

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER 4:

HISTORICITY OF THE RESURRECTION

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

This course is a revised traduction of the work “I Fondamenti del Cristianesimo” written by Rev. Piero Ottaviano and Didaskaleion.

The course is divided into units with a logical sequence. Therefore we suggest you to read them following their progressive order.

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4 HISTORICITY OF THE RESURRECTION

In this section we are going to examine all the ancient documents we have enabling us to ascertain the resurrection's historicity. We will examine the following ones:

- John, 20,1-10 (the linen burial cloth);
- Matthew 27-28 (the guard at the tomb);
- the (apocryphal) gospel according to Peter (the relevant divergences).

In appendix we will quote the accounts made in the 1st and 2nd century concerning the "fact" of the resurrection.

4.1 THE QUESTION

Has Jesus' resurrection actually happened, other than just having been preached?

By analyzing the documents we can clearly make out what the starting point of the Apostles' preaching is.

One of such accounts even lets us know that Jesus' resurrection is the very foundation of Christianity: without it the whole matter would become void and meaningless.

Since resurrection is that important to Christianity, it is necessary to make accurate investigations, in order to try and ascertain whether the resurrection which is being preached has actually happened; in other words,

whether Jesus has truly risen from the dead.

4.2 WORKING METHODS

It takes HISTORICAL CRITICISM to give an answer; i.e., documents have to be:

- FOUND (*see appendix*)
- APPRAISED/CRITICIZED = author, date of drafting, sources
- READ
- COLLATED: we will then notice
 - MEETINGS
 - DIFFERENCES
 - DISCREPANCIES
- INTERPRETED: **HAS THE RESURRECTION REALLY HAPPENED ?**

There are different interpretations: according to

- Non-Christian JEWS: **“NO! Somebody stole the body.”**
- THE CRITICAL SCHOOL: **“NO! A mistake made in good faith.”**
- THE MYTHICAL SCHOOL: **“NO! A mistake made in good faith.”**
- THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOL: **“YES!”**

At the end of this survey, we will be in possession of the required data that will allow us to express our personal belief:

- I am willing to believe that the fact actually happened (act of faith);
- I am not prepared to believe that it did happen;
- I remain doubtful, at least for the time being.

4.3 DOCUMENTS NEEDED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

We presently have the following accounts from:

Author	Datation		N.T.	Notes
MARK	AD 50/65	NO	YES	Mark was Peter's clerk (the last part of Chapter 16 was not written by him, though)
LUKE	AD 55/75	NO	YES	Luke was a disciple of Paul's and of others apostles: he is reported to have "carefully investigated"
MATTHEW	AD (45)/80	YES/NO	YES	The original gospel was written in some Aramaic language. The present one is a Greek revision
JOHN 20	AD 80/100	YES	YES	John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved"
JOHN 21	> AD 90	NO	YES	This chapter was added to the gospel after John's death by a disciple of his
NICODEMUS (apocryphal)	1 st or 2 nd Century	NO	NO	It relates about a tradition of memoirs by Nicodemus (?)
APOSTLES (apocryphal)	2 nd Century	NO	NO	A letter ascribed to the apostles, which is said to have been written as a completion of the canonical gospels
PETER (apocryphal)	AD 150 ?	NO	NO	This gospel was ascribed to Peter, but it is a fake; it tries to adjust the discrepancies found within the canonical gospels
JUSTIN	AD 155	NO	NO	Quoting the words of rabbi Tryphon

4.4 THE PURPOSE OF READING SUCH ACCOUNTS

We will read these documents so that we can understand as clearly as possible what their authors meant to convey to us.

This is what we call the *objective side* of our analysis.

Our readers will then have to consider whether these authors have told the truth, whether they have got misled - in good faith - or whether they were lying on purpose.

This is what we call the *subjective side* of our analysis.

We do not mean to exert undue influence over people to make them believe. An act of faith will always remain a free decision which implies a personal and responsible commitment.

4.5 READING THE DOCUMENTS

In order to get data as to the resurrection's historicity our readers will have to:

- read carefully all the documents that we have about this subject (see appendix);
- collate them;
- point out:
 - the meetings
 - the discrepancies
 - the contradictions

We will just analyze (by means of a literal translation) a couple of passages from the canonical gospels which we deem particularly significant:

- the way the burial linen lay (*John, 20,1-10*);
- the guard at the tomb (*Matthew, 27,57-66 and 28,11-15*).

Thereafter, we will tackle the question about the accounts' discrepancies and we will see how the (apocryphal) gospel according to Peter tried to eliminate them.

4.5.1 JOHN, 20,1-10: THE BURIAL LINEN/CLOTH

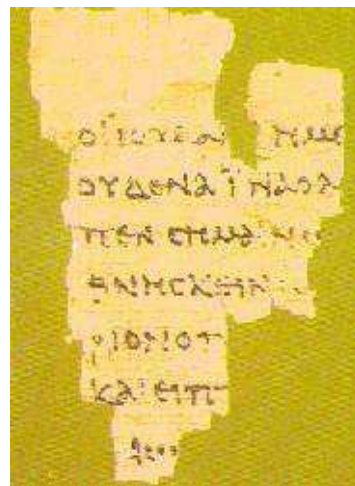
4.5.1.1 - Preliminary information about the gospel:

1. The ancient tradition agrees that this gospel was written (or dictated) in Ephesus by *John*, the apostle whom Jesus loved, when he was old. Only *Eusebius of Caesarea* would contradict that. He related that at that time in Ephesus lived two men by the name of John - one of them was indeed the Apostle, while the other was an Elder (Greek: presbyter = elder) - and that it was the latter who actually wrote the gospel.

2. Until the 18th century, tradition was accepted by all scholars, who would place this gospel about A.D. 80/90. From then on German scholars, or "critics" (i.e., belonging to the "critical school" - or rationalist school - which tried to interpret the gospels by means of cognition only, thus leaving out any "miraculous" fact) started accepting Eusebius' thesis and accordingly placed this gospel after the 1st century (some even in A.D. 180) so that they might invoke popular exaggeration whenever it came to "miraculous" deeds.

3. *The present data:*

- Recent archaeological findings have thrown new light on to this question: the papyrus known as "P52" (see below), found in Egypt in 1934, holds some verses of chapter 18 of the gospel we are talking about. Papyrologists place it about A.D. 125. Therefore, considering that it must have taken some time between its being copied and sent from Ephesus to Egypt, the dates are to be confirmed which place this gospel about A.D. 100, or even at an earlier date.



- The discovery of both Bethesda pool (John 5,1-9) in 1898 and *Lithòstrotos* has revealed that the author must have known Jerusalem well before its destruction (A.D. 70) and that he therefore might have been an eye-witness (as it can be guessed from many others details within the book).
- The author signed: "the disciple whom Jesus loved". Who can he be? According to the synoptic gospels, three were the disciples whom Jesus loved the best: Peter, James and John. Now, the "disciple whom Jesus loved":
 - cannot be Peter, for he is being mentioned along with the beloved one (John 20,2);
 - cannot be James, brother of John, for he had been killed by Herod in A.D. 43 (Acts 12,3);
 - it must be John. A couple of clues might so confirm:
 - John is never mentioned in the fourth gospel, which is yet the one reporting a greater number of interventions of the apostles;
 - Within the New Testament two prominent Johns are to be found: the Baptist and the Apostle. The Baptist is

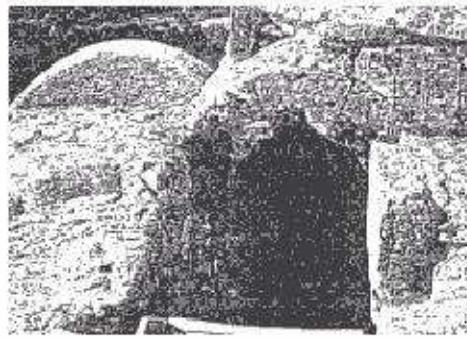
being referred to as John, simply. If the gospel's author is the other John, then there can be no ambiguity: as a result, John did not deem it necessary to specify - unlike the synoptic gospels - that he was talking about the Baptist.

4.5.1.2 - Scanning the text:

This is the only canonical gospel to indulge in details about the linen's arrangement in Jesus' tomb.

1. Early on the first (day) of the week , while it is still dark, Mary Magdalene goes to the sepulcher and sees that the stone has been removed from the tomb.

- *the first (day) of the week*: it's the Sunday after Jesus' burial, which, according to all gospel, had been arranged late on a Friday afternoon (the Sabbath was about to begin - according to the Jews, the Sabbath begins at sunset).
- *Mary Magdalene*: Mary of Magdala (a Galilean town by the Lake of Genezareth). A figure well known in all gospels: Matthew 27,56-61; Mark 15,40-47; 16,1,9; Luke 8,2; 24,10; John 19,25; 20,18. According to John, Mary of Magdala was the only woman who went to the tomb (although from her saying "we do not know..." in the plural in verse 2. it could be inferred that there were also other women). That is a discrepancy, compared with the synoptic:
 - Matthew reports that there were two women: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (28,1);
 - According to Mark there were three: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome (16,1);
 - At least five women were there, according to Luke 24,10: Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and "the others".
- *While it is still dark*: here is another difference compared with Mark 16,2, which reports "after sunrise" (yet Mark had just written: "very early", just like Luke 24,1: "at dawn"). Some annotators would rather interpret this sentence of John's not so much in a literal as in a figurative sense: Mary was still in the darkness of unbelief. Saint Augustine's interpretation was that Mary Magdalene had left home when it was still dark and arrived at the sepulcher when the sun was high.
- *The stone has been removed from the tomb*: In Jewish tombs dating back to the time of Jesus (we know at least four) the stone which is placed at the entrance cannot be overturned, for it is blocked by a groove hollowed in tufa (see illus. and picture below): therefore, one could never succeed in knocking it down with one's shoulder from the inside. This is the reason Mary reached the conclusion that the corpse must have been stolen.



2. So she comes running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and says: "They took the Lord out of the sepulcher and we do not know where they put him".

3. Then Peter and the other disciple got out and headed for the sepulcher.

4. They were both running and the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first

- *They took the Lord [...] and we do not know [...]*: The assumption that she makes is a most obvious one: the corpse lay there on Friday and now it is no longer there: it is clear that somebody must have taken it away. But where could they have put it? "We do not know"! Obviously - according to the evangelist/eye - witness - neither Mary (nor the other women who were with her, if any), nor Peter, nor "the disciple whom Jesus loved" knew anything about the body being possibly stolen or displaced. On the other hand, none of them (whether three or more) would think about resurrection - and yet, according to the canonical gospels, Jesus had prophesied of it, both directly (Matthew 16,21; 17,9.23; 20,19; 26,32; 27,63; Mark 8,31; 9,9.10.31; 10,34; 14,28; Luke 9,22; 18,33; 24,46) and indirectly (Matthew 12,40; 16,4; 26,61; Mark 14,58; Luke 11,29-30; John 2,19).
- *We do not know*: this sentence as expressed in the plural would lead us to assume that there is more than one woman at the tomb, just like the synoptic gospels relate. Notice that verse 20,13 reports it in the singular: "I do not know".
- *the Lord* (verse 2): How strange is the expression that Mary used that morning. In fact, the word "Lord" in the third person is usually referred to God only (very often) or to Jesus resurrected (John 11,2; 20,18.20.25; 21,7) or to the emperor of Rome (Acts 25,26). It could be thus assumed that John puts this word - "Lord" - into the mouth of Mary Magdalene, as a result of his faith (which matured afterwards) in Jesus' being the Son of God.
- The precise details reported in these verses and in the following ones do well explain whether the disciple whom Jesus loved actually is the eye-witness who wrote the gospel, i.e., John.

5. He bends over and sees there the linen lying (slackened?), but he did not go in.

6. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrives and walks into the sepulcher and notices the laying (slackened?) linen

- *the linen*: any translation reading "strips of linen", or "bands, bandages" is untenable, for the Greek word for "strips, band" is "keirÆai" (cp. John 11,44: the bands wrapped around Lazarus' body). But instead, the Greek word being used here is "oth-nia", i.e., simply "linen" (not specified). A short documentation to support this: in 1952 the Ryland library published the contents of a papyrus (Gk 627) written on 9 columns on both sides - 349 lines in all - coming from Hermopolis, Egypt. It was a list, in Greek, of the outfit of an agent of the Roman administration in Egypt by name Theophanes (A.D.320). From this list we notice that the word *oth-nion* generically refers to linen fabric, being the only item of the list which is inflected in the genitive and in the plural and is not followed by any figure concerning the quantity. This is what the first 17 lines, and line 41, would read: (see text and translation)

Anagraphe skeuon - List of articles of clothing	
Sticharia lepta (<i>light tunics</i>): 2	Sticharia (<i>tunics</i>): 3
Idiochromos (<i>of a single colour?</i>): 1	Delmatikaia (<i>small dalmatics?</i>): 4
Delmatika (<i>dalmatics</i>): 2	Anaboladia (<i>overcoats ?</i>): 3
Idiochromoi (<i>of a single colour?</i>): 2	Fakirion (<i>cloths for the face?</i>): ?
Maphortina alla (<i>other maphortines?</i>): 2	Drakion (<i>towel</i>): 1
Bir-oi (<i>cloaks</i>): 2	Balanaria (<i>bath towel?</i>): 4
Chlamys (<i>chlamys</i>): 2	Sabanofakiarion (<i>napkin</i>): 1
Othonion hom-ios (<i>linen, equally</i>): ?	Sindonia (<i>sheets</i>): 4
	Phaskiai (<i>strips - bands</i>): ?

- *laying*: this is the literal translation of the verb *keimena*. It is not correct to translate: "on the ground". The word "slackened" - in parentheses - is no translation but simply our interpretation, which will be exposed below.

7. and the sudarium/cloth that was on his head not lying with the linen, but rolled up (in) in a different way/separately in one single place.

What is being provided here is a literal translation and we would like to point out that in ancient manuscripts there are no variations to the Greek text that might give cause to any other possible translation. Unfortunately, some translations are defective. We have to admit that the text is not clear. It will inevitably demand some interpretation, for we it is assumed that the author indeed wanted to make himself understood. Nevertheless, whatever the interpretation proposed, it must not wrench the text.

- *sudarium*: napkin (used to wipe off sweat). We would rather call that a "chin rest" (cp John 11,44: Lazarus had a cloth/sudarium around his face.)

We shall give our interpretation of verses 6b-7, after analyzing the following verses. For the moment we will simply point out that the past participle "rolled up (in)" (entetylignÆnon) is expressed in Greek by a present perfect tense, which is meant to describe an action which started in the past and is in some way connected with the present time; so it should be interpreted as **"still rolled up as it was when it had been put there"**.

*8. Then the other apostle, the one who had reached the tomb first, went inside, too, **and he saw and he believed.***

9. As a matter of fact, they still did not understand from the Scripture that from the dead he had to rise.

10. So the disciples went back home (literally: at their own place)

In order to get to understand the meaning of verse 6b-9, let us reconsider verse 8: **"and he saw and he believed"**.

First of all, notice that the double sequence "and...and" connects seeing with believing; the mutual relationship being introduced here is more binding in Greek than it is in Italian (or in English). It indicates a connection between cause and effect: the disciple believed because of what he **had seen**.

Now we may wonder what was it that the "disciple whom Jesus loved" saw that morning? And what was it that he believed?

There seems to be no doubt as for what he saw: he saw how the linen were laying. His accurate description in verses 6-7 is an evidence of that.

What was it that he believed? It is not as clear. Anyway, the Greek verb is an aorist (which indicates an action started and accomplished in the past).

There are two possible interpretations:

a) He believed **Mary Magdalene**, who had suggested that the corpse might have been taken away (verse 2). This was also the interpretation accredited, among others, by St. Augustine (+ A.D. 430).

b) he believed **in the resurrection**: by the way the linen were lying, the disciple whom Jesus loved inferred that Jesus must have risen from the dead. This is the interpretation given by Cyril of Alexandria and Cyril of Jerusalem (5th century): both had absolute mastery of the Greek language.

But which of the two interpretations was the one that the disciple whom Jesus loved had in mind? Verse 9, by which the author supposedly meant to give an explanation, can also be interpreted in many ways, but substantially referable to two only:

a) "And he saw and **he believed Mary Magdalene**": in fact, when he saw he still did not understand the Scripture (=the Old Testament) which said that he had to rise from the

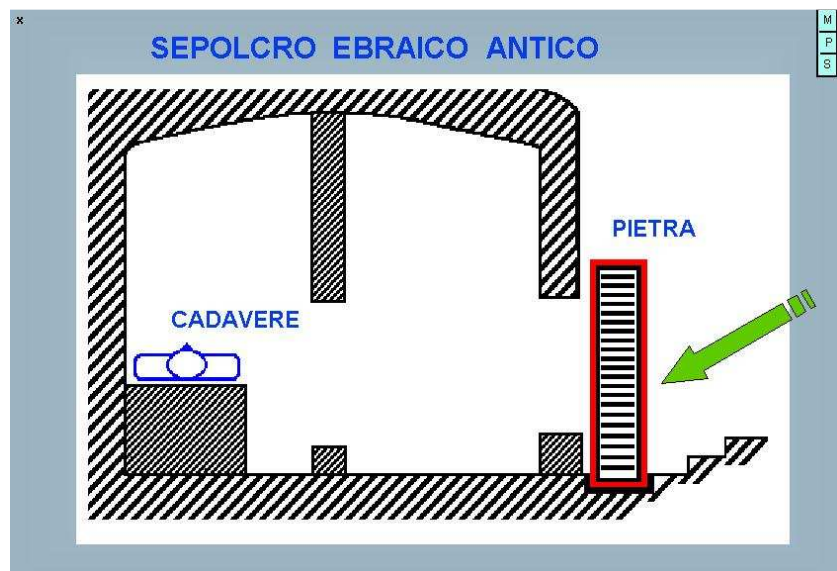
dead; he would not but later on, and anyway before writing the gospel.
b) "And he saw and **he believed in the resurrection**" In fact, before seeing he still did not understand the Scripture, but he did as soon as he saw the way the linen were lying.

Should we give up trying and understanding what the disciple really meant to say?
Luckily we can try another clue, namely the sense of the verb "believe" (Greek: *pisteuo*). Such verb recurs 98 times within the gospel, always with the meaning: "**to believe in something super natural**". It is never used to express one's trust in any human being. This leads us to conclude that it is used here with the same meaning, thus indicating that "**he believed in Jesus' resurrection**".

The first, though indirect, confirmation of this statement of ours is provided by the presence of "**and...and**", which indicates that two past actions happened at the same time: seeing and believing, though they are mutually connected, having a "cause and effect" meaning.

We get another confirmation, as provided by verse 10: had the disciples really believed that the body had been stolen, then they surely would have started looking for it, on instinct. Instead, back home.

Maybe the author meant to help deny the rumors circulating among "certain Jews" (cp. the following excerpt from Matthew 27-28) which had it that Jesus' body had been stolen. Had the disciples actually stolen the corpse, the linen could not have been found laying the way he saw them lay.



Section of the possible tomb of Jesus, as worked out from the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem
CADAVERE = CORPSE; PIETRA = STONE

4.5.1.3 - Some remarks

If our interpretation of the verb "*he believed*" is correct, then it is worthwhile trying and understanding what it was that the disciple "*saw*", for it is because of what he saw that he got to believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

What a pity verses 6-7 are not that clear at all. They are so unclear that most translators would rather interpret them than simply translate them, sometimes even by wrenching the text. This is why the "strips of linen" (or, worse, the "bands") are often reported to have been found lying "on the ground" and the sudarium to have been found all "folded up in a corner" nearby. (?!)

We cannot help feeling the need to propose an *interpretation*, either - if anything we are trying to keep to the text - and we are prepared to possibly change it, should any better one be found which does not distort the text.

We have already stressed the fact that the word "slackened" (verse 6) instead of "lying" is no translation, but just an interpretation. However, we believe it is the best one, among all the ones being proposed so far.

In order to have this text make sense, let us start from a reflection found in the very chapter 20 of the gospel.

Verses **19 and 26** report that Jesus comes "the doors locked" into the room where the disciples were assembled. That is the same as saying that, once resurrected, Jesus could walk through solid matter (whether doors or walls indifferently), namely, he is not subject to the physical law of impenetrability of solid bodies.

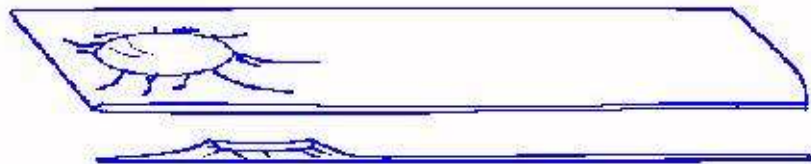
Let us suppose that the body of Christ in the tomb...

- a) was wrapped up in a sheet/shroud (i.e., the "sindon", as reported by the synoptic gospels) and that a sudarium was put around his head as a chin rest.



This is how Jesus was supposedly laid in the shroud

- b) "got out" through both shroud and sudarium. The burial clothes, devoid of the corpse, would have sunk and become slack, while the sudarium, being thicker, would not have sunk as the linen had, but would have remained rolled up in its place, the very and only place where it should logically have been, so that its presence could be noticed from the outside.



This is how we guess the linen cloths must have looked like right before John's eyes.

And this is what, considering our interpretation, the "disciple whom Jesus loved" actually describes: "He sees that the linen had sunk, whereas the sudarium which was around his head had not, but lay in a different way, namely rolled up inside in its place".

That sight would make him believe in Jesus' resurrection: as a matter of fact, if the corpse had been taken away, the linen cloths could not have been left lying in that way. Observing the way the linen were laying, the disciple can see the proof that Jesus has actually risen again and therefore he believes the Scriptures (cp. John 2,22: "After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled... and they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken").

Someone might object to such hypothesis: If Jesus' body had "vanished", then what was the open tomb for? (cp. verse 1).

The answer might sound like this:

Since the tomb could not be opened from within (this goes for the tombs we know about, namely the ones that the rich used to have built in Palestine in the 1st century A.D. and which should look like the sepulchre of Jesus, the one built by Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin), then it is to be assumed that:

- thieves must have opened the tomb from the outside: such is the first hypothesis as made by the Magdalene, but rejected by John (cp. verse 2);
- or it must have been opened by a miraculous intervention: this is the explanation given by Matthew (28,2) as he reports about an angel descending from heaven: **the tomb was opened not so much for Jesus to get out, as for the disciples to walk into and ascertain that the corpse was no longer there.** With no opportunity to control, it would have been difficult to have them believe in Jesus' resurrection. Besides, the Jewish laws forbid to re-open tombs, for such is considered a defiling act, namely, causing one to become unclean.

4.5.2 MATTHEW, 27-28 - THE GUARD AT THE TOMB

4.5.2.1 - Preliminary information about the gospel

1 - Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis, Phrygia (the now Pamukkale, Turkey) who wrote "An Explanation *of the words* of the Lord" before A.D. 120, thus reports: "Matthew wrote down Jesus' words in a Hebrew dialect; everybody would translate/interpret them as far as he could".

Now, the gospel according to Matthew that we can read today :

- is written neither in Hebrew, nor in Aramaic, but in Greek;
- it holds not only the words, but also the works of Jesus.
- Therefore it is not the one Papias was referring to.

2 - Nowadays scholars agree that the original Gospel according to Matthew was written very early, i.e., circa A.D.45, but that it subsequently had to be translated into Greek, having become unreadable after the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Its translator must have probably enriched it with his own reflections, together with some accounts of Jesus' deeds as derived from both the other gospels and oral tradition.

4.5.2.2 - Analysis/Scanning the text

This is the only canonical gospel relating about some guards at the sepulcher. It could be read between the lines that Matthew meant to answer back to somebody who had made objections.

[Chapter 27]

57. As evening was closing in a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph came, who had become a disciple of Jesus'.

- It is the Friday afternoon of the week of Passover, and the Sabbath is about to begin. (Luke 23,54)

58. He came to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Then Pilate ordered that it be given to him.

- According to the Jewish law (Deut. 21,22-23) nobody was to be left hanging (whether to a "wood", or a tree or a cross) during the night, particularly on Sabbaths.
- A Possible objection: as it was customary with the Romans, the body of an executed man was to be laid in a common grave. How is it then that Jesus had a sepulchre of his own? Matthew's answer would read: "because an important man, a member of the Sanhedrin, had interfered with the Roman authorities". (*cp. also Mark 15,43-45; Luke 23,50-52; John 19,38*)

59. *Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean (new, white) sindon (shroud)*

- *wrapped*: Greek same verb as John 20,7
- Therefore, there actually was a sindon. Also Mark (15,46) and Luke (23,53) gave an account of this. It is not proven that it was the Holy Shroud of Turin, even though the latter stands quite good chances.

60. *and placed it into his own new sepulcher that he had cut (he got cut) out of the rock, and, after rolling a big stone in front of tomb's entrance, he went away.*

61. *But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there before the tomb.*

- Mary Magdalene is a well know character of the gospels. But what were those women doing there? (see our answer below as per Matthew 28,1)

62. *The next (day), the one after Parasceve, the chief priests and the Pharisees met and went to Pilate*

- *Parasceve*: means Preparation Day (Sabbath'eve, i.e., Friday)
- The next day would be a Sabbath (a day of absolute rest beginning on Friday at sunset; even meals are to be prepared on Friday afternoon). Utter strange that Jewish chief priests should meet at Pilate's (who was pagan) house right on Sabbath, and, what's more, during Passover! So, on such a day - during the most important Jewish celebration - they seemingly do not mind getting defiled as a result of their relationship with a - surely unclean - pagan.

63. *"Sir", they said "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, "After three days I will rise again".*

64. *So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day, in order to keep his disciples from coming, stealing him and telling the people that he has been raised from the dead, which would be an even worse deception.*

Note that:

- How does Matthew know what the Jews' talk with Pilate was about? Could he have got to know this from Joseph of Arimathea, who was a member of the Sanhedrin?
- Matthew here meant to anticipate the accusation hanging over the disciples for their stealing Jesus' body, which would later on be commonly accepted by most non-Christian Jews. (cp. Justin's account in Section 1 Chapter 3: "Non-Christian Documents").
- Why did those cunning chief priests recall Jesus' statements only on that Sabbath morning? Objectively speaking, the right moment for the Christians to take away Jesus' body would have been the night between Parasceve and the Sabbath: the corpse would not yet start decaying and, as the tomb was out of town - and the Jews were forbidden from getting out of town on Sabbath - the Christians would have been less likely to fall in with somebody and expose themselves to trouble (remember that both the Roman and Jewish laws would actually punish tomb defilers with death).

65. Pilate told them: "You have/Take a guard (guard-house?); go and keep watch as you know how"

- The Greek text has "ἔχετε", which is part of the verb "to have" and may be used:
 - either as an imperative: "Have (meaning: "take") a guard!"; this would suggest that Pilate has given them some Roman guards.
 - or as a present simple: "You have a guard". In such case, Pilate would have let the Jews have Jewish guards to keep watch to Jesus' tomb.
- **Question:** Does this mean that the Romans would let the Jews (whom they had defeated) have their own army?
Answer: Since the Temple of Jerusalem, apart from being a sacred place, was also a place for meeting, as well as for trade and debate, arguments and riots were very likely to occur: this is why some guards were actually needed. Furthermore, only circumcised Jews were allowed to enter the Temple's inner part (see below the picture of a stone inscription). As a result, lest they should hurt the feelings of the Jews, the Romans had given them permission to have Jewish circumcised guards (cp. Acts 5,26; John 18,3.12), but only within the Temple's area. Therefore, the visit of the priests, if any, was meant for making a request:
 - for guards -depending on the Roman authority- to be placed at the entrance of the sepulcher
 - for permission to use Jewish guards outside the temple.

Greek stone inscription forbidding the non-Jews to enter the Temple's inner part	
	<p>Translation:</p> <p>FOREIGNERS ARE PROHIBITED FROM TRESPASSING THE BALUSTRADE AND ENTERING THE SANCTUARY. THE TRESPASSERS WHO SHALL BE CAUGHT IN THE OPEN ACT WILL BE LIABLE TO THEIR OWN SUBSEQUENT DEATH.</p>

66. So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard (guard-house?).

- The account of the priests' behavior sounds strange and unbelievable; as a matter of fact, the Jewish law forbids to get out of town and to do any kind of work on a Sabbath (putting a seal on a tomb is work; the Talmud says that even letters cannot be sealed on Sabbaths)

[Chapter 28]

1. After the Sabbath, as the first (day) of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

- On that Sunday morning the same two women who were sitting before the tomb (see chapter 27,61) on Friday found the sepulcher empty.
By underlining this detail, Matthew is seemingly answering between the lines this possible objection: "Could it be that the women have got to the wrong tomb on that Sunday morning? In fact, in the area where Jesus was buried there were a lot of sepulchers; the women found the tomb empty indeed, but perhaps it was not Jesus".
Matthew would thus reply, "That's impossible! The women who found the empty tomb were the same ones who had seen where Jesus was buried on the previous Friday afternoon".
- Notice that the early Christian tradition reports that it was women who found the empty tomb. This certainly proves to a guarantee of historicity, for the women's testimony used to be regarded as worthless, and yet the gospels do report it. Some time later John, who maybe wanted to reply to some possible objection, would stress the fact that "also Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved went to the tomb" (*cp. John 20,2-10 and also Luke 24,24*)

2. And then there was a violent earthquake: a messenger of the Lord came down from heaven and, as he got near, rolled the stone away and sat on it.

- Earthquake: one of the phenomena which are usually connected (in the Old Testament) with divine manifestations. However, only Matthew relates about an earthquake.
- Since the tomb cannot be opened from the inside (see section 4, chapter 5.a)2.) Matthew, rejecting the "stolen body" hypothesis, maintains that the tomb was opened by a messenger (angel) of the Lord who had come down from heaven, i.e., as sent by God (miracle). The other canonical evangelists, instead, report that the women found the stone rolled back, but do not mention who was he who had rolled it back to open the sepulcher.

3. His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were as white as snow.

4. The guards were so frightened and upset at this sight that they became like dead men.

- Current expression of Jewish literature when describing supernatural manifestations.

5. But the messenger said to the women: "Do not be afraid; I do know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

6. He is not here. He was raised from the dead, just as he said; come and see the place where he lay.

7. Then hasten to tell his disciples that he has been raised from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Now I have told you".

8. And the women, hurrying away from the sepulcher, afraid yet overjoyed, ran to tell the news to the disciples.

- Mark 16,8 has exactly the opposite! The women told nobody! But, if that were true, then how would Mark have known?

9. And right then Jesus met them and said, "Rejoice! (Hail!)" They came to him, clasped his feet and prostrated themselves before him.

10. So Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid, go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.

- Incidentally, notice that the women were given the same command twice, under similar circumstances. Could that be a single episode having been reported twice by ancient tradition? According to Luke (24,23-24), in fact, the women saw the messengers only, not Jesus (*cp. also Mark 16,5*).
- Notice also that, according to Matthew's text (and related one in Mark 16,7) Jesus would not appear to the disciples but in Galilee, i.e., in northern Palestine, or - at most - on the outskirts (Emmaus). Strange how the early Christian tradition got the place of Jesus' apparitions mixed up. In our opinion, this is certainly one of the most remarkable contradictions within the evangelic texts, one which is hard to explain, in spite of the ingenious attempts which have been made even in recent days.

11. Right as the women were leaving, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.

- Assumption can be made that the guards were Jewish: as a matter of fact, any army has a rule stating that soldiers are to refer to their superiors in rank.

12. And when they (the chief priests) had met with the elders, after convening the council, they gave an adequate sum of money to the soldiers

- How does Matthew know that the priests and the elders had bribed the guards? (see further on)

13. telling them, "You shall thus say: 'His disciples came during the night and took him away while we were asleep'.

- What would have been the point in producing sleeping witnesses as piece of evidence? How could those shrewd Jewish priests have been so naive as to take such decision, particularly - what's more - after convening a council? In this case, according to Matthew, their bad faith was clearly showing. (*cp. St. Augustine, "In Psalmos" 63.7*)

14. If this report gets to the governor, we will talk him into it and keep you out of trouble.

- This reference to Pilate would sound strange, had the guards been Jewish. Why should Pilate have cared about the behavior of some guards who were not under his authority? It was up to the Jewish authorities to decide to punish the Jewish soldiers who had disobeyed orders. Does this mean that the guards were Roman? This reasoning is not very convincing in itself, but it might make sense within the context.

15. So they (the soldiers) took the money and did as they had been instructed. And this story has been circulated among certain Jews to this day.

- *This day*, namely, when the author was writing. So we learn from the text that a certain story was being circulated among "certain" Jews (and not "the Jews", like some translation would have it). What story? The answer seems clear (though not thoroughly): When the author/translator of the Greek version of the gospel according to Matthew was writing this account, certain Jews were slandering the Christians by claiming that the Christians had stolen Jesus body so that they would be able to report about his resurrection. Matthew, who was a Christian, did not agree with such an interpretation of the facts - evidence of that occurring all over the statements of his account .

4.5.2.3 - Some remarks

Anybody having even the least knowledge about the customs of the Jews would be amazed at the text we have just quoted.

We can catch a lot of strange things there:

- The Jewish chief priests meeting on a Sabbath (and, what is even worse, on Passover!) at the house of a Pilate, a pagan (27,62);
- The Jewish priests remembering (only on that Sabbath morning!) Jesus saying that he would rise from the dead (27,63-64);
- The guards' citizenship: Jewish or Roman? (27,65; 28,11-14);
- The Sabbath breaking: the Jewish priests got out of the city and put a seal on the stone;
- Their bribing the guards: how does Matthew know? (28,12);
- Their producing sleeping witnesses as piece of evidence (28,13).

How can we explain all this?

Unless the author was an utter simpleton who did not know what he was writing about, a key for interpretation is given by verse 28,15: "*This story (we would rather say: "this rumor") has been circulated among (certain) Jews to this day"*. But if the author thinks it to be nothing but "rumor", then why does he report it? Let us take a closer look at this:

1. It is clear that, as a Christian, he surely believes that Jesus' resurrection actually occurred: the apparitions of Jesus resurrected, being reported as real, would testify to that.
2. However, he knows that some Jewish circles of his time (circa A.D. 80) are trying to shake the faith about Jesus' resurrection by accusing early Christians of stealing his body and of subsequently preaching that he had risen from the dead.

The rumors about the body being stolen must have started spreading only after both the gospels by Matthew and Luke and "Acts" were written, that is, after the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D.70) - as eye-witnesses had died out any rumor could thus be circulated unrestrained.

Let us analyze the following scheme:

Book	Datation	THEFT?	GUARDS?
MARK	AD 50 - 60	NO	NO
LUKE	AD 55 - 60	NO	NO
ACTS	AD 61	NO	NO
<i>DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM</i>			
MATTHEW (the present one)	AD 80 - 85	YES	YES
JOHN	AD 80 - 90	YES	NO
PETER (apocryphal)	150?	(YES)	YES
JUSTIN	155	YES	NO
TALMUD (Babylon version)	400?	YES	NO

In the books which were written **before the destruction of Jerusalem** there is no mention about Jesus' body being stolen, and no guards are mentioned to ever have been placed at the tomb, either.

Was it just an oversight of their authors? We do not think so, for had it all been true, Christianity would surely have been shattered to death. Any Christian getting to know about such rumor would surely have tried to stop it. We can therefore assume that it had still not been spread. Please also note that, although assertions made about a given document on an "ex silentio" basis are difficult to handle, in this case we think that one detail allows us to work on such basis: in the book of Acts, where several accounts about the trials that the first Christians went through are to be found, there is no mention about any Christian being tried for such a crime as corpse stealing - which both the Jewish and the Roman law would punish with death.

Had the first Christians been accused of it right from the start, why would the high priests not invoke such an accusation during the trials, instead of clinging to feeble accusations, like: "They speak against the temple", or "...against the law of Moses", which were not enough for the Romans to put any Christian to death. (cp. Acts 6,11-14; 18,13-15; 22,22-30; 23,20-30; 24,6; 25,7-8.15-19.26-27).

As the accusation of corpse stealing could have destroyed Christianity, which is based on the resurrection of Jesus (cp. *1st Cor.15,14.17.19*), the author had to stop it.

- **Let us then try to follow his reasoning:**, "So you - Jews - accuse us - Christians - of stealing Jesus' body? But can you produce any evidence?" (*It is not right to accuse without showing the accusation to be true*)
- **Meanwhile, somebody** might have started spreading the rumors that there were guards at the tomb having witnessed the theft.

We wonder who could have thought of the possibility that there were guards at the tomb.

We believe it must be a magnification of an actual fact: at each city gate there stood permanent guard: since Jesus' tomb was not far from either gate, somebody might have summoned the guards who were at the city gate to testify that Jesus' body had been stolen; as this rumor spread it eventually turned out to have it that the guards were actually at the tomb.

The author acknowledges this assertion about the guards' witnessing the theft of the body and - like a good lawyer - accepts the testimony of the Jewish adverse party showing how - if anything - it testifies for the resurrection of Jesus, not for the theft of the body. How does he manage it?

a) To start with, he hints that there were no guards at all, by pointing out that:

- it is not clear whether the guards were Roman or Jewish; .had the guards been Roman, then why should they report what had happened to the chief priests? (from time immemorial soldiers have always referred to the authorities they depend on)
- had they been Jewish, then why would the chief priests take it upon themselves to keep them away from Pilate's "wrath"? (Pilate could not care less about the inefficiency of Jewish guards!).

When had they been placed at the tomb? It is not clear, either.

- Not on Friday night, because the Christians actually were at the sepulcher and did not see any - as a matter of fact, on Sunday morning the women, on their way to the tomb, wondered who would roll back the stone for them (Mark 16,1-4), but they were not in the least worried that the access to the tomb might be denied by any guards.
- not on Sunday morning, because the women did not find any clue that could possibly lead to the presence of some guards.
- So they must have been placed there on the Sabbath, by day. But this would have been against the Jewish laws. The Sabbath is sacred and is to be spend in absolute rest. Matthew, on the contrary, reports that on the Sabbath of Passover the chief priests met at the house of Pilate, a Gentile (which was seriously defiling!) then got out of the city (which was a crime) and put a seal on the stone(again, a crime!)

b) Then he does take into account also the hypothesis that there actually were some guards at the tomb, and shows that it is hardly credible.

- As a matter of fact the guards are to guard the tomb. Should any attempt to steal Jesus' body have been made during the night, they would have had to oppose it.

The subsequent fight should thus have had the Christians as winners, since the body of Christ was never found. But everybody in Jerusalem would have come to know about this and the Christians should have had to be tried for tomb rifling (or attempted tomb rifling).

But there is no record of this. After such a trial how could the Christians possibly have preached about Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem? (cp. Acts 2,24-36; 3,15; 4,10; 5,30-31). It would have been all too easy to prove them wrong! But if the guards were there and if no fight ever started, then only two solutions are possible:

- either the guards did not realize anything because they were asleep - in such case their testimony does not prove anything - (St. Augustine's commented: "If they were asleep, then what could they see? And if they saw nothing, then what could they testify to?")
- or something extraordinary happened, and the guards could do nothing about it: i.e., the resurrection of Jesus.

Therefore, strange as it may seem, Matthew maintains that the very guards whom the Jews wanted to testify to the theft of Jesus' body, are actually the only witnesses of Jesus' resurrection!

c) Finally he explains the reasons why the guards should have lied:

- Supposing that there actually had been guards at the sepulcher and that they actually reported to the chief priests about the Christians stealing Jesus' body, it was clear to Matthew that they were lying. But why did they do it?
- This would be Matthew's answer: "Instead of punishing the guards for disobeying their orders (they slept instead of keeping watch), the chief priests bribed them in order to get their false testimony. The chief priests, in fact, were the only ones who might have some interest in keeping the news about Jesus' resurrection from spreading. Thinking that they were acting in God's name, they had put Jesus to death for blasphemy. But if God had truly raised him from the dead, they would get disowned and fall in disgrace with the people. They might have bribed the guards to avoid all this!
- All the discrepancies lead us to think that there were no guards at the tomb. Certain Jews opposing the Christians might have made the whole story up after the destruction of Jerusalem (by then any rumor could not possibly be confirmed or denied) and Matthew shows how this "story" about the guards does not stand.
 - Somebody might have objected: "So you, Matthew, are accusing the chief priests of bribing the guards. What kind of proof do you hold?" Matthew would probably answer: "The same that they claim to be holding as they accuse us, the Christians, of stealing Jesus' body: namely, none!"
 - Somebody having vivid imagination might put forward another theory: that some guards were there indeed and that it might have been the Christians who bribed them in order to get away with Jesus' body.

Of course, everything is possible; **nevertheless history is a science dealing with actual - not merely "possible" - events.** History is appraised through documents and there is no document whatsoever confirming such theory. Moreover, Matthew absolutely ruled it out.

4.5.2.4 - A final remark: the empty sepulcher!

This controversy between Jews and Christians makes one thing clear: as Matthew wrote this Gospel, there was no doubt that Jesus' tomb was empty (Christians also mention the burial linen cloth inside of it). In fact, the Jews would claim that the body must have been stolen, whereas the Christians would explain that through the resurrection.

As a rule, historic criticism has it that when two opposite parties agree on one important fact, the fact has actually happened. How could the preaching about Jesus' resurrection be credible, had his body been found in the tomb? On the other hand, how could we think that anybody in Jerusalem would ever believe in the resurrection without prior verification?

Since the tomb was unanimously ascertained to be empty, here we have another question: how could we possibly explain the reason for its being undisputedly empty?

The records can provide two possibilities only:

- either the theft of the body
- or the resurrection

Where should we take side on?

4.6 THE DISCREPANCIES WITHIN THE CANONICAL TEXTS

Both texts being analyzed are quite different:

- the former (the arrangement of the burial linen, according to John) was written by an eye-witness;
- the latter (the guard at the tomb, according to Matthew, is probably a tale of fiction meant to stop the rumors - spread by certain non-Christian Jews - about the body being stolen.

What they share is faith in Jesus' resurrection. In our opinion, they are both "extreme" documents as for the resurrection' historicity; that is the reason for our reading them. Between them are placed other canonical reports about the resurrection (see appendix) which we recommend you to read by noting their meetings, along with their discrepancies and contradictions. From these documents (including the Apocrypha) we can infer that the traditions agree on the fundamental facts, whereas they are mutually contradictory concerning even details of some importance, as you can see from the scheme below:

MAIN DISCREPANCIES AMONG EVANGELIC RECORDS					
TOMB	MK 16, 1-8	LK 24	MT 28	MK 16,9-20	JO 20
WHEN	very early on the day of the week, just after sunrise	on the first day of the week, at dawn	on the first day of the week, early in the morning	early on the first day of the week	early on the first day on the week, while it was still dark
WOMEN	Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother, Salome	Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Johanna and the others	Mary Magdalene the other Mary	Mary Magdalene	Mary of Magdala, others (see "we" of verse2), 2 disciples
WHAT FOR	they bought spices so that they might cover Jesus body	they took spices they had prepared on Friday	they went to look at the tomb	-	they went to look at the tomb
WHAT DID THEY SEE	the stone rolled away; a young man sitting on the right side	the stone rolled away; two men standing inside the tomb	Earthquake, an angel coming down rolling back the stone and sitting on it (outside)	-	the stone already removed; the linen 2 angels sitting inside the tomb; Jesus
WHAT HAS BEEN SAID	the young men said:"Do not be afraid, Jesus has risen; tell his disciples that he is going"	the man asked them questions, they reminded then the prophecy made in Galilee	the angel said: "do not be afraid, Jesus has risen, tell his disciples that he is going ahead of them into Galilee"	-	(later) the angels/Jesus asked: "why are you crying?" She thought the body had been removed
WHAT DID THE WOMEN DO	they fled from sepulcher trembling and they said nothing to nobody	they came back from the tomb and told all these things to the Eleven and to others.	they went away afraid in order to tell it to the disciples	she went and told His disciples	she went and told Peter and the others disciples
JESUS APPEARING TO THE WOMEN	-	-	Jesus was there, they clasped his feet; he repeated the message concerning Galilee	Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene	later Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and told her that he was going to ascend to heaven.
DISCIPLES AT THE TOMB	-	Peter saw the burial clothes and	-	-	Peter and the disciple came to the

		went back home			tomb, saw the linen and went back home, believing
APPARITION AT JERUSALEM	-	the Lord appeared to Simon (v. 34), to the Eleven on the evening of the first day of the week; mission	-	the Lord appeared to the Eleven when they were eating (Jerusalem); mission	Appeared to the disciples
ON THE WAY	-	Jesus appeared to two disciples on the way to Emmaus	-	Jesus appeared to two of them while they were in the country	-
IN GALILEE	Apparition to the disciples? (verse 7)	-	apparition to the Eleven on a mount; mission	-	(John 21) apparition to 7 disciples by the sea of Tiberias

4.7 THE RESURRECTION AS REPORTED BY THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PETER (APOCRYPHAL)

4.7.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PETER

1) How the manuscript was found

In the winter of 1886-87, in the tomb of a monk at Akhmin (Panopolis) in Upper Egypt a parchment of the 8th-9th century was found. Though it had no title, no expounder would doubt that what it held was the gospel according to Peter.

2) When the book was written

Since it had already been quoted from before A.D. 190, it cannot be placed at a later time. It is commonly placed (though without evident proof) in A.D. 150. Some scholars (P.Garder-Smith and James) even place it in A.D.90-100.

3) Its origin place

Syria, seemingly within a gnostic circle. That would relate to both the testimony by Serapis, who had a copy of it from the docetes who were using it, and to chapter 21 of "Didascalia Siriaca" - because of the similarities it has with Peter's gospel.

4) Its relationship with the synoptic gospels.

It is evident that the gospel according to Peter derives most information from the canonical ones, especially from the one according to Matthew. Its author is anyway concerned with rearranging and harmonizing the reports by trying to eliminate - or settle - the main discrepancies.

Furthermore, some details were let in deriving from who knows what tradition. Undoubtedly both style and contents are different comparing with the canonical gospels. It is a sort of compound of history, legend and theology.

4.7.2 TEXT AND COMMENTARY

Let us provide a literal translation of the Greek text and comment each verse.

3. Joseph, a friend of Pilates' and of the Lord was also there: seeing that they were going to crucify him, went to Pilate and asked him for Jesus' body so that he might bury him.

- *There:* i.e., at Herod's house where, according to the records, the king ratified Pilate's verdict (verses 1-2)
- *Joseph:* Joseph of Arimathea, a well known figure of the canonical gospels.
- *the Lord:* this name, conveying divinity, had by then become Jesus' name.

4. Having sent (somebody) to Herod, Pilate asked him for Jesus' body.

- Strange that Pilate, the Palestinian main authority, should turn to Herod. Was it just out of deference to him, or due to the fact that they had become friends? (cp. Luke 23,12).

5. And Herod said, "Pilate, my friend (literally: brother), had nobody asked for it, we would have buried him anyway, for the Sabbath is about to begin. It is written in the Law that we are not to let the sun go down on an executed man (we are not to leave the body of an executed man hanging overnight).

- The information about the Sabbath is from Luke 23,54. The quotation is from Deuteronomy 21,23. Since Herod was an Edomite ruling over the Jews, he knew pretty well that these could hardly stand him; therefore, in order to make himself accepted, he would display a great abidance by the Law of Moses.

21. So they pulled the nails out of the hands of the Lord and took him down. The whole earth quaked causing great awe.

22. *Then the sun shone again and they realized that it was the 9th hour.*

23. *The Jews were satisfied and gave his body to Joseph so that he might bury him, because they had seen all the good things that he had done.*

24. *He took the Lord, washed (him) and wrapped (him) into a sheet/shroud (sindon) and took him to his own sepulcher, called "Joseph's orchard"*

- the synoptic gospels do not mention Joseph washing Jesus' body; he would not have had enough time, since the Sabbath was about to begin (to the Jews this would happen at sunset, cp. Luke 23,54). If the information about the washing is true, then the holy Shroud which is being kept in Turin would certainly be a fake.
- The orchard's name is a demonstration of how the details of a report tend in time to become more and more precise and amplified.

25. *The Jews, the elders and the priests realized then what evil they had caused to themselves and started wailing and beating their breasts, saying, "Woe to our sins! The Judgment and the end of Jerusalem are near!"*

26. *My friends and I were filled with sadness and, with our aching hearts, we hid ourselves away: as a matter of fact we were hunted like criminals, like the ones who wanted to set the temple on fire.*

27. *Because of all these things, we fasted and sat weeping and mourning until the Sabbath.*

28. *Then the Scribes, the Pharisees and the elders first met and then - having heard that the people rumored and beat their breasts saying, "All these awesome signs have occurred after his death: see how righteous he was!" -*

29. *they got frightened and went to Pilate and begged him saying,*

30. *"Give us some soldiers so that we can keep watch to his tomb for three days and thus keep his disciples from coming and stealing his body, lest the people might think the he has risen from the dead and should harm us.*

- Here the text follows Matthew 27,62-64, but, whereas Matthew placed this event on Sabbath, the fact is reported here to have happened on Friday. The author thus avoiding both the strangeness of the chief priests' meeting at Pilate's house on Sabbath and the objection that the Christians might have stolen Jesus' body during the night between Friday and Sabbath as, according to Matthew, there were yet no guards. According to such account, it would not have been possible for the Christians to steal Jesus' body, for they had always been under control.

31. So Pilate gave them a centurion - Petronius by name - and some soldiers to keep watch to the sepulcher. And both the elders and the scribes went to the tomb.

- While in Matthew 27,28 it is not clear whether the guards are Roman or Jewish, it is reported here that they were Roman. Even their leader's name is being mentioned - Petronius - which is a typical Latin name.

32. After the centurion and the soldiers and everyone who was there had rolled a big stone and placed it at the entrance of the sepulcher

33. they put (literally: smeared) seven seals on it and after pitching their tents, they started keeping watch.

- The canonical gospels, instead, report that it was the disciples who closed the tomb by rolling the stone; the author here indirectly escaped the objection that the Christians might have placed Jesus' body elsewhere - and not in the tomb - so that they could claim that he had risen.
- Furthermore, in order to make it clear that the body had not been stolen, the author reports that the tomb had been well sealed and that both elders and scribes had stayed there keeping watch (cp. verse 38) and that they even pitched a tent.
- Again, it is clear that, as time went by, the number of details would increase and the answers to possible objection would become more and more precise.

34. As Sabbath morning was dawning, people from both Jerusalem and its vicinity went to look at the sealed tomb.

- Everyone came (right on a Sabbath, when it was not allowed by the Jewish tradition to get out of town) and made sure that the tomb was sealed. In this way any accusation of theft would have proven to be ill-grounded (cp. verse 30 and Matthew 27,64)

35. That night, as the day of the Lord was breaking and the soldiers were keeping watch in shifts of two, a great sound coming from the sky was heard

36. and they saw the skies open and two men come down with much splendor and get close to the sepulcher.

- The fact that Sunday is being referred to as "the day of the Lord" sounds strange (cp. also verse 50). The Jews would call this day "the first (day) of the week", as reported also by canonical gospels. Probably, when the author was writing the custom had already spread among Christians to call Sunday "the day of the Lord". Hence the Latin "dies dominica" and the Italian "domenica". The same expression is also used in Revelation 1.10.
- The author had also realized that in the gospels there were some discrepancies as regards both the messengers (angels) and the women who were at the tomb:
 - According to Mark: a boy (16,5)
 - According to Luke: two men (24,4)
 - According to Matthew: an angel (messenger of heaven) (28,2)
 - According to John: two messengers (20,12)

And so he tries to make the various accounts match. Here he agrees with Luke's version by specifying that it was two angels (a partial acknowledgement of John's, version).

37. And the stone, which had been rolled at the entrance, rolled back by itself and the sepulcher opened and the two boys went in.

- These amazing details are meant to highlight the miracle of resurrection.
- The "two men" of verse 36 having been turned into "two boys", thus confirming also Mark's version.

38. At that sight, those soldiers woke both the centurion and the elders - as a matter of fact they too had been there keeping watch -

39. and as they were telling them about all the things that they had seen, again they saw three men coming out of the tomb, one being supported by two, and a cross following them,

- Here is a clear description of the miracle of the resurrection
- the cross following is an odd detail: perhaps it is a literary way to convey the theological concept that the resurrection of Jesus is not to be separated from his sacrifice on the cross. (cp. Oriental icons).
- These details are not found in canonical gospels.

40. and they were as tall as the sky, while the one whom they supported was taller than the sky;

- A literary way of conveying that the two were angels and that Jesus is superior to them, for He is God. In ancient times the sky was believed to be a plate, and God was believed to dwell beyond it.

41. and they heard a voice coming from heaven saying, "Have you preached to the dead?" (lit.: the sleeping)

42. And a voice from the cross was heard answering, "Yes".

- The idiom "voice from above" occurs all over rabbinic literature: it is the voice of God.
- An ancient Christian tradition, also quoted by Peter in his first epistle (3,19), has it that, while the body of Jesus was lying in the tomb, his soul descended into the Sheol (the place of the dead) to preach to the souls that were already there to convert them and disclose Heaven to them.
- This concept is also expressed in both the Apostles' Creed: "...He descended into hell" and in the way Oriental painters would depict the resurrection: from Heaven Jesus saves both Adam and Eve (see icons: chapter 4.6 and front cover). The work of Christ reaches out to all men, even those who had lived before his coming: he is everyone's savior, for he existed before anyone.
- The cross speaks! According to the author's theological insight, it is the cross that saves.

43. So they discussed, consulting each other whether they should go and let Pilate get to know about these things;

- In Matthew 28,14 this statement sounds somewhat different "And if this report gets to the governor we will persuade him and keep you out of trouble".

44. and as they went on discussing, again the open skies appeared and a man came down and entered the tomb.

- By "this man" coming from heaven, the author has taken into consideration also Matthew's account, the one about the messenger coming down from heaven.

45. When they saw these things, the men who had stayed the night with the centurion making the tomb secure left the sepulcher, ran to Pilate and told him everything they had seen - as they were very upset - saying, "He really was the Son of God!"

- According to Matthew 28,11 the guards told everything to the chief priests. Instead, it is reported here that they told Pilate and reached the same conclusions as the centurion had, who was standing under the cross: "Surely this man was the Son of God!", as reported by Mark (15,39)

46. Pilate retorted: "I am not responsible for the blood of the Son of God. Now you deal with it!"

- Pilate would always act coherently: he was "washing his hands" of it once again. - But, strange enough, he made a profession of faith by recognizing that Jesus is the Son of God.

47. So, as they came to him, everybody would beg and plead him to order that neither the centurion nor the soldiers tell anybody what they had seen.

48. "We would rather - so they said - be responsible for a crime before God than fall into the hands of the Jews and be stoned".

- The author thus makes the chief priests' bad faith clear. No canonical gospel would confirm this.

49. So Pilate ordered both the centurion and the soldiers to tell nothing.

- This is why - according to this author - these events would not be reported by the canonical evangelists: they knew nothing about them, as, of course, the soldiers did obey Pilate!

50. In the morning (of the day) of the Lord, Mary of Magdala, a disciple of the Lord - who, for fear of the Jews - who were raging - had not been in a position to do at the Lord's tomb what the women usually do for their dead beloved,

51. took some women friends with her and went to the sepulcher where he had been lain

- Here, again, Sunday is called "day of the Lord" (cp. verse 35)
- Mary Magdalene is reported by all canonical gospels to have gone to the tomb on Sunday morning, whereas there are some discrepancies as regards the names of the other women who were with her:
 - According to Mark: Mary (the mother) of James and Salome (16,1);
 - according to Luke: Joanna, Mary (the mother) of James and the others (24,10);
 - according to Matthew: the other Mary (28,1);

- according to John: the Magdalene went there alone (20,1), but the pronoun "we" in verse 20,2 would convey that other women were there with her. This author gets off by simply reporting about "friends"

*52. They were afraid that the Jews might see them and they said:
"We could not mourn on him, nor beat our breasts on the day he
was crucified; now at least we will do this at his sepulcher.*

*53. But who will roll back the stone which is at the entrance, in
order to let us in and sit beside him and do what we have to do?"*

*54. - it was a big stone, in fact - "And we are afraid that somebody
might see us. And should we not succeed, at least we can place at
the entrance all the things we have brought in memory of him and
we will mourn and weep and beat our breasts on our way home."*

- It is strange that the women should fear. It was not forbidden to visit a tomb, and, besides, the canonical gospels did report the presence of women when Jesus was buried.
- The "big stone" reference seems to come from Mark 16,4

*55. Once they had arrived, they found the tomb open; and as they
got nearer, they bent over and saw a boy there, sitting in the middle
of the tomb: he was handsome and his robe was radiant and he said
to them,*

- The account according to which the sepulcher was found open - with no mention about anyone opening it - is common to all canonical gospels, except for the one according to Matthew, which reports that it had been opened by a messenger coming from heaven (28,2). Ancient sepulchers (at least, the ones we know about) could not be opened from the inside; should then any objection arise about some thieves stealing the body, the author has already made it clear in verse 37 that the tomb had got open by itself as the two men were coming down from the sky.
- This boy should be the same one as also mentioned by Mark (16,5). By the clothes he is wearing it is clear that he must be an angel.

*56. "Why have you come? Whom are you looking for? The man they
have crucified? He is not here, he's gone. If you do not believe it, just
bend over and see the place where he lay. See: he is not there; as a
matter of fact, he has risen and gone where he had been sent from.*

- This speech is similar to the one quoted by both Mark (16,6) and Matthew (28,6)

57. Then the women, frightened, fled.

58. It was the last day of the Azymes. Many had gone and turned back home: the celebration was over.

59. As for us, the twelve apostles of the Lord, we wept and mourned; each one of us, overcome by sadness because of what had happened, went back home.

60. As for me, Simon Peter, and my brother Andrew, we took our nets and went to sea. With us there was also Levi, the son of Alpheus, whom the Lord...

4.7.3 CONCLUSION

As we can infer from the collation of the canonical gospels with Peter's, the latter presents itself like a compound of history, fiction and theology, meant to

- a) complete and specify the canonical gospels by giving an account of details meant to justify the theological theories of some "heretical" circles (i.e., that Jesus has not got a body, being a spirit; the physical importance of the cross;
- b) eliminate the discrepancies and the contradictions contained in the canonical gospels;
- c) highlight the miraculous side of the story;
- d) prove the bad faith of the Jews who deny resurrection.

4.8 APPENDIX: THE RECORDS ABOUT THE BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

4.8.1 GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARC - A.D. 50/60

Chapter 15

42. *And since it was the evening of Preparation Day (namely, the day before the Sabbath)*

43. *Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the Kingdom of God, took heart and went to Pilate and asked him for Jesus' body.*

44. *Pilate was surprised to learn that he had already died and summoned a centurion and enquired after Jesus actual death;*

45 *and as he learnt from the centurion that it so was, he gave the body to Joseph.*

46. *So Joseph bought a sindon, took down the body, wrapped it up in the sindon and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock; then he rolled a stone against the tomb's entrance.*

47. *And Mary Magdalene and Mary (the mother) of James noted where he was laid.*

Chapter 16

1. *And as the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body,*

2. *and very early on the first (day) of the week they started for the sepulcher after sunrise.*

3. *And they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone for us from the entrance of the sepulcher?"*

4. *Then, as they looked up, they saw that the stone had already been rolled back - yet it was a very big stone -.*

5. *As they entered the tomb, they saw a boy dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and were astonished.*

6. *But he said to them, "Do not be surprised. Is it Jesus, the Nazarene who was crucified, whom you are looking for? He has risen, he is not here: see the place where they laid him.*

7. *But now go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you into Galilee: there you will see him, just as he told you."*

8. *And they went out and fled from the sepulcher, as a matter of fact, they were trembling and upset and they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

*(the following account was written by another author, probably
some time after)*

9. When Jesus rose, early on the first (day) of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.

10. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping.

11. And when they heard that he was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

12. Thereafter he appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country.

13. And these came back and gave the news to the others: but they did not believe them, either.

14. Finally he appeared to the Eleven as they were lying at table and rebuked them for their misbelief and their stubbornness, for they had not believed those who had seen him after he had risen.

15. He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel (good news) to all creation.

16. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

17. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak in new tongues,

18. they will pick up snakes with their hands and, if they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all. They will lay their hands on sick people and (these) will get well."

19. Then the Lord (Jesus), after he had spoken to them, was taken into heaven and seated at the right hand of God.

20. As for the disciples, they went out and preached everywhere, as the Lord was working with them and confirming His word by the signs that accompanied (it).

4.8.2 GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE - A.D. 55/75

Chapter 23

50. Now there was a man named Joseph, an influential member of the Council, a good and upright man

51. - he had not consented to their (the Council's) decision and action - coming from the Judean town of Arimathea, who was waiting for the kingdom of God.

52. He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body,

53. and as he took it down he wrapped it in a sindon and then placed it in a sepulcher cut in the rock, one in which no-one had yet been laid.

54. It was Preparation Day, and (the) Sabbath was about to begin.

55. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed him and saw the sepulcher and how his body was laid into it.

56. Then they went back and prepared spices and perfumes. And on Sabbath they rested, in obedience to the commandment.

Chapter 24

1. On the first (day) of the week, at daybreak, they took the spices they had prepared and went to the sepulcher.

2. They found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher,

3. but, when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

4. And right then, as they were in anguish because of this, two men in shining robes came to them;

5. the women were frightened and bowed their heads; and the men said to them, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?"

6. He is not here, but was raised; remember what he told you while he was still with you in Galilee:

7. He said that the son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and rise again on the third day."

8. And they indeed remembered his words.

9. When they came back from the sepulcher they told all these things to

the Eleven and to all the others.

10. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the others

who were with them who told the apostles.

11. But their words sounded to them like nonsense and they did not believe the women.

(the following verse is not to be found but in few manuscripts only, and its authenticity is doubtful)

12. Then Peter got up and ran to the sepulcher; bending over, he saw the linen cloths (some manuscripts add: lying there) by themselves and went back home (literally: to his place/to himself) wondering what had happened.
13. Now that same day two of them were walking to a village called Emmaus, at about sixty stadia from Jerusalem (some manuscripts: 100 stadia; others: 160 stadia);
14. they were talking with each other about everything which had happened
15. and as they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them;
16. but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.
17. He asked them: "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" And, sadly, they stood still.
18. One of them, named Cleopas, thus answered, saying, "Are you the only one living in Jerusalem (or: are you a foreigner) who does not know about all the things that happened there in these days?"
19. And he asked: "What things?". So they replied: "About Jesus the Nazarene, who was a powerful man and prophet in both everything he said and did before God and all the people,
20. and also about the chief priests and our rulers, and how they handed him over to be sentenced to death and crucified.
21. We hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel; but now it is the third day since all this happened.
22. But then also some of our women upset us. They went to the sepulcher early this morning
23. and as they did not find his body, they came to us and said that they had seen a vision of messengers saying that he is alive.
24. And some companions of ours went to the sepulcher and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."
25. He said to them, "Oh, are you witless, and how slow of heart in believing all that the prophets have spoken!
26. Did the Christ not have to suffer these things before entering his glory?
27. And, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted for them what all the Scriptures said concerning himself.
28. And as they approached the village they were heading for, he acted as if he were going further.

29. So they urged him and said, "Stay with us for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over". And so he went in to stay with them.
30. And it so happened that, when he lay at table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them.
31. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he disappeared from their sight.
32. And they asked each other: "Weren't our hearts burning within us as he was talking with us on the road and disclosed the Scriptures to us?"
33. Both got up at once and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them assembled together
34. who said (variation: saying), "Really, the Lord was raised and appeared to Simon."
35. Then they told them what had happened along the way and how they had recognized Jesus by the way he had broken bread.
36. As they were saying these things, He himself was among them (many manuscripts add: and said to them, "Peace to you")
37. They were shocked and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.
38. He said to them: "Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"
39. You can tell by both my hands and feet that it is I myself. Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.
40. After saying this, he showed them his hands and feet (not all manuscripts do actually have this verse).
41. But as they still did not believe it because of their joy and amazement, he asked them: "Have you got anything here to eat?"
42. They gave him a piece of broiled fish
43. and he took it and ate it in their presence.
44. He said to them: "This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and the Psalms.
45. Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures
46. and told them that thus had actually been written: that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day;
47. that repentance (literally: change of heart) and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48. *"You (are) witnesses of these things;*
49. *and now I am going to send you what my Father has promised;*
but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from
above."
50. *After leading them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his*
hands and blessed them.
51. *And while he was blessing them, he left them (various*
manuscripts also have: and was taken up into heaven)
52. *And they (various manuscripts: after prostrating themselves*
before him) returned to Jerusalem with great joy
53. *and stayed all the time at the temple, praising God.*

4.8.3 GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW - A.D. (50)/85

Chapter 27.

57. *As evening approached, came a rich man from Arimathea*
named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus.
58. *He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body and Pilate ordered*
that it be given to him.
59. *Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth*
60. *and placed it in his own new sepulcher that he had had cut out*
of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the sepulcher's entrance
and went away.
61. *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there before*
the sepulcher.
62. *The next (day), the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests*
and the Pharisees went to Pilate.
63. *"Sir", they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that*
deceiver said, "after three days I will rise again"
64. *So give the order for the sepulcher to be made secure until the*
third day. Otherwise his disciples might come and steal the body
and tell the
people, "He has been raised from the dead!". This last deception
would be worse than the first."
65. *"Take a guard" Pilate answered "go and make the tomb as*
secure as you know how."
66. *So they went and made the sepulcher secure by putting a seal*
on the stone and posting the guard.

1. *After the Sabbath, at dawn on the third day of the week, Mary Madgalene and the other Mary went to look at the sepulcher.*
2. *There was a violent earthquake for a messenger of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.*
3. *His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow.*
4. *The guards were so frightened and upset that they became like dead men.*
5. *But the messenger said to the women, "Do not be afraid: I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified,*
6. *He is not here; he has risen, just as he said; come and see the place where he lay.*
7. *Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he was raised from the dead and that he is now going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Now I have told you"*
8. *So the women hurried away from the sepulcher, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.*
9. *And then Jesus came and met them: "Rejoice! (Hail!)", he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and prostrated themselves before him."*
10. *Then Jesus said to them: "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go into Galilee; there they will see me."*
11. *While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.*
12. *When they (i.e., the chief priests) had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers an adequate sum of money*
13. *telling them, "This is what you are to say: 'His disciples came at night and stole him away while we were asleep'.*
14. *If this report gets to the governor, we will persuade him and keep you out of trouble."*
15. *So the soldiers took (the) money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been circulated among (certain) Jews to this day.*

16. Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.
17. When they saw him, they prostrated themselves before him, but some doubted (or: but when they saw him, the ones who had doubted prostrated themselves before him).
18. Then Jesus came to them and said "All the power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
19. And now, go and make disciples of all peoples (the Gentiles), baptizing (literally: immersing) them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,
20. teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And thus I am with you every day, to the completion of the time.

Gospel according to John - A.D. 80/90

Chapter 19

38. After that, Joseph of Arimathea - who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly (literally: hiding) because he feared the Jews - asked Pilate to let him take Jesus' body and Pilate allowed him to.
39. So off he went and took his body. There went also Nicodemus - the man who had called on him the first time at night - bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, almost one hundred litrai.
40. So they took Jesus' body and wrapped it (or: tied it ?), with the spices, in linen cloths, in accordance with Jewish burial customs. (or: the Jewish way of preparing the burial)
41. At the place where Jesus was crucified there was an orchard and in the orchard a new sepulcher in which no-one had ever been laid;
42. therefore, since it was the Jewish day of Preparation and the sepulcher was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Chapter 20.

1. On the first (day) of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the sepulcher early in the morning, when it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been removed from the sepulcher.
2. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They took the Lord out of the sepulcher and we do not know where they put him".
3. So Peter got out with the other disciple and they both went to the sepulcher.

4. *They were both running and the other disciple outran Peter and reached the sepulcher first.*
5. *And bending over he looked at the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go inside.*
6. *Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, came too and entered the sepulcher and saw the linen lying there*
 7. *as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around his head, which was not lying with the linen, but was rolled up in a different way/separately in the same place.*
8. *Then the other disciple, who had reached the sepulcher first, went in, and he saw and he believed.*
9. *They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.*
 10. *So the disciples went back home.*
11. *But Mary stood weeping outside the sepulcher. As she was crying, she bent over the sepulcher*
12. *and saw two messengers in white (robes) sitting where once lay Jesus' body: one at the head and the other at the foot.*
13. *And they asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" She said, "They took my Lord away and I do not know where they put him."*
14. *At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.*
15. *Jesus asked her: "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him".*
16. *Jesus said to her, "Mary". She turned back towards him (or: having known better) and cried out in Aramaic: "RabbunÆ", which means Teacher.*
17. *Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me/do not touch me, for I have not yet returned to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God".*
18. *Mary of Magdala went to the disciples bringing the news: "I saw the Lord" and told them what he had told her.*
19. *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together - with the doors locked for fear of the Jews - Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace to you".*

20. After saying this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.
21. Again, Jesus said, "Peace to you. As the Father sent me so I am sending you".
22. At that he breathed on them saying, "Receive (the) Holy Spirit.
23. If you forgive anyone his sins they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."
24. Now Thomas, one of the twelve, the one called "Didymus" (twin), was not with them when Jesus came.
25. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord". But he said, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it".
26. And eight days later his disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood among them and said, "Peace to you".
27. Then he said to Thomas: "Reach your finger here, see my hands and reach your hand here and put it into my side. Don't be unbelieving but a believer."
28. Thomas said to him: "My Lord and my God!"
29. Then Jesus told him: "Because you have seen me, you have believed? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed".
30. Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples
which are not mentioned in this book:
31. these (or: these things) have been 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.

Chapter 21 (by a different author) - After A.D. 90

1. After that, Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the sea of Tiberias. It happened this way.
2. Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee,
the sons of Zebedee and the other disciples were together.
3. Simon Peter told them, "I am going out to fish" and they said, "We are going with you". So they went out and got into the boat, but that

night they caught nothing.

4. Then, as morning had already broken, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

*5. He called out to them: "My boys, haven't you anything to eat?"
"No, we haven't", they replied.*

6. So he told them, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find something". When they threw the net they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish.

*7. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord".
As Simon heard that it was the Lord he wrapped his garment around himself (for he was naked) and jumped into the sea*

8. whereas the other disciples followed with the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore - about 200 cubits -.

9. When they landed, they saw there a fire of burning coals with fish on it, and some bread.

10. Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught".

11. Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish - 153 - but even with so many the net was not torn.

12. Jesus said to them, "Come on and eat". None of the disciples dared ask him "Who are you?", since they knew it was the Lord.

13. Jesus came forward, took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish.

14. This (was) now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he had been raised from the dead.

15. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon, "Simon, (son) of John, do you love me more than these?" "Certainly, Lord" he said "you know that I love you". Jesus said, "Feed my little lambs".

16. Again, for the second time, Jesus said, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?". Peter said, "Certainly, Lord, you do know that I love you". He said, "look after/herd my lambs".

17. The third time he said to him: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time "Do you love me". He said, "Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you". Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs.

18. Amen, Amen, I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands and (someone) else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go".

19. Jesus said this (to indicate) the kind of death by which he/Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me".

20. Peter turned and saw that disciple whom Jesus loved was following them - it was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?"-

21. As Peter saw him he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

22. Jesus answered: "If I want him to stay until I return what (is) that to you? Just follow me".

23. So this belief spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he simply said, "If I want him to stay until I return, what is that to you?"

24. This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down and we know that his testimony is true.

25. Jesus did many other things as well. If everyone of them were written down I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

4.8.4 NICODEMUS' MEMOIRS(GREEK RECENSION "A") 1ST – 2ND CENTURY

Chapter 11

3. A man named Joseph, a Councillor from the town of Arimathea, who was also waiting for the kingdom of God, went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. He took it down, wrapped it up in a linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock, where nobody had ever been laid.

Chapter 12

1. The authorities versus Joseph and Nicodemus. When the Jews heard that Joseph had asked for Jesus' body, they went out looking for him, for the twelve who had been claiming that Jesus had not been born from fornication, for Nicodemus and for the many who had gone to Pilate and testified to his good deeds. But these had all hidden themselves away, so they could not find but Nicodemus, since he was a Jewish chief. Nicodemus said to them, "How is it that you have assembled in the synagogue?" The Jews replied, "How could you enter the synagogue, since you have joined with him and his part will be with you in the life to come." Nicodemus replied, "Amen, Amen". Joseph came as well and said to them, "Why are you mad at me and my asking for Jesus' body? You see, I have put it in my new sepulcher after wrapping it in a linen cloth and then I rolled the stone against the entrance of the cave. You have not behaved

uprightly to the righteous one, since you did not repent crucifying him, nay you even pierced him with a spear."

2. But the Jews arrested Joseph and gave orders that he be kept in custody until the first day of the week and then said to him, "You have to know that we cannot proceed against you because of the time of day, since the Sabbath is about to begin, but you might as well be advised that you will never be honored with a tomb: your body will become food for the birds of the sky." Joseph thus answered, "These words of yours sound like the words of haughty Goliath, who raised himself against the living God and the saint named David. Since God spoke through the prophet: "Mine is vengeance: I shall give the reward" so the Lord says. And now a man who was uncircumcised, but whose heart was circumcised, took some water and washed his hands of it, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man. You deal with it!' 'His blood be upon us and our children', this is what you said to Pilate. And so I fear that God's wrath is upon you and your sons, just as you said." When the Jews heard these words, they got angry and clutched him, tied his hands and feet, shut him up in a blind room and put seals at the door of the place they had put him in.

3. On the Sabbath the chiefs of the Synagogue, the priests and the Levites issued the order for everybody to meet at the synagogue on the first day of the week. And all the people got up early and went to the synagogue to devise what kind of death should be inflicted on him.

As the Council met they ordered that Joseph be brought in, to disgrace him. When they opened the door, they did not find him in. The people were very surprised, for the seals were still in their place, and Caiaphas still had the key on himself. And they no longer dared lay hands on the one who had intervened in favor of Jesus before Pilate.

Chapter 13

1. The guards' testimony. As they were sitting in the synagogue, amazed because of Joseph, the guards came whom the Jews had asked Pilate for in order to make Jesus' tomb secure and keep his disciples from coming and stealing his body. And they reported what had happened to the chiefs of the synagogue, to the priests and the Levites.

They reported that a violent earthquake had happened and that "...we saw an angel coming from the sky and roll away the stone from the tomb's entrance and sit on it: he was shining like snow and lightning. We trembled for fear and froze like dead men. We heard the angel's voice as he spoke with the women who were waiting there at the tomb, saying, 'Do not be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here! He has risen, as he told you. Come and see the place where the Lord lay. And now

hurry out and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and that he is in Galilee".

2. *The Jews asked: "Who were the women whom he spoke to?" The guards answered: "We do not know who they were". And the Jews: "What time was it?" "It was midnight", answered the guards. The Jews asked, "And why didn't you get the women?" The guards answered, "Because we were so afraid that we were just like dead and because we thought that we would not live to see another day. How were we to get them?" The Jews replied, "Just as surely as God lives, we don't believe you". The guards said to the Jews, "You have seen so many signs about that man and yet you still do not believe, so how would you believe us? You have indeed sworn the truth by saying "As surely as God lives" In fact he is alive. We also heard that you jailed the guy who had asked for Jesus' body, you put seals at the door and you could not find him in as you opened the door again.*

So you hand Joseph to us and we shall hand Jesus to you". The Jews retorted, "He has gone back to his town"; "So has Jesus", said the guards, "He has risen from the dead - so we heard the angel say - and he is in Galilee".

3. *As the Jews heard these words they got very afraid and said, "Do not let the people know about this, lest they all turn to Jesus". Then the Jews convened a council and gathered a large sum of money and gave it to the guards, saying, "You are to say that during the night, as you were sleeping, his disciples came and stole him. If the Procurator gets to know about this, we shall talk it out with him so that you will have nothing to worry about. So these took (the money) and did as they had been instructed.*

Chapter 14.

1. Jesus on Mount Mamilch.

And a Levite named Aggai, who were coming from Galilee, and thus reported to the chiefs of the synagogue, the priests and the Levites, "We have seen Jesus as he sat on Mount Mamimlch with his disciples. He commanded his disciples, 'Go into the whole world and preach to all creation: whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs which will accompany the believers: they will drive out demons in my name, speak in new tongues, pick up snakes with their hands and if they drink deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay hands on sick people and these will get well again'. (cp. the final addition in Mark, 16,17-18). And we saw Jesus be taken into heaven while he was still talking to his disciples.

2. *So the elders, the priests and the Levites said, "Give glory to the God of Israel and confess before him that you truly heard and saw*

what you have actually reported to us". The announcers answered, "Just as sure as the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph lives, we did hear this and we did see that he was taken to heaven". So the elders, the priests and the Levites replied, "Have you come to tell us the news or have you come to send your prayer to God?", they answered: "We have come to pray God". So the elders, the priests and the Levites said, "If it is true that you have come to pray God, then what's this talking nonsense before the people?". So Finee - the priest - Adas -the Scribe- and Aggai -the Levite- answered to the chiefs of the synagogue, the priests and the Levites, "If the words that we said and the things that we saw are sinful to your eyes, then do us what you think is right". So these took the law and beseeched them never to say these words again to anyone. Then they gave them something to eat and drink and, after giving them some money and three men to escort them to Galilee, they ordered them out of the city. And they went in peace.

3. Deep concern of the Jewish authorities. As these men had started for Galilee, the chief priests, the chiefs of the synagogue and the elders locked the doors and elevated a great lamentation and said, "Why did this sign appear in Israel?" But Annas and Caiaphas said, "What are you worrying about? What's all this crying for? Don't you know that his disciples gave the guards a large sum of money and instructed them to declare that an angel came from heaven and rolled the stone away from the tomb's entrance?". But both priests and elders objected, "Let us grant you are right, that his disciples stole the body. But how would his soul enter his body, since he is now in Galilee?" At that they were unable to give any answer; with some effort they finally said, "We must not believe the uncircumcised".

4.8.5 LETTER OF THE APOSTLES (APOCRYPHAL) - 2ND CENTURY

19. You see, it was right because of this that we did not hesitate (to write to you) about the true testimony of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the way he worked while we could still see him and how he would constantly clarify and inspire our thoughts.

20. This man, to whom we testify, is known as the man who was crucified at the time of Pontius Pilate and prince Archaelaous; he was crucified together with two thieves and was taken down from the wooden cross and buried with them in a place called quaraneio (the place of the skull). There went three women: Sarah, Martha and Mary Magdalene. They were taking some ointment to anoint Jesus' body and they were weeping and mourning because of what had happened. They came to the sepulcher and (there) they found the stone which had been thrown away from the sepulcher. They opened the door and did not find his body.

21. *And as they were mourning and weeping the Lord appeared to them and said, "Do not cry. It is me you are looking for. But now one of you is to go to your brothers and tell them, 'Come, our teacher has risen from the dead.'" And Mary came and told us. And we asked her: "Woman, why are you bothering us; surely you are not saying that he who is dead and buried can live again?" and we did not believe that our Saviour had risen from the dead. So she came back to our Lord and said to him, "None of them would believe that you have risen". And he said to her, "Then another one of you is to go and tell them once more". So Sarah came and gave us the same news and we accused her of lying. So she came back to our Lord with the same report as Mary.*

22. *Now then the Lord told Mary and her sisters, "Let us call on them" .So he came and found us hiding in the house. We doubted and we did not believe. He came to us like a ghost and we did not believe that it was he. But it was indeed. So he told us, "Come on, don't be afraid! I am your teacher, whom you, Paul, have denied thrice before the cock crowed; what now? Are you going to deny me again?" We got near him thoughtfully and doubting whether it was really he. And he said to us, "Why are you doubting instead of believing? It is I, the one who told you about my flesh, my death and resurrection; and now, just to have you believe that it is I, I ask you, Peter, to come and put your hands into the nail marks in my hands; you, Thomas, do touch my side and you, Andrew, do also see that my feet touch the ground and leave prints on it, for the prophet wrote: 'Ghosts and demons do not leave footprints on the ground'".*

23. *So we touched him to make sure that he had risen with his flesh. And we fell face down before him and begged him and beseeched him to forgive us for failing to believe him. Then our Lord and Saviour said to us, "Get up and I shall reveal to you everything that is on the earth and above the skies, and also your resurrection, the one in the heavenly Kingdom, the one because of which my Father sent me so that I can take there all of you and the ones who believe in me".*

4.8.6 THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PETER (APOCRYPHAL) - ABOUT A.D. 150

3. *And there was also Joseph, a friend of both Pilate's and the Lord's who, seeing that they were about to crucify him, went to Pilate and asked him for Jesus' body so that he might bury it.*

4. *Having sent (somebody) to Herod, Pilate asked him for Jesus' body.*

5. *And Herod said, "My friend (literally: brother) should nobody have asked for it, we would have buried him anyway, for the*

Sabbath is about to begin. It is written in the Law that we are not to let the sun go down on an executed man.

21. So they pulled the nails out of the Lords' hands and took him down. The whole earth quaked, causing great awe.

22. Then the sun shone again and they realized that it was the 9th hour.

23. The Jews were satisfied and gave Jesus' body to Joseph to bury, for they had seen all the good things that he had done.

24. He took the Lord, washed (him) and wrapped (him) into a sheet (sindon) and took him to his own sepulcher, called Joseph's Garden.

28. Then the Scribes, the Pharisees and the elders met and then, having heard that the people rumored and beat their breasts saying: "Since all these awesome signs have occurred after his death, see how righteous he was!",

29. the elders got frightened and went to Pilate and begged him saying:

30. "Give us some soldiers so that we can guard his tomb for three days and keep his disciples from coming and stealing his body, lest the people might think that he has risen from the dead and should do us harm.

31. So Pilate gave them a centurion - Petronius by name - and some soldiers to keep watch at the sepulcher. And both the elders and the Scribes started for the sepulcher.

32. After the centurion and the soldiers and everyone who was there had rolled a big stone at the entrance of the tomb

33. they put (literally: smeared) seven seals, and, after pitching their tents there, they started keeping watch.

34. As the Sabbath morning was dawning, people from Jerusalem and its vicinity went to look at the sealed tomb.

35. That night, as the day of the Lord was breaking and the soldiers were keeping watch in shifts of two, a great noise coming from the sky was heard

36. and they saw the skies open and two men come down with much splendor and get close to the sepulcher.

37. And the stone that had been rolled at the entrance rolled back by itself, the sepulcher opened and the two boys went in.

38. At that sight those soldiers woke both the centurion and the elders - as a matter of fact they had stayed there keeping watch, too -

39. and as they were telling them about all the things that they had seen, again they saw three men coming out of the tomb, one being supported by two, and a cross following them.

40. and they were as tall as the sky, while the one whom they supported was taller than the sky;

41. and a voice coming from heaven was heard saying, "Did you preach to the dead? (literally: the sleeping)"

42. And a voice coming from the cross was heard answering, "Yes".

43. So they discussed among themselves whether they should go and let Pilate know about these things;

44. and as they went on discussing, again the open skies appeared and a man came down and entered the tomb.

45. When they saw these things, the men who had stayed the night together with the centurion left the sepulcher that they were guarding and ran to Pilate and told him everything they had seen, as they were very upset, saying, "He was indeed the Son of God!".

46. Pilate replied by saying, "I am not liable for the blood of the Son of God. Now you deal with it!"

47. So, as they came to him, everybody would beg and plead him to give orders that neither the centurion nor the soldiers tell anybody what they had seen.

48. They said, "We would rather be responsible for a crime before God than fall into the hands of the Jews and be stoned".

49. So Pilate commanded both the centurion and the soldiers to tell nothing.

50. In the morning (of the day) of the Lord, Mary of Magdala, a disciple of the Lord's - who, for fear of the Jews, who were raging, had not been in a position to do on the Lord's tomb what the women usually do for their dead beloved ones

51. took some women friends with her and went to the sepulcher where he had been lain,

52. They were afraid that the Jews might see them and they said, "We could

not mourn on him, nor beat our breasts on the day he was crucified; now

at least we will do this before his sepulcher.

53. But who will roll back the stone which is at the entrance, in order to let us in and sit beside him and do what we have to do?"

54. - it was big stone, in fact - "And we are afraid that somebody might see. And should we not succeed, at least we can place at the tomb's entrance all the things we have prepared in memory of him and we will mourn and weep and beat our breasts on our way home."

55. When they arrived, they found the tomb open; and as they got closer, they bent over and saw a boy there, sitting in the middle of the tomb: he was handsome and his robe was radiant and he said to them,

56. "Why have you come? Whom are you looking for? The man whom they have crucified? He is not here, he is gone. If you do not believe it, just bend over and see the place where he lay. See: he is not there; as a matter of fact he has risen and gone where he had been sent from."

57. So the women, frightened, ran away.