

An Easter Harmony from the Four Gospels

Adapted from *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ*, a harmony of the Four Gospels, based on the text of the EHV, available from Northwestern Publishing House.

Jesus' Tomb Is Made Secure

On the day after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered in the presence of Pilate and said, "Sir, we remembered what that deceiver said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise again.' So give a command that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise his disciples might steal his body and tell the people, 'He is risen from the dead.' And this last deception will be worse than the first."

Pilate said to them, "You have a guard. Go, make it as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and posting a guard.

The Empty Tomb

Suddenly, there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and going to the tomb, he rolled away the stone and was sitting on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards were so terrified of him that they shook and became like dead men.

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so they could go and anoint Jesus. Very early on the first day of the week, at sunrise, while it was still dark, they went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. They were saying to each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb for us?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away from the tomb. When they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

So Mary Magdalene left and ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb," she told them, "and we don't know where they put him!"

So Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. Bending over, he saw the linen cloths lying there, yet he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter, who was following him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw only the strips of linen cloths lying there. The cloth that had been on Jesus' head was not lying with the linen cloths, but was folded up in a separate place by itself. Then the other disciple, who arrived at the tomb first, also entered. He saw and believed. (They still did not yet understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead.)

Jesus Appears to the Women

Then the disciples went back to their homes, amazed at what had happened. But Mary stood outside facing the tomb, weeping. As she wept, she bent over, looking into the tomb. The other women entered the tomb. Suddenly they saw two young men dressed in dazzling white clothing sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet. The women were terrified and bowed down with their faces to the ground. The angels asked Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She told them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they have laid him.”

The angel sitting on the right side said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen, just as he said. Come, see the place where they laid the Lord. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again?” Then they remembered his words.

“But go quickly,” the angel said, “and tell his disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead! And look, he is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’ See, I have told you!”

After this, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?”

Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you carried him off, tell me where you laid him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned and replied in Aramaic, “*Rabboni!*” (which means, “Teacher”).

The women went out and hurried away from the tomb, trembling and perplexed with fear and great joy. Because they were afraid, they said nothing to anyone and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” They approached, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Do not continue to cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father—to my God and your God. Go, tell my brothers that they should go to Galilee, and there they will see me.’”

As they were on their way, there were some members of the guard who went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. After the chief priests had assembled with the elders and had reached a decision, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came at night and stole him away while we were sleeping.’ If the governor hears about it, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” After the soldiers took the money, they did as they were instructed. And this story has been repeated among the Jews until this day.

When Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them returned from the tomb, they reported to the Eleven and to all the rest who had been with them, as they mourned and wept. Mary Magdalene announced, “I have seen the Lord!” She also told them all these things he said to her. Yet when they heard that he was alive and had been seen, these words seemed to them like nonsense, and they did not believe them.

Jesus Appears to the Emmaus Disciples

Now, on that same day, two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about all of these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing this, Jesus himself approached and began to walk along with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. He said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” Saddened, they stopped.

One of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

“What things?” he asked them.

They replied, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be condemned to death. And they crucified him. But we were hoping that he was going to redeem Israel. Not only that, but besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Also some women of our group amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning. When they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb. They found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him."

He said to them, "How foolish you are and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and to enter his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village where they were going, he acted as if he were going to travel farther. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, since it is almost evening, and the day is almost over."

So he went in to stay with them. When he reclined at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and began giving it to them. Suddenly their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. Then he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us along the road and while he was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

They got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and those who were with them assembled together. They were saying, "The Lord really has been raised! He has appeared to Simon." They themselves described what had happened along the road, and how they recognized him when he broke the bread. But they did not believe them either.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together behind locked doors because of their fear of the Jews. As they were reclining at the table, talking about these things, Jesus himself appeared, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you." He rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen him after he had risen. But they were terrified and frightened and thought they were looking at a ghost.

He said to them, "Why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet and side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

While they still did not believe it (because of their joy), and while they were still wondering, he said to them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. He took it and ate in front of them.

He said to them, "These are my words, which I spoke to you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms."

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He said to them, "This is what is written and so it must be: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you! Just as the Father has sent me, I am also sending you." After saying this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whenever you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven. Whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

But Thomas, one of the Twelve, the one called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples kept telling him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

Jesus Appears to Thomas

After eight days, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Take your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue to doubt, but believe.”

Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, did many other miraculous signs that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus Appears on the Sea of Galilee

After this, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is how he showed himself: Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, “I’m going fishing.”

They replied, “We’ll go with you.”

They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus was standing on the shore, but the disciples did not know it was Jesus.

Jesus called to them, “Boys, don’t you have any fish?”

“No!” they answered.

He told them, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” So they cast the net out. Then they were not able to haul it in because of the large number of fish.

The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard, “It is the Lord!” he tied his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about one hundred yards. When they stepped out on land, they saw some bread and a charcoal fire with fish on it. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.”

So Simon Peter climbed aboard and hauled the net to land, full of large fish, 153 of them. Yet even with so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, “Come, eat breakfast.”

None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord.

Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them, and also the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I care about you.”

Jesus told him, “Feed my lambs.”

A second time Jesus asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

He said, "Yes, Lord, you know that I care about you."

Jesus told him, "Be a shepherd for my sheep."

He asked him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you care about me?"

Peter was grieved because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you care about me?" He answered, "Lord, you know all things. You know that I care about you."

"Feed my sheep," Jesus said. "Amen, Amen, I tell you: When you were young, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will tie you and carry you where you do not want to go."

Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. After saying this, he told him, "Follow me."

Peter turned and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them. This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, "Lord, who is going to betray you?" When Peter saw him, he asked Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"

"If I want him to remain until I come," Jesus answered, "what is that to you? You follow me." And so it was said among the brothers that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say that he would not die, but, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" (This is the disciple who is testifying about these things and who wrote these things. We know that his testimony is true.)

The Great Commission

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some hesitated because they were uncertain. Jesus approached and spoke to them, saying, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

"These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons. They will speak in new languages. They will pick up snakes. And if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them. They will lay their hands on the sick, and they will get well.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you. And surely I am with you always until the end of the age."

Jesus Ascends Into Heaven

Then after he had spoken to them, he led them out as far as the vicinity of Bethany. He lifted up his hands and blessed them. And while he was blessing them, the Lord Jesus parted from them and was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. So they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They were continually in the temple courts, praising and blessing God. Those who went out preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

Jesus also did many other things. If every one of them were written down, I suppose the world itself would not have room for the books that would be written. Amen.