

77. Jesus Appeared to Mary

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what both the Old and New Testament teach about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus took the time after His resurrection to open the understanding of the disciples so that they could explain His death and resurrection from the Scriptures and we want to do the same thing for our children. In this topic, we will see that Jesus took time to minister to Mary Magdalene because she was filled with sorrow.

After Mary had told Peter and John that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb, she returned to the tomb. John 20:11-13 says, “But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’” Mary and the other women had gone and told the disciples that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb. Then, Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb to weep because of her great sorrow.

In these verses, we see that Mary was crying as she stood outside the tomb. Then, with her eyes filled with tears she bent down and looked into the tomb. She saw that the tomb was not empty. Instead, she saw that there were two angels sitting there in white. They were sitting where the body of Jesus had been laid when Joseph and Nicodemus placed the body in the tomb. One of the angels was sitting at the spot where the head of Jesus had been. The other angel was sitting at the place where the feet of Jesus had been. Here, we see that God had sent these angels to minister to Mary in her sorrow.

The angels asked Mary the question, “Woman, why are you weeping?” The two angels had earlier appeared to all of the women. Luke 24:4-9 say, “And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”’ And they remembered His words. Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.” The women had heard this message and had even gone and told the other disciples.

However, we see that Mary did not really understand the message that she and the other women had given to the disciples. Her mind was so confused that she spoke and acted as though Jesus was still dead. Mary shows her confusion and lack of understanding by the words that she then spoke to the two angels. Mary said to the angels, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” Mary showed by her statement that she thought that the religious leaders, the gardener or some other people had taken away the body of Jesus and that was why the tomb was empty. She was especially sorrowful because now she had no idea of where the body had been taken. Once she finished speaking to the angels, she turned away from the

tomb.

Through her tears, Mary saw someone standing there as she turned away from the tomb. John 20:14-15 says, “Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, ‘Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’” Mary did not recognize that the person standing there was Jesus. Two other disciples had that same experience that day as they walked from Jerusalem to the town of Emmaus. Luke 24:15-16 says, “So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.” The word translated “restrained” means *to have power or to hold*. The Lord had used His power to prevent these two disciples from recognizing Him. The same thing may have happened to Mary Magdalene.

Jesus had asked Mary two questions. The first question was, “Woman, why are you weeping?” Of course, Jesus knew why she was weeping but Jesus often asked questions to help people learn to think and understand. The second question was, “Whom are you seeking?” Her answer really expressed her sorrow and grief over the fact that the body of Jesus was not there but her answer did not actually answer either question. She also made the assumption that the person speaking to her was the gardener. Here, we see that when people are in great sorrow it is easy to get many things confused. Since Mary assumed she was talking to the gardener, she also thought that the gardener might be the person that had removed the body from the tomb. She wanted to know where the body had been taken so that she could take the body away and at least know where it was.

One lesson that we can learn from Mary Magdalene is that many individuals who have just experienced the death of one that is loved very greatly may be quick to try and blame someone or something for the death. This was true of both Mary and Martha when their brother, Lazarus, died. Both sisters said the same thing when they first saw Jesus. John 11:21 says, “Now Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’” Then, John 11:32 says, “Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’” In both cases, the sisters said that if Jesus would have been there that their brother would not have died. Since Mary Magdalene did not know what happened to Jesus, she immediately assumed that someone had taken away the body of Jesus. Blame does not heal but only causes greater grief.

Jesus then revealed who He was to Mary by speaking her name. John 20:16-18 says, “Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him, ‘Rabboni!’ (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and *to My God and your God.*””” Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her.” When Jesus said her name, we see that Mary immediately recognized that it was Jesus speaking to her. Suddenly, the message that she had delivered to the disciples made sense. Now, she knew that Jesus was actually alive.

Mary immediately turned to Jesus and called Him “Rabboni”, which means *Teacher*. It was a title of honor and spoke of the great love that Mary had for Jesus. Jesus had earlier set this Mary free from the torment of demon possession. Mark 16:9 says, “Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.” Here, we see that she had the privilege of being the first to see Jesus after His resurrection.

The first response of Mary was to cling to Jesus. In contrast, Jesus had to explain His first priority to her. Hebrews 9:23-26 says, “*Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*” Here, we see that the first priority of Jesus was to appear in the presence of God to put away sin for us. The “us” would have included Mary, so His ascension to the Father was also for her sake. Christ was the One who was the sacrifice once for all time so that there was no longer any need for earthly sacrifices to provide a covering for sin.

Jesus also had a very important responsibility for Mary at this time. She was told to go and tell His brethren that He was ascending to the Father. In John 15:15, Jesus had told the disciples, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” Before His crucifixion, Jesus could change His relationship with the disciples from servants to friends because He had taught them all that the things that He had heard from His Father. Now, Jesus was able to change their and our relationship to Him to brethren. Romans 8:14-15 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” Through His death and resurrection, Jesus made it possible for all who believe to become the children of the Father and joint heirs with Jesus.

Mary Magdalene was obedient and went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord. She also told them the things that Jesus had spoken to her. Mary understood what Jesus had done for her and for all who place their faith in Jesus. We see that she was eager to be obedient to the Lord and go and share how Jesus had made it possible for them to become children of God. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand exactly how important it is for each person to hear how to become a child of God. We want to show them by our example the importance of sharing that message with others. As we teach them and as they see the example that we give, they will also be encouraged to follow that example. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share the good news so that others will know how to become the children of God.