

## **Matthew 28:1 and the Resurrection** **What it really means**

Nothing is worse than a bad theory in defense of a noble cause. The noble cause is that the resurrection of Messiah was on the weekly Sabbath and not Sunday. The bad theory is the use of Matthew 28:1 to argue that the women went to the tomb just after sunset Saturday so as to say the resurrection was Saturday afternoon, or just before they arrived.

Let us look at several translations of Matthew 28:1. First the King James Version:

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 sepulchre.

The Sabbath ended at sunset Saturday, yet it says that the women came to the tomb “as it began to dawn.” Do you see the problem? The problem is that the KJV implies sunset in the first clause. Then in the second clause, which is explaining the same time, it says “dawn.” To resolve this crisis certain teachers have resorted to the same explanation as given by some Peshitta translators:<sup>1</sup>

Now in the evening of the Sabbath, as it was twilight [on] the first of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the grave (MGI).

Now we see here that the text at least agrees with itself by saying that the women went to the tomb near sunset at the end of the 7th day of the week. But is this the only solution? Does this solution agree with the time other scriptures state that the women went to the tomb? Indeed it does not:

And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. (Mark 16:2).

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<sup>1</sup> I say some Peshitta translators because not all of them actually translate the Aramaic text correctly, Roth put “Now in the closing (evening) of the Sabbath, as the first of the week was dawning...” (AENT), which is true to the Aramaic, but presents the same contradiction as the KJV, namely that evening and dawn are not the same times.

Here Mark has said “they came...at the rising of the sun”; Luke indicates the same, “very early in the morning, they came” (24:1), and so also John, “Mary Magdalene came in the early morning while it was dark to the tomb.” (John 20:1).

Therefore, to use Matthew 28:1 to say the women went to the tomb at sunset on Saturday as an argument for the resurrection on the Sabbath is an exercise in wrongly interpreting the word of truth.

So to “solve” Matthew 28:1 by assuming that the second clause speaks of twilight in the evening may make it agree with itself, but it creates a contradiction with three other key texts. In fact, the contradiction is now three times as bad as the first one. For at the first only Mat. 28:1 contradicted itself. Making Mat. 28:1 agree with itself in such a way multiplies the contradiction by three.

Therefore, if the Scripture is actually the truth of Messiah, then there must be another solution that has been overlooked. For anyone who proposes that the women went to the tomb in the evening is logically implying that Matthew 28:1 contradicts Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, and John 20:1. The women did go to the tomb in the morning, which shows that “at the dawning” (τῆ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ) in Mat. 28:1 must mean dawn. The solution does not involve making this phrase mean “twilight,” “dusk” or any other term implying the evening right after the close of the Sabbath.

A multitude of erring teachers have claimed that τῆ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ means near sunset. What they are not telling you is that this Greek word means “dawn” as surely and completely as the English word for dawn. What they are not telling you is that normal usage of the word in Greek is for “dawn” obscenely in favor of “dawn.” What they are dogmatically claiming is that it must mean evening twilight, and that it cannot mean dawn. What I tell you is that they are blind teachers who will not see the evidence because of their erring presuppositions.

So let us move on. Since the second clause of Matthew 28:1 most assuredly means “dawn”, it follows that the first clause must also refer to the same time. Let us outline this using the KJV:

- 1 In the end of the sabbath
- 2 as it began to dawn toward
- 3 the first day of the week
- 4 came Mary...

Clause 1 is the same time as clause 2, which is the same time as clause 3, which is the same time as clause 4. Each and every clause must be brought into agreement. Firstly the word “sabbath” in clause 1 is plural in the original. It should be “Sabbaths.” I am quite aware of all the arguments that Sabbaths in the plural means just a Sabbath, but these arguments are special pleadings brought out to defend the failing Sunday paradigm. The word σαββάτων is indeed normally used in Greek to mean plural Sabbaths.

Second, the word translated “week” is the same word as “Sabbaths,” and thirdly, the word translated “end” simply means “later” in Greek, and the word “toward” may be translated “for” or “on.”

Therefore, making the corrections we have:

- 1 In the **later** of the sabbaths
- 2 as it began to dawn **on**
- 3 the first day of the **sabbaths**
- 4 came Mary...

Now everthing agrees. The resurrection was on the later of two Sabbaths in Passion week. The women came just after it at dawn, and this later Sabbath was also called the “first of the Sabbaths” because Leviticus 23:15 established a practice among the Jews of counting seven Sabbaths after Passover, starting with the first weekly Sabbath after Passover:

Now the later of the Shabbats, at the dawning on the first of the Shabbats, Miryam Ha-Magdalit and the other Miryam came to look at the grave.

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