

Previously in John, we saw the hopelessness that Jesus' loved ones must have felt at the crucifixion. Considering what had been done to Jesus, we can understand why the thought of resurrection seemed so out of the question. (Isaiah 52:14) We saw the secret disciples come out of the closet and take a stand for Jesus. At their own expense, they buried Him in an honorable way. They were rushed because the Sabbath began that evening. It was Friday when Jesus was placed in the tomb. The Sabbath began that evening. The first day of the week began on what we call Saturday evening. By Sunday morning, Jesus had technically been in the grave three days according the Jewish way of thinking. (1Corinthians 15:3-4) For our western minds it was about 36 hours.

Commented [notes1]: 14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him -- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness--
Isaiah 52:14 (NIV)

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. We can tell a lot about this tomb from the description in the text and the archeological finds of tombs of the same time period. The opening would have been about three feet high and two foot wide. It probably had a round wheel like stone that sealed the entrance. Inside would be benches along the walls on three sides or a semicircular arch with a bench built into the wall on which the body was laid to decompose.

Commented [notes2]: 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
1 Cor 15:3-4 (NIV)

The other Gospel writers tell us Mary Magdalene came with other women. It is not uncommon in Jewish writing to leave out the details that do not pertain to the author's point. More than enough details are mentioned in the passage to indicate that this was written by someone who had actually been to the site. The ladies had come on the third day as was customary for Jewish people to mourn the dead and add spices to what had already been placed with the body. (Mark 16:1) The spices were to cover the smell of decomposition. They certainly weren't there because they expected Jesus' resurrection.

Commented [notes3]: 1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.
Mark 16:1 (NIV)

The women probably didn't know that the stone had been sealed by Rome or about the guards that had been there as that took place after the beginning of the Sabbath. (Matthew 27:66) When they arrived, the stone sealing the entrance was already moved out of the way. An angel had moved it, not to let Jesus out, but to let the world in to see the tomb was empty. (Matthew 28:2) The stone being left open would have caused them to fear grave robbery or desecration by the enemies of Jesus. Grave robbers were such a problem that in the next decade, the emperor Claudius would declare it to be a capital offense. The value of the spices, linen, and treasures buried with the dead was a great temptation for the poor.

Commented [notes4]: 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.
Matt 27:66 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.
Matt 28:2 (NIV)

2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" Apparently Mary went on ahead of the other women as the passage describes her arriving while it is still dark, but the others are described as arriving at Sunrise. (Matthew 28:1) Mary ran to tell the disciples before the other women saw an appearance of angels. After relaying the story of

Commented [notes6]: 1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.
Matt 28:1 (NIV)

the empty tomb she went back. The other women also went to the house where the disciples were hiding and told of the angel announcing the resurrection of Jesus. Though they all heard, only Peter and John acted on what they heard. The rest didn't believe, choosing to reject the women's testimony. (Luke 24:11)

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Again we assume the unnamed disciple is John the Beloved. Whether they ran to confirm the fact that the tomb was empty or if they had hope that Jesus had risen we don't know. Either way, they knew something was going on and they wanted to get to the bottom of it.

⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Since John is writing this gospel, he is the only one that would have known that detail. John, the youngest, outran Peter, the oldest. It's not surprising, nor does it seem out of place that John wouldn't go in, while bold Peter goes straight in. Bending down and sticking your head in that entrance puts you in a very vulnerable position. Impetuous Peter didn't hesitate.

⁶ Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there,⁷ as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. John used a more intense word for the way Peter looked at the grave clothes. The language here for folded can mean "rolled". The grave face cloth would be put over the head or on the head like a turban and then a strip of linen would tie it in place, also tying the mouth shut. The wording here may indicate the way the head cloth seemed to be right where it had been on the body of Jesus. The strips of linen that held the spices are mentioned, but the body shroud (if there was one - John does not mention it) may have been taken by Jesus for clothing. It was like a CSI looking at clues and trying to figure out what had happened. Also factor in the deep love they have for the one whose body is missing and the miraculous events and claims in Jesus' life.

⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. Peter's presence in the tomb helped him to have the courage to go on in. What John saw there convinced him that Jesus had risen from the dead. Lazarus had needed assistance to get out of the grave wrappings (John 11:44); Jesus went right through His. That seemingly impossible prediction of rising in three days had come to pass. (Mark 10:34)

⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) The word for Scripture here is singular. It may mean all the Scriptures, but John was likely thinking of one particular verse. Here are a few that may have come to mind. ¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; Isaiah 53:11a (NIV) ¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. Psalms 16:10 (NIV) The Apostles will quote that verse as a proof text in Acts. (Acts 2:31) Or my favorite, ² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we

Commented [notes7]: 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.
Luke 24:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."
John 11:44 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."
Mark 10:34 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.
Acts 2:31 (NIV)

may live in his presence. Hosea 6:2 (NIV) It would be that evening, with the help of Jesus, that they would make the connection with Jesus' life and many prophetic expressions in the Old Testament. If they would have already made those connections, it would have been easier for them to believe the words of Jesus that after three days He would rise from death. Our connection of the Word with our daily life is what gives us faith to believe what Jesus is doing each day. (Romans 10:17)

¹¹ but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. Mary finally saw the angels that the other women had seen. Apparently Mary has not yet heard what they told the other women. (Matthew 28:5-7)

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." We must really confuse angels at times. Her Lord is risen from the dead, made it possible for her to have eternal life, made her justified before God and she's crying! *Woman, why are you crying?"* She probably didn't realize all that, but where was her faith? The angels must feel that way about us at times too. We have all that Mary had and more. We have the Word in our hands, two thousand years of church history, the presence of the Holy Spirit and we go about whining. I can just hear those angels, "Man, why are you whining? Where is your faith? You are chosen son or daughter of God. The righteousness of Christ has been credited to you. You have everlasting life!" From their heavenly perspective it must be hard to comprehend how we could be so caught up in our worldly perspective. (2Kings 6:17)

¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. Through her tears and with her last recollection of Jesus as a lifeless mangled corpse, she assumed it was the only other man that would be there that early, the groundskeeper. (Luke 24:16)

¹⁵ "Woman," he said, "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." Jesus asks the same question the angels asked, but also added the "who". There He stood! Sometimes we are crying our eyes out, asking for Jesus to show up and help us through our difficulty, and all the while He is right there speaking with us. Our tears and false conclusions blind us from the answer right in front of us. (John 10:24)

Jesus has a way of breaking through when we are truly seeking Him. *¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).* How did He break through? He called her name. She knew how He said it. She knew the sound of His voice calling to her. Perhaps He had a special way of saying it to distinguish her from all the other Marys. (Proverbs 8:17; John 10:4) It is the same for each of us. (Isaiah 43:1)

Commented [notes11]: 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for 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: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." Matt 28:5-7 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 17 And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 2 Kings 6:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 16 but they were kept from recognizing him. Luke 24:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 24 The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." John 10:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. Prov 8:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. John 10:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 1 But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. Isaiah 43:1 (NIV)

Jesus has a way that breaks through our preoccupation with daily routines. For Nathaniel, He just needed to tell him He was there with him under the fig tree in his hour of prayer. (John 1:48) Nathaniel instantly knew. For Moses it was His voice in the Tent of Meeting. (Exodus 33:7-9) For John it must have been some expression of love that was so meaningful to John that he would thereafter refer to himself as the one that Jesus loved. For Peter, I think it was the phrase, "Do you love me?" (John 21:16) For the Apostle Paul and many of us, it is a recollection of our conversion. The Spirit of God has a phrase and a memory to break through to me, and He has a way to break through to each and every one of you. If you don't know what it is already, ask Him to show you. Don't be afraid to get that intimate with Him. Go there often.

In the end of the letter to the church of Pergamum in Revelation, Jesus said that to the one that overcomes He will give a white stone with a new name written on it. (Revelation 2:17) We'll each have our own special name, like the way Jesus called to Mary Magdalene. I imagine it will have something to do with the way He tenderly speaks to us even now.

*17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my **brothers** and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"* The expression here has been a challenge to interpret because John didn't add any interpretation or elaborate. My take on it is that Mary had just gone through the most heart wrenching physical separation of her life. She finally found someone who loved and valued her. She finally found a reason to believe she was truly made in the image of God (Luke 8:2), and then that person that had brought so much healing to her soul was brutally murdered.

Suddenly there He was, alive again, and she did not want to ever let Him go. Jesus knew her heart and did not want to cause her more pain. She could not cling to His physical presence. He must ascend to the Father. The cycle of what He had come to do was almost complete. He would not allow her to be attached to His physical presence because it was time for her to know His spiritual presence. (John 14:16-18)

Sometimes we would like to cling to things, even things through which we have come to know, as Mary did, that we are loved and valued. It may be a church fellowship, certain brothers or sisters in Christ, or an old Bible that's falling to pieces. Jesus will wean us from things to help us know Him in Spirit and in truth. (John 4:24) When we cling to the physical, we are always vulnerable to having it removed, but the spiritual presence of Christ can never be taken from us. He would have us hold on to His Spirit and to truth by faith. Please understand that I'm not talking about a feeling, or even that break through thing by which He gets your attention. He wants an intimacy with you that is more direct and personal than the symbols, signs, emotions or feelings.

The wording of that command gives us some insights as to the change that resurrection had brought. Notice that Jesus doesn't say He is ascending to **our** Father and God. There is a difference in our relationship with God and His. He is

Commented [notes19]: 48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." John 1:48 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 7 Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. 8 And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. 9 As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses. Ex 33:7-9 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" John 21:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it. Rev 2:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Luke 8:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. John 14:16-18 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:24 (NIV)

the only begotten Son. (John 1:18) Our relationship with God is based on Jesus' relationship with God. But also notice that for the first time Jesus calls the disciples "brothers". In spite of the great difference of Creator and creation, we have been adopted as sons of God and accepted as brothers of Jesus. (Romans 8:14-15; Hebrews 2:11)

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. Mary will be the first in a string of people to be witnesses of the resurrection. Peter will see the Lord. (1Corinthians 15:5) Cleopas and his friend will too. (Luke 24:18) Then Jesus will appear to the whole group. We'll see that next week.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus would first appear to this woman? Perhaps it was because she was hurting more than others. She was there at the tomb weeping and all the others had gone. It may be just timing and location, but I think it was more. Jesus is intentional in everything He does.

All the Apostles are men. Though there are women disciples (followers- Luke 8:2), Jesus followed the Biblical tradition of male leadership. The idea, however, that a woman's testimony is not trustworthy, or that women are somehow of less value than men, was an addition to God's word. I believe Jesus chose to appear to her first to break this stereotyping. Surely the disciples would look back and be convicted for not believing her story. The words gripped them and yet they would still refused to believe. We know the words went to their hearts because John remembered them in detail years later when writing this Gospel. He brings it up and doesn't hide it, because there is something for us to learn from it. There may be different roles for men and women in the church, but all are equally valuable members of the body of Christ. (Romans 12:5)

The Life Application Bible points out that Mary gives us a great pattern to follow. She examined the tomb and found it empty. She met with Jesus. Then she went to tell others about her encounter.

Everyone needs to look at the empty tomb and realize what it means. Jesus has conquered death. God accepted His sacrifice for our sins, and we can rise to new life with Him. The Resurrection means Jesus has reconciled us with God. (Romans 4:25)

Next we have a personal encounter with Jesus that brings us to a relationship that is personal and intimate. He is our rabboni, Master teacher. Finally, if it means that much to us, we will surely tell those that we encounter of how He has changed our life. We will tell how the grave is empty and that He lives within our heart. He's alive, and that makes all the difference in this world and the next!

Commented [notes26]: 18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.
John 1:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."
Romans 8:14-15 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.
Heb 2:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.
1 Cor 15:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"
Luke 24:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;
Luke 8:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.
Romans 12:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.
Romans 4:25 (NIV)