BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

www.bibleradio.org.au

BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2323 ~ Jesus Appears to Mary.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

For people who faithfully serve the Lord, there are blessings which often come at the most unexpected times. Today's *Bible Adventure* is about the risen Lord Jesus appearing firstly to Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus rose alive from death in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, a faithful little group of women who loved Jesus were on their way to visit the tomb. They planned to do the distasteful task of anointing His body with spices, in preparation for a more permanent burial.

DRAMA - The Bible In Living Sound.

In those days, the testimony of a woman was considered to be nearly worthless. Yet because of their faithfulness, this small group of women were the first of Jesus' followers to see the angels at the tomb. One of the women, Mary Magdalene, even spoke with the risen Lord a little later that morning.

Mary Magdalene had never considered the possibility that Jesus could have risen from the grave. Although she had seen the burial clothes folded neatly in place, she had assumed someone had stolen His body. But if the body had been stolen, the clothes would have been taken away with it; or they would have been left scattered about the tomb. Of course Jesus' body hadn't been stolen. He'd risen back to life!

Mary decided to run back into Jerusalem and tell Peter and John that Jesus' body had been taken away. When the men heard this, they ran to the tomb to see for themselves. Being younger, John reached the tomb first but at the entrance, he stopped and only looked in. When Peter arrived, he went straight into the tomb, leaving John to follow behind him. John and Peter both saw the tomb was empty yet it was John who believed that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead – and after three days, as He said He would.

Peter didn't believe Jesus could be alive at first, so he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

The two disciples couldn't fully understand the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus' resurrection and what it all meant. Although Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, Mary stayed behind at the tomb weeping again. She'd seen the angels when she first visited the tomb with the other women. Now they appeared to her and asked why she was crying. After her explanation of a tragedy, she saw a man standing nearby whom she supposed was the gardener. Although it was Jesus, she didn't recognise Him. His resurrected body was somehow different to how it had been before. But when Jesus called Mary by name, she immediately recognised His voice and knew this person was really Jesus!

In Matthew, Chapter 28, it's recorded that the other women with Mary also saw the risen Jesus. They all returned to the other disciples, telling them that they had actually seen the risen Lord!

Throughout the centuries, there's been a controversy about when Jesus actually died and how long He stayed in the tomb. In Matthew, Chapter 12, the scribes and Pharisees claimed that Jesus was driving out demons from people by the power of Satan. But Jesus explained to them why this wasn't true. So then the rulers asked Jesus to give them a sign to show that He was the promised Messiah. Jesus refused to do so because they didn't believe in Him. He said that no sign would be given except the sign of the prophet Jonah: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man (that's Jesus Himself) be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

How did Jesus fulfil this prophecy? Each year we remember Easter as Jesus dying on the cross on Friday afternoon and being in the grave until early Sunday morning, but this doesn't add up to three full days and nights. Was Jesus actually counting part days as whole days then? To understand what a Jewish day means, the Jewish day starts at 6 o'clock in the evening, whereas we're most likely to count our days starting at 12 o'clock midnight.

Every year, we celebrate Christmas Day on the 25th of December, no matter what day of the week the 25th day falls. In the same way, the Jewish Passover is always celebrated on the 14th day of the Jewish month Nisan. This 14th day can vary considerably, as 7 years out of a 19-year cycle have an extra month added to them.

The month of Nisan corresponds to March/April in our calendar. Apart from the normal Saturday Sabbaths in the month of Nisan, there are also an extra three special Sabbaths or Holy Days held for the: Passover (14th), Feast of Unleavened Bread (from the 15th to the 22nd) and Feast of First Fruits (held the Sunday morning following Passover). Of the three special Sabbaths, only the Feast of Unleavened Bread prohibits work the same way the weekly Sabbath does.

To help resolve the controversy over how long Jesus said He was to be in the grave, we need to look at Exodus, Chapter 12, where God told the Israelites to select a lamb on the 10th day of Nisan and inspect it for defects. If the animal was perfect, they were to keep it until the 14th day, which for us, means the end of the 13th day. Then at twilight, the Israelites were to slaughter and roast the lamb, eating all of it that same evening. Jesus came to fulfil the prophecy of this Passover Lamb.

The only day Jesus ever allowed the people to hail Him as King was on the day we call Palm Sunday, and this was the 10th day of Nisan. He did this to fulfil the selection process for the Passover Lamb. Jesus officially presented Himself as Israel's Messiah and became the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Then for the next three days, Jesus faced the most aggressive debate and confrontation with the Jewish officials that He had in His entire ministry. The rulers were inspecting Him for any doctrinal spot or blemish that would disqualify Him from being the Lamb of God. They found none and finally, no one dared ask Him any more questions.

Some years before the birth of Jesus, the Passover celebration had been changed. So in Jesus' day, the Passover called for a brief ritual meal of lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs to begin after sunset at the start of the Jewish 14th day, followed by a great and leisurely festival daytime meal on the 15th, for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So the 14th day became known as 'Preparation Day' because on this day, the Jews made ready for the great feast. Jesus died on Preparation Day, the 14th of the Jewish month Nisan, which is Passover. He ate the ritual meal with His disciples in the Upper Room and was then arrested, tried, convicted and put to death, all during the Passover feast 24 hour period. This had to happen to fulfil the prophecies of the Passover Lamb.

In the week Jesus died, there were two Sabbaths back-to-back that permitted no work to be done: the Feast of Unleavened Bread on Friday the 15th and the usual Saturday Sabbath on the 16th. In Matthew, Chapter 28, we read that Jesus arose at dawn on the first day of the week (Sunday the 17th) and being the Sunday after Passover, it was also the Feast of First Fruits. At the empty tomb, it was also Jesus' Resurrection Morning.

Later that Sunday, two disciples walking home to Emmaus were overtaken by the risen Lord. They didn't recognise Him and at first, thought He must have been a very recent visitor to the area for asking them to explain why they were so sad. In the course of the discussion, the men indicated that it was the third day since the crucifixion, being the Sunday. The previous day (Saturday) would have been the 2nd day since Jesus died, and so Friday would have been the 1st day, making Thursday the day Jesus' crucifixion had happened.

The controversy is that others argue that this is backwards calculation and it doesn't permit three full days and three full nights in the tomb. But the Scriptures simply say it was three days and three nights. If Jesus' death is considered to be on Wednesday, the Passover Lamb prophecies are now incorrect. The disciples on the Emmaus road would then have said that Sunday was the 4th day since Jesus' crucifixion. So the Thursday date is the only one that will accommodate both the Passover Lamb and three-day/three-night prophecies used in the Scriptures.

A little over 100 years ago, a believer named Robert Anderson was head of Scotland Yard's investigative police division in London. Because we remember Jesus' death on Good Friday, he was disturbed by the 'three days and three nights' prophecy. He enlisted the help of the London Royal Observatory to investigate the problem, as astronomers can locate the exact position of the planets and stars for any date in history. As the Passover always falls on the 14th day of Nisan, there is always a full moon on this date, as the 1st of each Jewish month is always determined by the sighting of the new moon.

The Royal Observatory discovered that the first Palm Sunday was the 10th day of Nisan, the same day in Exodus 12 when the Israelites were to select their lamb. That particular week when Jesus died, Passover was Thursday the 14th, the Feast of Unleavened Bread began on Friday the 15th, Saturday the 16th was the weekly Sabbath and the Resurrection Morning was Sunday the 17th.

A problem that arises with a Friday crucifixion is a quote from John, Chapter 12: "Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany …" from Jericho. If Friday was accepted as the day Jesus died, six days earlier was the weekly Sabbath and on that day, any journey over a kilometre was legally out of the question for devout Jews.

So how important is it for us to remember the Lord's death on a Thursday or a Friday? It's not really. The supremely important thing is that the tomb was empty on Resurrection Morning. The authorities made sure that there could be no argument about this. In 1st Corinthians, Chapter 15, Verse 17, the Apostle Paul says: "If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

Have you thought about your position before God? Are you for Jesus or instead, rebelling in your heart against Him? Does your life reflect your commitment to Him or it is all theory and there's no practical Christian love shining out to people both in the church and in the world? To belong to the Lord Jesus is to belong to His kingdom.

Let’s all heartily say with the songwriter: “Take the world but give me Jesus!”

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

< END OF SCRIPT >