

The Story (24) – Resurrection

By Ashby Camp

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I. Dead and Buried

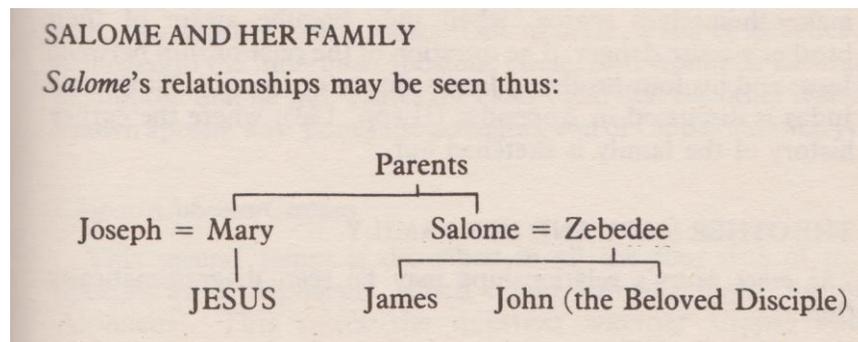
FRIDAY MORNING TO LATE AFTERNOON

A. Last week I sketched for you the events during the week leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. When I was so rudely interrupted by the bell, Pilate had relented to pressure from the Jewish leaders and sentenced Jesus to be crucified. Jesus was scourged, as the brutal prelude to crucifixion, and then marched off to Golgotha to be crucified. At some point, a man named Simon of Cyrene was conscripted to carry Jesus' cross, meaning the crossbeam, presumably because Jesus was too weak to carry it. It would have weighed 30 to 40 pounds.

B. Jesus was crucified between two robbers or insurrectionists, traditionally called thieves, under the charge: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. The mocking of him continued from soldiers, leaders, and others passing by. The robbers reviled Jesus, but one had a change of heart, and Jesus tells him "Today you will be with me in Paradise." The crucifying soldiers cast lots to see who would get his clothes, which was a fulfillment of prophecy.

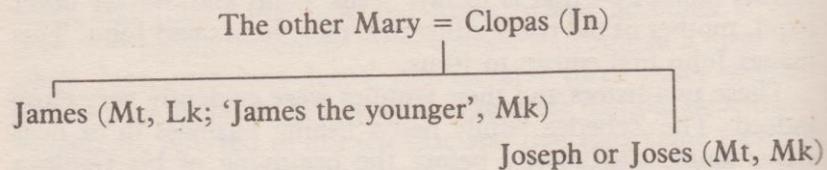
C. As the late N.T. scholar John Wenham pieces things together in his book *Easter Enigma*, admittedly employing a fair amount of reasonable speculation, it seems that early in the crucifixion, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene (who is arguably the same person as Mary of Bethany, Martha and Lazarus's sister), Mary the wife of Clopas, Salome, and John were allowed by the centurion to come near to the cross; other relatives and well-wishers (including Joanna and Susanna) stood further back.

SLIDES ON RELATIONSHIPS (James the Younger probably = James son of Alphaeus)



THE OTHER MARY AND HER FAMILY

The other Mary's relationships may be seen diagrammatically thus:



D. Jesus committed his mother to John's care, and then John and his mother, Salome, took her to a home that Wenham speculates, from various bits of evidence, John's family maintained in Jerusalem. It seems that the three women were supporting the Lord's mother by the cross until John took her to his home, after which they moved back to observe the Lord's suffering at a distance. After staying with his new mother for some hours, John returned to the crucifixion and witnessed the end.

E. Darkness fell on the land for about 3 hours, and then Jesus declared "It is finished"; he gave up his life on Friday afternoon (April 7 if the year was A.D. 30). There was an earthquake and the curtain in the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two, rocks were split, and tombs were opened. After his death, the soldiers pierced his side with a spear releasing a flow of water and blood.

F. Joseph of Arimathea got permission to bury Jesus. He wrapped his body in a linen shroud and took it his newly cut tomb that was nearby. Given that the Sabbath began at sundown, there was insufficient time to adequately prepare the body for burial, so Joseph and Nicodemus temporarily packed it in a large supply of dry spices. To all the world, it looks like Rome has crushed another pretender. But Sunday's coming.

G. Joanna, whose husband, Chuza, was steward to Herod Antipas, and Susanna, another well-to-do woman who is mentioned with Joanna in Lk. 8:3, perhaps followed Joseph into the tomb and helped to lay out the body (women saw how it was laid – Lk. 23:55) while Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas watched at a respectful distance. The four women conferred and agreed to return at first light on Sunday to anoint the body as best they could, thinking it had been insufficiently prepared because of the hasty burial. Before leaving they saw Joseph's servants roll the great stone against the entrance of the tomb.

H. Joanna and Susanna returned to the Hasmonean Palace (her husband being part of Herod's court) and prepared spices and ointments from what was on hand in the short time before the Sabbath began. Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas went to John's house, it being too late

for Mary Magdalene to return to Bethany (where she either lived – if she is Martha's sister – or was staying).

SATURDAY DURING THE DAY AND EVENING

A. Members of the Sanhedrin sent a delegation of Pharisees and Sadducees to Pilate to procure guards for the tomb. The tomb was sealed, and the Temple guard, backed by a contingent of Roman soldiers, set up a watch.

B. That evening, after the Sabbath had ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas, and Salome bought spices for the anointing. Perhaps Salome bought the spices on behalf of the three of them, while Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas (accompanied by her husband since it was after sundown) ventured to Bethany to tell the other disciples the dreadful news.

II. The Resurrection

SUNDAY BEFORE DAWN AND THROUGH THE EVENING

A. While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas (accompanied by her husband) set out from Bethany to return to John's house. Clopas stayed at John's house while Salome, Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Clopas went to the tomb at daybreak to anoint the body.

B. There was an earthquake, and an angel rolled the grave stone away (not to let the body out but to permit the coming witnesses to enter in verification of the resurrection). The angel sat on top of the stone and frightened the guards away. The angel then withdrew into the tomb so as not to frighten the women when they arrived. (Matthew probably intended his readers to understand that the events recorded in Mat. 28:2-4 happened while the women were on the way.)

C. The Jewish guards encouraged the senior Roman soldiers to go first with them to their authorities, rather than to report their failure to Pilate, thinking that Caiaphas might be a useful buffer between them and the governor.

D. The women arrived at the tomb and saw that the gravestone had been rolled away. Mary Magdalene jumped to the conclusion that the body had been stolen and ran off to tell Peter and John.

E. As Salome and Mary of Clopas were considering what to do, Joanna and Susanna arrived, having come as agreed to help complete the burial rites. Joanna led the group into the tomb to verify that the body was in fact missing. The angels made themselves visible and delivered their message of Jesus' resurrection and instructed them to inform the disciples. Led by Joanna, the women rushed back into the city and headed for John's house.

F. Peter and John, having heard from Mary Magdalene that someone had stolen the Lord's body, ran to the tomb with Mary Magdalene trailing behind. Joanna, being less familiar

with Jerusalem, took a less direct route from the tomb to John's house, so the two groups did not meet.

G. Peter and John saw the empty tomb, but the angels did not make themselves visible. Mary Magdalene lingered behind after Peter and John returned home. She saw the angels in the tomb and then Jesus appeared to her. She returned to John's house and found a group of excited women and a group of confused and somewhat skeptical men.

H. Salome and Mary of Clopas headed to Bethany to tell the good news to the disciples there. As they started on the way, they were met by Jesus.

I. Clopas and his companion set out for Emmaus. Jesus joined them and made himself known at the mid-day meal.

J. During the afternoon, Jesus appeared to Peter.

K. The apostles from Bethany (less Thomas) arrived and gathered with the others in the upper room (Mark's large house – Acts 12:12). Clopas and his companion returned from Emmaus and joined them. Jesus appeared to the ten apostles and to the others present. (Cleopas is the nearest genuine Greek name to the transliterated name Clopas. Luke could have adopted this form in preference to the form derived from the Aramaic in writing up this story for his Greek-speaking readers.)

L. Note that the bodies of other saints, "holy ones," who had died came out of their tombs after the Lord's resurrection and appeared to many in Jerusalem (Mat. 27:52-53). This was a foretaste of what will happen to all when the Lord returns, even those who lived before the Lord's coming.

THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY

Jesus appeared to the Eleven (Thomas included) while they were meeting in the house.

LATER APPEARANCES IN GALILEE

A. The Passover festival being completed (which included Passover and the six days of unleavened bread), the Eleven returned to their home country in Galilee pursuant to Jesus' instruction. Jesus appeared to seven of the apostles as they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee.

B. Jesus appeared to more than five hundred believers, including the eleven disciples, at a prearranged meeting on a remote mountainside in Galilee.

C. Jesus appeared to his brother James.

BACK IN JERUSALEM

A. The apostles were perhaps instructed to return to Mark's house in Jerusalem to wait for the final event which was to prepare them for their world mission. Jesus met with them there and taught them the night before his Ascension.

B. As dawn began to break, Jesus led them out of the city on the same route they had taken on the night of the Last Supper. He took them to the summit of the Mount of Olives, where the descent to Bethany began, gave them his last words, and then ascended to heaven before their eyes.

SEE "THE HISTORICAL CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST"

III. Views of Death and the Afterlife at the Time of Christ

A. Some in the ancient pagan world denied there was any kind of life after death, but most pagans believed that a person's spirit or soul continued to exist after death. Those pagans who believed in a continuing spiritual existence did not believe in *resurrection*, in the restoration of bodily life after death. For them, death was a one-way street to a disembodied existence.

B. Some Jews, like the Sadducees, denied there was any kind of life after death, and others, like Philo, believed that one would continue to exist after death as a disembodied soul or spirit. But most ancient Jews believed that God would raise his people bodily from the dead at the last day, the day on which he judged and remade the world.

1. That belief is behind Martha's statement in Jn. 11:24 that she knows her dead brother Lazarus "will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." It also is evident in Paul's play to the Pharisees in Acts 23:6 that he was on trial with respect to the hope of the resurrection of the dead and in his statement in Acts 24:15 that his accusers from Jerusalem accept the hope that there will be a resurrection of both the just and unjust.

2. In several places, Jesus accepts this aspect of the standard Jewish view, the aspect of a general resurrection on the last day. For example, in Mk. 12:18-27 (Mat. 22:23-33; Lk. 20:27-40), when the Sadducees asked him a trick question designed to make the belief in an end-time resurrection look silly, he defended the belief by indicating that in that resurrection state certain things would be different so there would be no problem with people who had been married multiple times during their pre-resurrection lives.

C. What the Jews did *not* expect was that this end-time resurrection, this rising to immortal life, would happen to someone *in advance of God's remaking of the world*. That was not part of their theological landscape. They expected everyone to be resurrected to immortality together in conjunction with the final judgment and the beginning of the eternal state.

1. The fact Jesus was raised contrary to that expectation, raised immortal in advance of God's remaking of the world, the firstfruits of the end-time resurrection, is indicated in Mark's account of the transfiguration. When Jesus told Peter, James, and John after the transfiguration not to tell anyone what they had seen "until the Son of Man had risen from the dead," Mark reports that they were puzzled about what this rising from the dead might mean (Mk. 9:9-10). N. T. Wright says in *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 415:

The passage flags up one of the points at which we have seen, in our study of Paul, a significant Christian innovation: the idea that 'the resurrection' has split into two, with Jesus' resurrection coming forwards into the middle of history. Mark, clearly, intends his readers to recognize that they share with hindsight the knowledge that Jesus seemed to have in advance. The reader understands what was, for the disciples at the time, still a puzzle. Mark is thus drawing our attention to the fact that this is precisely an innovation within Jewish thinking.

2. The fact the disciples were not expecting Jesus to be resurrected within history, despite what he had told them, is confirmed by their reaction to his death.

a. None of them said, "Don't worry; he'll be back in a few days." Rather, their hopes were crushed; they went into hiding. You can feel the despair in the disciple Cleopas's statement in Lk. 24:21. He said to the unrecognized Jesus on the road to Emmaus that they "*had hoped* that [Jesus] was the one to redeem Israel," the implication being "but they crucified him so he could not have been."

b. Even when the women reported to the apostles and the others that the tomb was empty and that angels had announced Jesus' resurrection, they did not believe them (Lk. 24:1-11).

c. Thomas had everybody telling him that the Lord had risen, and he said he would not believe it unless he could see that the allegedly resurrected Jesus had distinguishing marks of crucifixion and could feel those marks and the solidity of Jesus' body (Jn. 20:24-25).

D. The fact the disciples became absolutely convinced Jesus had risen bodily from the tomb, that the resurrection had begun with an individual while the world continued on as it was, when such a thing was contrary to their expectations speaks volumes about the evidence of that resurrection. It was powerful enough to pull them through their skepticism all the way to complete conviction.