

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Glorious Sufficiency of God's Word

INTRODUCTION

There have been many theories floating around about the resurrection of our Lord. One was the swoon theory that Jesus just fainted on the Cross and was mistakenly placed in the tomb, then revived and was snuck away. The most common theory at the time of the crucifixion was the conspiracy theory. The Jews spread the rumor that Christ's disciples stole his body and made up the story of the resurrection. We read of that in Matthew 28:11–15 (ESV),

"¹¹ While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹² And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers ¹³ and said, 'Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day."

John's Gospel seems to be seeking to refute the impossibility of that. Our Scripture text is

TEXT: JOHN 20:1–10 (ESV)

THE STORY

It is extraordinary that all four Gospels (*cf.* Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; and John 20:1) introduce their resurrection accounts by specifying *the first day of the week*. "Most fitting was it that the Lord Jesus, as head of the new creation, should rise from the dead on the first day of the week – intimating that a new beginning had been inaugurated."¹ In the Old Testament the Sabbath was a celebration of God's finished work in creation. Now under the New Covenant, Sunday is a celebration of God's finished work in the new creation. How sad that many treat the Lord's Day with such indifference and disinterest!

In the Synoptics (The Synoptics are Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They are called that because of their many similarities and parallels, from the Greek meaning "having the same look.") A group of women start out just before dawn to anoint the body of Jesus. They did not expect anything else. The thought that He was alive, that He had risen was evidently not even in their minds. They see the stone rolled away and see two angels at the tomb. Matthew gives us more detail:

¹ Pink, Arthur W., Exposition of the Gospel of John, The Zondervan Corp., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975 Page 255.

“Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Mark adds Salome 16:1) went to see the tomb (Mark also adds that they were wondering who would roll away the stone). And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord (Luke says there were two angels 24:4) descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”” (Matthew 28:1–7, ESV)

John centers the account on the one woman, Mary Magdalene. John does not ignore the fact there were others for in his account he writes, *“So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, **and we** do not know where they have laid him.”” (John 20:2, ESV)*

Mary’s immediate conclusion, according to John, is that *“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”*² We do not rightly know how to harmonize that statement with the Synoptics. We are left uncertain. One likely idea was that Mary got there first, then came all the other women; and then came the appearance of the angels. We are left wondering.

This she told Peter and the “other disciple”. (The “other disciple”, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” are all the same person, the author, John.) It is here John records the famous footrace in the Bible. Apparently, Peter and John, were themselves going to the tomb. When they hear the report from of the ladies a footrace to the tomb starts. John gets there first. When he peeked in “he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.”³ Simon Peter arrived second and characteristically went right into the tomb. We read:

“⁶. . . He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.”⁴

John informs us that Peter “found in the empty tomb the clearest evidences of a deliberate and composed transaction. There were no signs of haste or fear. What had taken place had been done “decently and in order, not by a thief, and scarcely by a friend.”⁵

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:6–7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ Pink, Arthur W., *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, The Zondervan Corp., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975 Page 262

Verse 8 and 9 provide for us the commentary and the point of the account. *“Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.”* (John 20:8–9, ESV)

THE POINT OF THE STORY

Remember, John is writing this 60 years after the fact. He’s looking back and by the aid of the Holy Spirit he is recounting the story. I’d like you to see 2 points:

1. The Physical evidence discounts the conspiracy theory.
2. John’s testimony makes a powerful statement about Scripture.

To the early readers these proofs would be very compelling.

1. The Physical Evidence Discounts The Conspiracy Theory.

“He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.”⁶ The account of John suggests that these clothes were lying in their original arrangements as they had been tightly rolled up around our Lord’s body. As He would enter through the door of the disciples, He simply exited through the grave clothes without disturbing them.

When we compare the raising of Lazarus, he awkwardly stumbles from the grave and Jesus commands that others unwrap him. *“The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”*” (John 11:44, ESV). The escaping the grave clothes was, for Jesus, part of the entire miracle of the resurrection.

One should add that the evidence of the empty tomb alone is not sufficient but combined with the appearances that we will soon read about, it is undeniable.

2. John’s Testimony Makes A Powerful Statement About Scripture.

Verses 8 & 9 are most interesting. Let’s read them again. *“Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.”* (John 20:8–9, ESV)

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:6–7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The singular *Scripture* (in the Greek text) suggests that a specific text is in mind. We are not told which one. For example, it could be Psalm 16:10 (ESV) (“¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”)

But the phrase that follows is revealing: “for as yet they did not understand the Scripture.”⁷ You see, at this point the faith in Christ’s resurrection was grounded upon what John saw in the empty tomb. But soon to follow and through thousands of years, it was not the empty grave that gave evidence to the resurrection, but it is in fact the properly understood Scriptures. An example of this is how Jesus had to explain the Old Testament to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

“And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:25–27, ESV)

It seems to me that for the days and decades to follow the resurrection miracle, it was not the empty tomb that gave it credibility, but it was in fact the Scriptures. Note the words of Paul:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:3–6, ESV)

Notice that he didn’t write that Jesus was raised on the third day according to John, according to Mary Magdalene, according to Peter, Thomas, etc. He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

APPLICATION

Think of how profound this is. You already know from 1 Corinthians 15 that the entire truthfulness of the Christian faith rests on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now we learn that the authenticity, the accuracy, the validity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ rests solidly on the Bible. Now here is a provocative question: **Can your view of the Scriptures handle the weight of this?**

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

That's my applicatory question. Can your view of the Bible handle the weight of the entirety of the Christian faith? Let me be practical. When someone says, "How do you know the resurrection is true", are you able to unashamedly rest your case on this answer, 'Because the Bible says so'?"

When someone asks, "How do you know there's a God; how do you know there is heaven/hell; how do you know Jesus is the only one Saviour; etc., are you able to rest with total assurance in the answer, "Because the Bible tells me so?"

Or when someone says, "How do you know there are 2 genders? How do you know marriage is a lifetime commitment between a man and a woman, are you able to rest on the truth, 'Because the Bible tells me so?'"

I used to watch a lot of Larry King. There are two men that stood out to me in their answers to Mr. King. These two men, Billy Graham and John MacArthur, always prefaced their answer with, "Well, Larry, the Bible says, . . .!"

Just think of this. John was probably in his 80s and he probably wrote his Gospel just before A.D. 90. He wrote to 2nd generation Jews living in Asia Minor, dispersed by the Roman Emperor Domitian. And John had this amazing confidence, that as he provided a historical narrative, in written form, on the life and teaching of Christ that the reader could "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing . . . have life in his name."⁸

That's the audacious faith we have in Christ, that His Word has the power to create faith and bring men and women into the Kingdom. You say, "How do you know that?" My answer? The Bible tells me so.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:31). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.