

He is Not Here

In the Tomb

After Jesus had been buried, the Pharisees made a request of Pilate to seal Jesus' tomb. They did not realize that they were strengthening the testimony of the resurrection. Because the tomb was sealed, it would have been more difficult for robbery of the body, and therefore heighten the marvel of the resurrection. Notice the Pharisees acknowledged that Jesus claimed to rise on the third day, which they understood as Sunday (Matthew 27:63).

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After the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. It was dawn, which meant that Jesus' body had been in the tomb all morning. They had already come by to see where the tomb was, but the seal had not yet been made. But that made no difference. Before they arrived, the stone was already rolled away. An angel of God had come to roll away the stone. This is why there was a great earthquake. Notice that the description of the angel is not like what we find in popular culture. The appearance of the angel was so stunning, that it shocked the Roman soldiers into an extreme state of fear. We are told that they became like "dead men" (Matthew 28:4). Also notice that when the women encountered the angel, they were not put into a state of panic like the men. This, combined with the fact that women are the first to appear to the tomb (and to see Jesus), is another testimony about the Bible's teaching on the equality of women. Both women are immediately told not to be afraid, and were even shown where the Lord had laid. They did have fear, but unlike the Roman soldiers (Matthew 28:8). Their fear was more like a kind of excitement so great that it is a radically unfamiliar experience. In their tremendous excitement, they ran to report this to the disciples.

As soon as Peter and John heard about the empty tomb, they ran to see it for themselves (John 20:2-10). We are told that John outran Peter. This does not mean that Peter was less enthusiastic about seeing the empty tomb. It does indicate that each of them were moving as fast as they could. They were not just in a little hurry. All of their energy had been expended to get there as fast as possible. However, they had not yet realized that the Lord was resurrected (John 20:9). Even though Mary had been spoken to by the angel and remembered Jesus' words about rising on the third day, she told Peter and John that she did not know where Jesus' body had been moved to (John 20:2). Her eyes had not been open yet, and she was also probably very confused about this situation.

The Lord is Risen

When Mary returned to the tomb, she was weeping. Her tears were shed because she did not know where Jesus' body was. She could not anoint his body, or understand how he was to rise if his body was missing. But Jesus was standing right behind her. It was not until Jesus called her name that she realized that it was him. Her confused sorrow immediately turned into joy, and she took hold of his feet. Jesus told her not to cling to him, because he had not yet ascended to be with the Father. The most simple explanation of this seems to be that Jesus is telling Mary that she cannot hang on to him. He must ascend. But, as this was a cause for great rejoicing, she was to go tell the disciples. Mark records that the disciples did not believe Mary when she reported the Lord's resurrection. However, Mark 16:9-20 does not appear in some manuscripts. We will not evaluate the text's authenticity at this juncture. Jesus had also appeared to other women before he appeared to his

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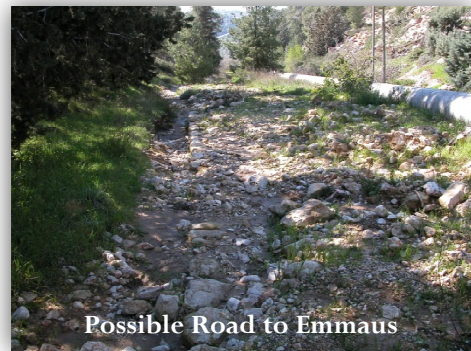
disciples (Matthew 18:9-10). We see how the Lord characteristically greets those first who had a low social status.

Liars

In the meantime, the soldiers reported their experience to the chief priests and elders in Jerusalem (Matthew 28:11-15). This meant that they were told about the angel who had moved the stone. As we discussed in Lesson 13, the hardness of these men's hearts was great. It would have been utterly senseless for their story to be true. But they were first ready to believe something that was dim-witted rather than that Jesus had risen from the dead. For Jesus' disciples to have stolen his body while the guards were asleep was about as brainless of a story as anything. They knew how big the stone was, and they had it sealed. How was all of that supposed to have taken place while guards were sleeping?

Slow of Heart

The next appearance of the Lord was to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus. This is one of my favorite Bible stories because it tells us so much about how we understand the Bible. When the Lord was talking to Cleopas and his friend, they were grieved over the death of the Lord, and that Jesus had not "redeemed Israel." But Jesus' response to them was not to dazzle them in his resurrected state. Instead he gave them a Bible study on the Old Testament. Based on everything in the Old Testament, they should have known that these events had to come to pass.



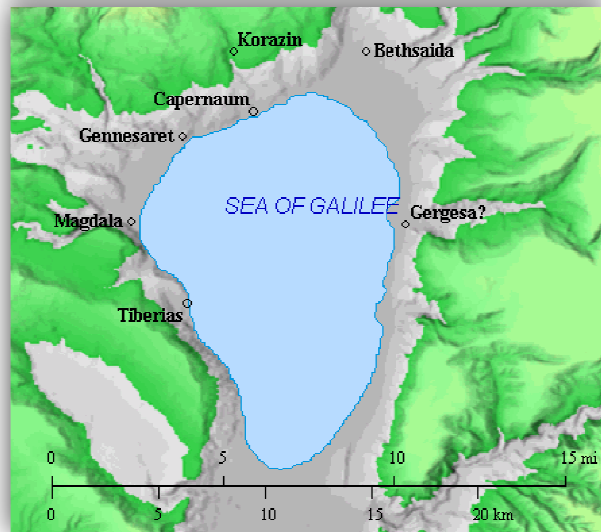
He explained to them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.
Luke 24:27

Peace Be With You

Before the Lord appeared to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem, he had appeared to Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5). We know nothing about the encounter. A week had passed since the Lord's resurrection (John 20:19). For several days, they had the opportunity to doubt and fester in fear over their defeat to the Jewish leaders. Because of their fear of the Jewish leaders, they had been hiding in a locked room. But Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. To show them that he was truly risen, he did not perform a miracle, but displayed his humanity to them. He showed his wounded side, and ate some fish. Spirits cannot be wounded or eat food. Thomas was not present among them, and when the Lord's appearance was reported to him, he denied it. He is often called "doubting Thomas." But Thomas was not doubtful. Thomas was denying. We are told of a second appearance of Jesus with his disciples, but this time Thomas was present with all of the disciples (1 Corinthians 15:5). This was a week after his previous appearance (John 20:26), which means that it had been two weeks since the resurrection.

At the Sea of Tiberias

John 21:1-25 tells us that the Lord met seven of his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This was the same as the Sea of Galilee, but it was referred to by this name on the western side near the city of Tiberias (see John 6:1). Peter had gone back to fishing, and was followed by the others. Perhaps they did not return to their hometown out of fear of their old neighbors who Jesus had angered. The attempt to return to fishing resembles the times that Peter had done this early in Jesus' ministry. He did not think he had anything better to do. But when they had discovered that Jesus was on the shore, they immediately became excited. As Peter was the first one to go back to fishing, he also wanted to be the first one to greet the Lord. One of the funniest statements in the Bible is John 21:7, "And so when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord...he *threw* himself into the sea" (emphasis added). Knowing that Peter did not really have to "throw" himself into the sea makes it even more funny (21:8). Jesus took the opportunity of Peter's zeal to test his love. Three times Peter was asked if he loved Jesus. Peter replied each time with something like a "no duh," answer. "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Perhaps the Lord asked Peter three times because he had denied Jesus three times. However, it is more fitting in the context to understand that Peter is not doing what Christ wanted him to do. Peter should have already known that Jesus did not want him bothering with reviving his fishing career (see Matthew 4:18). The Lord's response to Peter in each of his answers is most clear: "Tend my lambs," "Shepherd my sheep," "Tend my sheep." It was Peter's responsibility to care for the followers of Christ. It is fitting that the Lord calls Peter out. You will remember that Jesus called Peter "the rock" (Matthew 16:18) in anticipation of the events to take place in Acts 2. Instead of Peter initiating care for the people of God, he was initiating an escape. He was fishing for fish instead of men. But you will soon see Peter almost nearly a different man. And you will see why.



In Galilee

The Lord met all eleven of his disciples on a mountain in Galilee which is where the Great Commission was given (Matthew 28). First Corinthians 15:6 tells us that the Lord also appeared to five hundred people at one time, which occurred around this time. Like the other texts in Mark, the last section (16:15-20) does not appear in some manuscripts. No, it will not be discussed here. But, you should take note that its content does not have an equivalent in another Gospel.

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First Corinthians tells us once more that Jesus appeared to James and all the apostles (15:7). The location is unspecified.

Concerning the Kingdom

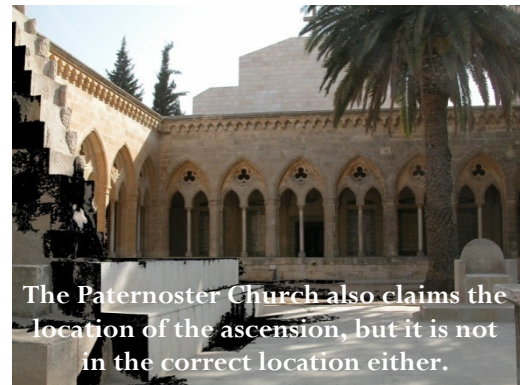
As it was Christ's will for his apostles to begin to proclaim the kingdom in Jerusalem, we find them there next. For a period of forty days, the Lord appeared to his disciples to train them. Luke 24:45-47 is a parallel text to Acts 1:3-4. During this time the Lord taught his disciples concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Luke who was the author of his own gospel, as well as Acts, gives us more specific details about this time in Luke 24:44,46. The Lord was teaching them that the Old Testament is about his sufferings and resurrection, and those who repent for the forgiveness of their sins (24:47). There is one word for what the Lord was teaching about: Gospel. Based on this portion of Luke, and the parallel text in Acts, it is clear that the Old Testament teaches the Gospel, which Luke refers to as the "kingdom of God" in Acts. After this had taken place, the disciples asked Jesus if he would now restore the kingdom of Israel (Acts 1:6). This statement shows that they were still looking for what our friends on the road to Emmaus were looking for (Luke 24:21). Jesus did not say the disciples were dummies for looking for the wrong thing. He did not ignore their question either. His response to them is that it is none of their business to be concerned about things such as "times" and "epochs" (Acts 1:7). Instead, it is their responsibility to be witnesses of Christ to the world, beginning in Jerusalem (1:8). For the kingdom (i.e., the Gospel) is not concerned about worldly realms. The kingdom of God is concerned about the death and resurrection of Christ, and those who repent of their sins. Now we finally see what the kingdom of God is in its most clear manifestation.

Ascension

Christ's ascension into heaven is often overlooked. For the last time Jesus appeared to his apostles on the Mount of Olives. Luke indicates that this location was near, or toward Bethany (Luke 24:50), so it was probably not in the same spot as his other activities on the Mount of Olives. At this time, the Lord blessed his disciples and departed from them. Of all the events I



The Dome of Ascension is now a Muslim mosque. It contains the supposed last footprint of Jesus. It is not in the location of the ascension indicated by Luke.



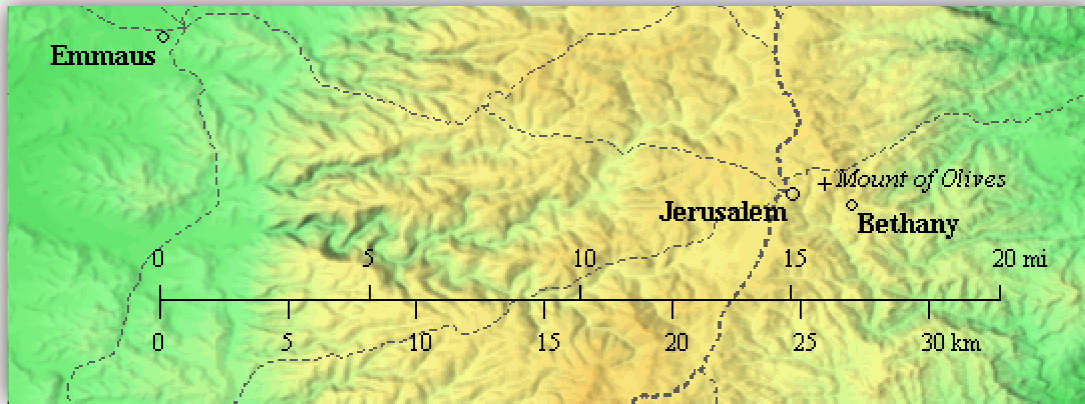
The Paternoster Church also claims the location of the ascension, but it is not in the correct location either.



The Russian Church of the Ascension is the most recent claimant for the site of the ascension....no, it is not on the Mount of Olives and not "out as far as Bethany" either.

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would have liked to have witnessed in the Gospels, this would be on the top of my list. Ever since I had first read this passage, I have wondered what it exactly looked like. But, if the Lord will return before die, then he will return in same way that he left (Acts 1:11). Praise God! Christ will return!



Reading Assignment

Acts 1-20

Greek	Pronunciation	English	Part of Speech
anastasi~	ana-stasis	resurrection, a raising	noun
anabainw	ana-baino	to go up, rise, ascend, climb	verb
kosmo~	cosmos	the world	noun
nomo~	nom-oss	law	noun
cari~	car-iss	grace	noun
egeirw	ay-gey-ro	I raise up	verb