

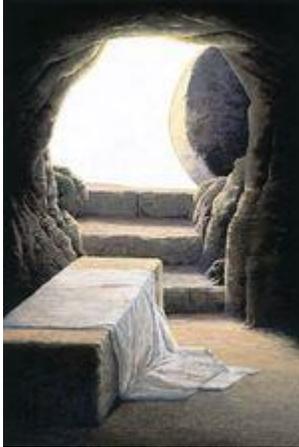
Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



Matthew 28:1-10

To deny the physicality of the resurrection is to deny that God vindicated the words and deeds of Jesus which are embodied in his flesh.



Year A

Easter Vigil or Sunday Morning

April 19, 2014

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [Matthew 28:1-10, The Message](#) or [Matthew 28:1-10, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click here, [Matthew 28:1-10](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "[A Covenant Of Compassion](#)."

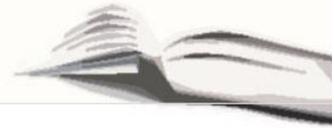
A good sermon or bible study of this lesson will have to begin by looking back to Matthew 27:55-66, and reading forward to Matthew 28:11-15.

Doing this will help you realize that between Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and the guards posted at the tomb, we can be sure that there is absolutely [trustworthy, continuous, eye-witness evidence](#) that:

- **It was Jesus of Nazareth up there on the cross and not a look-alike imposter.**
We know this for sure because Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were close companions of Jesus and would recognize him.
- **Jesus really, actually died on the cross on Friday, just before evening, the start of the Sabbath.**
We know this for sure because Mary Magdalene and the other Mary heard him cry out WITH A LOUD VOICE, saw him breathe his last, and heard what the Centurion said. Joseph of Arimathea had personal, direct contact with the body and would have known if there was still any life left in the body.
- **The body of Jesus was taken from the cross and placed in a known tomb.**
We know this for sure because Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, saw Joseph of Arimathea take the body and prepare it for burial, and then sat opposite the tomb.
- **The body of Jesus was not secretly removed from the tomb by his followers.**
We know this for sure because the opponents of Jesus - the chief priests and

Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



Pharisees - had the Roman Governor, Pilate, place Roman guards at the tomb to prevent this very sort of hoax. The guards sealed the tomb with a stone and kept a 24 hour watch.

- **The body of Jesus was not in the tomb when the angel of the Lord opened the tomb at dawn on Sunday.**

We know this for sure because Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and the Roman guards, were there and witnessed these events.

- **Jesus is resurrected, and is not a ghost.**

We know this for sure because Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were met by Jesus. Jesus greeted them. They heard him; saw him; and were able to touch him. They recognized him and worshiped him. His body was a resurrected body, but it was actually, factually, really the same Jesus they knew before.

- **Jesus is resurrected, and this is not a hoax.**

We know this for sure, because in fact we know that the guards were paid to spread this false rumour. Oddly enough, even today people make lots of money writing books promoting this false rumour.

So what? So why is this such Good News?

In order to really get the Good News of Easter, it is important to get our hearts and minds focused on who brutally degraded and killed Jesus, and why they did that.

Why?

Well. Let's suppose Jesus had lived a long and happy life and died peacefully in his sleep surrounded by loved ones. If he had then been resurrected on the third day, that would be pretty good news. We could still preach sermons about "Love Is Stronger Than Death." Which is for sure true. And most days is good enough news for me.

Or. Let's suppose that some ordinary person - say, Mary Magdalene - was resurrected. Same thing as before. "Love Is Stronger Than Death." Still is good enough news.

But suppose we learned that someone truly bad - say, Adolf Hitler - was resurrected. Wow! Not such good news. In this case I'd rather that death was a permanent condition.

But if we focus our hearts and minds on the fact that it was Jesus who was resurrected, and that he was resurrected after being brutally degraded and executed by the Romans, then the truly Good News becomes clear.

Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



You see, the Romans killed lots of people. Often right on the spot; no muss, no fuss.

No time consuming, expensive trial, flogging, mocking, marching off to Golgotha, stripping naked, nailing to a cross, more mocking and taunting, poking with a spear to make sure he's really dead.

Why the showy death for Jesus?

Because they wanted to kill more than the person of Jesus. They wanted to kill what Jesus stood for. They wanted to kill any thought in any followers of carrying on. They wanted to kill any future; any hope.

Normally, Jesus' dead body would be left on the cross to rot a bit; maybe be eaten by scavenging birds and animals; be reduced to a no body; and then be thrown into a mass grave to fade from memory.

But Joseph of Arimathea was able to get a personal favour from Pilate (probably at great personal expense). And Joseph was able to retrieve Jesus' body from the ignominy of the cross and return it to the framework of beloved relationships; keeping the identity of the body intact; giving the body a proper burial in anticipation of the general resurrection when God would raise all the saints.

But then another unusual thing happened.

You see, at the time of Jesus, it was believed that the flesh of a person contained all their deeds - good and bad. And that after death, the body had to undergo a year-long purification as the evil deeds in the flesh rotted away; leaving only the bones which contained the personality of the person. God would then use the bones to knit a new "resurrected" body for the life to come.

But before Jesus' flesh could begin to rot, God interrupts this process and raises Jesus.

What does this mean?

It means that the flesh of Jesus - Jesus' words and deeds - needed no purification. They already were pure.

Jesus' words and deeds are true and trustworthy.

It also means that God has overturned the Roman mortification of Jesus' flesh.

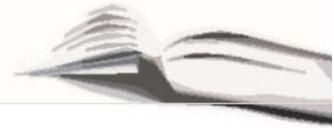
The Romans tried to erase Jesus' words and deeds from the face of the earth forever. But God raised Jesus to resurrected-life here on earth.

This is why the New Testament consistently insists on the physicality of the resurrection.

To deny the physicality of the resurrection is to deny that God vindicated the words and deeds of Jesus which are embodied in his flesh.

Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



Now let's not get all modern, and scientific, and silly here. Nowhere does the New Testament claim that the same flesh that was flogged and killed by the Romans, and buried in a tomb, is the "flesh" of the resurrected body.

We can't say for sure what a "resurrected body" is because there is no earthly equivalent. "Resurrected bodies" are for the life to come, not this life.

So the Jesus who died on Good Friday - that flesh - is still dead on Easter Sunday.

But the words and deeds that were in the flesh of the Jesus who died on Good Friday?

Ah! The embodied words and deeds of Jesus - **THOSE** are really, actually, factually alive on Easter Sunday.

The worst that Rome could do was not able to kill Jesus' words and deeds.

They are true and trustworthy.

This is the really Good News of Easter.

Happy Easter everyone!

David Ewart,
www.holytextures.com

Historical background information in this post is drawn primarily from Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, see link below, pages 140-141.

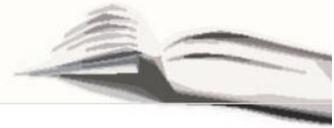
* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, Richard Rohrbaugh, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

Matthew 28:1-10 (NRSV)

¹ After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." ⁸ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped

Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



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."

New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. [Used by permission](#). All rights reserved.

Matthew 28:1-10 (The Message)

¹ After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb. ² Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing. He rolled back the stone and then sat on it. ³ Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white. ⁴ The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move.

⁵ The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. ⁶ He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed.

⁷ "Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, 'He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' That's the message."

⁸ The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. ⁹ Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "Good morning!" he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Jesus said, "You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there."

Scripture quotations from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. [Used by permission](#) of NavPress Publishing Group.