
Lesson 55

The Resurrection

The Scripture Lesson

Matthew 28:1-6

Because of the lateness of the hour on Friday, and because Saturday was their Sabbath, the women had to wait till Sunday to anoint Jesus' body. Sunday morning found them very early on their way — *while it was yet dark*. They were hurried along by their love for Jesus, of course; but, in addition, they must have believed that Jesus would be fast decaying in the grave, and that very soon it would be difficult, if not impossible, for them to anoint His body.

The women, you see, did not doubt for a minute that Jesus' body was still lying dead in the grave. Like the disciples, they had heard Jesus tell of His death and resurrection, but they were never able to understand it — so they simply put it out of their minds. They forgot His word. They came to the tomb on Sunday morning in their *unbelief*. That was not good. But God used even their unbelief for their good, for at the tomb the women were the first to learn of Jesus' glorious resurrection.

It was on their way to the tomb that they began to wonder for the first time how they would be able to move the big stone from the entrance. But then, as they came nearer to the grave, they could see that things were not the same as when they

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had left the garden on Friday. Something had happened. The stone was no longer covering the opening to the tomb but was lying flat on the ground, as if someone had thrown it aside. What could that mean? To their minds it could mean only one thing, and that was that the body of their Lord had been stolen by the enemy.

Without even waiting to look into the sepulcher, Mary Magdalene hurried away to bring the sad story to the disciples. The other women, meanwhile, continued on their way to the tomb to see if they could learn more about what had happened in the garden.

If the soldiers had still been there, they could have told the women something of what had happened. But they were not. Early that morning there had been an earthquake. And an angel, whose face was as bright as lightning and whose clothing was as white as snow, came down from heaven and threw aside the huge stone and sat upon it. The terrified soldiers fell to the ground as if they were dead men. And when their strength returned, they got up and fled from the garden.

When the women arrived, therefore, the soldiers were gone and the stone was rolled away. The women proceeded to look into the tomb, and they saw that, as they had expected, the body of Jesus was gone. They must have wondered,

though, why the linen clothes were still there.

While they thought on these things, two angels appeared to them in the sepulcher to tell them about the wonder of the resurrection. The angels told them that they need not be afraid. They should rather rejoice. Why? “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.” And then the angels invited them to look again at the place where the Lord had lain. The body truly was gone. But the linen clothes lay exactly as they were when the body was yet in them. He had *passed right through them!* Christ had risen indeed!

The Wonder of the Grave Clothes

Mark 16:8, 9; John 20:2-10

The wonderful message of the angel to the women was not meant to be for them alone. They must, the angel said, run and tell Jesus’ disciples — and Peter. To the women it must have seemed a bit strange that they were directed to tell the disciples *and Peter*. Was not Peter one of the disciples?

Yes, Peter was one of the Eleven — and that is exactly why Jesus directed the angel to make special note of Peter. When Peter hears this word from the women, he will know what the angel meant. He will be reminded of the fact that he had denied his Lord. He had sworn that he was *not* one of Jesus’ disciples. It will hurt Peter to be reminded of his shameful denial. But the angel’s words will also bring comfort. For they meant that the Lord had *remembered* him. The Lord still *loved* him. Tell *Peter* that I have risen.

The message from the women was not the first to reach Peter on that Resurrection morning. Mary Magdalene, remember, had headed for Jerusalem to tell the disciples that the body of Jesus had been *stolen*. She found Peter and John together, and to them she made her report. The news troubled the two disciples, of course, and they set out on a run to the garden, to see if they could learn what had happened there.

John ran faster than Peter. He therefore arrived first at the tomb, and found it even as Mary had said — the stone was lying flat on the ground, and, as John could see when he looked into the

sepulcher, the body was indeed gone.

But there was something peculiar about it all. The body was gone, but the grave clothes were still there. Who, John wondered, would ever think of removing the linen clothes before stealing the body? John began to doubt Mary’s story. Then Peter came running up, and he went directly into the sepulcher, with John following. Both of them stared at the grave clothes. The grave clothes, you will remember, were strips of linen cloth wound around the body. The body could be removed only by unwinding the strips of cloth or by cutting through them. They had obviously not been cut. And it would have been all but impossible for someone to unwind the strips, take out the body, and then somehow rewind the strips into the same shape they held when they were yet around the body of Jesus. What could have happened?

There could be only one answer. A miracle had taken place. But it was not yet clear what that miracle was. Did God for some reason remove the body? Or did Jesus arise by passing right through the grave clothes? And if He did, what had happened to His body to make it possible for Him to do that?

Peter left the sepulcher, wondering. He just could not figure it out. John simply believed. He remembered, finally, what Jesus had said, and he now believed that Christ had actually risen from the dead. Both men, however, still needed to see Jesus, and to have Him help them understand the resurrection.

Memory Work

Group A

Matthew 28:5, 6 “And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

Group B

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

ACTIVITIES

This paper has been prepared in the hope that it will be used by students of all ages. The activities are designed so that the oldest will be challenged, and the youngest will find some of it within reach. Parents should encourage their children to attempt only what they can handle without frustration. For some that will be much, for others little.

DO YOU AGREE?

If you do, write Yes; if you do not, write No.

- ___ 1. The women were surprised, when they reached Joseph's garden, to find soldiers there guarding the tomb.
- ___ 2. Seeing the great stone lying flat on the ground, the women at once concluded that Jesus' enemies had come and stolen the body.
- ___ 3. Mary Magdalene therefore hurried to Jerusalem to report this crime to the chief priests.
- ___ 4. The rest of the women entered the sepulcher and found that the body of Jesus was indeed gone.
- ___ 5. As the women pondered this sad development, two angels appeared to them in the form of men in shining garments.
- ___ 6. The angels admonished the women for seeking the living One among the dead.
- ___ 7. To help their faith in so astounding a miracle, the angels invited the women to see the place where the Lord had lain.
- ___ 8. Then the angels told the women to hurry and tell the disciples, but not Peter.
- ___ 9. Mary Magdalene, however, had by this time reached the city and had told Peter and John about the resurrection.
- ___ 10. On entering the sepulcher, Peter and John also saw the angels that had appeared to the women.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER READERS

1. When did the women go to the sepulcher? Why did they go so early in the morning?
2. As the women came near to the sepulcher, they could see that the stone that had before covered the opening of the sepulcher had been thrown aside. What did they think had happened? Which one of the

women left at once to bring this news to the disciples?

3. What was it that had frightened the soldiers who were guarding the tomb? What did the soldiers do?
4. Going into the open sepulcher, the women saw that the body of Jesus was indeed gone, as they had expected. How did they learn what had really happened to the body of Jesus?
5. The angel told the women to go and tell Jesus' disciples and Peter. When Peter heard those words from the women, he must have felt very ashamed. Do you understand, though, how the words "and Peter" were also a great comfort to him?
6. The first news to reach Peter and John came from Mary Magdalene. What did they do after they heard Mary's story?
7. When Peter and John went into the sepulcher, what did they see that convinced them that no one had stolen the body of Jesus?

COMPLETING SENTENCES

1. Early on Sunday morning, while it was yet _____ (John 20:1), a group of women set out for the garden tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. Among them was Mary _____, Mary the mother of _____, and _____ (Mark 16:1). Luke names also _____, and adds that _____ women were with them (Luke 24:10). They had before bought _____ spices in order that they might _____ the body of Jesus just as soon as they could do so on Sunday morning. They reached the sepulcher at the _____ of the sun — hurried along partly because of their great devotion to Jesus, and partly because, assuming as they did that the body was decaying, further delay might make it impossible to anoint the body (Mark 16:1, 2).

2. It was unbelief that led the women to make plans for the anointing of Jesus' body. It was unbelief, too, that later brought Peter and John to the tomb to check out the report of Mary Magdalene. For Jesus had earlier given clear instruction concerning His resurrection. To the disciples He had said plainly that in Jerusalem He would be delivered unto the _____, who would put him to _____, and that on the _____ day He would _____ again (Luke 18:31-33). There can be no doubt that the women also knew of that instruction of Jesus; for when the angel at the tomb reminded them of it, they _____. His words (Luke 24:6-8). Their very slowness to believe, however, was used by God to provide more witnesses to the resurrection. The guards were persuaded of the resurrection, of course, after feeling the earthquake and seeing the angel. The unbelieving Jews would have been delighted if the only evidence of a resurrection was what the guards experienced. But God saw to it that there were many others who could attest to it — including the women and the two disciples who themselves needed to see the evidence of the empty tomb and the wonder of the grave clothes in order to believe. So important is the doctrine of the resurrection that Paul could later write, “And if Christ be not _____, then is our preaching _____, and your _____ is also vain.... Ye are yet in your _____” (I Cor. 15:14-17). Because of its central importance in the good news of salvation in Christ, and because wicked unbelief always scoffs at the resurrection, God so ordered events that the resurrection of Jesus was established beyond any doubt as a historical fact.

3. On the way to the tomb, the women remembered that heavy stone. They said among themselves, Who shall _____ away the _____ from the _____ of the sepulcher? But as they neared the sepulcher they saw that the stone was _____ away (Mark 16:3, 4). The idea seems to be, not that the stone was rolled aside in its groove, but rather thrown aside, so that it was lying now flat on the

ground. The women at once concluded that the Jews had desecrated the grave and stolen the body. Not waiting to investigate any further, Mary _____ ran quickly into the city to report this unhappy turn of events to John and _____. They have taken away the _____ out of the _____, she said, and we know not where they have _____ Him (John 20:1, 2).

4. Mary was mistaken. For Jesus' enemies had had nothing to do with the rolling away of the stone. Earlier on that Sunday morning there had in fact been a great _____. At the same time an _____ of the Lord descended from _____ and _____ back the stone from the door (Matt. 28:2). It may be that it was at that very moment (that is, at the moment of the earthquake) that the Lord of life broke the bands of death. The angel then threw aside the stone, not because the resurrected Christ needed an open door, but in order thus to worship the glorious Lord as He emerged victorious over death and the grave.

5. The sentries did not witness the resurrection. But they felt the quaking of the earth, and they saw what the angel did to that great stone. And they saw the angel sit on the stone, with his countenance like _____, and his _____ as white as snow. So terrified were the keepers that, for _____ of him, they did _____, and become as _____ men (Matt. 28:3, 4). Apparently, however, they recovered sufficiently to flee with their report to the _____ (Matt. 28:11).

6. When the women arrived the guard was gone and the garden quiet. So, after Mary Magdalene left to inform the men, the rest of the women proceeded to the open grave to investigate the matter more closely. After surveying the quiet scene they _____ the tomb and _____ not the body of Jesus. Since they had already assumed that the body was stolen, they were not surprised by the empty grave. But they must have noticed that the linen clothes had been left behind. They were there-

fore much _____ thereabout. It was at that point that two men (angels) stood by them in _____ garments (Luke 24:3, 4).

7. The women were, of course, _____ (Mark 16:5). But the _____ said to them, “Fear not _____; for I know that ye _____ Jesus, which was _____” (Matt. 28:5). The angel then went on to admonish them: “Why seek ye the _____ among the _____?” Spices, they carried, to anoint a body that was no longer in the grave. “He is not _____,” the angel continued, “for He has _____” (Luke 24:5, 6).

8. So little were the women prepared for the resurrection that they were simply dumbfounded at the message of the angel. The angel would therefore help them, by drawing their attention to what could both serve as *evidence* of the resurrection, and give the women some understanding of the *nature* of the resurrection. “Come,” he said, “see the _____ where the Lord _____” (Matt. 28:6). Proof there was, before their very eyes, that Jesus’ body had passed right through the grave clothes.

9. Besides, the angel continued, there were the words of Jesus Himself. “_____ how he spake unto you when he was yet in _____, saying, The Son of man must ... be _____, and the _____ day _____ again.” So clear! But, so far was that from their idea of what the Messiah was to be, that they had simply dismissed Jesus’ words as being somehow figurative. Now, however, they _____ Jesus’ words, and probably wondered how they could have let those words of their beloved Master go right past them (Luke 24:7, 8).

10. But now they have work to do. “Go _____ and tell his _____ that he is risen from the dead” (Matt. 28:7). “His disciples,” the angel said, “and _____” (Mark 16:7). Knowing nothing about Peter’s denial of Jesus, the women probably paid little attention to

that singling out of Peter. But those words of the angel, when brought by the women to the Eleven, must have been no little comfort to the distressed, miserable Peter. Jesus remembered him! Though Peter had disowned his Master, the Lord had not disowned him. What a comfort to Peter ... and to every contrite sinner!

11. “Lo, I have _____ you,” concluded the angel, thus affirming the truth of his words (Matt. 28:7). And the women forthwith _____ from the sepulcher, for they _____ and were _____ (Mark 16:8). Afraid, they were, because of their meeting with the angels; and amazed because of the astounding message of those angels. At the same time, they were filled with great _____ (Matt. 28:8). So, though they were hardly prepared to say _____ to any (other) man (Mark 16:8), they could hardly wait to bring the wonderful news to the grieving disciples.

12. Mary Magdalene, meanwhile, had reached the city and found Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus _____, and told them, “They have taken _____ the Lord out of the _____, and we _____ not where they have _____ him” (John 20:2).

13. The confused disciples were probably of a mind to believe Mary’s tale of a desecration of the grave, and they set out at once to investigate this new development. They ran both together at first, but then John did _____ Peter and came _____ to the sepulcher. John however did not enter the sepulcher, but, _____ down to get a view of the interior, he was able to see the linen _____ lying (John 20:3-5).

14. The fact that the linen clothes were there at all must have led John to doubt Mary’s story. But it was necessary to take a closer look. Peter, on his arrival a moment later, went directly into the _____ and saw the linen clothes _____, and the _____ lying still separate from the rest, just as it had been when it was yet

wrapped about Jesus' _____ (John 20:6, 7).

15. John followed Peter into the sepulcher. It was not at all necessary for the wonder of the grave clothes to be *explained* to the two disciples. They could see at a glance that it would have been *impossible* for anyone to have removed the body and then returned those grave clothes to their former position with such precision. Jesus' body had passed through the grave clothes. Peter departed, _____ in himself at that which was come to pass (Luke 24:12). John, on the other hand, when he saw the wonder of the grave clothes, _____ (John 20:8).

16. The awakening of faith came, for John, only in the way of *visual proof* of the resurrection. But, though he believed, he did not yet understand — for, says John, “as yet they knew not the _____, that he must rise from the dead” (John 20:9). Jesus' death and resurrection made still no *sense* to the disciples. They needed to be enlightened by Christ Himself.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The followers of Jesus were convinced, after He died, that the cause in which they had put their hope was lost. What do you think, did they conclude that He was not the Messiah yet after all?
2. Unbelievers have always ridiculed the record of His resurrection. It happened, too, that the followers of Jesus were themselves not quick to believe. Do you see how that very slowness to believe was used by God to establish the resurrection as a historical fact beyond any doubt?
3. In the tomb there was evidence of the resurrection — the grave clothes. How does that evidence show also that Jesus did not need to have the stone rolled away in order to get out of the sepulcher? What do you think, was Jesus already gone when the angel threw open the tomb?
4. Matthew tells us that the keepers “became as dead men” (Matt. 28:4). What, do you suppose, does that mean? The angel later told the women not to be afraid. Why did he not give the same assurance to these men?

5. The message of the angel, “He is not here, for he is risen,” must have been so astounding that the women found it well nigh incomprehensible. It was apparently to help their faith that the angel added, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matt. 28:6). The women had already seen that place. How, do you suppose, would it help them to look again?

6. To the women, the angel said, “Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee” (Luke 24:6). Try to imagine yourself in the place of those women. How would you feel, standing there with spices in your hands?

7. Jesus Himself must have instructed the angels concerning the content of their message to the women. Why would He tell them to tell the women to go and tell the disciples *and Peter* (Mark 16:7)? Do you see how the comfort intended in those last two words goes far beyond Peter? ... and how those two words really proclaim the victory of the cross?

8. The women were at that moment in possession of the greatest news in the world. We read, however, in Mark 16:8, that on their way to tell the Eleven they did not say “any thing to any man.” After reading that verse, do you have some idea why they kept this news to themselves?

9. What do you think, when Mary Magdalene came with her story to Peter and John, were the two disciples of a mind to *believe* her? Why would John, in peering first into the tomb, begin immediately to doubt Mary's conclusion that the grave had been desecrated by Jesus' enemies?

10. In describing the position of the grave clothes, John makes a point of saying that the napkin was “wrapped together in a place by itself.” From that description, do you understand where the napkin lay?

11. Try now to imagine yourself in the place of those two men. You would, of course, see clearly that Jesus' body had simply passed through the grave clothes. But, knowing nothing beyond that, what questions would you still have in your mind about what really happened there?

12. John says, concerning his own response to seeing the grave clothes, that he “believed.” How was that “belief” much like that of Thomas — who later declared that he would believe only if he himself touched the risen Lord (see John 20:24, 25)?