



Hard Passages in the Bible

Gaining confidence for engaging the
biblical story

Resurrection of Jesus – Mark 16:1-8

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³ and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

⁸ Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.^[a]

[The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9–20.]

Resurrection of Jesus – Matthew

28 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. **3** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. **4** The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. **6** He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the

place where he lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. **9** Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Resurrection of Jesus – Luke

24 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. **2** They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. **5** In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? **6** He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: **7** ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised

again.’ ” **8** Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. **10** It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. **11** But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. **12** Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

[Followed by two disciples on road to Emmaus and appearance to the Eleven]

Resurrection of Jesus – John

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. **2** So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. **4** Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5** He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. **6** Then Simon Peter came along behind him and

went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, **7** as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. **8** Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. **9** (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) **10** Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

(Narrative continues with Mary Magdalene seeing Jesus but mistaking him for the gardner)

Reaction to the readings

- What do you make of these accounts of the resurrection?
- Why do we have four versions?
- What consistent themes do you hear in them?
- What are you confused or unclear about?
- What questions do they leave you with?

Common Themes in Resurrection narratives

- Christ is risen!
- Women are the first witnesses
- Empty tomb – sign that Jesus is not among the dead.
- Role for Peter (Luke, John)
- Return to Galilee (Mark, Matthew, John)
- Running (Peter, beloved disciple, women)
- Others??

Comparison of resurrection narratives

	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
Who goes to the tomb?	Mary Mag., Mary, Salome	Mary Mag., other Mary	Mary Mag., Joanna, Mary, and others	Mary Magdalene
What's there?	One "young man"	Earthquake and 1 angel	2 "men"	No angels
Action of women	Don't tell anyone	Run to tell disciples	Tell disciples who don't believe	Tells the disciples
Male disciples at tomb?	No	No	Peter	Peter and beloved disciple
Who sees Jesus first/ Where?	(after v. 8) Mary	The two Mary's; near tomb	Two disciples going to Emmaus; near Jerusalem	Mary, at tomb
Additional resurrection appearances	Two in country, the Eleven (Jerusalem)	Mountain in Galilee	the Eleven/ Jerusalem	the Eleven/ Jerusalem; Sea of Galilee

Concluding thoughts from the series

- “As long as we use love to guard us from disrespecting the original authors, as long as we use love to guard us from interpreting the Bible to oppress instead of liberate, as long as we use love to show grace to those with different perspectives, we can find freedom in the way we read the Bible. We need not worry about not having enough degrees to read it accurately.”
 - Jared Byas in *Love Matters More*
- “Whoever, then, thinks that he understands the Holy Scriptures, or any part of them, but puts such an interpretation upon them as does not tend to build up this twofold love of God and our neighbor, does not yet understand them as he ought.”
 - Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*

Some principles for interpreting challenging passages

- Read the Bible always with the goal of building up love of God and neighbor
- Ask: How does this passage fit in the overarching story of God's redemptive work?
- Put different biblical passages in conversation with each other.
- There may be more than one correct meaning to find in a passage for a given situation (see #1)
- Read the Bible understanding Jesus as the clearest picture of God
- Learn from Gospel accounts of how Jesus engaged his scriptures.