

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#36: “Jesus’ Burial and Resurrection”

SCRIPTURE: John 19:38-20:18

INTRO:

We may breathe a sigh of relief that the horrible crucifixion is over. Jesus is no longer hanging there, on that cruel instrument of Roman torture.

Have you ever wondered why the cross became the prominent symbol of Christianity? Why we wear crosses around our necks instead of replicas of the empty tomb? Why do we wear replicas of such a cruel instrument of torture and death? Why glorify an instrument of torture and execution in a religion that is supposedly all about new life, forgiveness, and redemption?

Here’s a short answer: We Christians find comfort in the cross as a representation of Jesus and His love for us. We don’t glorify the cross; we wish to glorify the one who died on that cross. It serves as a reminder of His ultimate sacrifice that we who believe in Him as the Son of God might have eternal life to look forward to.

Today, we consider the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, but first

LET’S CONSIDER THE BURIAL OF JESUS.

A secret disciple of Jesus by the name of Joseph asked Pilate if he could take the body of Jesus for burial, and Pilate said he could. He took the body to a new tomb a short distance from Golgotha, where He was crucified. Another disciple, the Nicodemus who had approached Jesus by night to ask about being born again, brought about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes to the tomb.

Isn’t this remarkable? Two secret disciples show up to claim the body and place it in a tomb.

It was Friday afternoon, and since the Sabbath began at sundown, if the body of Jesus was to be buried before Sunday,

something had to be done right away, so Joseph stepped up. Who was he? If we gather information about him from the other three gospel writers, we find that he was rich, that he was a member of the Sanhedrin and a devout man who was seeking the kingdom of God, and that he didn't side with the majority and their evil purposes as far as Jesus was concerned.

Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin.

Next, we read that

THE TOMB WAS EMPTY WHEN THE WOMEN ARRIVED ON SUNDAY.

The stone, which weighed anywhere between two-thousand and four-thousand pounds, had been taken away, so, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, who had brought spices to prepare the body, could readily see that the tomb was empty.

They at first suspected that someone had stolen the body, and they told Peter and the other disciples their suspicions. So, Peter and John went to see for themselves. When they realized what had happened, that Jesus had risen from the dead, they finally understood and believed what Jesus had been saying to them.

Not knowing what to do next, they went to their homes.

Next, we note that

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE.

Mary stayed at the entrance to the tomb after the disciples had left. When she looked in, she saw two angels sitting where Jesus' body had lain. She was crying, and the angels asked her why. She said, "*They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.*" You see, she didn't realize that Jesus had risen from the dead.

And when she turned around, lo and behold, there was Jesus standing right in front of her. For some reason, she didn't realize it was he. So, when He asked her why she was weeping, and whom she was seeking, she thought He was the gardener, so she said, "*Sir,*

if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” But when Jesus called her by her name, she exclaimed, ***“Rabboni!”*** which means Teacher, indicating that she realized who he was.

Jesus then told 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.’”*** So she went to the disciples, told them that she had seen the Lord, and relayed to them all that He had said.

At this point, I have two questions for you: (1) Why Mary Magdalene? Why wasn't it Jesus' mother, Mary? (2) Why did Jesus tell Mary Magdalene to keep her distance?

First of all, Mary Magdalene was among the first to see the risen Jesus, along with the other two Marys and Salome, because she was more persistent than the eleven disciples and rushed to the tomb with spices to anoint the body at daybreak on Sunday.

Secondly, from the time Jesus cast seven demons out of her, she and Jesus had a special relationship. Some have let their imagination run wild and decided that Jesus must have married Mary Magdalene, but Bible scholars totally reject that notion. Apparently, she was a special friend who happened to be a woman.

But why did He ask her to keep her distance?

There are at least two plausible explanations. Some Bible scholars believe that Jesus went up to the Father between His encounter with Mary Magdalene and His later encounters listed here, presenting His blood at the throne of God. If this were the case, that event could be what Jesus referred to when He told Mary Magdalene that He hadn't yet ascended to the Father. When Jesus returned, it was all right to touch Him physically.

Another view is that Mary Magdalene's "clinging" refers more to a spiritual and symbolic clinging than an actual physical clinging. If we take the latter position (and some might subscribe to both), we would believe that Jesus was pointing out to Mary that the relationship Jesus would have with His people, including her

following His resurrection, was about to change. It would involve the soon coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' people following His ascension to Heaven.

In our present dispensation, which began on the Day of Pentecost, our relationship with Christ is by faith, through the Holy Spirit Who indwells us; it's not a physical relationship. We can't see or talk with Christ personally, but we do experience a relationship with Jesus, made possible by the Holy Spirit.

So, Mary went to the disciples and told them that she had seen the Lord, and that He had said these things to her.

CLOSING:

Next week we'll consider Jesus' appearance to the disciples, then to Thomas, who was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them,