while it was yet dark. But that is not possible.

Therefore here **the correct meaning** is "the first of the (seven) weeks", while it was yet dark. This means that she came **Sunday morning before sunrise**. At that point the stone had already been rolled away.

John had undoubtedly talked personally with Mary Magdalene ... and Mary had told John that she had in fact gotten to the tomb before it got light. So that's what John recorded.

Notice that John has deliberately **omitted references to the other women** that were involved. Why has John omitted that? John has omitted all references to the other women in these events because **their involvement in those events didn't add anything to the story**, as far as John was concerned. John has **skipped over** the women resting on the Thursday Holy Day, and about buying and preparing spices on the Friday, and then resting for the weekly Sabbath.

What the other writers had already mentioned was sufficient, as far as John was concerned. Likewise, John doesn't mention either the one or the two angels the women had seen. That too had already been covered.

Rather, what John wanted to do is present in a correct way information that the other writers had not yet presented. So let's continue.

Then **she runs**, and comes to **Simon Peter**, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved (i.e. **John** himself), and says unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him. (John 20:2)

So Mary Magdalene ran to Peter and John, who were together. John is writing this based on his own personal experiences. **John is here 100% accurate in what he wrote.** He was one of the two apostles to whom Mary had run.

Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together: and **the other disciple did outrun Peter**, and came first to the sepulcher. (John 20:3-4)

Just for the record, John points out that he actually got to the tomb first. He was a faster runner than Peter. As we have already seen, **Luke didn't know** that John had run with Peter.

And he stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. (John 20:5)

So John stooped down, because the opening was not very high, and he looked into the tomb. But he deferred to Peter, and waited for Peter to go in first. John was acknowledging that Jesus Christ had appointed Peter as the leader at that time, and so John deferred to Peter.

Then comes Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and sees the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. (John 20:6-7)

Only the person who had run with Peter would have known all these details. So without question **John was the man who ran with Peter.** John lets Peter take in the whole scene, before John himself then also entered the tomb.

Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, **and believed.** (John 20:8)

John is telling us that **none of the apostles had believed** that Jesus Christ would be resurrected. He is saying that from the moment that he himself walked into the empty tomb, without having seen any angels in the process, **from that moment forward he, John, believed that Jesus Christ had indeed been resurrected!** John is speaking for himself, not for Peter or for anyone else.

John then by way of explanation adds:

For as yet **they knew not** the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. (John 20:9)

Here is something we need to understand.

It's not that they weren't familiar with the Scriptures that apply to Christ's resurrection, and it is not that Jesus Christ hadn't told them **a dozen times or more** that He would be resurrected by God the Father. It was just a case that **they had never understood** the things Christ had said to them, or the Scriptures they had read at some point in the past. And that was the case **even though they were eager students** of Jesus Christ, even though they had already been used to heal the sick and to cast out demons. In other words, **they didn't have an attitude problem**, because they were willing, eager students. **But they still hadn't gotten some things!**

We need to understand that exactly the same thing can happen to us, and **has undoubtedly happened to each one of us many times in the past** ... that we were told something in the plainest of terms, but

we still didn't understand it.

There is a powerful lesson for us in John 20:9.

Let me give you **another example** of the apostles "not really getting it". During His last Passover, another highly charged emotional occasion, Jesus Christ had briefly told them to in future include the foot-washing in their Passover observances. But **none of them really "got it"**. It was only about 60 years later, when John was writing his gospel account, that John correctly recalled the instruction "I have given you an example, that **you should do as I have done to you**" (see John 13:15).

So the early NT Church didn't include the foot-washing because they didn't know anything about it. And when Jesus Christ instructed the Apostle Paul in Arabia, Christ didn't tell Paul about the foot-washing, and that is why Paul said nothing about the foot-washing when Paul said: "for I have received of the Lord **that which also I delivered unto you ...**" (See 1 Corinthians 11:23). Paul didn't know about any "foot-washing", and none of the first three gospels mention it. That's because apart from John none of the original apostles ever really "got it" as far as the foot-washing is concerned. And John himself only "got it" very late in his life.

So we need to go easy on people around us, when sometimes they just "don't get it", even though our instructions or explanations are so clear. We should then keep in mind that we ourselves in other situations have also been like that. And even during the millennium there will be people who will just "not get it". Some people not really "getting it", when it comes to the knowledge of God, is one of the under-discussed features of human nature.

And John 20:9 is an example of this.

Let's continue with the next verse.

Then **the disciples went away again unto their own home**. (John 20:10)

**That's the correct sequence! That's how it happened that Sunday morning. John is the only writer who experienced these things personally. John's sequence of events is correct, though also incomplete. John has deliberately left out a number of things the other writers have mentioned.**

But here is the point:

In any slight conflict regarding certain details, John's account doesn't have to fit in with the others, even if two or three of them agree. No, when there are some discrepancies with some of the details, then **the other accounts must fit in with John's account**, because John was the only writer who experienced these things personally. And at the end of his life, after all the other writers had died, he was setting the record straight.

So let's continue.

But **Mary** stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she **stooped down, and looked** into the sepulcher, (John 20:11)

When Peter and John had run to the sepulcher, Mary had also run after them. She was a bit slower and got there a little after Peter and John had already been inside the tomb. So when Peter and John then left, Mary stayed behind.

Minutes earlier John himself had still been there, and John was the first one to believe that Jesus Christ had indeed been resurrected. But now John has left with Peter, and Mary is all alone, unable to stop weeping. She's been weeping for over three days.

**Now we get the correct sequence regarding what really happened that morning. John records what Mary later told him personally. John has presented this sequence of events to set the record straight, because there were many accounts floating around in the early Church with slightly varying details here and there. John's sequence is the authoritative one.**

And **sees two angels** in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. (John 20:12)

So Mary is bending down to look into the tomb; i.e. she is looking directly at the back wall of the tomb. And she sees two angels. **This is quite likely the source** for Luke's statement regarding "two angels" in Luke 24:4. Luke might not have understood the exact context in which one woman (not two or more) had seen two angels. John, who had been there minutes earlier, understood this situation correctly.

So **why were there two angels in the tomb**, when minutes earlier neither Peter nor John had seen any angels? Why? Mary was so emotionally worked up and so distraught that she was very likely **very close to a total nervous breakdown**. She had in her mind dealt with this monumental grief for over three full days already, and she couldn't stop crying.

**So the angels appeared in an effort to encourage Mary!**

And they say unto her, Woman, why do you weep? She says unto them, **Because they have taken away my Lord**, and I know not where they have laid Him. (John 20:13)

She still does not believe that Jesus Christ has been resurrected. And nothing, short of finding the body, is going to stop her uncontrollable despair and hopelessness. Seeing these angels had not encouraged her one bit.

**It was at that point that the resurrected Jesus Christ decided to reveal Himself to Mary.**

Nothing else was going to console Mary. It wasn't a matter of favoritism that Christ appeared to Mary. It was a case of: this was the only way to stop this woman from having a total breakdown. I believe that this was a spontaneous decision by Jesus Christ, because it was surely not a part of the plan that **any human being** would see Christ before He had ascended to God the Father. As far as human beings are concerned: **seeing the resurrected Jesus Christ was supposed to only happen after God the Father had been reunited with Jesus Christ.**

Recall that Mary had previously been demon-possessed. And she had put that completely behind her. **But if she ever had a total nervous breakdown**, she might once again become very susceptible to demon possession. When we human beings experience extreme emotional turmoil, then Satan will always exploit that. **Very emotional people are easier for Satan to manipulate.**

I believe that Jesus Christ decided spontaneously to very briefly appear to Mary Magdalene to help Mary to hold it together. Mary was in great danger of possibly losing control, in which case demons would once again have come into her. Mary's eternal destiny was at stake.

So notice the next verse.

And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and **knew not that it**

**was Jesus.** (John 20:14)

Apparently there was a specific timetable for when after His resurrection Jesus Christ would appear before God the Father. And that timetable had not yet been met.

The most likely explanation is that since the wave-sheaf represented the sacrifice of Jesus Christ being accepted by God the Father, and since that wave-sheaf was **cut and then waved only some time after sunrise**, this was to signify that God the Father would only accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at some time after sunrise in Jerusalem, on a Sunday morning. But this is only my guess.

So notice:

Jesus said unto her, Woman, why do you weep? whom do you seek? She, supposing him to be the gardener, said unto him, Sir, if you have borne Him hence, tell me where you have laid Him, **and I will take Him away.** (John 20:15)

**Just what was she going to do with the body? Put it back into the sepulcher? Or put it somewhere else? She would not even have been able to carry the body on her own. Mary's statement here shows she was not thinking rationally, and, as I have said already, in danger of a total breakdown. And as can be seen from her statement, seeing the two angels hadn't done anything at all for her.**

Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and said unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. (John 20:16)

**Finally she got it from the way Jesus Christ spoke her name. Now she would no longer be looking for a body to embalm. Now she understood that Jesus Christ had indeed been resurrected. Now she could finally calm down and get a hold on her feelings and her emotions, knowing that Jesus Christ was alive again.**

Jesus said unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but **go to My brethren, and say unto them**, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God. (John 20:17)

The whole appearance lasted perhaps ten seconds. Jesus Christ gave her something to do. And then Christ disappeared instantly. And Mary told the Apostle John, amongst others, exactly what had happened ... and John has recorded the correct and accurate account. And Mary remained strong and did not have a breakdown.

**Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.** (John 20:18)

All that the Apostle Peter told Mark in this regard was what Mark recorded in 16:9, a statement we have already examined.

Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, **out of whom He had cast seven devils.** (Mark 16:9)

That last statement about Mary Magdalene probably wasn't needed. It really would have been okay for Mark to leave that out. I seem to recall something somewhere about "blotting out the past" and a guilty and embarrassing past being removed from us (e.g. Isaiah 1:18-19).

And that's the end of the discussion regarding what happened that Sunday morning. The next verse is

about that Sunday evening when Christ appeared to them in a closed room (see John 20:19).

Right, that covers all the statements in all four gospels regarding the events around Jesus Christ's resurrection. Let's see if we can put it all together.

## **COMBINING THE FOUR ACCOUNTS**

All four gospel writers start with Joseph of Arimathaea obtaining the body from Pilate shortly after Jesus Christ had died.

**Matthew and John then skip over the next three days (i.e. they say nothing about the Thursday, Friday and Saturday) and they then continue the account with early on Sunday morning.**

**Mark and Luke have some brief statements before also getting to early Sunday morning.**

Of the four writers, **John was the only eyewitness** to some of the events on that Sunday morning. John was setting the record straight, and his sequence of events is the correct one.

**The time-line was as follows:**

- 1) **Wednesday late afternoon:** Joseph receives permission from Pilate to take down the body. This is recorded in Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42. There was still time **before sunset** for Joseph to "**buy**" some "fine linen". See Mark 15:46.
- 2) **Only John** records that Nicodemus helped Joseph with taking the body to Joseph's new tomb. **Nicodemus** was the one who provided the spices of myrrh and aloes for the embalming. See John 19:39. The women, who after this still bought and prepared spices, did not know that Nicodemus had already provided these spices.
- 3) **Wednesday evening at sunset:** These two men have placed the body in the tomb, and they roll the big stone in front of the opening, and they leave. See Matthew 27:60; Mark 15:46.
- 4) **Mary Magdalene** and "**the other Mary**" had **watched** the two men burying the body in the new tomb. They wanted to be sure that they would find that tomb a few days later, intending then to embalm the body themselves. See Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55.
- 5) Everybody goes home to observe the annual Sabbath (First Day of UB), which had started at sunset.
- 6) **Thursday:** The whole of Thursday is a **Holy Day**. On that Thursday Holy Day the priests and the Pharisees demanded that Pilate would place a guard in front of the tomb. Pilate agrees. See Matthew 27:62-66. This was **the Sabbath that was past** in Mark 16:1.
- 6) **Friday morning: Three women** (two Marys and Salome) "**bought sweet spices**", and they spent several hours preparing these spices for use in embalming. See Mark 16:1. They "**prepared** spices and ointments". See Luke 23:56.
- 7) **Saturday:** The women "rested according to the commandment". See Luke 23:56.
- 8) **Saturday sunset: Jesus Christ** is resurrected and **instantly leaves** the tomb. God punctuated Christ's resurrection with **an earthquake**. An angel rolled the stone away from the tomb's opening. See

Matthew 28:2. The **Roman guards** see the angel and are paralyzed with fear. See Matthew 28:4.

9) **Saturday evening: None of the women went to the tomb on Saturday evening!** They only went to the tomb **very early on Sunday morning**. On Saturday evening it would have been pitch-black inside the tomb, and they would not have seen anything, and they would not have been able to do any embalming. The women all knew this, and they had planned to all go to the tomb very early on Sunday morning. Besides, the Roman guards would not have given them any access to the tomb on Saturday evening.

10) **Sunday morning:** All the accounts agree that the women came to the tomb on Sunday morning.

11) First **the two Marys** and **Salome** go to the tomb. They see that the stone has been rolled away. When they go inside the tomb, they see an angel who tells them that "**He is risen**".

12) The women then flee and initially they don't say anything to anyone.

13) Then Mary Magdalene tells Peter and John that the tomb is empty.

14) Peter and John run to the tomb and check it out for themselves. They don't see any angels.

15) Meanwhile Mary Magdalene has also arrived back at the tomb. When Peter and John leave, she stays behind.

16) Then she sees first two angels, and then very briefly **the resurrected Jesus Christ**, who had not yet returned to God the Father in heaven.

17) At some undefined point **after that** Jesus Christ also appeared to the women who "held Him by the feet". Between these last two events Jesus Christ had gone to the Father's throne in heaven, and then returned.

18) After that Jesus Christ appeared to various people over a period of about 40 days, before returning to God the Father in heaven, awaiting the time for His "Second Coming". At one occasion, which is not recorded anywhere in the gospels, Jesus Christ was seen by **more than "500 brethren"** (see 1 Corinthians 15:6).

And that's how the four gospel accounts tie together.

Frank W Nelte