

## Synchronizing the Resurrection Narratives—5: Event 1 (part 2)—Two Marys come to the tomb “late” (Saturday) as the first day is “dawning” (Sunday) to look at the tomb, then they returned home, Matt. 28:1.

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In the last essay I noted that *opse* should be translated “late” in Matthew 28:1; it is always translated this way in the Bible and throughout secular literature up to the second century. After the following four translations, I have corrected the first part of the verse:

**Matthew 28:1** Now late of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. (KJV)

**Matthew 28:1** In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. (NAS, 1971)

**Matthew 28:1** Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. (NAS, 1995)

**Matthew 28:1** Ὁψέ δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων, ἦλθεν Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή, καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία, θεωρῆσαι τὸν τάφον. (There are no variants in the Greek texts)

The corrected translation of the first temporal phrase :

**Matthew 28:1** Now late (Ὁψέ δὲ) on the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

As one can see from the translations above, there is no conflict concerning the translation of the second temporal phrase, “as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.” *However*, how can Matthew connect the temporal phrase “late on the Sabbath” with “as it began to dawn” (sunrise?) without violating the law of non-contradiction? How can it be late in the day on the Sabbath (Saturday) while it is also beginning to “dawn” on Sunday? Certainly, it is doubtful that Matthew intentionally and blatantly contradicted himself by connecting the time period just before sunset on the Sabbath in the first phrase with just before sunrise on the first day of the week (Resurrection Sunday) in the second phrase.

In Matthew 28:1 the five words translated “as it began to dawn” is the Greek present active participle *epiphoskouse/ἐπιφωσκούση*. This Greek word has *only one other New Testament usage*. Remarkably it is used of the burial of Jesus, specifically to indicate the time of day

that He was buried. Luke is very clear about the fact that Jesus died at about the ninth hour of the day, corresponding to our 3:00 p.m. Note how the “dawn” in Matthew 28:1 is translated “drew on” and “to begin” in its only other usage in the New Testament:

**Luke 23:54** And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath **drew on** (KJV).

**Luke 23:54** And it was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was **about to begin** (NAS, 1995).

**Luke 23:54** This was done late on Friday afternoon, the day of preparation, as the Sabbath **was about to begin** (New Living Translation).

**Luke 23:54** It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was **about to begin** (NIV).

**Luke 23:54** καὶ ἡμέρα ἣν παρασκευῆς καὶ σάββατον **ἐπέφωσκει** (no variants in the Greek texts)

Clearly in the above passage, Jesus was buried in the afternoon of the preparation day (Friday) as the Jewish Sabbath “was about to begin (to dawn),” our word *epephosken*. This is the only other use of the term in the Bible, and it clearly does not refer to “dawn” in the sense of sunrise. If in Matthew 28:1, *epiphosko* is allowed to have the same influence on its subject, “the first day of the week” as it does on its subject “the Sabbath” in Luke 23:54, we must then conclude that the second temporal phrase of Matthew 28:1 is referring to the same time of day as in Luke 23:54, just before sunset. Again, the phrase “late on the Sabbath” (best translation) is not in conflict with “as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.” Matthew 28:1, therefore, does not refer to Sunday morning. It refers to Saturday evening, maybe an hour before sunset. Both temporal phrases in Matthew 28:1 refer to the same time period, just as they do in Luke 23:54. The correct translation:

**Matthew 28:1** Now **late** on the Sabbath, as the first day (Sunday) was **about to begin,**<sup>1</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

In sum, the first event includes two grieving Marys, late on the Sabbath (Saturday), just before sundown, coming to look upon the tomb where Jesus was buried. They looked upon it and returned home. Unlike the accounts of the sunrise Sunday morning trip of the women in Mark 16:1-2 and Luke 24:1-3, Matthew 28:1 makes no mention of their intention of spicing the body of Jesus. There are no contradictions in these resurrection accounts.

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<sup>1</sup>In this translation I have omitted the word “dawn.” This is in accordance with its use in the only other passage where this word is found (Luke 23:54)—where no such concept or translation is found. I left it out because “dawn” can bring with it the idea of light as per sunrise. However, even in English we use the term “dawn” to describe the rise of any new thing, e.g., “the dawn of a new era.” It is not uncommon to hear radio deejays who work through the night and morning begin with a greeting of welcoming the “dawn” of a new day shortly after midnight. Everyone understands that he does not mean that the sun is rising. The dawn refers to a new day and not necessarily to sunrise as such.

Again, in Matthew they simply went “to see” the tomb, probably about an hour before sunset on the Sabbath, Saturday evening; they returned home shortly thereafter.

In Christ,

Pastor Don