

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Glory of the Family of God

INTRODUCTION

The Synoptic Gospel writers begin their accounts of the resurrection telling us how the stone was rolled away. We learn that there was a violent earthquake as an angel of the Lord rolled back the stone and sat on it.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body, early Sunday morning, only to find it empty. When angels at the tomb tell them that Jesus has been raised from the dead, the women react with both fear and joy. At this point I become somewhat confused. It is uncertain to me why the angelic message didn't register with Mary Magdalene, but it appears that she runs ahead of the other women to find Peter and John, who, upon being told of the body's disappearance, rushes with Mary to the empty tomb. Peter and John examine the tomb and John at least goes away convinced that Jesus has risen as He said. Then John records: *"Then the disciples went back to their homes."* (John 20:10, ESV). Again that is an interesting fact of the story that we might wonder why John thought it important to mention it.

Jesus himself appears to Mary Magdalene there by the tomb, and then to the other women who are still on their way back from the tomb to tell of the resurrection. The Synoptics also record an attempted cover-up by the Chief Priests. Luke also records that these women told all the Disciples, but the rest of the Disciples did not believe them.

Today, we consider the moving and compassionate encounter Jesus has with Mary Magdalene. Who is Mary Magdalene? Mary was a follower and ministry colleague of Jesus. She had been healed from demonic oppression. Luke writes,

"Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means." (Luke 8:1–3, ESV)

Some people have tried to connect Mary as the sinful woman in Luke 7:47 but there's no evidence of that. The Gnostic Gospels made infamous through the Novel by Dan Brown, *The DeVinci Code*, implied that Mary was married to Jesus. None of that is true. Mary was a devoted follower and supporter of Jesus (period).

The reason why Mary returned to the tomb is not given. Let's read the account:

READ JOHN 20:11–18 (ESV)

THE STORY

Again, I'm am uncertain why Mary Magdalene returned to the Tomb. But again, she encounters an angel. The angel simply says to Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping?"¹ Angels had a significant role in the life of Christ. An angel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary (Luke 1) and later to Joseph (Matthew 1). Angels announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds (Luke 2). Angels strengthened Jesus during His ministry (Matthew 4; and Luke 22). Angels re-assured the disciples at His ascension (Acts 1) and now angels attend His resurrection.

At that point Mary must have sensed someone else there. This person asks Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"² Assuming he was the gardener she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."³

Jesus simply says, "Mary!" In an instant she knew who that was. "Rabbani (meaning Teacher)," she responds. This is an intimate, tender moment. She missed the significance of the empty tomb, the significance of attending angels but she didn't miss the voice of her Savior. One commentator writes, "Only one thing was necessary to establish Jesus' identity—his uttering her name. One of the strange commonplaces of life is that the most penetrating utterance one can understand, no matter by whom spoken, is his personal name. Furthermore, the way it is spoken often identifies the speaker."⁴

Dr. Carson writes, "Whatever the cause of her blindness, the single word *Mary*, spoken as Jesus had always uttered it, was enough to remove it. The good shepherd 'calls his own sheep by name ... and his sheep follow him because they know his voice' (10:3–4). Anguish and despair are instantly swallowed up by astonishment and delight."⁵

Jesus then says to her, "*Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'*" (John 20:17, ESV). This verse stands as one of the most difficult verses to interpret. The

- a. The ESV translates the phrase: "Do not cling to me."
- b. The KJV translates the phrase: "Touch me not."
- c. The NIV translates the phrase: "Do not hold on to me."
- d. The NASB translates the phrase: "Stop clinging to me."

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ *Expositor's Bible Commentary, The*, Pradis CD-ROM: John/Exposition of John/iv. The Passion of the Word (18:1-20:31)/H. The Resurrection (20:1-29)/2. The appearance to Mary Magdalene (20:10-18), Book Version: 4.0.2

⁵ Carson, D. A. (1991). [The Gospel according to John](#) (p. 641). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

The manuscript evidence clearly is not saying, “Don’t touch me.” The highly respected expositor, Dr. D.A. Carson agrees with this idea. He writes, “Stop clinging to me, but go and tell my disciples that I am in process of ascending to my Father and your Father.”⁶

To assume the interpretation that Mary was not permitted to touch the glorified/un-ascended body of Christ conflicts with the next event with Thomas where Jesus said, “*Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side.*” (John 20:27, ESV).

Mary has the glorious privilege of being the first preacher of the resurrection message. Mary accepts her commission and takes the good news of the resurrection back to the disciples. Carefully notice the words of Jesus: “But go to my brothers and say to them.”⁷ And then John records: “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples.”⁸ The Holy Spirit uses the term “disciples” and “brothers” synonymously. What an encouragement. Those who are his brothers are His disciples – learners, followers.

APPLICATIONS

There are two important applications to glean from this historical record. One is contextual and the other is theological. By contextual I mean that it fits with the purpose and intent of the author. By theological, I mean that there is an encouraging truth contained within the account.

THE CONTEXTUAL APPLICATION

Remember the readers are being convinced of the truthfulness that Jesus is who He says He is. John records the events in significant detail. I quote from Dr. Michael Licona. Mike Licona is a premiere New Testament scholar. He is a professor, and he runs a website entitled <https://www.risenjesus.com/> that specializes in the Resurrection of Jesus and the literary support of the Gospels. He is often seen in debates with skeptics. He has debated men such as Bart Erhman. Licona writes,

“The main argument posited for the historicity of the appearance to the women, and the empty tomb for that matter, is that the early Christians would not have invented the story, since the low view of women in first-century Mediterranean society would raise problems of credibility. [There is] evidence that in the Greco-Roman world educated men regarded women as ‘gullible in religious matters and especially prone to superstitious fantasy and excessive in religious practices.’ A number of Jewish sources indicating the low view of women in Jewish culture may likewise be cited.”⁹

⁶ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 644). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jn 20:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jn 20:18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁹ <https://blog.faithlife.com/why-did-jesus-appear-to-the-women-instead-of-the-disciples/>

To get a sense of how many men responded to the testimony of women, note Luke 24:10–11 (ESV),

“¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹ but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”

The point is that if John was fabricating this story, he would never have informed the readers that women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. The genuineness of the story is in the fact that John used the real, yet most unlikely witnesses to make his point.

THE THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION

In John's Gospel, The Holy Spirit leads us through 3 incredibly significant categories of relationship with Jesus. In John 15:15 he leads us from servant to friend, which is an amazing thought. Now here the Holy Spirit leads us from disciple to brother. This affirms what Paul will teach later, that at conversion God becomes our Heavenly Father and we become his children -- brothers or sisters of one another. Jesus becomes our brother and coheir (Romans 8:17).

Additionally, what is clearly stated by our Lord is “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”¹⁰ You should hear the ringing bells of the New Covenant here. At one time while speaking, Jesus became aware that His mother and brothers wanted to speak to Him. Do you remember what He said?

“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”” (Matthew 12:48–50, ESV).

John's Gospel clarifies for us so vividly who a Christian is. A Christian is a servant, a bondsman of Christ. A Christian is a disciple, a learner, one who follows Jesus. A Christian is a friend to Christ. One to whom receives knowledge of His will. A Christian is a brother to Christ and to others in Christ. A Christian is someone who seeks to do the will of Christ's Father, their Father.

John, at the very beginning of his Gospel teaches us how this relationship is made possible. *“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,”* (John 1:12, ESV). The word “receive” is a good word. It means to accept, obtain or experience something. It was John Piper that once said, the next obvious question is the most important. What did you receive when you received Jesus? Did you receive Him as your Lord and Master? Did you receive Him as your

¹⁰ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 20:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Teacher? Did you receive Him as your Lawmaker? Did you receive Him as your Friend and Brother? If you didn't, you can do that today.