

The Bible Page—Resurrection Narratives of Mark and Matthew

Mark's Resurrection narrative is short compared to his account of the Passion. He covers the scene of the women finding the empty tomb (Mk 16:1-8). All four Gospels include this and all mention Mary Magdalene as being present. Mark and Matthew's (Mt 28:1-8) accounts of this are similar. In Mark three women come. Mary, the mother of James, is not the Blessed Virgin. This Mary is called "the other Mary" for Matthew's Gospel in a couple places, and is stated to be Mary the wife of Clopas in Jn 19:25. Women in those days could not serve as witnesses legally, so the writers would not have cited women unless it was historically accurate. The exchange with the angel (young man) is similar in Mark and Matthew. The angel tells them not to be afraid or amazed. Jesus has risen! They are to tell his disciples to go to Galilee and they will see him there. Note that in Mk 16:7 Peter is still shown as the leader of the disciples despite his denial of Jesus earlier. In Matthew Jesus also appears to the women and tells them to have no fear. Mt 28:9 states that the women embraced his feet and worshipped him, proving his body was real and they were not dreaming.

Some scholars say that Mk 16:9-20, the "Longer Ending" of Mark, was written by another author with a different style, but it is canonical and inspired as determined by the Council of Trent. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene in Mk 16:9, Mt 28:9-10, and Jn 20:14-18. He appears to two disciples on the way to Emmaus in Mk 16:12-13 and Lk 24:13-35 as well as the eleven Apostles. He commissions them to preach and baptize to the whole world (Mk 16:14-16). Mk 16:17-18 previews some of the happenings in the early days of the Church. The Apostles drive out demons, speak new languages, pick up serpents without being harmed, and cure the sick by laying hands on them. All of these things happen with Peter and Paul in Acts of the Apostles. Mark's Gospel ends with a short description of the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven (Mk 16:19-20).

Because Matthew has the section on the "guarding of the tomb" as we discussed in the Passion *Bible Page* for his Gospel, he follows up with a scene about the guards after the Resurrection. The guards were "shaken with fear" of Jesus and "became like dead men" when they actually witnessed the Resurrection of Jesus (Mt 28:4). They guarded a dead man but became like dead men themselves. When the guards told the chief priests and elders what had happened the Jewish leaders bribed the soldiers to say that the body of Jesus was stolen. The alleged stealing was still a story told in Matthew's time many years later, so Matthew certainly had to correct this fabrication.

The very moving commissioning of the disciples occurs at the end of Matthew's Gospel (Mt 28:16-20). Jesus appears to the Eleven in Galilee and they worship him. He gives them a mission to evangelize all nations, recalling the time of Abraham (Genesis 22:18) when God said all the nations would be blessed. Then we have the clearest statement of the Trinity in the whole New Testament when Jesus tells them to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," (Mt 28:19) the baptismal formula we find in the early Church and the one we use today. Notice that the word "name" is singular for one God even though three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are included. This baptismal formula is given in the *Didache* (no. 7), an early Christian catechism of the first or second century, using exactly the same words. Jesus' own baptism is a Trinitarian scene (Mt 3:16-17) with Jesus being baptized, the Father present as a voice from heaven, and the Holy Spirit represented as a dove.

The disciples (and we too) are to carry on the teaching of Jesus as he commanded us. Matthew emphasizes the threefold mission of the Church: Evangelization, baptism, and teaching (CCC 849, 1122, 1257). The Gospel ends with our assurance, as Jesus says many times, that we are not to be afraid, for he is with us always until the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus in glory!

For next week read the Resurrection narrative of Luke 24.

The Bible Page—Resurrection Narrative of Luke

Luke 24 begins with the empty tomb, as do all four Resurrection accounts, on the first day of the week, the day the early Christians set apart each week as the day of resurrection. The two men giving the message at the tomb are later identified as angels (Lk 24:23). Three women are present. Joanna is mentioned earlier in Luke as the wife of Herod's steward (Lk 8:3). Luke reports Peter rushing to see the empty tomb. We see this in John's Gospel too. As leader of the Apostles Peter no doubt feels obligated to check out the women's story. Peter shows amazement and wonder but not belief yet, until he sees the risen Christ.

The next scene is given in detail only by Luke, although Mark's Gospel briefly tells of it. On the "Road to Emmaus," a Judean village close to Jerusalem, Cleopas and another disciple meet Jesus but do not recognize his glorified body, because they are still spiritually blind. They had unfulfilled hopes of Jesus being a powerful military and political leader and "were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel" (Lk 24:21). So Jesus gave them an instruction of all the Messianic prophecies in the Scriptures. This Liturgy of the Word is followed by a Liturgy of the Eucharist, just like we have in the Mass now. Even the words used in Lk 24:30 where he took...blessed...broke...gave to the disciples is the same wording used to describe the Eucharist of the "Last Supper" (CCC 1346-1347). The "breaking of the bread" among the early Christians was used as a description of the Eucharistic liturgy (Acts 2:42, 20:7; CCC 1329). This was the first Sunday Mass! After the two disciples recognized Jesus they realized why they were so enthralled and exclaimed what we should feel after reading the Bible: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" (Lk 24:32)

Jesus then appears to the Eleven and other disciples and allowed them to see the wounds in his hands and feet and to touch his body so they could be convinced he had risen. Then he ate fish in front of them as well. He forever reigns in a human body, but one that can vanish at will (Lk 24:31) and pass through locked doors (Jn 20:19). His body is now in a glorious state (CCC 646, 659). Next, Jesus gives them a Scripture study on everything written about him in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms—the three classical divisions of the entire Old Testament. By one count there are over 300 prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament. Jesus completes his appearance to them with a promise from his Father that he will send a "power from on high," (Lk 24:49) the Holy Spirit, who will come at Pentecost.

Luke finishes his Gospel with the Ascension of Jesus. This is the link to his second book, *Acts of the Apostles*, which begins with the Ascension. We will be covering Acts a couple chapters at a time shortly after Easter, since it is a prominent reading on weekdays and Sundays during the Easter season.

Let us finish this Bible Page with a summary table of all of the appearances of Jesus after his Resurrection as furnished by noted biblical scholar Scott Hahn.

In or near Jerusalem: to Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:9; Jn 20:11-18), to other women (Mt 28:8-10), to Peter (Lk 24:34), to ten disciples (Lk 24:36-43; Jn 20:19-25), to the Eleven, including Thomas (Mk 16:14; Jn 20:26-29), at his Ascension (Mk 16:19-20; Lk 24:50-53; Acts 1:4-12).

Other appearances: to the disciples on the Emmaus road (Mk 16:12-13; Lk 24:13-35), in Galilee (Mt 28:16-20; Jn 21:1-24), to 500 people (1 Cor 15:6), to James and the other Apostles (1 Cor 15:7), to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6, 22:1-10, 26:12-18; 1 Cor 15:8).

Be sure to attend as many liturgies of the Triduum as you are able to this week. Please do the readings beforehand to get as much as you can out of these holy days.

For next week, read the Resurrection narrative of John, chapters 20 and 21.

The Bible Page—Resurrection Narrative of John

John identifies Mary Magdalene as one who came to Jesus' tomb, just as all the Gospels do. The "we" in Jn 20:2 does hint to possible other women being present. John does not name himself but used "the other disciple" again to represent himself and perhaps more broadly the "Beloved Disciple" that we can use as a model. Even though the other disciple arrived at the tomb before Peter, he defers to the leader of the Apostles and Peter enters the tomb first to see the burial cloths and empty tomb. Only then does John enter.

The appearance to Mary Magdalene is recorded in John's Gospel. Two angels appear first, as in Luke. When Jesus appears to her his body is glorified and his appearance is different so Mary has trouble recognizing Jesus. As Jesus talks to her she begins to recognize him. We also must listen to Jesus in prayer, so we can hear his voice and recognize him.

That evening Jesus appears to ten disciples, with Judas and Thomas absent. His body is transformed and not bound by locked doors. Yet his body is human as shown by the wounds in his hands and side. When Jesus breathes on them and gives them the Holy Spirit we recall the Lord breathing life into Adam (Genesis 2:7), Elijah resuscitating a boy (1 Kings 17:21), and God raising corpses to new life (Ezekiel 37:9). When Jesus says to forgive or retain sins (Jn 20:23) he is instituting the sacrament of Reconciliation (CCC 976, 1441, 1461).

One week later Jesus appears again, this time with Thomas present. Thomas' unbelief now leads to indisputable confirmation of the presence of the risen Jesus. Thomas believed because he was able to put his finger into Jesus' nail marks and his hand into Jesus' side. Because of this we have the very consoling words of Jesus: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (Jn 20:29). Faith, not sight, matters. John goes on to include this as the reason for his writing the Gospel, "that through this belief you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31). Now we too with Thomas can say "My Lord and my God."

In John 21 we have an appearance of Jesus to seven disciples back in Galilee as they were fishing. Jesus helps them catch a large number of fish. Jesus prepares a breakfast over a charcoal fire. There are only two charcoal fires John includes in the Gospel. The first one occurs when Peter is denying Christ three times (Jn 18:18). Now this will be a chance for Peter to redeem himself, so he tells Jesus he loves him three times. St. Jerome suggested that the number 153 for the fish signifies the number of known species of fish at the time. The meal of bread and fish certainly reminds us of the "multiplication of the loaves and fishes" and the "bread of life discourse" in John 6.

When Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, the first two times he uses the Greek word *agapao* for the highest form of all-giving, committed, self-sacrificial love. Peter says that he loves Jesus and uses the Greek word *phileo* for brotherly or friendly love. The third time Jesus asks for *phileo* love. Jesus is desirous of complete love from Peter but is willing to settle for brotherly love. Peter still needs more time to become all-giving. Jesus acknowledges this because he now predicts the way Peter will finally offer himself completely to Jesus. When Peter is old he will stretch out his hand and go where he does not want to go (Jn 21:18). Peter was crucified in Rome around A.D. 67. By telling Peter three times to feed and tend his sheep, Jesus places Peter at the head (Rock) of his Church.

John completes his Gospel with one more reference to himself as the "Beloved Disciple" (Jn 21:20-23). This explains the tradition that John lived the longest of all the Apostles and perhaps people were saying that he would not die until Jesus came again, but Jesus had never said this. John concludes with a statement that he is an eyewitness to these events and that there are many other things that could be written, although scrolls were rare and expensive back then. Don't we wish though that we possessed many more details about the life and teachings of Jesus? But we have enough for our faith to remain strong.

For next week, there will be no new assignment. Review the Passion and Resurrection narratives. We will cover some miscellaneous things like translations of the Bible, commentaries, biblical web sites, and other references. Then we will begin a study of Acts of the Apostles.