

# Scott's Thoughts

Attempts at explaining various subjects of Scripture

from the small mind of Scott Sheridan

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No. 8, June 28, 2007

## Who Saw It and When Did They See It

I recently heard the author of the book, *God Is Not Great*, on the radio. One of the many rather foolish claims he made was that it is absolutely impossible to harmonize the accounts of the women visiting the tomb of Jesus on the morning He resurrected. Of course, he is not alone in this. Many have claimed to demonstrate the falsehood of the New Testament by making such a claim. One web site says this: "For something so important and central to the message, theology, and very nature of Christianity, it's curious that the gospel authors would all have such radically different stories about what happened."<sup>1</sup>

I wouldn't use the word "radical," but there are some differences. But you would expect a few differences since four different accounts were written by four different individuals. I find it funny how liberals and atheists say that they Gospel writers had to have copied from each other (synoptic problem) to get a consistent record so you can't trust what they wrote because of their collusion. And then criticize the Gospel records for their individuality. Oh well. Such is the way with those that do not want to believe.

There are four texts to consider. They are John 20:1-19; Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:1-12. You really need to read these to follow the discussion so go ahead and I'll go grab a Diet Mountain Dew and be back in a couple of minutes.....

OK. Before I get started, I want to give credit where it is due. In my second year of Greek at Florida Christian College Lewis Foster spent an entire class hour going over this.

One other thing. Too many times we try to interpret the Scriptures as a 21<sup>st</sup> century American. That makes sense since that what most of us are (with a couple of exceptions to my friends in other countries). The Scriptures were not written by 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans. It was written by 1<sup>st</sup> century, Greek speaking, Orientals. And it must be handled as such. Much of the "attention to detail" that we in this century like to have will not be found in ancient writings. They simply did not think that way. Even many modern cultures today do not think that way. That being said, let's get on with it.

All four of the texts I mentioned above begin early on Sunday morning. Jesus' body was not prepared for burial due to the fact that by the time He was placed in the tomb it was almost time for the Sabbath to begin (approx. 6pm Friday evening, our time). So they left Him there as is. As they were leaving, the women obviously agreed to meet on Sunday morning to finish the job.

While it was still dark on Sunday morning a group of women were on their way to the tomb. The group consisted of Mary Magdalene, Mary (James' mom), Salome and Joanna. They were coming from Bethany a few miles away. As it was becoming light, Mary Magdalene probably ran ahead of the others. She found the stone rolled away and went to tell the 12 (actually only 11 since Judas killed himself). She found Peter and John. They went running to see for themselves. John got there first, having outrun Peter, but he stops at the entrance to the tomb and takes a look around. When Peter got there he did not hesitate. What they found was interesting. Things were neatly put away, particularly Jesus' head cloth. Had His body simply have been stolen, it is doubtful the thieves would have taken the time to clean up.

Before Peter and John arrived the other women finally arrived from Bethany, had met with the two angels and had started to go back home. After all, they came to prepare a body and it was not there. I'm sure they were going to spread the news about what the angels had told them as soon as possible.

Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb. Since she wasn't in the big hurry that Peter and John had been in, she arrives at the tomb after they and the other women have left. Mary speaks to two angels. Then, she sees someone in the garden that she assumes is the gardener. She asks Him if He knows where the body Of Jesus had been taken.

When He spoke her name she immediately knew who He was. I absolutely love that passage. Imagine yourself in her place, being as disheartened as she must have been. Then to ask this stranger a desperate question, only to discover that it was Jesus she was speaking to. I literally get emotional over these kinds of things. Wow.

Anyway, Jesus a little later appears to the other women on their way back to Bethany. He told them to tell the 11 that He would meet them in Galilee (Mt. 28:10).

Jesus later appeared to many others: Peter, two on the road to Emmaus, to the 11 minus Thomas, then later to all 11. Of course Paul gives us a pretty good record in 1 Corinthians 15.

You may disagree, but I think that is a pretty good harmonization of that Sunday's events. I haven't researched what others have done to harmonize the accounts, so there may be others out there as good, or even better than this. Let me know.

Let me say one other thing before I wrap this up. People look for all kinds of ways to prove the Scriptures wrong. Let me try and teach you something. If there is any **reasonable** explanation for an apparent contradiction, it is no longer a contradiction. And this applies to all subjects. Things may be beyond our information, but that does not make something contradictory.

<sup>1</sup> <http://atheism.about.com/od/gospelcontradictions/p/Resurrection.htm>

On June 4<sup>th</sup> I upgraded my laptop to Microsoft Vista. It rewrote my entire operating system. It's been a pain having to reinstall programs. Fortunately it left my files intact but I had to reinstall the executables. In the process I lost the mailing list for this e-letter. This mailing is going out to less than half of those that were on the list BV (before Vista). If you happen to know of someone that did not receive their expected email please let them know they need to resend to me their address. Some of you Preachers have people in your congregation that were signed up. I have no way of knowing their address. Please help me out. Thanks!

SCOTT



Comments of the last issue of *Scott's Thoughts* concerning the term "Pastor":

**KZ in IL:** Well thought out and taught very well! Keep up the good work - even if it goes against what everyone else teaches. My elders will appreciate this article!

**DR in OR:** Great article on the misuse of the term "The Pastor." I, too, have observed that while perhaps it seems like a minor issue, it often indicates a willingness to follow after what is popular rather than what the Bible teaches. Those I know around me who have backgrounds in the restoration churches who misuse the title don't do it because they misunderstand. They do it because it's popular and used by "successful" men. They don't want to have to explain the difference between a "pastor" and an "evangelist." They don't want to look like they're out of step with the mainstream evangelical churches. When or if I point it out to them, they become defensive and accuse me of being too picky. I know you know all about that.

Just wanted to let you know that there is another out here who agrees with you. Words do mean things. Keep up the good work.

**MD in IA:** I think you are making a mountain out of a molehill, frankly. The term "poimeign" is "shepherd". Whether or not a person who preaches the gospel is called a "pastor" or not would be entirely dependent on his role. It is a descriptive term. It is a term that shows what the person is doing...and that would be shepherding.

If I "shepherd" a church it is not only biblical but even appropriate to be labeled a "shepherd."

The reality for me is that as we quibble over terms like this, people all around us (in fact most everyone we know) are going to perish in hell. But hopefully we will have our terms clarified.

My philosophy is this...don't call me anything. I'm just your friend. Call me (by my name). I don't pursue titles.

But if you are truly an "evangelist" then you shouldn't be preaching to Christians each and every week. You should be doing whatever it takes to win the lost.

"If they must go to hell, then let them go with my arms around their ankles. If they must go there, then let them have to push me out of the way first."

In our aim for correctness, we forget the main point. Jesus clarified it for us...love God, love people. The rest is just details.

*[I don't usually respond to the comments made about the last edition and I will not here except to say that just because a person is concerned about the proper use of Biblical terms does not mean he is abandoning the call to save souls or has faulty aim. That argument is a straw man.—Scott]*