

Resurrection Appearances – 1:-

Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately!) the news reporters and video cameras were not at the tomb on that first Easter morning! The records we have come from a variety of sources and depend on ‘eyewitness’ reports by confused people trying to explain what they have seen and heard. A number of attempts to place events in some kind of order have been made. A possible summary of them is :-

- At least 3 women, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, prepare spices to go to the tomb (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1).
- An angel descends from heaven, rolls the stone away, and sits on it. There is an earthquake, and the guards faint (Matthew 28:2-4).
- The women (?) arrive at the tomb and find it empty. Mary Magdalene leaves (the other women there) and runs to tell the disciples (John 20:1-2).
- The women still at the tomb see two angels who tell them that Jesus is risen and who instruct them to tell the disciples to go to Galilee (Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:2-8; Luke 24:1-8).
- The women go to find the disciples, they see Jesus (Matthew 28:8-10).
- The women relate what they have seen and heard to the disciples (Luke 24:9-11).
- Peter and John run to the tomb, and find it empty (Luke 24:12; John 20:2-10).
- Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb. She sees the angels, and then she sees Jesus (John 20:11-18).

The Appearances in the early morning:-

Mark chapter 16, verse 1 simply states that the women went to buy spices “*when the Sabbath was past*”. The Jewish Sabbath ends at sunset when shops would re-open. The women most likely bought spices at that time so that they could set out at sunrise (or shortly before) to go to the tomb. Note that they already knew the place, Mark chapter 15, verse 47. In the short account in Mark, the women find the stone already moved. In Matthew’s longer version it could read that the earthquake and the rolling away of the stone took place as the women arrived! The resurrection could have happened with the stone in place. As someone has said “*the stone was not removed to free the Lord Jesus, it was removed so that we could see that the tomb was empty.*” The stone would have been no obstacle, nor the locked doors, to the resurrected Lord – see John chapter 20, verses 19 and 26 and Luke chapter 24, verse 36.

If Mary Magdalene left the ‘other women’ at the tomb and went to break the news to the disciples then the angel(s) spoke to the women remaining. They then followed Mary to go to the disciples and met the Lord Jesus on the way. (Matthew chapter 28, verses 8 – 10).

Notice that in all these early morning encounters the emphasis is on “*Do not be afraid!*” A contrast between believers and the guards. See Matthew chapter 28, verses 3 – 7.

Remember that in the early hours of that first Easter Day the uppermost thoughts in the minds of the women was distress at the loss of the Master, followed by fear at the strange happenings at the tomb. Until their personal encounter with the Lord they were totally bewildered at the events.

Please pray for those dealing with grief and loss at this time!

*O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.*

*O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.*

George Matheson 1882