

and ask for the body of Jesus. Pilate gave Joseph the permission he requested. He was joined by Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews (John 3:1),² who had brought about a hundred pounds of a mixture of myrrh and aloes. They reverently took the body of Jesus down from the cross, wrapped it in a linen cloth brought by Joseph, placing the myrrh and aloes mixture in the folds of the cloth. Joseph had a new tomb³ in a garden near the place of crucifixion (Matthew 27:60; John 19:41). They took Jesus' body to this tomb and laid it to rest.

A group of women followed Joseph and Nicodemus, watched as the body of Jesus was buried, and marked in their minds the location of the tomb where they buried Jesus (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55). Realizing that Jesus' body had not been prepared properly for burial, they returned to their homes and prepared aromatic spices and ointments to take to the tomb at a later time (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56a). On Saturday they rested and fulfilled the law of Moses regarding the Sabbath (Luke 23:56).

On Saturday, the chief priests and the Pharisees came to Pilate and said, "The deceiver said that after three days He would rise from the dead. We are afraid His followers might come and steal His body and claim that He rose from the dead. Give orders that the tomb must be sealed and guarded." Pilate said, "Make it as secure as you can." The entrance to the tomb was sealed and guards were placed beside its entrance (see Matthew 27:62–66).

On the third day from Christ's crucifixion,⁴ on Sunday morning, before dawn,⁵ a group of

²Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin. He must have been a believer in Christ. Earlier in the ministry of Jesus, he had come to Jesus by night inquiring about the way of salvation (John 3:1–21).

³John says it was "a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid" (19:41). Most tombs were the burial place of multiple bodies, but this was a new tomb in which no other bodies had been placed. It is clear then that the resurrection of Jesus could not have been mistaken for the resurrection of another body in the tomb.

⁴According to the Jewish method of inclusive reckoning any part of a day was considered a day. The Jews also referred to any part of a day figuratively as "a day and a night." This was no doubt how our Lord was reckoning time whenever He referred to the length of His approaching entombment as the Son of Man being "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40).

⁵Mark 16:2b says, "They came to the tomb when the sun had risen." Other references say: "As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week" (Matthew 28:1b); "At early

women started out to the tomb from Jerusalem. We are given the names of some of them: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10). They believed that the body of Jesus should be anointed more permanently for burial.

At the tomb, early on Sunday morning, a severe earthquake occurred. An angel of the Lord rolled away the stone from the entrance of the tomb and sat upon it (Matthew 28:2).⁶ The angel's appearance was like lightning, and his garment was as white as snow (Matthew 28:3). The guards fell over like dead men (Matthew 28:4). God wanted to reveal the empty tomb to witnesses; hence, the reason for the miraculous rolling away of the stone. Jesus must have risen sometime before the earthquake. Later, some of the guard went into Jerusalem and told the chief priests all that had happened. The Sanhedrin met and agreed to give a large sum of money to the soldiers if they would say that His disciples had come by night and stolen the body of Jesus. The soldiers took the money and did as they were told (Matthew 28:11–15).

The group of women who had started out to the tomb before dawn were now nearing the tomb. Knowing they were getting near, they began to raise among themselves an important question: "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" (Mark 16:3). This was a sensible question, one that normally would have been asked before they left Jerusalem for the tomb. These women, under the duress of the circumstances of Jesus' death, had probably been thinking with their hearts, not with their heads. Had they been thinking with their heads, they would have said at the first suggestion of going to the tomb, "How shall we get in? Who will roll away the stone for us? No need to go down to the tomb, if we cannot get in!" Moved with love and consideration for Jesus, they had decided on what needed to be done, and they had set out to do it without giving much thought to the logistics of how

dawn" (Luke 24:1b); "While it was still dark" (John 20:1b). It must be that the women started out toward the tomb before daylight or dawn, and, when they arrived at the tomb, it was still dark but the sun was beginning to rise.

⁶Jesus most likely rose before the earthquake. The earthquake was only the dramatic moment of the appearance of the angels and the rolling away of the stone from the front of the tomb.

they were going to do it. This is how hearts of love often respond.

When they came within sight of the tomb, they looked up and discovered that the problem of “how to get in” had already been solved. The stone had been rolled away (Mark 16:4). Mary Magdalene must have stopped in the pathway, immediately jumping to the conclusion that someone had stolen the body of Jesus. The empty tomb posed an even greater problem for Mary than the question, “How shall we get in?” She did not wait to investigate, but, turning around, she ran back to Jerusalem to find Peter and John and to tell them what she had seen (John 20:2).

The other women who had come with Mary Magdalene did not leave the tomb as did Mary. They lingered, trying to figure out what had happened. Eventually, they timidly went to the entrance of the tomb and entered it. Inside, they saw two angels (Luke 24:4).⁷ The women were terrified and fell on the ground before them. One of the angels spoke gently to the women, saying, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying” (Matthew 28:5, 6). The women looked over and saw the cold stone slab where the body of Jesus had been lying. The angel also reminded the women of the Lord’s promise to rise from the dead: “Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:6b, 7). Then, the angel gave the women a commission: “Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you” (Matthew 28:7). The women must have left the tomb with a happy song of good news in their hearts. They also must have realized the awesomeness of the resurrected Jesus, the Son of God, being on earth in their midst (Matthew 28:8).

⁷Mark says, “Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed” (16:5). Perhaps Mark focuses in his record on the one angel who did the speaking while Luke mentions the two.

In the meantime, Mary Magdalene had made her way back to Jerusalem, to the house where Peter and John were staying. Mary found Peter and John and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him” (John 20:2). Peter and John were overwhelmed by what Mary told them. Concern caused them to take off running toward the tomb. John outran Peter and arrived at the tomb first, but he did not go inside. He stood reverently outside, looking inside at the place where Jesus’ body had been lying, and awaited the arrival of Peter (John 20:4, 5). When Peter came to the tomb, with his characteristic boldness, he went inside, and John followed behind him (John 20:6, 8).

We are not absolutely certain what they saw. The NASV says, “And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself” (John 20:6, 7). The NASV translated the Greek word for the arrangement of the linen wrappings as “lying there.” Older scholars argued that this word meant to be organized or neatly arranged, and that the word should be understood to mean that the linen wrappings were folded. More recent scholars have insisted that the word simply meant “rolled up,” and that the linen wrappings were still seemingly wrapped around the body but the body was gone. In other words, the linen wrappings had the appearance of a cocoon. It must be that the older scholars were correct, for Luke 24:12 says, “But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.”⁸ It is not said that Peter believed; it is only said that he marveled at what he saw. Of John, it is said that he “saw and believed” (John 20:8b). Surely had Peter seen a cocoon, he would have believed. What stronger evidence could one have than a cocoon? The fact that Peter did

⁸It must be recognized that some manuscripts do not have Luke 24:12. John, however, mentioned that “the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed” (20:8). John makes no mention of Peter believing. He thus implies that only one of the two believed as a result of what they had seen.

not believe is reason to conclude that they saw the linen clothes neatly folded and separate from the face-cloth, which was rolled up. Had someone stolen the body of Jesus, it is strange that the linen clothes would be left behind and even stranger that the thieves would have taken the time to fold the grave clothes. This puzzled Peter and caused him to marvel, but John was convinced by what he had seen that Jesus had risen from the dead. The two left the tomb and returned to their homes in Jerusalem.

At long last, Mary Magdalene made her way back to the tomb. The garden tomb was now deserted. The women had long since gone back to Jerusalem. Peter and John had already visited the tomb and had left. Mary came to the entrance of the tomb, weeping, bewildered, and tired. At her first visit to the tomb, she had not investigated the tomb at all. This time Mary stooped down and looked inside the tomb. "And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying" (John 20:12). For some reason, Mary did not recognize them as angels. We do not know why. Maybe she just could not see clearly through her tears, or maybe she did not look directly at them, thinking they were assistants to the gardener. One of the angels said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" (John 20:13a). Mary said, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him" (John 20:13b). Mary then turned around and beheld Jesus standing in front of her, but she did not recognize Him. Perhaps, thinking He was the gardener, she did not completely turn around and look straight at Him. He asked her the same question the angels did: "Woman, why are you weeping?" Supposing He was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away" (John 20:15).

A conversation then took place which must be the shortest conversation in the New Testament.⁹ The entire conversation consists of only two words: Jesus uttered one and Mary uttered one. Jesus said, "Mary!", calling her by name.

⁹J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Standard Publishing Foundation, n.d.), 744.

That was enough for her to realize who He was. She turned and looked directly at Him and said, "Rabboni!" which means "Teacher." She probably fell at His feet in her joy and reached out to take hold of Him, but Jesus said, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God'" (John 20:17).¹⁰ These were the post-resurrection days, and much remained to be done. Other brethren needed to be told that He was really alive from the dead. Mary Magdalene left the tomb and told other disciples about what she had seen and heard (John 20:18).

Mark wrote, "Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it " (Mark 16:9–11).

The resurrection ministers to the joyful. Perhaps Jesus' second appearance after His resurrection was to the women who had witnessed the empty tomb and were walking back to Jerusalem.

The women who had come to the tomb with Mary Magdalene, who had seen the angel inside the tomb and had been charged by the angel to "go quickly and tell His disciples" that He had risen from the dead, were walking back to Jerusalem. Can you imagine the conversation they were having as they hurriedly walked back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples what they had seen and heard? Having seen an empty tomb and having been told by an angel that Jesus had risen from the dead would be enough to inspire days of conversation, not to say anything about the immediate excitement and exhilaration of such an experience.

As the women walked along toward Jerusalem, they looked up and saw Jesus standing in the middle of the road. He greeted them, saying

¹⁰J. W. McGarvey has paraphrased our Lord's response to Mary in the following paragraph: "Do not lay hold on me and detain yourself and me; I have not yet ascended; this is no brief, passing vision; I am yet in the world, and will be for some time, and there will be other opportunities to see me; the duty of the moment is to go and tell my sorrowing disciples that I have risen, and shall ascend to my Father" (Ibid., 744).

something similar to our “Hello.” The women did what all of us one day will do—they fell at His feet, took hold of them, and worshiped Him (Matthew 28:9). Paul said that “at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Philippians 2:10). Here before them was Jesus, alive from the dead, God in the flesh, greeting them!

Jesus said to the women, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me” (Matthew 28:10). With the gentle words, “Do not be afraid,” He calmed their hearts which trembled at the thought of being in the presence of the resurrected Christ. Before His crucifixion, Jesus had promised His disciples that He would meet them in Galilee after His resurrection: “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee” (Matthew 26:32). The angel in the tomb had mentioned this promise of Jesus to them as well (Matthew 28:7). It was a promise that He had made that He would have to rise from the dead to keep.

The resurrection ministers to the remorseful. It must be that Jesus’ third appearance was to Simon Peter.

Reference is made to this appearance only twice in the New Testament. The two disciples from Emmaus mentioned it: “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon” (Luke 24:34). Paul referred to this appearance in 1 Corinthians 15: “And that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve”¹¹ (15:5).

We know neither where this appearance took place nor the exact circumstances of it. Peter, because of his penitence over his denial of Jesus, had been especially singled out as in need of the Lord’s compassion. The angel had even told the women at the tomb, “But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you’” (Mark 16:7).

The Lord gravitates to those who need Him the most. If there was any apostle who did not deserve an appearance of Jesus, it was Peter; but if there was any apostle who really needed

¹¹The phrase “the twelve” had become a figurative phrase for “the apostles.” It would not be literally accurate, but it was figuratively accurate.

an appearance of Jesus, it was Peter. On the last night our Lord had spent with His disciples, He had told Peter, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times” (Matthew 26:34). Peter had responded by saying, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You” (Matthew 26:35a). It must be that Peter really meant what he said, but he did not realize how vulnerable he would be in a very trying circumstance.

After Jesus was arrested, Peter followed into the court of the high priest¹² while His trial was taking place. A servant-girl, a porter at the gate to the courtyard, looked intently at him and said, “This man was with Him too” (Luke 22:56b). Peter adamantly said, “Woman, I do not know Him” (Luke 22:57b). A little later, as they sat around a small fire that had been built for warmth, another person saw him and said, “You are one of them too!” Peter retorted, “Man, I am not!” (Luke 22:58).¹³ About an hour later, a man said to Peter, “Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too”; “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?” (Luke 22:59; John 18:26). This man was a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off with the sword in the garden as Jesus was being arrested. Peter began to curse and swear (Matthew 27:74) and said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about” (Luke 22:60). In the whirlwind of accusations, repeatedly pommelled by the tempter, Peter lost his temper and accented his denial with profanity. While Peter spoke, the rooster crowed the second time.¹⁴ The Lord’s

¹²John was known to the high priest, and for this reason, was allowed into the courtyard (John 18:15, 16). John spoke to the gate keeper and Peter was allowed to come into the courtyard.

¹³Peter’s second denial was a group of denials. A maid said, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene.” Peter said, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about” (Mark 14:66–68). The people around her joined in and said, “You are not also one of His disciples, are you?” Peter said, “I am not” (John 18:25). Peter walked out into the porch, and a man said, “You are one of them too.” Peter said, “Man, I am not!” (Luke 22:58). The maid continued to say to the ones around her, “This is one of them!” (Mark 14:69). Peter denied with an oath, saying, “I do not know the man” (Matthew 26:72). He denied to four different groups in such rapid succession that they are regarded as one.

¹⁴Mark writes of two rooster-crowings and records the denials of Peter as occurring between them (Mark 14:68–72). But Luke (Luke 22:34) and John (John 13:38) speak of but one rooster-crowing and place the denial of Jesus before it. The first rooster crowing occurred at midnight. The second

prophecy had been fulfilled.

Jesus was brought out to be taken before the Sanhedrin for a formal type of sentencing. During the transfer, Jesus turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61). As Peter looked into the face of Jesus, he remembered the prophecy of Jesus. Perhaps as he looked into Jesus' face, he remembered the tenderness of Jesus as He foretold the denials (Luke 22:31–34). Peter's heart broke, and he slipped out into that dark night and "wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62). A crushing weight of guilt and shame swept over him, intensified by the dark night and by the sounds of the mock trial of Jesus in the background.

Can you imagine how discouraged with himself Peter must have been as Jesus was crucified? "When He really needed me, I forsook Him," Peter must have said to himself. All day Saturday, Peter must have been in the depths of despondency. He was experiencing complete disappointment in himself, unable to see how he could ever make amends and begin anew. He saw himself at the bottom of the pile of humanity, the chief of sinners, the world's worst friend.

Jesus reached out to Peter in divine compassion and lovingkindness. Jesus is not one to hold a grudge, regardless of how heinous the sin against Him. He is ever in the recovering and reclaiming business. He will not throw us away. We are the only ones who can totally abandon ourselves. He cannot override our wills, but He stands ready to restore us to Himself regardless of the wreck we have made of ourselves.

We do not know what Jesus said to Peter when He appeared to him, but His appearance must have been greatly assuring to Peter. The tone of the appearance must have been, "Peter, you have made a big mistake, but you are penitent. Do not live in the past. I forgive you. Now you must live in the present and future. I died and rose so that you may be forgiven of the past and live each day free from guilt. Come, be My servant. You can do great things for Me." Although we do not know what Jesus said to Peter, we do know that Peter was a different

man after this appearance. A few days later, he boldly preached on the Day of Pentecost, even at the risk of his life (Acts 2:14–36).

The record of this appearance should be very encouraging to us. It pictures the heart of Christ, reminding us that Jesus loves us even when we sin. When we arise in penitence from any sin, Jesus will restore us to Himself and treat us as if it never happened. He will not excuse sin, but He will forgive any sinner who repents and seeks God's grace according to the divine conditions.

The resurrection ministers to the wishful. The fourth appearance of Jesus following His resurrection was to two discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35).

Two disciples were walking to Emmaus, a small village which was located outside of Jerusalem,¹⁵ where they lived. The name of one is given: Cleopas. The name of the other is not given. They were deeply discouraged. They had the facts but they had not put them together right and, consequently, had not come out with the right conclusion.

During their journey, someone joined them. God put a veil over their eyes so that they would not see that the One who joined them was the Christ. Have you ever been going down a pathway or hall and, as you walked along, you were joined by someone? You did not know him, he was a total stranger to you, but you started talking to him anyway. "It is a beautiful day today," you may have said. Something like this happened to these two disciples. As they walked along, perhaps someone came in on a lane which fed into the road they were on. Before they knew it, they found themselves walking side-by-side with a stranger. He asked them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" (Luke 24:17). The two disciples stopped, looked at one another, and said, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" (Luke 24:18). The stranger said, "What things?" They said,

rooster crowing signaled the dawning of the day, occurring around three o'clock in the morning. Mark gives the exact time of the denials, between midnight and three o'clock, whereas Luke and John give the time before which the denials would take place, the dawning of the day.

¹⁵Archaeologists have not identified Emmaus with certainty, but Luke 24:13 says it was about seven miles outside of Jerusalem. The two disciples walked the distance on Sunday evening, and after seeing Jesus walked back to Jerusalem to meet with the brethren (Luke 24:33).

The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive (Luke 24:19–23).

Jesus said to these two disciples, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” (Luke 22:25). If Jesus were here today, likely He would give us the same rebuke: “O . . . slow of heart to believe!” We have so much evidence. Why are we so hesitant to believe? Jesus further said to them, “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 22:26). Beginning with Moses and working through all the prophets, Jesus explained how the Christ fulfilled what the prophets had said. Can you imagine what it must have been like to have listened to Jesus as He taught the course entitled, “Prophecy and Its Fulfillment”? Later, we learn that the hearts of the two disciples had burned within them as they listened to Him speak (Luke 24:32).

They came to the place where they needed to turn off to go to their home. Jesus indicated to them that He was going on. They, therefore, invited Him to their home for the night. Jesus always goes where He is sincerely invited. At their home that evening, they sat a meal before him. Jesus took the bread set before Him, blessed it, broke it, and handed it to each of them. He went into their home as a guest, but He quickly became the host. This is always the case. He enters our hearts as a guest, but if He stays, He will reign over our hearts as Lord. God lifted the veil from their eyes, and they found that they were seated across the table from the Christ. They beheld Him for a few moments, then He vanished (Luke 22:31). Imagine what it would be like to find yourself seated at a table with the resurrected Christ!

These two disciples put up their food, rushed out of their house, and returned to Jerusalem. They found the disciples gathered together with the eleven apostles. With excitement that

could only characterize men who had seen the risen Christ, they told the group that Jesus was alive from the dead, how He had appeared to them and to Peter (Luke 22:34, 35).

The resurrection ministers to the fearful. The fifth appearance of Jesus after His resurrection was to an assembly of anxious disciples late on Sunday evening in Jerusalem.

We do not know where this meeting took place. We do know they were meeting behind closed doors somewhere in Jerusalem (Luke 24:37; John 20:19). Maybe they were thinking, “They crucified Jesus, we may be next.”

Sometime that evening, Jesus appeared in their midst. He said, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). Those who had not already seen Him thought that they might be seeing a ghost (Luke 24:37). He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in you hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Luke 24:38, 39; see John 20:20). Some still could not believe what their eyes were seeing. They were overwhelmed with joy at the sight of Christ. Jesus said, “Have you anything here to eat?” (Luke 24:41). They gave Him some broiled fish. He took it and ate it before them (Luke 24:42, 43). No finer evidence could be provided. Jesus was before them in a body that had mortal wounds in it. Anyone else but the Son of God would have been dead. He even ate fish before them to prove that He was alive.

After providing the clearest form of evidence that He was alive from the dead, he began to teach them. He reminded them that all things which had been written in the prophets were fulfilled in Him (Luke 22:44). He helped them to understand more clearly what had happened (Luke 22:45). Then He said to them:

Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:46–49).

He also said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have

been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained" (John 20:22, 23). These words anticipated and promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles which would occur on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4. They also suggested the authority that Spirit-guided men would have in the Christian Age. Guided by the Spirit, the apostles would announce to the world the conditions upon which heaven would grant forgiveness of sins to people. Anyone who obeyed those conditions in faith would receive forgiveness; anyone who refused those conditions would be denied forgiveness by the Lord.

All of the appearances of Jesus following His resurrection minister to us in a remarkable

way. They provide something we need. They reach down to the deep parts of our lives and give us the support that our hearts and intellects require for us to fully believe. Let us allow the resurrection to minister to us for the rest of our lives.

Eddie Cloer



When anyone becomes a Christian, he has given his life to the only religious leader who has ever been or who ever will be who can say, "[I am] the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Revelation 1:18).