

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL

## JESUS SAVES

### JESUS THE SAVIOR

#### *The Savior Is Raised*

We all love pictures. Some take photos continually with our I-Phones documenting everything from daily events to spectacular moments in our lives. The truth is if we are not careful we can become so focused on the picture-taking itself that we miss connecting with the literal subject of the picture. There were seven Jewish feasts (outlined in *Leviticus 23*) which God provided as pictures to the Jewish nation regarding their coming Messiah who would be the Savior of the world. The leaders of that day became so focused on the pictures themselves that they missed the subject of the pictures when He appeared as promised. Let's consider three of those pictures.

The blood of lambs was shed during Passover commemorating the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt while providing a snapshot of the foretold Messiah's death. John the Baptist had proclaimed regarding Jesus in *John 1:29 (ESV)* <sup>29</sup> ... "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*"

Leaven or yeast represents sin and is a picture of death and decay. Unleavened bread is a picture of Jesus' holiness, purity and sinlessness. During the first days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the body of Jesus, the sinless sacrifice for our sins, was buried. Jesus said in *John 12:24 (ESV)* <sup>24</sup> *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

The Feast of Firstfruits is seen primarily as a time marker. It marks the beginning of the grain harvest in Israel. It also marks the countdown to the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost). On the morning of the Feast of Firstfruits, the first day of the week following the first Sabbath after the Passover, Jesus was raised from the dead and became the firstfruits from the dead. Paul explained in *1 Corinthians 15:20, 23 (ESV)* <sup>20</sup> *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* <sup>23</sup> *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*

Of course, all four gospels tell the story of Jesus' Resurrection from the dead. Because of the differences some people feel there is conflict among the Gospels concerning the morning of the Resurrection and the events which took place. If you have difficulty with this, do a thorough study yourself of the Gospels and you will discover that there is no conflict. Each writer presents different facets of the Resurrection just as each of us who witnesses the same event would relate the same story with different details. My greatest personal proof of the Resurrection is that I know for certain that Jesus lives within my heart!

The Scofield Reference Bible combines information from the four narratives recreating Resurrection Morning events in this way: In the early morning the women went to the sepulcher of Jesus to anoint His body, even though they did not know how they could get into the tomb. There were three, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome followed by other women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee. The three women found the stone had been moved by an angel. Mary Magdalene hurried to tell Peter and John who ran toward the sepulcher. Meanwhile Mary the mother of James, Salome and the other women, arrived at the tomb, entered it and saw angels who assured them Jesus had risen. They ran from the tomb in fear and joy to inform His disciples. Peter and John arrived at the tomb, entered, observed and left. Mary Magdalene returned to the sepulcher, stood weeping and Jesus revealed Himself to her. As the other women were on their way to tell His disciples, Jesus appeared to them.

You will notice that the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ were women. Among the Jews in that day, the testimony of women was not held in high regard. “It is better that the words of the Law be burned,” said the rabbis, “than be delivered to a woman.” But these women had a greater message than that of the Law, for they knew that their Savior was alive. If the disciples were fabricating a resurrection story, they would not have used women and they certainly would not have chosen Mary Magdalene of all people. After all, Jesus cast seven demons out of her. But, here she is right up front on resurrection morning. Today, we will look into Matthew’s account of the resurrection. Come and see the empty tomb!

**Read Matthew 28:1-6 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

Christ arose on the first day of the week. On the first day of the week of creation, God commanded the light to shine out of darkness. On Resurrection Morning, He who was the Light of the World, shone out of the darkness of the grave.

The earth had quaked at Mount Sinai when God gave the Law to Moses. There was an earthquake when Jesus died on Mount Calvary. The Calvary earthquake signified that the demands of the Law had been met and the curse of the Law was forever abolished. We are told what happened during the Calvary earthquake in **Matthew 27:51 (ESV)** <sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. Notice that the curtain was torn, not from the bottom to the top but from top to bottom. It was torn by God, not by man. The curtain symbolizes the

torn body of Jesus. When His body was torn upon the Cross, He paid the penalty for our sins and opened the way for us to go directly into the presence of God.

When Jesus died, the earth received Him shaking for fear; now when Jesus arose to life, the earth leaped for joy in exaltation. During Jesus' ministry, the scribes and Pharisees wanted to suppress the voices of His disciples who cried out *Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord*, Jesus responded in **Luke 19:40 (ESV)** <sup>40</sup> *He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."* Now, we find the earth itself rejoicing in the Resurrection. The earthquake opened the tomb that had been sealed with a giant stone.

The excuses that people make to deny the truth of the resurrection continue to this day. Some say the women went to the wrong tomb! I don't need to waste time discounting that! Some have estimated that the stone that sealed Jesus' tomb weighed close to two tons which is the approximate weight of a midsize car. I am told that to the right of the tomb opening an inclined groove or track was cut into the rock, running across the opening. It had a deeper indentation at the tomb's entrance. When the tomb was built, the 'stone door' was blocked to keep the entrance open. After Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' dead body in the tomb, they would have removed the block allowing the stone to roll down the incline and drop into the indentation to cover the opening and lock the stone in place. Opening the tomb would **not** have been as easy as closing it and that is where the angel came in!

Keep in mind that the stone needed to be removed not to let Jesus out but to allow the eyewitnesses in. Matthew describes the angel's appearance as lightning with clothes as white as snow. Mythology and modern day artists like to portray angels as looking like baby 'cherubs.' This is incorrect. Daniel described the angel he saw in this manner: **Daniel 10:4-6 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> *... as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris)* <sup>5</sup> *I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man ...* <sup>6</sup> *His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.* Is it any wonder that God's angel could move even a two-ton stone by Himself!! But like other angel messages, the angel encouraged the women: *Do not be afraid!* Somehow I suspect that the guards did not hear the angel's message. The men with Daniel did not see the vision of the angel but a great trembling did fall upon them.

The women were given the message we have today: come and see and then go and tell.

**Read Matthew 28:7-9 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> *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.* <sup>8</sup> *So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.* <sup>9</sup> *And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.*

Most often in studies of the resurrection, I have focused on the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb. That may be the reason that in the past I have missed that Jesus personally appeared to the other women as well. There were definitely more than the two women named by Matthew. **Luke 24:10 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> *Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles.* These women were the ones who stood at the cross and then gathered at the tomb. John records Mary Magdalene's personal encounter but I think it is wonderful that Matthew tells us how Jesus encountered the group of women followers in the midst of them going to tell the good news that Jesus was alive. The lesson that I see in this is that when we do what we are commanded to do – that is share the gospel of Christ – we will encounter the living Jesus in the process.

Keep in mind that even when you are going out with joy others will be going out with lies working to discount the good news of our living Lord.

**Read Matthew 28:10-15 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> *Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”* <sup>11</sup> *While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.* <sup>12</sup> *And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers* <sup>13</sup> *and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’* <sup>14</sup> *And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”* <sup>15</sup> *So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.*

Remember the words of the scribes and the elders at the cross when Jesus was crucified: *He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.* Well, here Jesus is – alive and well and they resort to deceit to cover up the truth of His resurrection. We have to give the guards a little credit since they did not lie to the chief priests but they ‘lost points’ when they were willing to lie for money. There were no depths of deceit and trickery too low for these religious bigots who were determined to pursue their chosen course to the bitter end, no matter what it took. Matthew concludes his gospel with the words of Jesus.

**Read Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* <sup>19</sup> *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* <sup>20</sup> *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Many Bibles add the heading, The Great Commission, to this passage. Whether you call it The Great Commission OR ‘Bringing Our World to Jesus’ as our church did in the 1990s OR “Know, Grow, and Go” as our church motto states today, the resurrection message for us is the same as it was for the women on Resurrection Morning! “Come and see, then go and tell!”