

EASTER 2021 – PART E

[Mark 16:1-14](#)

Reading: [Matthew 28:1-15](#), [Luke 24:1-43](#), [John 20:1-25](#)

This morning we come to the last part of this divine drama that God has set before us, and I have purposefully chosen not to approach this part of the story in a theological way, but simply to recall the story itself. If I was to actually teach on the resurrection, it could take months to cover all that it entails, and even then I could never do it justice.

In the last four weeks we have been with Jesus as He entered Jerusalem, as He spent time with the disciples in the Upper Room, and as He journeyed and stayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and profusely sweat drops of blood in a kind of divine agony unprecedented to us. We watched Him as He was betrayed by Judas and arrested by a huge mob of nearly 1000 persons and then unmercifully dragged through six separate trials by both Jews and Gentiles. We witnessed the ludicrous and outrageous charges against Him and how the Jewish Sanhedrin had their way with Pilate. We watched as He was beaten, spit upon, scourged and then led out to Calvary. We witnessed the inhumane brutality as He was crucified. We saw His Father forsake Him for three hours while the Father's divine wrath for our sin was placed on His Son. We beheld the concern that both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had for the body of Jesus and how they placed Him in the tomb of Joseph and wrapped Him in linen cloths and aromatic spices. We saw the hypocrisy of the Sanhedrin and their request for a guard at the tomb and how they thought everything was finally going to work out as they had planned.

So, now it is Sunday morning in the drama and we find ourselves early on that morning witnessing the events at the burial site. There are three primary players in this part of the drama – the soldiers who fled, the angels who frightened them, and the women who came to anoint the body of Jesus. The story also mentions Peter, John, and some other women who had been following and ministering to Jesus. However, what strikes me more than anything else about everything that happened on that Sunday morning is that **no one actually believed Jesus when He said that He was going to be raised from the dead**. The Sanhedrin thought that the disciples would somehow devise a plan to steal His body from the tomb, so they asked for the Roman guard. The soldiers were strong and well trained, and they really had no time for this Galilean dreamer. The women, well, they were there to anoint the body one last time and bury all of their hopes there as well.

What we clearly know is that everything that Jesus had told them would happen had actually happened, but literally **no one believed that He would actually be resurrected**. In fact, when they finally did see the angel at the grave and when Jesus revealed Himself to them, I think it would be more than fair to say that they were in a state of shock. [Mark 16:5](#) says that “**they were alarmed**” which means that they were astonished from the personal terror they felt of not understanding anything that was happening to them. The NASB says “**they were amazed**”. I bet they were. Listen to [Mark 16:8](#) and how they actually left the tomb,

Mk 16:8 (NKJV) So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The word “**fled**” is the Greek word “*pheugo*” from where we get our English word “fugitive. It means that because of fear that they were literally “running” to get away. This was no casual “*Well, let’s go back and tell everyone*” – not at all. This was “*Let’s get out of here!*” When it says that that they were “**afraid**”, it literally means that they were terrified, scared to death, and trembling from the fear that they were experiencing.

These women are very interesting to me simply because the testimony of all of the gospels is that they had been following Jesus for at least two years and ministering to Him in different ways. They were there at the crucifixion and they had watched the body being taken down and moved to Joseph’s tomb. This is was not just someone they had met somewhere and felt sorry for – not at all. This was the One in whom they had placed their hope. They believed that He was the Messiah, their Savior. They had worshipped Him, but now all of that seems very distant. You can just imagine how heart-broken these women actually were. They were agonizing because they had believed that Jesus was the One who would save them, but now there must have been a thousand questions haunting them. “*Was this really the Messiah? Why did He have to die? We thought He was God and that He would save us.*” Even before seeing the angel, I think it would be safe to say that they were afraid, confused, and even beginning to doubt much of what they had experienced. Death just has a way of making everything seem so final, so decisive, so irrevocable – and they were feeling that effect personally.

The first person at the tomb very early Sunday morning was Mary Magdalene out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons. Obviously, her life had been greatly impacted by what Jesus had done for her, and she had been incredibly faithful to Him and loved Him dearly. [John 20:1-2](#) says,

Jn 20:1 (NKJV) Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

Apparently Mary Magdalene did not actually go into the tomb because when she saw that the stone had been removed, it says that she ran back to tell both Peter and John. In her mind, someone had stolen the body of Jesus. Even as close as she was to Christ, it never dawned on her that He had actually been resurrected. She probably had seen others raised from the dead, but for her it was an impossibility for a dead man to raise himself. As she is leaving, the other women arrive at the tomb and actually enter into the tomb to see what is in there. [Mark 16:3-6](#) tells us what happened,

Mk 16:3 (NKJV) And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” ⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away-- for it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶ But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.

When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary arrived at the tomb, they had to be surprised at what was going on with the Roman guard that was there to secure the grave and to keep anyone from stealing the body. So, what happened to these very brave sixteen men? Well, [Matthew 28:1-7](#) tells us,

Mt 28:1 (NKJV) **Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³ His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷ And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."**

Suddenly there was a great earthquake and the soldiers see this angel whose face looked “**like lightning**” and who had “**clothing as white as snow**”. It says that the soldiers were so afraid of what they were seeing that they literally “**became like dead men**”. They may have fainted or gone into some kind of temporary coma, but whatever it was, it scared these men to death, and when they awoke it was clear to them that no one was in the tomb – so they fled. The very simple message of every one of the four gospel accounts is to verify the one reality that the tomb was empty except for the grave clothes and that Jesus was not there. I know that some skeptic is going to make the statement that “*Well, the disciples actually came and stole the body.*” Really? Why would they want a dead body, and what would they do with it if they had it? That was the last thing that they wanted – a dead body.

Do you know what the problem is at this point in the story? **The problem is that we have a real resurrection, and no one knows what to do with it!** They have not fully realized it yet, but this changes everything. This is great. This is much more than just being profound. Think about it for a minute. The greatest event in the history of planet earth and everyone was totally confused. The soldiers were totally confused. The Sanhedrin were totally confused when the soldiers told them what happened. The women were totally confused. Peter and John were totally confused. Even the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were totally confused. The only ones in the story who were not confused were the two angels who were at the tomb telling everyone what had happened. Can you imagine what it would have been like to have been having a conversation with these two blazing angels? In my mind, the angels really had a very simple message – “*Jesus is not here. He has risen from the dead. Since He told you this would happen, what is it about this that you do not understand? Do we need to repeat it to you?*” So, in [Mark 16:7](#), the angels tell the women to go back and give the disciples a specific message.

Mk 16:7 (NKJV) **But go, tell His disciples--and Peter--that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.**

So, when did Jesus tell them to go to Galilee? It is in [Mark 14:28](#).

Mk 14:28 (NKJV) **"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."**

Now, without going into any further detail, please appreciate that none of them ever went to Galilee after hearing the news. To the contrary, they were sitting around trying to make sense of everything. In fact, in [Mark 16:11](#) it says that when Mary Magdalene told the disciples what she had seen and been told that they refused to believe her.

Mk 16:11 (NKJV) And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

What else we know is that on that Sunday evening, the day of the resurrection, that Jesus appeared to them. Listen to how this transpired in [Luke 24:36-43](#). This is that resurrection Sunday evening.

Lk 24:36 (NKJV) Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." ³⁷ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. ³⁸ And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹ But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" ⁴² So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. ⁴³ And He took *it* and ate in their presence.

[Mark 16:14](#) actually adds some more serious detail about what Jesus said to them during this time.

Mk 16:14 (NKJV) Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

I read that and I find it hard to criticize these disciples too much simply because I know that in my own personal life that I have failed many times to truly believe the Word of God and my heart has become hard and even callous to God's glorious truths for my life. After this encounter with Jesus on that Sunday evening, they remained in Jerusalem for at least eight more days, and even then, Thomas was still unwilling to believe since he had not actually seen Jesus the first time as the other disciples had.

In terms of what is actually recorded, the details of the resurrection provide the least amount of information of the four previous segments that we have studied. Mark basically has eleven verses, Matthew has ten verses, Luke has twelve verses, and John has the most – eighteen verses. Listen, we are talking about the most marvelous event in eternity that would have the greatest impact on our lives that was possible - the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was something that had to happen if any of us were going to be saved and have our life delivered from eternal torment. No resurrection, no salvation. No resurrection, no forgiveness. No resurrection, no future. Even with all that happened from 9am to 3pm on that Friday on which Jesus was crucified, and even with all that He suffered for three hours in His divine nature that we could never even imagine, if Jesus had not been resurrected, then His entire life and Incarnation would all have been in vain. A dead Savior has no meaning, has no significance, has no value. [1 Peter 1:3-5](#) gloriously summarizes the results of the resurrection for us when it says,

1Pe 1:3 (NKJV) Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Our hope is living, and our inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, will never fade away, and is reserved in heaven for us. The resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith. It is why you can have eternal life.

As great of a teacher as Jesus was, if there had been no resurrection, then what He taught would have been meaningless. He would just have been another bogus teacher in a long line of men who thought they had an understanding into eternal realities. If there had been no resurrection, then there never could have been any salvation. If there is no salvation, then you should probably just eat, drink, and be merry, for in the near future you are going to die. [1 Corinthians 15:17-19](#) says,

1Co 15:17 (NKJV) And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

The word “**futile**” simply means vain, having no purpose, aimless, fruitless, worthless. If there was no resurrection of Christ, then everything you believe about God and Christ and Christianity and the Bible is utterly worthless and will leave you as empty as anyone could ever be. In fact, you would be the “**most pitiable**”, the most miserable. When people see you, they will simply declare that you are pitiful. I know what that means because when I look at those people who have refused Christ and rejected Him, I think to myself that they are surely the ones to be pitied – not me, not you. The lost are the ones who will be utterly miserable beyond any words that I can describe to them. They will be utterly miserable for all of eternity and beyond.

The great news is that one day every believer will be physically resurrected.. Many believers have already died and are now with Christ, but when they are united with their bodies in a literal physical resurrection, they will be given a new physical / spiritual body that cannot and will not decay, that will never suffer death, that will never sin or even feel the effects of sin, and one that will have abilities and capacities that they could never even imagine. [Romans 7:24](#) calls our bodies a “**body of death**”.

Ro 7:24 (NKJV) O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

It is the idea that sin has so corrupted our whole being – our body, mind, emotions, intellect, and even our spirits, that it is considered to be a form of death. From the moment that we were born, we began our march towards death. There is no stopping the grim reaper. However, the resurrection of the believer when he gets a new body is the reward that is given to him because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. [1 Corinthians 15:42-44](#) speaks of believers who are going to be resurrected from the dead and says,

1Co 15:42 (NKJV) So also is the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

This new body that we will have will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. Right now, my physical body is decaying, dying, has wrinkles, gets extremely tired and weary, gets cancer, has bad eyesight, needs constant care, and is shortly going to expire – but not my new body, not your new body.

Now, what amazes me as I have read all four gospel accounts of the resurrection is one remarkable fact. In fact, the more I think of what I am about to say, the more it intrigues and fascinates me. It is the fact there is not one single word about the actual resurrection of Jesus in any of these accounts. There is absolutely no description and no account of what happened, of how it happened, or even when it happened – NOT ONE SINGLE WORD. In fact, no one saw Him rise from the dead. No one saw Him

leave the tomb. It is not even clear that the angels witnessed any kind of resurrection event simply because the Scriptures do not say that they did. The guards may have been there as the body was being placed in the tomb and anointed for burial, but until the earthquake and the angel appeared to them to let them know that the tomb was empty, the soldiers had no clue what had happened on the inside of that tomb. Everyone who was at the tomb or came to the tomb was stunned and shocked at what they were seeing and understanding. If the people who were there had genuinely believed that Jesus was going to be resurrected, then in all likelihood they would have been asking the others why they were in such shock and disbelief simply because that was exactly what Jesus had told them would happen. However, there was not even a hint that that was a reality for anyone there. Listen to what Jesus told the disciples in [Mark 8:31-32](#),

Mk 8:31 (NKJV) And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.³² He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

[Mark 9:30-31](#) says,

Mk 9:31 (NKJV) For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

[Mark 10:32-34](#) says,

Mk 10:32 (NKJV) Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him:³³ "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles;³⁴ and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

The way I read these verses, and there are certainly more, Jesus was not trying to hide any of this from His disciples, but He was saying everything He could to prepare them for His death and His resurrection.

The reality, though, is that when anyone came to the tomb that Jesus was gone. I have no idea when Jesus was resurrected timewise in relation to when His body was placed in the tomb and the stone rolled against it, but from what we just read, I believe it happened on that Sunday morning. What we know for sure is that when He first appeared to the women who came to the grave and then eventually to the disciples, He was in a new resurrection body. Whatever kind of body He had and whatever He could do in that body, that is the same kind of body that you will receive, and it will astound you.

I want to close with the final message that Jesus gave to His disciples before He ascended into heaven. It is really very simple, and it would do each of us good to pay attention to its compelling encouragement.

[Luke 24:44-49](#) says,

Lk 24:44 (NKJV) Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me."⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.⁴⁶ Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was

necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

May God help us to not be doubters, but to genuinely believe what took place in all of the events we have studied. We are simply to be “**witnesses of these things**” as we share our lives with others who may not know Him as we do.