Lesson 7 Empty Tomb; Living Savior

Study Text

John 20:1–31

Key Verse

Mark 16:6

Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him (KJV).

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him" (NIV).

Christ's resurrection is the foundation of Christian faith and practice.

Introducing the Study

How did the resurrection of Jesus impact the lives of those closest to Him? How does it shape our lives today? The apostle John wrote vividly about the day the disciples met the risen Christ. John could not forget the empty tomb—or the way that Jesus appeared to him and the other disciples a short time later. The desire of John's heart was to help others know Christ the way that he did. As you read the study, ask God to give you a deeper appreciation for the resurrection of Jesus, and to help you understand how important the Resurrection is for Christians. Also think of ways you can share this good news with those who do not know Him.

Commentary & Application

1. An Empty Tomb

John 20:1–9

Jesus had changed Mary's life in a supernatural way, delivering her from demons (see Luke 8:1–3). Now, after His crucifixion, she showed her devotion to Him by setting out for the tomb to anoint His body with spices (John 20:1; see Mark 16:1). Upon arriving, she discovered that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance of the tomb. However, there would be much more evidence that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead (see Acts 1:3). And while a physical barrier such as a stone would not hinder the risen Christ (see John 20:19), the moving of the stone ensured access to Jesus' empty tomb.

Mary would soon encounter the risen Christ. But at this point she believed that His body had been

King James Version

John 20:1. The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.
2. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.
6. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,
7. And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.
8. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.
9. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.
11. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,
12. And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.
13. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.
14. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.
15. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.
16. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.
19. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.
20. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.
21. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

New International Version

John 20:1. 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.
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!"
6. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there,
7. as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.
8. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.
9. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)
11. Now 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.
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."
14. At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.
15. He asked her, "Woman, 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."
16. Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").
19. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

20. After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.
21. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

taken from the tomb. So she ran to notify Peter and John (verse 2).

Peter and John went to the tomb and saw the evidence of the Resurrection: grave clothes, but no grave occupant (verses 3–7). The grave clothes were neatly folded, so this was not the random, chaotic scene that would have resulted from a grave robbery—as the Jewish leaders claimed. (See Matthew 28:11–15.) As a result of the evidence John saw in the empty tomb, he believed (John 20:8). Later, he and the other disciples would understand the Scriptures dealing with Jesus' death and resurrection (verse 9; see Luke 24:45–47).

How do you think you would have responded if you had been at the tomb that morning? Explain.

2. The Risen Lord

John 20:10–16

After Peter and John returned to the place they were staying, Mary remained outside the tomb, crying. Not even the presence of angels was enough to pull her out of this despair. She thought that Jesus' body had been moved to another location (verses 10–13).

Then Mary turned around and saw Jesus, but she did not recognize Him (verse 14). Mary was not alone in not recognizing the risen Christ (see John 21:4). Possibly Mary was blinded by grief, or perhaps she needed a revelation of Christ, as the disciples on the road to Emmaus later received (Luke 24:31).

Mary thought Jesus was a gardener and had possibly taken away the body of her Lord (John 20:15). Jesus broke through her grief and her concern for His body by calling her by name: "Mary" (verse 16). Suddenly she recognized Him and cried out, "Rabboni," which means "teacher." Mary needed proof that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that proof was amply provided!

Mary had difficulty in recognizing the risen Christ. What might keep you from seeing Him clearly today?

3. The Great Commission

John 20:17–23

Jesus told Mary to tell His disciples, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17, NIV). Christ gives to every person who believes the right to become a child of God (John 1:12). Mary would announce to the disciples the great news of His resurrection (John 20:18), which is at the foundation of our new birth in Christ.

Although the disciples were locked away in fear of Jesus' enemies, Jesus appeared and showed them His hands and side (verses 19–20). Here was proof that He was indeed their triumphant Savior!

Jesus' followers would not remain still. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (verse 21, NIV). He gave them the presence and power of the Holy Spirit for their mission (verse 22). Some believe that His actions here anticipate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:1–4).

A central part of the disciples' mission would be announcing the forgiveness of sins (John 20:23). Jesus said, "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (NIV). Jesus helped His disciples understand that they could provide assurance of forgiveness to the new believers who would soon be added to their number. Believers can and should declare to people everywhere that when they accept Jesus' sacrifice on their behalf, their sins are forgiven. But if they refuse to accept the good news, their sins remain unforgiven.

How would you respond to one who said, "God can never forgive me!"?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

In his Gospel, John showed that Jesus' disciples, who did not expect Him to rise from the dead, became fully convinced of His resurrection, transformed, and given a mission. That mission—to tell others about the forgiveness available in Christ—is our mission today. When you tell others about Christ, you're not sharing about a dead historical figure who cannot touch human lives today. Rather, when you witness, you are sharing with nonbelievers that they can have a relationship with Someone who will live forever—and Who can enable them to live forever as well! Remind yourself of the joy the disciples had following the Resurrection and ask God to help you joyfully share Christ with those around you.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday
Living Redeemer.
Job 19:23–27

Tuesday
Resurrection Hope.
Psalm 16:1–11

Wednesday
Jesus Christ Lives.
Luke 24:36–48

Thursday
Promise of Resurrection.
John 5:19–29

Friday
Resurrection Body.
1 Corinthians 15:49–58

Saturday
Newness of Life.
Colossians 3:1–10