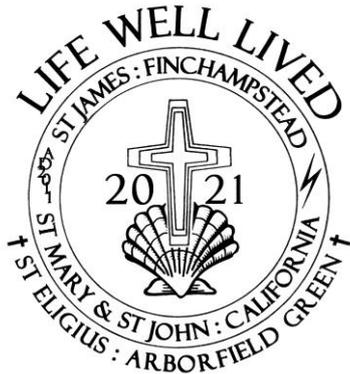


## Parish of Finchampstead and California



# THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

## TALK 1: INTRODUCTION and the GOSPELS of MARK and MATTHEW

### Introduction

*If Christ has not been raised from the dead, your faith is futile (1 Corinthians 15:17)*

#### The aim

- To look in detail at the Biblical material relating to the Resurrection of Jesus and thereby to deepen our faith in the risen and living Son of God

#### How we shall proceed

- Gospels vs Paul
- Gospels in order commonly believed to have been written
- Need to explore some major issues in Biblical scholarship but try not to be diverted from aim
- Review of the individual Gospels
- Paul
- Concluding session on the implications of the Biblical material for our own Christian faith

#### The synopsis

- The four Gospel accounts of the post-Resurrection events in separate columns, aligned to show different accounts of same events
- Considerable lack of direct overlap (but note eg the role of women)
- Deal with each Gospel account in turn but note here sparseness of Mark, the elaboration and apparent double ending in John
- As well as comparing and contrasting the accounts, also look at how they work as part of each individual Gospel
- Note in the fifth column Paul's minimalist approach as to facts – try and tease out what the significance is of that in talk 3

#### Setting the scene – a compressed account of the events of Good Friday

- Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane
- In Matthew and Mark his disciples flee
- Jesus is tried
- Peter three times denies knowing Jesus
- Jesus is condemned to death
- He is crucified; the sky turns black (not in John)
- The women (and in Luke and John, others) attend the execution

- Jesus dies; the temple curtain is torn (not in John)
- [Matthew alone reports an earthquake]
- Jesus' body is hurriedly placed in a tomb which is closed
- The women watch the entombment (not in John)
- [In Matthew alone a guard is set over the tomb]

## Mark

- Mark's Gospel is almost universally considered to be the earliest.
- See ch 16:1-8 - These verses part of original Gospel, but followed by two later endings (v9-20 included in the synopsis for interest)
- Did Mark intend to finish his Gospel at v8? Most scholars consider that he did. But note inconsistency between v7 'Go and tell' and v8 'they said nothing to anyone'. Does 'anyone' mean 'anyone except the disciples'?
  - Resonances and contrasts of v1-8 with the rest of Mark's Gospel:
  - **Spices for anointing** – but Jesus had already been anointed by the woman at Bethany (14:3-9)
  - **The first day of the week** = the third day, as Jesus had said (8:31, 9:31, 10:34)
  - **Just after sunrise** – not only the earliest possible time, but contrast the light of resurrection with the darkness of death (15:33)
  - **Rolling the stone away** vs putting the stone in place (15:46). At the crucifixion and burial the women were onlookers (15:40,47), now they become the principal characters as they enter the tomb.
  - **The young man dressed in a white robe** recalls the follower of Jesus who ran away naked at his arrest (14:51) – power replaces impotence
  - **Sitting on the right side** – the place of highest honour which Jesus applied to himself during his trial (14:62)
  - **They were alarmed** – a better translation might be 'terrified'; Mark uses this dramatic word only twice elsewhere – about the disciples at the Transfiguration (9:15) and about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (14:33)
  - **He has risen** (or **He has been raised** which Paul would have preferred): THE CLIMAX OF THE GOSPEL. The fulfilment of Jesus' own words (8:31, 9:9, 9:31, 10:34, 14:28)
  - **See the place where they laid him** as reported in 15:47
  - **Go and tell** – a dramatic reversal of Jesus' instructions of silence to those he healed (1:44, 3:12, 5:43, 7:36, 8:26) and to the disciples (8:30, 9:9)
  - The disciples **and Peter** because Peter needed to hear after denying Jesus so comprehensively (14:66-72)
  - **He is going ahead of you (or before you) into Galilee, as he told you** (in 14:28). Also recalls the calling of the first disciples beside the Sea of Galilee in 1:14-20.
  - **The women fled ... they were scared** – just as the disciples were scared and fled after Jesus' arrest (14:50). And fear is a frequent response to Jesus during his ministry (4:41,5:15,5:38,6:50). But why were the women fearful now when they hadn't been before? (Scared by the implications of what they had heard, by their vulnerability, by their status, by their grief, by the unbelievability of their story?)
  - **They said nothing to anyone** – the final contradiction – the reader knows that the women cannot have been completely silent, or how would anyone know what happened?

### Mark's testimony about the Resurrection

- THE WORLD HAS BEEN TURNED UPSIDE DOWN
- But for those with ears to hear, Jesus had predicted that

- It's just that no-one was expecting it to happen that morning – Jesus the Messiah had been obliterated by the power of Rome and the collusion of the Jewish establishment, his male followers had scattered, the faithful women had a body to attend to, and then ...
- Huge stones don't just move – but this one did
- People aren't raised from the dead – but Jesus was
- It was God who raised him, confirming that he was the Messiah after all, and it was God who sent a messenger to proclaim it (the only one in Mark)
- And again without precedent and for the times almost scandalously and recklessly God chose as the only recipients of that proclamation – three women ...
- ... and God's plan seemed to hang by a thread as even their faithfulness seemed to be overwhelmed by fear
- So the Gospel comes to an end with an implicit invitation for the reader/hearer to provide the sequel (perhaps also to put themselves in the picture)
- But that sequel must have at least three elements:
  - The disciples will see Jesus
  - He will restore them (better, redeem them) ... and Peter
  - He will lead (go ahead of) them again

## Matthew

- Now considered to be heavily dependent on the earlier Gospel of Mark, but for most of the Christian era was regarded as superior to Mark. Note its placing as the first Gospel in the NT. Also note artistic treatments of the resurrection usually include the soldiers who feature only in Matthew.
- Keep an open mind on whether the differences between Mark and Matthew reflect Matthew's creativity or a desire by Mark to restrict his account to his view of the essentials. Look at Matthew's account in its own terms.
- Overall Matthew seems to want to emphasise certain elements of the Resurrection in ways which are distinctive:
  - God has exercised his power to raise Jesus from the dead (the earthquake as a symbol of God's action in the OT – eg Judges 5:4, 2 Samuel 22:8, Psalm 68:8; the angel not just as messenger (as in 1:20,2:13,19,4:11) but as one who effects God's will and who reflects his glory – compare the description with Moses in Exodus 34:29 and Jesus at the transfiguration (Mt 17:2))
  - The importance of the women is put beyond question – not only do they see the earthquake, the angel and the empty tomb, but they are the first to see the risen Jesus; Peter and the other disciples do not believe them, even after Peter checks out the tomb; but God sends no earthquake and no angel to persuade them.
  - By virtue of God's act of raising him, Jesus is now to be worshipped, both by the women immediately and by the male disciples later.
  - The empty tomb is itself a pointer to God's activity, and the elaborate account of the soldiers eliminates the possibility of human intervention. Note Matthew's editorial comment in 28:15 about circulation of the soldiers' false report - a clear indicator of why the soldiers are so important to him
  - After the description of the women at the tomb Matthew has only one appearance by Jesus - the Great Commission to the disciples.
  - During his earthly ministry Jesus seemed to focus on the Jewish people (10:5-6,15:24). Now he sends his disciples to all nations, emphasising the point by commissioning them in Galilee (Galilee of the Gentiles (4:15)).
- Matthew ties the post-resurrection story into the rest of his Gospel differently from Mark. Mark's spare narrative links in almost every phrase with themes earlier on. A few of these links are retained in Matthew but he has other points of contact, particularly with his Gospel's opening chapters:
  - **The angel** as more than simply a messenger (as already noted).
  - God brought the child Jesus back from Egypt, a potent symbol to Jews of exile and suffering (2:23); now he brings him back from death.
  - The women were **afraid** (as in Mark) but also **filled with great joy** – like the wise men (2:10).

- The women and the disciples **worshipped** Jesus, just as the wise men had done (2:11).
- The last great commandment is given on the **mountain**, repeating the location of the giving of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) and of Jesus' teaching on the Law in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew ch 5-7).
- Jesus declares that **all authority** has been given to him, far in excess of the authority the Devil had tried to tempt him with (4:8-11).
- The commission is to **all nations** – to the Gentiles; Jesus' first appearance (epiphany) in the Gospel is to Gentiles – the wise men (2:1).
- The **baptism in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit** is a fulfilment of John the Baptist's prophecy in 3:11.
- Contrast the simplicity of the **Commission** with Jesus' detailed instructions to the disciples when he first sent them out on their own (10:5-20).
- After baptism **teaching** is given priority, just as it was when Jesus called the first disciples (4:23).
- **I am with you always** – takes us back to Immanuel – God with us in 1:23.
- **To the very end of the age** – so Matthew's Gospel embraces the whole of salvation history, starting with Abraham (1:1).

#### Matthew's Testimony about the Resurrection

- GOD'S PLAN IS FULFILLED
- As in Mark – so in Matthew: Jesus predicts his resurrection.
- But Matthew goes further than Mark – the whole narrative from the birth stories and the wise men to the end of Jesus' ministry points to the resurrection and what followed it.
- In Matthew God's power is made explicit in the disclosure to the women of what has already happened - the angelic manifestation and proclamation, earthquake and moved stone taken together.
- Matthew gives the women more prominence even than Mark. They see so much - the earthquake, the stone rolled away, the stupefied soldiers. They see where Jesus' body was laid. Finally they see Jesus and touch him - confirming the resurrection is about a physical, touchable body, not a spiritual experience. Their involvement comes to a much more conventional end than Mark's 'go tell' / 'they said nothing to anyone' conundrum.
- The soldiers add texture to the story while their involvement addresses an apparently contemporary issue for Matthew the writer.
- But whereas God has raised Jesus from death, his intervention for the benefit of the women makes the soldiers become like dead men.
- The soldiers can't account for what happened to them, but then neither can the male disciples. The soldiers are transformed temporarily; the disciples' will be transformed – and permanently – but they will have to wait for a time beyond the end of the Gospel, during the eternal period when Jesus will be with them.
- In the meantime, their faith has fallen short again. The restoration implicit in Mark is no more explicit in Matthew, though Jesus' giving them the Great Commission implies he has confidence in them, in spite of everything, including their remaining doubt.
- And, while the Great Commission is a suitable and appropriate conclusion to the Gospel, it still leaves open, like the ending of Mark, how the disciples will interpret it, and how we as readers will respond to it.