

THE REST OF THE STORY

Hebrews 9:11-12

The first person to whom Jesus appeared alive was Mary Magdalene. The Apostle John reports:

John 20:11–18 (ESV)

¹¹ *But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”*

Mary Magdalene was not expecting the resurrection; she assumed the gardener or someone else had taken Jesus' body. This was true of Jesus' followers in general; they did not expect the resurrection in spite of Jesus' predictions (Matt. 16:21-23, 17:22-23, 20:17-19).

¹⁴ *Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).*

At first, Mary did not recognize Jesus; she mistook Him for the gardener. This indicates there were enough changes in Jesus' resurrection body that He was not immediately recognizable by those who knew Him. But when He spoke her name she recognized His voice.

It is worth pointing out that if the resurrection of Jesus was a fabrication of His disciples, they would not have had Jesus appearing first to a woman. Under Jewish law at the time, the testimony of a woman was not acceptable as valid testimony in any Jewish court. The Apostle John reports Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene because that is the way it happened.

¹⁷ *Jesus said 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.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.*

Why did Jesus forbid Mary Magdalene to cling to Him? *Cling* translates a Greek term that in this context means *to fasten to*. Jesus did not forbid her from touching Him, but to clinging to Him in such a way as to not let Him go; as if to prevent Him from ever leaving her again.

She needed to let Him go because He had more to do; He needed to ascend to the Father in heaven.

Many of us are aware of Jesus' ascension recorded in Acts 1. The Acts 1 ascension occurred 40 days after the Resurrection. Does it not seem odd He would refer to His ascension forty days hence when speaking to Mary Magdalene?

The ascension of Acts 1 was a second ascension.

Jesus next appeared to the group of women who had come to the tomb near dawn, reported to the disciples and then returned to the tomb (Matt. 28:9-10). Jesus' third appearance was to the two disciples walking to the village of Emmaus later in the day (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32).

Jesus' first ascension took place between His second and third appearances on Resurrection Sunday.

Resurrection Sunday could also be called Exaltation Sunday; it was on Resurrection Sunday that Jesus was exalted, crowned King and appointed High Priest (Heb. 1:3-9, 13, 5:5-6). Once appointed High Priest, Jesus entered the Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Tabernacle and offered His blood as the once for all sacrifice for sins.

Jesus ascended on Resurrection Sunday in order to complete His work of salvation.

Hebrews 9:11-12 reveals:

Hebrews 9:11–12 (ESV)

¹¹ *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*

Imagine the scene as millions of angels watched in hushed wonder as God the Father appointed Jesus, the God-Man, High Priest. They watched as Jesus walked from the Throne and entered the darkened Tabernacle that had been defiled by Lucifer (Ezek. 28:11-16). Jesus walked through the Holy Place, then behind the veil and there, in the Holy of Holies, just as High Priests on earth had done for centuries on Yom Kippur, He poured out His blood on the heavenly Mercy Seat and paid the penalty for our sins once for all. In that moment Jesus secured *an eternal redemption*.

This sacrifice had to be made in the heavenly Tabernacle in order for us to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

Jesus is the only person in all the universe Who could offer this sacrifice in the heavenly Tabernacle.

You and I could never accomplish our own salvation.

A perfect blood sacrifice had to be offered in the Heavenly Tabernacle.

A perfect High Priest had to offer the sacrifice.

Jesus is the only person in all the universe who met the requirements.

On Resurrection Sunday, Jesus ascended and completed His work of salvation on our behalf.

JESUS DID IT ALL

Jesus accomplished everything necessary to pay the penalty for our sin. From His sinless life to His crucifixion to His resurrection to His ascension and offering - Jesus did it all.

On the other hand, we are sinners and can do nothing to pay for our sins. If you've been taught that you need to keep the Ten Commandments to be reconciled to God, you've been taught wrong. If you've been taught that you need to be baptized to be reconciled to God, you've been taught wrong. If you've been taught that you must belong to a certain church to be reconciled to God, you've been taught wrong.

The only way to be reconciled to God is to believe and trust in the blood sacrifice Jesus offered on Resurrection Sunday. His blood, shed on Good Friday and offered on Resurrection Sunday has paid the penalty for all our sins against God. The Apostle Paul explains in Colossians 2:13-14...

Colossians 2:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

You need to be honest with God and agree with Him that you are a sinner deserving His condemnation.

You need to respond to God and what He has done for you in Christ. You need to put all your trust, all your confidence in the fact that the blood sacrifice of Jesus pays the penalty for all your sin past, present and future. You need to put all your trust, all your confidence in the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and will raise you from the dead to be with God forever.

If you will put all your trust, all your confidence in Jesus, your sin will be completely forgiven, the Holy Spirit of God will come to live in you and your relationship with God will come to life. You will begin to hunger and thirst for God's Word. Your eyes will be opened to see things from God's perspective. Your mind will be renewed and your character will grow and change.

You will want to seek out a more mature Christian to disciple you in your relationship with Jesus. We will help you with that.

May this Resurrection Sunday 2015 be your spiritual birthday! Trust in the Lord Jesus today!!