

FINDING THE EMPTY TOMB

The time of Jesus' resurrection has traditionally been taught to be early in the morning on the first day of the week, just before dawn on what we call Easter Sunday morning.¹ This teaching has been promoted by every known Christian denomination for many centuries. However, an extensive search in the Greek-English Interlinear King James Bible, several Greek-English lexicons, and a Greek-English Dictionary shows a different time frame for the resurrection of Jesus than what has traditionally been taught. The Greek text of these events seems to place the resurrection at the close of Sabbath just at the beginning of the new week. It seems that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (the mother of James and Salome) came to the tomb in the early evening after the close of the Sabbath and found the sepulcher empty, and the other events unfold from that point. Since Mary Magdalene and the other Mary found the tomb empty when they arrived just after the Sabbath ended, it follows that Jesus was resurrected in the twilight of the day immediately after the sun went down at the close of Sabbath.

This essay is an examination of the words and phrases that comprise the resurrection story in each of the gospels. The text in Greek characters is provided first, followed by the transliterated Greek, then the Interlinear KJV, and finally the traditional KJV. This is followed by a brief discussion of the meaning of the significant words in the verse. Based on this, I then provide my own suggestion of how the text should read in English.

Matthew

28:1 οψε δε σαββατων τη επιφωσκουση εις μιαν σαββατων ηλθεν μαρια η μαγδαληνη και η αλλη μαρια θεωρησαι τον ταφον

28:1 opse de sabbatôn tē epiphōskousē eis mian sabbatôn êlthen a=mariam tsb=maria ê magdalênê kai ê allê maria theôrêsai ton taphon

28:1 Now late on sabbath, as it was getting dusk toward [the] first [day] of the week, came Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher,

28:1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

The first word of significance that must be explored is the first word in the sentence: οψε (opse). This word has only one meaning regarding a time frame as applied to a particular time of day. The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Volume 1, Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, Editors, United Bible Societies, p. 639, provides the following definition for this critically important word:

a.. οψε ; οψιος, α, ον: pertaining to a point near the end of a day (**normally after sunset but before night**) — 'late, late in the day.' ... '**evening**'. [Bold added.]

¹ Of course, there were no actual eyewitness accounts of the resurrection of Jesus. The information recorded in the gospels regarding Jesus' resurrection is really just an account of when the women and disciples found the tomb empty sometime — presumably soon — after His resurrection.

The time frame for discovering the empty tomb and the following events in Matthew's gospel is generally set by this one word. This word indicates that the time of day when the women found the tomb empty occurred near the end of the Sabbath, late in the day, or in the evening. When taken alone this word does not restrict us to a time either before or after sunset, but simply tells us that it was near the end of the Sabbath that this event took place. In the context of Hebrew thought, *evening* did not necessarily indicate a time after sunset or after dark. The evening sacrifice took place in the mid to late afternoon at about the time of the beginning of the fourth watch. This would be around what we would call 3:00 P.M. by our modern method of keeping time. The evening sacrifice certainly occurred before sundown each day. But the primary meaning of the word οψε (opse) signifies the waning moments of the day or twilight — the time just about sunset until darkness sets in. Some translations render the phrase οψε δε σαββατων as "after the Sabbath." Sabbath, of course, ends at sunset. In any event, the word οψε tells us that the discovery of the empty tomb by the women probably took place during twilight. It is possible that the phrase οψε δε σαββατων (late on Sabbath) may indicate the time at which the women began their trek from home rather than the time they arrived at the tomb, but that is not implied in the text.

The next phrase contains the words τη επιφωσκουση (tê epiphôskousê) and is translated in the Interlinear to be "as it was getting dusk". The first word τη (tê) has a wide application as a connective word, but can also convey an immediacy of time in a sequence of events. It means that what is happening occurs right away without a time delay. Because Matthew opens this part of the story indicating a time late in the day, it is possible, even likely, that Matthew is using τη (tê) in the sense of the immediate next event. The word επιφωσκουση (epiphôskousê) has the ending *ko* which indicates either a middle or passive voice form so that the reader understands that the event is either just beginning or just ending. This can be literally translated "upon the coming of the light" (a light that is getting brighter) or "upon the going of the light" (a light that is getting dimmer). Many words in Greek can be understood in two opposite ways depending on the context. Whether the writer intends for us to understand that the light is getting brighter or dimmer must be determined by the context of the sentence. Since the writer began the sentence with the phrase οψε δε σαββατων indicating a time near the end of Sabbath, the logical conclusion is that the light is getting dimmer and that επιφωσκουση is intended to convey the thought that the light is going away.

The entry for epiphôskō in the majority of the Greek-English Lexicons would lead the reader to believe that the primary meaning is an event associated with dawn or sunrise. However, sunrise is not implied in the words of the text. That understanding is supplied by the translators or the reader who relies on tradition rather than scripture to interpret the text. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the word *dawn* does not require a sunrise context. The *dawn of civilization* or the *dawn of a new era* or *it dawned on me* are expressions in English that have nothing to do with a sunrise event even though the word *dawn* is a key part of each phrase.

The word epiphôskō appears only one other time in scripture in Luke 23:54, so to help determine whether it is reasonable for epiphôskō to be translated *upon the going of the light* rather than *upon the coming of the light*, let's see how its translated in that passage. First the text in Greek characters, followed by the transliterated Greek, then the KJV Interlinear, and finally the traditional KJV.

Luke 23:54 και ημερα ην παρασκευη και σαββατον επεφωσκει
 kai êmera ên a=paraskeuês tsb=paraskeuê ats=kai sabbaton **epephôskēn**
 And day it was preparation, and Sabbath **was coming on.**
 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath **drew on.**

It is inescapable in this verse that the time frame is a sunset event and that *epiphōskō* means the light is getting dimmer as the Sabbath is drawing near. In the verses just prior to this, Luke tells the reader that Joseph of Arimathea gained permission from Pilate to take the body of Jesus from the cross and bury it, and this is done in the context of the Sabbath's soon arrival. As used here, the word *epiphōskō* is related to a diminishing light and the approach of the Sabbath. If a time frame related to a growing or diminishing light is associated with *epiphōskō* in Luke 23:54, it must be related to an event at the close of the day and a diminishing light at sunset rather than a growing light at sunrise. The Sabbath, like all days, arrives at sunset and not sunrise. The events recorded in Luke 23 must be a sunset event because the approach of a day in scripture is necessarily associated with a diminishing light. This same meaning fits perfectly with the use of *epiphōskō* in Matthew 28:1 so that Matthew seems to be telling us that the new week is just about to begin at the close of Sabbath. This is necessarily a late afternoon or twilight event so that the meaning of *επεφωσκεν* (*epiphōskō*) in Matthew 28:1 must be something akin to the approach of the new week. The first of the week is drawing near immediately at the close of Sabbath evening as Mary Magdalene and the other Mary make their respective ways to the tomb.

Matthew is not telling us that the morning is drawing near. To do so would require the reader to immediately skip forward approximately 12 hours thereby creating a great deal of internal stress for this verse. There is no need or justification to do so.

The phrase *εις μιαν σαββατων* (*eis mian sabbatōn*) is literally translated "the one of the Sabbaths". The word *σαββατων* (*Sabbaton* or *Sabbath*) is not a Greek word, but has its origins in Hebrew and has been merely adopted into Greek as described by the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Gerhard Fridrich, ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Translator and Editor, Vol. VII, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p. 7.

a.. **The Greek-speaking Judaism of the Dispersion retained the Heb. word and gave it the Gk. form *σάββατων*.** In explanation of the meaning of the Heb. term *אנאפאויסיס* was used as a transl.: *το μεν γαρ σάββατων κατα την των ιουδαιων διαλεκτον αναπαυσις εστιν απο παντος εργου*, Jos. Ap., 2, 27; cf. also Philo Cher., 87; Abr., 28. The plur. *τα σάββατω* can have three meanings: **1. several Sabbaths**, e.g., *εν τοις σαββάτοις και εν τοις νουμηνιαις*, Ez. 46:3 LXX cf. also Is. 1:13 LXX; 2 Ch. 31:3; Jos. Ant., 3, 294; 12, 276 f.; 13, 252; **2. one Sabbath** (in spite of the plur.), e.g., *τη δε ημερα τη εβδομη σάββατα κριω τω θεω σου*, Ex. 20:10 LXX; *την γαρ εβδομην ημεραν σάββατα καλουμεν*, Jos. Ant., 3, 143 cf. also Ant., 1, 33; 3, 237; 111, 77, etc.; another name for the Sabbath is *η ημερα των σαββάτων*, Ex. 20:8 LXX; 35:3; Dt. 5:12; *ιερ. 17:21 f.*; Jos. Ant., 7, 305; 12, 259 and 274; 13,12; 14, 226 etc.; **3. the whole week as in Heb. usage** (also sing. *το σάββατον*), e.g., in psalm titles in the LXX: *της μιας σαββάτων ψ 23:1*; *δευτερα σαββάτου ψ 47:1*; *τετράδι σαββάτων ψ 93:1*. The preparation is *προσάββατον* in Jdt. 8:6, *η προ του σαββάτου* in Jos. Ant., 3, 255 f., *παρασκευη* in Jos. Ant., 16, 163. **The Sabbath itself is often simply the seventh day, so that η εβδομη (ημερα) often means the same as σάββατον, cf. Gn. 2:2 f. LXX; Ex. 16:26 f. etc.; [Bold added.]**

Thus the word *σαββατων* (*Sabbaton*) can mean (1) several Sabbaths, (2) a single Sabbath, or (3) an entire week. The primary definition is the weekly seventh day Sabbath and the other festival Sabbaths foreshadowed and sanctified by God at creation. See Genesis 1:14. The secondary definition is that of a week, probably developed within Hebrew from the expression "from Sabbath to Sabbath" which would mean "from week to week." See Isaiah 66:23. There is a perfectly good

Greek word for *week* — εβδομα (ebdoma) — but Matthew chose not to use that word with respect to the discovery of the empty tomb. In fact, all the gospel writers use the expression that the discovery of the empty tomb was related to the *one of the Sabbaton* and none of them uses the Greek word for week.

The expression εις μιαν σαββατων (eis mian sabbatôn) seems to convey the concept that the discovery of the empty tomb took place at the beginning of the week immediately following the close of the Sabbath. It should be noted that the word *day* does not appear in the phrase that includes the second occurrence of σαββατων (Sabbaton) in this verse or in any other of the gospel accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb; but it is understood from the gender of other Greek words in the sentence. It is written in brackets or italics in some Bibles to show that the word does not occur in the original text. Translators have inserted the word *day* in this phrase even though *hemera*, the Greek word for *day*, is not in the text. This is not inappropriate; words which may be assumed are sometimes omitted in New Testament Greek. Using a similar construction in English, one might say that a certain day is *the 4th of the month* and it would be proper to assume that *the 4th day of the month* is the correct meaning. But translation of the Greek phrase into English does not require that the word *day* be inserted into the sentence. In the minds of many, the word *day* carries with it the meaning of a sunlight time frame which is contrary to the meaning already established by the first two phrases of this verse. By keeping the word *day* out of the translation, the meaning of the beginning or first of the week is preserved regardless of a daytime or twilight context, as opposed to the traditional rendering of the first *day* of the week implying a sunrise context.

For those who have grown up with the tradition of starting the calendar day at midnight,² it must be remembered that sunset marks the beginning of the day in scripture (Leviticus 23:32) and the new week begins with sunset at the end of Sabbath and not at daylight following Saturday on what we call Sunday morning. Although these scriptures were written in Greek, they were written by Jews or individuals who were intimately associated with Jews, and their traditional time frame is the context of the gospel writers. In order to understand the events the writer is trying to convey, the reader must view these events from a Jewish or biblical perspective.

With this background of these Greek words and the Jewish perspective, Matthew's record of the time frame for the discovery of the empty tomb should read something like this:

Late on Sabbath, just in the waning light at the first of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

² The Catholic The Code of Canon Law, in English Translation, Collins, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983, states: "Can. 202 § 1 In law, a day is understood to be a space of twenty-four hours, to be reckoned continuously and, unless expressly provided otherwise, it begins at midnight; a week is a space of seven days; a month is a space of thirty days, and a year a space of three hundred and sixty-five days, unless it is stated that the month and the year are to be taken as in the calendar."

Mark – Part 1

16:1 και διαγενομενου του σαββατου μαρια η μαγδαληνη και μαρια η του ιακωβου και σαλωμη ηγορασαν αρωματα ινα ελθουσαι αλειψωσιν αυτον

16:1 kai diagenomenou tou sabbatou maria ê magdalênê kai maria b=[ê ats=ê b=tou] a=[tou] ts=tou iakôbou kai salômê êgorasan arômata ina elthousai aleipsôsin auton

16:1 And being past the sabbath, Mary the Magdalene and Mary the [mother] of James and Salome bought aromatics, that having come they might anoint him.

16:1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

16:2 και λιαν πρωι της μιας σαββατων ερχονται επι το μνημειον ανατειλαντος του ηλιου

16:2 kai lian prôî a=tê a=mia a=tôn tsb=tês tsb=mias sabbatôn erchontai epi to mnêmeion anateilantos tou êliou

16:2 And very early on the first [day] of the week, they come to the tomb, having risen the sun.

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

The traditional translation of Mark 16:1 is in perfect harmony with the concept that this is an evening event, although the words *being past* sound a little odd in English. The word διαγενομενου translated *being past* also conveys the meaning of an elapse of time or *being spent* or *to close*. Jews and other Sabbath keepers typically refer to the end of the Sabbath as the close of the Sabbath, and that seems to be what is meant by this phrase. The time frame set by verse one is an evening event.

Verse two presents a significant challenge as it appears to take the reader to the next daylight period of time. The word *early* has been translated to indicate a sunrise time frame and, indeed, sometimes it does imply a morning time frame; but not necessarily. More often, it indicates a time prior to or at the beginning of some other event. For example, if one has a business meeting at 4 P.M. and arrives early, it does not mean that the arrival was at dawn or early in the morning. If one arrives a few minutes ahead of schedule, the arrival is early. Moreover, when one uses phrases such as *early church history* or *early in the life of...*, the use of the word *early* sets the position of time relative to other events that follow and has no implication with respect to a morning time frame. *Early church history* does not refer to events that occurred before the church began, nor does *early in the life of...* refer to events that occurred before a person was born. The early events were simply the beginning events. The Greek word for early here is πρωι (prôî) and simply means *before* or *at the beginning*. It seems that Mark is telling the reader that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome arrived at the tomb as soon after the Sabbath — at the earliest possible time of the new week. Those translations that identify this as an early morning event must rely on tradition and implications they read into the Greek text and not the actual words of the text. But reliance on such tradition and implications is in conflict with the meaning expressed in the previous verse that the context of these events took place *when the Sabbath was past* which, in Jewish culture, is necessarily an evening event.

The most striking thing that should be noted regarding verse two is that the word for *morning* does not appear in the Greek, that concept having been added by translators at some later time. Greek-English lexicons typically tell the reader that the time frame for *morning* is implied. However, it is only implied in the mind of one who expects to find it there by Christian tradition and not Jewish

tradition. Consequently, the word *morning* can be removed from the sentence without changing any of the original literal meaning of the Greek words written by the evangelist. Considering that the new week begins after sundown at the close of Sabbath, it would be consistent with verse one and the record in Matthew already discussed to conclude that the resurrection took place in the evening.

In verse two, the phrase ἀνατειλαντος του ηλιου (anateilantos tou êliou), which is typically translated *at the rising of the sun* is problematic and needs careful examination. The phrase carries the notion that the sun was fully risen, perhaps just above the horizon, but a full sunshine event rather than a pre-dawn or an evening event. The key word here is ἀνατειλαντος (anateilantos) which conveys the concept of motion and is translated in the KJV as *having risen* and in the NIV as *rising*. There are several places where variations of this word are found in the New Testament: Matthew 4:16 ἀνετειλεν (sprang up), Matthew 5:45 ἀνατελλει (makes to rise), Matthew 13:6 ἀνατειλαντος (having risen), Mark 4:6 ἀνετειλεν (having risen), Luke 12:54 ἀνατελλουσιν (rising), Hebrews 7:14 ἀνατεταλκεν (descended), James 1:11 ἀνετειλεν (rises), and 2 Peter 1:19 ἀνατειλη (rises). These forms are variously connected with the rising sun (Matthew 4:16; 5:45; 13:6; Mark 4:6; James 1:11), a rising cloud (Luke 12:54), a descendent (Hebrews 7:14), and the morning star rising in one's heart (2 Peter 1:19). The exact same form of the word in Mark 16:2 is found in Matthew 13:6 in the parable of the sower which is used there in the context that the sun is up high enough and has become hot enough to scorch plants without roots. By implication, the sun in Mark 16:2 would at least be fully risen above the horizon and probably to a position hot enough to scorch similarly under-nourished plants. This is certainly at odds with verse one which indicates that the events stated began when the Sabbath was past.

The Anchor Bible commentary on Mark expresses the general confusion many Christians feel regarding the time factors in all the gospels for Passion Week, and the author particularly focuses on the time element of when Matthew intends the reader to understand the resurrection to have occurred. He goes on to describe some of the problems the word ἀνατειλαντος (anateilantos) presents in Mark 16:2 for the reader to have a clear and consistent understanding of this text with the rest of the story and cites some creative alternative renderings for this verse in an effort to achieve harmony.

“Does Matthew follow the Jewish calendar (in which case the “first day of the week” will be after about 6 P.M. on Saturday) or the Roman calendar—which would then give us 3 - 6 A.M. on Sunday? But even with the word “Sabbath,” we are not as free of difficulty as might be supposed. In all the traditions we have either *mia Sabbatōn* or *mia tōn Sabbatōn*, and this is not as obvious an indication of a particular “day” of the “week” as might appear. By the time we reach the *Didachē* (c. A.D. 75), the plural *sabbata* clearly meant “week” and the enumeration of the days certainly establishes Sunday as the “first day” of the week (cf. *Didachē* 6). But the notes of time in all four evangelists—not to mention the confused chronology of Holy Week—make it hazardous to say whether one or all of them wished us to understand Saturday or Sunday.”

“Ostensibly Luke and John agree with Mark and, just possibly, with Matthew too. But the phrase *epi to mnēmeion anateilantos tou hēliou* (*just after sunrise*) contradicts Luke and John and is inconsistent with *very early on the first day of the week*, especially if that indicates a Jewish reckoning of after sunset on Saturday. The difficulty was felt early: several manuscripts omit *lian* (*very*), one manuscript omits *prōi* (*early*), and several manuscripts read *anatellontos* (in the process of rising) for *anateilontos* (*had risen*). But these are all attempts to deal with an original reading and are manifestly secondary. **It is certainly difficult to think that Mark wrote “very early on the first day of the**

week, after the sun had risen.” Various suggestions have been made to minimize or obviate the difficulty. We can take up suggestions made in the past as to what Mark *meant* to say, such as that the women started out very early but arrived only at sunrise. This is unsatisfactory, for given only minimal accuracy in the traditional sites the distance is too small. Or perhaps Mark’s Greek (never noted for grammatical purity) really was meant to read “at the sun rising,” and maybe, too, *lian prōi* has been read too literally and really means “as early as could be.” Even so this can hardly be made to accommodate *just after sunrise*. One possibility is to omit *and* at the beginning of v. 2, read *to go and anoint him . . . on the first day of the week*, conclude the sentence there, and start again with *Just after sunrise—omit and—they were saying . . .* Nevertheless all of this is no more than guesswork, however inspired we may think it to be, and the problem remains insoluble.” [Bold added.] The Anchor Bible, Mark, C.S. Mann, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1986, pages 664-665.

It is clear that C.S. Mann, the author of the Anchor Bible commentary on the gospel of Mark, expresses grave doubts that the evangelist wrote that the women arrived at the tomb of Jesus and found it empty “very early on the first day of the week, after the sun had risen.” The traditional rendering of this part of Mark’s story is at odds with other parts of the story as told by Mark as well as the story as told by Matthew, Luke, and John. This alone is sufficient reason to search for another explanation of these words and phrases to gain an understanding that is consistent with the rest of scripture.

There is at least one other possible explanation for this inconsistent rendering of Mark 16:2 that might account for the problem. In The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture, Bart D. Ehrman analyzes several passages in the New Testament where various early manuscripts have been found to have different words for the same verses which significantly changes the theological meaning of the passage. While Ehrman discusses only five concepts at length, he concludes that there are dozens of places in the New Testament where the scribes have altered the sacred text in order to promote a particular belief or doctrine that the original text did not state as clearly as one might hope for. As various teachings about the nature of Christ and what He accomplished here on Earth were developed and refined in the first and second centuries, scribes found it convenient to change the text by swapping letters or sometimes entire words so that the text would read more to one’s beliefs. Changing the text was viewed as a method of protecting the members of the local church from what were believed to be heretical teachings that circulated among certain Christian communities during the first and second centuries and was not done in a sinister effort to undermine or destroy scripture although that is the actual effect it has on the scriptures. These changes made by well-meaning scribes for the purpose of promoting a particular point of view constitute the orthodox corruption of scripture.

C.S. Mann indicates that there are actual differences in the words found in various manuscripts of Mark’s rendition of the resurrection story which itself tacitly admits to some attempts to corrupt the text. The words that were most problematic to those ancient scribes, and to us, is the phrase $\epsilon\pi\iota\ \tau\omicron\ \mu\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu\ \alpha\nu\alpha\tau\epsilon\iota\lambda\alpha\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \eta\lambda\iota\omicron\upsilon$ (just after sunrise). Following the lead of C.S. Mann and considering that Mark 16:1 sets a time frame at the close of Sabbath, I suggest that the phrase $\epsilon\pi\iota\ \tau\omicron\ \mu\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu\ \alpha\nu\alpha\tau\epsilon\iota\lambda\alpha\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \eta\lambda\iota\omicron\upsilon$ in Mark 16:2 expressing a daytime event, is an orthodox corruption of scripture. What is needed at this point is for someone who has access to the original documents and is well versed in the Greek to examine as many of those early documents as possible to search for another rendition of verse two that would be more consistent with verse one. This is

the only instance in the four gospels where there appears to be evidence of textual tampering regarding the resurrection story.

Finally, if *ανατειλαντος* (*anateilantos*) is not a substitute for another word more consistent with verse one, it is interesting to compare this word translated *rising* with the word in Mark 16:9 which is also translated as rising. Mark 16:1 uses the word *ανατειλαντος* while verse 9 has *αναστος*. Notice the similarities and differences in The Nestle's Greek New Testament:

Mark 16:1 *ανα τειλα ντος* = rising

Mark 16:9 *ανα ----- στας* = rising

When comparing these two words, it is obvious that they differ by the middle part of the word. It is not likely that the writer intended to convey exactly the same meaning with these two different words although they are translated as meaning exactly the same thing. It appears that the first and last parts of the words tell us that this has to do with rising (or perhaps movement), but the word in verse one has an extra middle part that tells us that this rising (or movement) is controlled by the meaning of the middle part of the word, *τειλα*. *τειλα* is a derivative of *τελος* and The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (1981), p. 619, offers the following definition:

- a. *τελος*, -ους, το, ... 1. end, i.e. a. termination, the limit at which a thing ceases to be, (in the Grk. writ. always of the end of some act or state, but not of the end of a period of time, which they call *τελευτη*...) ... b. the end i.e. the last in any succession or series... c. that by which a thing is finished, its close, issue... d. the end to which all things relate, the aim, prupose...

All of these illustrations associate *τελος* with the end of a thing. Could it be that Mark is not marking a period of time with this word in the sense that the sun is high in the sky, but an event that has to do with the sun in the sense of fulfillment. If Mark is telling us that the sun has finished its rising, that it has come to the end of its rising so that it ceases to be, that it has completed its aim or purpose, then where is the sun? If Mark is telling us that the sun is at its end, that it has reached its termination point and ceases to be visible, then the sun has set for the day. Thus *ανατειλαντος* (*anateilantos tou hēliou*) should not be translated *just after sunrise*, but as *just after sunset*. Mark could actually be conveying the idea that the movement of the sun is toward completion, has just set, has been concluded, terminated, or finished. While the ordinary meaning of *αναστας* conveys the meaning that sun is rising, *ανατειλαντος* conveys a different meaning -- the meaning that the sun is setting.

With this background of these Greek words, the Jewish perspective of time, and the history of the orthodox corruption of scripture, Mark's record of the discovery of the empty tomb should probably read something like this:

After the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought perfumes that they might come and anoint Him. And very early at the beginning of the week they came to the tomb after the setting of the sun.

Mark – Part 2

16:9 αναστας δε πρωι πρωτη σαββατου εφανη πρωτον μαρια τη μαγδαληνη αφ ης εκβεβληκει επτα δαιμονια

16:9 a=[[anastas tsb=anastas de prôî prôtê sabbatou ephanê prôton maria tê magdalênê a=par tsb=aph ês ekbeblêkei epta daimonia

16:9 Now having risen early [the] first [day] of the week he appeared first to Mary the Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

16:9 And when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

The gospel of Mark, as written by the evangelist, ends with Mark 16:8, so the account here is not part of the most reliable manuscripts of the original gospel of Mark. It is an ending to the book that was added at a later date by scribes who were uncomfortable with the original ending. It is only a reflection that Jesus did, indeed, rise and show Himself to Mary Magdalene early on the first of the week. While Christians have traditionally spoken of this as a morning event, there is no hint in this text that this event took place in the morning or any particular time of the day. Only tradition points to the morning as the time frame. Scripture begins the day at sunset, the new week begins after the close of the weekly Sabbath, and there is no evidence that the meaning of these words is any different in this passage from what we find in Mark 16:1. If Jesus has already risen when the women arrive at the tomb after the Sabbath was past as stated in verse one, at the close of the Sabbath after sunset, then it would be the first day of the week, but not necessarily a daylight event. The verse merely states that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene early on the first of the week, which would be after the close of the Sabbath by biblical reckoning.

Again, the use of the word *early* does not carry an implication with respect to the time of day, but with respect to a time preceding a given event. Mark is telling us that Jesus arose at the earliest possible time of the new week and appeared to Mary Magdalene before He did anything else of record. Mark seems to use the word *early* here to take us back to the context of the very first events of Mary's arrival at the tomb.

With this background of these Greek words and the Jewish perspective, Mark's record of the encounter which Jesus had with Mary Magdalene after His resurrection should read like this:

Now having risen early on the first of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene from whom He had cast out seven demons.

Luke

24:1 τη δε μια των σαββατων ορθρου βαθεος ηλθον επι το μνημα φερουσαι α ητοιμασαν αρωματα και τινες συν αυταις

24:1 tê de mia tôn sabbatôn orthrou a=batheôs tsb=batheos tsb=êlthon epi to mnêma a=êlthon pherousai a êtoimasan arômata tsb=kai tsb=tines tsb=sun tsb=autais

24:1 But on the first [day] of the week at early dawn they came to the tomb, bringing which they had prepared aromatics, and some [others] with them.

24:1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

Luke begins the verse with the word $\tau\eta$ (tê) which often is used as a connective word, but can convey a sense of immediacy. The phrase $\mu\iota\alpha \tau\omega\nu \sigma\alpha\beta\beta\alpha\tau\omega\nu$ (mia tôn sabbatôn) is used here in the same sense in which Matthew used the phrase $\epsilon\iota\varsigma \mu\iota\alpha\nu \sigma\alpha\beta\beta\alpha\tau\omega\nu$ (eis mian sabbatôn) in Matthew 28:1 to cite the beginning of the week as the time context of these events. Luke seems to be saying that the discovery of the empty tomb was immediately upon the beginning of the first of the new week. The immediate beginning of the new week would be the twilight time after the close of the Sabbath.

The words unique to Luke's story of finding the empty tomb that need explanation are the two words $\omicron\rho\theta\rho\upsilon \beta\alpha\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ (orthrou batheos) which are translated by the traditional view to be *early dawn*. The first word $\omicron\rho\theta\rho\upsilon$ (orthrou) is associated with *dawn* or *early morning* in John 8:2 and with *daybreak* in Acts 5:21. However, it is the present-day Greek word for *nocturn* which indicates a night time event. Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary, Comprehensive International Edition, 1976, further associates nocture with the romantic part of the night. The romantic part of night runs from evening till around midnight, but not the wee hours of the night, dawn, daybreak, sunrise, or early morning. To be sure, there is another Greek word for night, $\nu\kappa\tau\omicron\varsigma$, which is not used here, and that may be the reason the translators chose to identify $\omicron\rho\theta\rho\upsilon$ with *early dawn* even though such a rendering is contrary to the primary meaning of the word in modern Greek. The translator is left with choosing the meaning that is both consistent with the text and the story as well as reinforced by the other gospels. It might seem that the words *daybreak* and *nocturne* represent opposite concepts, but we only have to remember that many words in Greek can have opposite meanings and the correct interpretation is dependent on the context. The context is clearly the beginning of the week.

The word $\omicron\rho\theta\rho\upsilon$ (orthrou) is probably used with opposite meanings in John 8:2 and Acts 5:21. The word *daybreak* actually represents a break or change between the days, as in going from the 1st day to the 2nd day. In scripture, the change of days occurs in the evening, at sunset. So when John says that Jesus entered into the Temple at daybreak ($\omicron\rho\theta\rho\upsilon$ (orthrou)) to teach and was confronted by the Pharisees about the prostitute they put in front of Him, this seems to be an evening time frame. The Interlinear KJV renders John 8:2 as "And at dawn again he came into the temple, and all the people came to him; and having sat down he was teaching them." Really? The people came to the temple to hear Him teach at dawn? This is contrary to human nature. But what is more amazing is that we are told in verses 3-5 that the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Him who was caught in the very act of adultery. Really? At dawn or early morning? Is that the time of day that prostitutes are known for engaging in business? Prostitution is associated with a particular time of day and it is not dawn or early morning. So closely is the time of day associated with prostitution that prostitutes are known as "ladies of the evening" or "ladies of the night". Was she set up for this? Did she unwittingly take an appointment with one of the scribes or Pharisees so they could "catch her in the very act"? If she did take an appointment, it seems very unlikely that such an event would occur at or before dawn or in the early morning.

It seems much more likely that the people would come to the temple to hear Jesus teach after the day's work is done and they're looking for a little social time. This is also the time when prostitutes are usually looking for business and "Johns" are looking for streetwalkers, and is the most natural time for such a woman to have been caught in the very act. The story of the woman taken in adultery in John 8 does not sound like a sunrise event.

So there are three reasons to believe that Luke is telling us that the women found the tomb empty

in the evening: (1) the primary modern Greek meaning for ορθρου is nocturn which carries a night-time meaning, (2) Jesus (in John 8:2) was probably teaching in the Temple in the evening after the completion of the day's work, and (3) prostitutes are known as "ladies of the evening" or "ladies of the night", and not "ladies of the dawn" or "ladies of the early morning". Taking in all this context of human nature, the most sensible meaning for the word ορθρου is evening or night, or perhaps early night.

In Acts 5:21 the apostles went into the temple to teach at *daybreak* and this is translated to be a sunrise or early morning time frame. This is the most reasonable translation of this passage since the apostles were arrested, thrown in jail, visited by the angel of the LORD at night who opened the doors of the prison, and told them to stand and speak in the Temple. Acts 5:18-20. The word for *night* in this instance is νυκτος which indicates the regular dark part of night and not a twilight or sunrise time. It is not possible that they were visited by the angel of the Lord at night, told to go stand and speak in the Temple, but they waited until the next evening to do so. Thus the reasonable meaning of ορθρου in Acts 5:21 cannot be related to an evening event.

The other word in Luke that needs review - βαθεος (batheos) - has a primary definition that means depth, but a secondary definition that indicates a position that is on the inside of something and not on the edge. The word βαθεος is defined by the Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (From B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100), E.A. Sophocles, Volume II, p. 294, as:

a.. βαθος, εος, το, depth. Sept. Ps. 129, 1, sc. της καρδιας. Polyb. 1, 34, 5 of a battalion. 27, 10, 3, high-mindedness. Strab. 7, 1, 3 την εκ βαθος χωραν, the interior, as opposed to the shore... [Bold added.]

Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries identifies βαθος (bathos) as meaning "profound (as going down), literally or figuratively: - deep, very early." Again, *early* does not necessarily mean morning, it may mean a time before or at the beginning of a certain event.

God's people were instructed to guard the edges of the Sabbath so as not to profane the holy Sabbath hours. "Remember the Sabbath day..." in Exodus 20:8 means to guard as something of great value. It seems that Luke selected the word βαθεος to show that the women who came to the tomb with their spices were not trampling on the Sabbath or even on the edge of the Sabbath, but that the sun was, in fact, fully set and the first day of the new week had begun. The Pharisees had strict rules regarding how far one could walk and how much one could carry on the Sabbath without breaking it, and Luke seems to be telling us that the women were not in danger of breaking any of the Pharisees' rules regarding Sabbath observance because the new week had clearly begun. The time frame here is early on the new week—a sunset event. They came with their spices, not on the Sabbath, nor even at the edge of the Sabbath, but fully inside the boundary of the new week.

Traditionally these two words together have been translated to be *early dawn*. However, ορθρου by itself can indicate a nocturnal time frame, even though it has been translated as *early morning* in John 8:2 and *daybreak* in Acts 5:21. If ορθρου alone means *daybreak* or *early dawn*, why would Luke add the word βαθεος to the sentence if it too means *very early*? If the traditional teaching is true, then Luke would be saying something akin to *very early, early morning* which seems redundant. It seems more likely that Luke intended the second word (βαθεος) to compliment or modify the first word (ορθρου), rather than simply repeating it. Both words taken as a tandem must mean something akin to *definitely just inside the evening boundary*.

With this background of these Greek words and the Jewish perspective, Luke's record of the time frame for the discovery of the empty tomb should read something like this:

Immediately after Sabbath sunset the women went to the tomb taking the spices they had prepared.

John

20:1 τη δε μια των σαββατων μαρια η μαγδαληνη ερχεται πρωι σκοτιας ετι ουσης εις το μνημειον και βλεπει τον λιθον ηρμενον εκ του μνημειου

20:1 tē de mia tōn sabbatōn maria ē magdalēnē erchetai prōi skotias eti ousēs eis to mnēmeion kai blepei ton lithon êrmenon ek tou mnēmeiou

20:1 But on the first [day] of the week Mary the Magdalene comes early dark still it being to the tomb, and sees the stone taken away from the tomb.

20:1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

The words John chose to use pose no conflict with the other gospel writers that the tomb was discovered upon the close of Sabbath. John uses the same phrase as Luke to indicate that this was immediately (tê) on the first of the week (de mia tōn sabbatōn), which matches exactly the time frame expressed by Matthew and Mark. John's description of the time frame for these events needs only the reminder that the day in scripture begins at sunset. John clearly says it was dark when the women came to the tomb. The Greek word used here, σκοτιας (skotias), is the same word used in John 6:17 to describe the darkness that had overtaken the disciples in the boat as they were making their way across the sea to Capernaum the night after the feeding of the 5,000. The context of the darkness is the evening and early part of night before they sailed the three or four miles across the sea and the storm and waves came upon them where they saw Jesus walking on the water. The context of taking the boat is an early night time setting and not anywhere close to the dawn of the next morning. So it is in John 20:1. It was not sunrise, or bright or early morning, or dawn, or daybreak. Traditional translations have had to make the word σκοτιας (skotias), the Greek word for dark, take on a meaning that is not consistent with its use in John 6:17 where the word is used to describe the darkness in the early night on the Sea of Galilee. It is interesting to note that the text for the Interlinear KJV renders this *early dark* which is in perfect harmony with the other evidence that the tomb was found shortly after the Sabbath was over, in the twilight or early dark part of the new week. The *early dark* part of the new week would be the beginning of the week.

John also uses the word τη (tê) at the beginning of this verse probably to convey the meaning that these events occurred immediately at the beginning of the new week. No time gap is implied from the *early on the first of the week* to the *early dark* time frame, which would be a necessity if σκοτιας (skotias) is to be understood to mean a time shortly before dawn as tradition teaches. Also, the word *day* does not appear in the Greek text, although it is implied. It does no harm to the original text to leave out the word *day* as *day* might imply a daytime context in some minds, which the rest of the sentence does not agree with.

With this background of this Greek word and keeping in mind the Jewish perspective of when the day begins, John's record of the time frame for the discovery of the empty tomb should read something like this:

Immediately at the first of the week, as it was getting dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone was removed from the tomb.

Conclusion

Although the traditional teaching about the time of Jesus' resurrection places that event toward the morning of the first day of the week, the gospel writers consistently describe the women arriving at the tomb immediately after the close of the Sabbath and finding the empty tomb as the light was diminishing. Since the tomb was empty when the women came to the sepulchre just after the close of the Sabbath, Jesus had to rise from the tomb just as the sun was setting at the close of Sabbath. The traditional teaching that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday morning is not supported by a careful examination of the words and phrases in these texts and the consistent translation of these Greek passages.

This has huge implications regarding the traditional teaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus and how it should be memorialized and celebrated. If Jesus was resurrected just after the Sabbath as the new week began on what the Western world calls Saturday night and not on Sunday morning, then the claim that Sunday is the LORD's Day is not supported by the resurrection stories in the gospels. Although the first day of the week begins at sunset by the biblical method of counting days, the secular method of counting days doesn't begin Sunday until midnight. There is a six hour differential between the beginning of the week in scripture and the beginning of Sunday at midnight. While Jesus was resurrected at the beginning of the first day of the week, it was not yet Sunday. Christians who worship on Sunday as a memorial of the resurrection of Jesus on that day must re-examine that practice if they desire to live in harmony with scripture.

The second implication is that our understanding of the amount of time Jesus spent in the tomb must be revised. Traditional Christian teaching has been that Jesus was in the tomb approximately thirty-six hours from Friday evening through Sunday morning. This is at odds with what Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees in the conversation in Matthew 12:38-42 that He would be in the heart of the Earth for three days and three nights just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. According to the belief that Jesus died on Friday and lay in the tomb on Sabbath, Jesus was in the tomb for only an hour or two on Friday and one full day on Sabbath. That does not make three days, let alone three days and three nights which Jesus told the doubters to look for as the sign that He was sent from heaven. The sign of Jonah that Jesus said the public could rely on as the sign of His heavenly mission is not fulfilled by a Friday crucifixion, and resurrection at the end of Sabbath the next day.

The next task is to determine the sequence of events for the entire Passion Week in an effort to understand how the sign of Jonah was actually fulfilled as Jesus said it would be.