

EASTER: A MYSTERY? A MISSING PERSON? MARY? AND A MIRACLE!

I John 20:1-18

Jesus has forced open a door that had been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because he has done so.

C.S. Lewis

Death died when Christ rose.

Anon

The best news the world ever had come from a graveyard.

Anon

We are more sure to arise out of our graves than out of our beds.

Thomas Watson

The resurrection of Christ is the most important article of our faith.

John Calvin

If Christ be not risen, the dreadful consequence is not that death ends life, but that we are still in our sins.

G. A. Studdert Kennedy

The claims of Jesus Christ, namely his resurrection, has led me as often as I have tried to examine the evidence to believe it as a fact beyond dispute.

Lord Caldecote, former Lord Chief Justice of England

There are but two essential requirements: first: Has any one cheated death and proved it? Second: Is it available to me? Here is the complete record.

Confucius' tomb – occupied

Buddha's tomb – occupied

Mohammed's tomb – occupied

Jesus' tomb – empty.

Argue as you will. There is no point in following a loser.

G.B. Hardy

11But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb. **John 20:11 NASB**

- The empty tomb: mystery or miracle? (**John 20:1-18**)
 - Interestingly, Mary Magdalene was the last one to leave the site of the crucifixion and the first one to arrive at the tomb of Jesus.
 - Mary arrives at the tomb and the stone covering the entry was already moved and the tomb was empty. (**v1**)

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- Mary panicked and ran to get Peter and John and told them that “they have taken away the Lord and we do not know where they have laid Him”. (v2)
- Peter and John ran to the tomb, viewed the empty grave, the grave cloths, and the face cloth, and John states that “he saw and believed.” (v8)
- This is amazing...verse 9 says “for as yet, they did not understand that He must rise again from the dead.”
- Jesus had told his disciples four times that He would be raised from the dead. (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, 26:32) Peter and John should have known that, but Mary probably didn't.
- They came to the tomb on Easter morning looking for a dead man.
- How about you? Did you come to church this Sunday only looking for a dead historical figure?
- We came today, not to solve the mystery of an empty tomb but to celebrate the miracle of the Empty Tomb!
- The miracle is the solution to the mystery and the key to having a life in God and the living God in your life.
- Notice what happens...Peter and John find the grave empty and they were able to just walk home. They had an encounter with the ‘Divine Absense’ but had not yet encountered His ‘Resurrection Presence’.
- Mary could find no comfort in ‘going home’. Jesus was gone and she couldn't find Him...until she could find Him, she wouldn't quit her search.
 - Something had happened to Mary. She got saved and had been delivered from seven demons (Luke 8:2) but that had happened to others, too.
 - Mary knew the work that Jesus had done in her heart and life. All the forgiveness she had received and how her guilt, shame, and regret had all been washed away.
 - Mary loved the salvation she had received but she had also learned to treasure Jesus Himself, not only what He had done for her.
 - This is a wonderful gift that Mary was ‘carrying’. She had a true heart desire to know and to be with Jesus. She had to find Him and could not rest until she did. (A perfect example of Passion for Jesus)
- Have you noticed the two encounters John the Baptist had with Jesus in **John 1**?
 - John sees Jesus and says, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” **John 1:29**
 - John sees Jesus again and says, “Behold the Lamb of God.” **John 1:36**
 - Our first encounter with Jesus is to deal with our sins and to give us eternal salvation. We “see” and believe.
 - We experience His amazing work in our lives and then we grow into knowing Him and being endeared to Him for all He has done and increasingly for all that He is.
 - Mary had a strong yearning for the Lord; Peter and John could go home but she couldn't. She simply stood at the entrance of the tomb and wept.
- Mary has an encounter with the Resurrected Jesus. (John 20:11-18)
 - Mary had a conversation with two angels...when did they show up? Did Peter and John miss them?

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- Mary is asked by the angels why she is crying, and she tells them she can't find the Lord, she doesn't know where He has been taken. (She is still looking for a dead man!)
- Now Jesus shows up and He speaks to Mary, only Mary thinks He is the gardener, and she asks Him if He has taken her Lord away and if He has, she will go get Him and take Him away.
- How was Mary going to transport the body of Jesus? How would one 'slight' lady carry all that 'dead weight'? And where would she take Him if she could somehow move Him?
- Love just does not 'know difficulty'. She was going to find Jesus and take Him away. Where love is alive, problems are not the focus...where love is alive, adversity cannot hold you back.
 - Jesus now reveals Himself to her with one word. 'Mary' and she instantly replies and embraces Him. His sheep hear His voice, and He calls them by name.
 - 'Mary' was the 'word of the Lord' (**Matthew 4:4**) and it settled everything.
- Jesus gives Mary interesting instructions..." Stop clinging to me for I have not ascended to the Father" (**v17**) but go to my brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God.'
 - Mary didn't want to let go and leave, she wanted to stay with Jesus.
 - Jesus knew that Mary wanted to keep Him 'down here'. His tomb was empty for certain but so was His throne.
- Jesus would ascend to Heaven, to the right hand of the Father so that we could go there too. (Once He went there to stay, we would go with Him, in Him and be seated there, too. (**Ephesians 2:6**))
- He knew that He would see Mary again and that she and everyone else would gain far more by releasing her hold on Him now so He could complete His mission.
- She had to let go now, stop clinging to Him now in order to benefit in ways she could not comprehend in the moment. She only knew what she could discern with her five senses, and He knew that letting go of Him would bring her far more than she could ever imagine.
 - Jesus tells Mary that she needs to stop 'clinging' to what she 'knew' so He could give her way more than she ever knew existed.
 - This phrase 'stop clinging' means to stop or cease an action that has already begun rather than avoiding starting an action.
- What thing are you holding onto that is keeping you from God's best for you?
 - Mary was holding onto Jesus, a really good one to hang onto, but even a good thing that is ill-timed and 'out of rhythm' with God's plans can be something that holds you back.
- What earthly thing, what thing in this life keeps or holds you back from God's plan for you?
 - Mary was relating to Jesus from a human, earthly point of view. She had to 'let go' so she could receive a life together with Him for eternity.
 - Don't let a temporary connection here blur your focus on your external destiny.
- The miracle of His resurrection holds the power for the fulfillment of our identity, purpose, passion, and destiny.

Happy Easter!