

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

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[0 : 00] Well, now we're going to go back to the passage there. I wouldn't think you would need much clue as to what we're going to think about.

And it's in the passage there, John chapter 20 and verses 11 to 16. And this is a wonderful passage, really.

It's so full of instruction for us. We may not always think we need it, but I think that it's just a sweet passage of Holy Scripture and full of instruction.

And the title is Mary Magdalene Meets the Risen Lord, because that's the subject matter we're looking at here. And what we find in it is a situation for Mary of desolation, of heartbreak, feeling, really seriously feeling that all the hopes she had about Jesus, of course, the women folks shared it, the disciples shared it, but she is the one who was brought to the fore in this passage.

And the fact of the matter is, what is in front of us is a genuine devout believer has been confronted with God's ways when they're other than we think.

[1 : 36] They just run right against what we think should be happening. And the Lord does bring us through baffling situations that leave us feeling perhaps distressed.

We can't get a handle on what's going on. And I'm sure I'd like to think most of you, if not all of you, know something of that.

Reminded of a wee hymn there when I said, God's ways are other than we think. Far beyond reason's height. Far beyond reason's height.

Easy for us here. Because we have the Holy Scriptures. We have the whole story. And what you have to do is go back and think about it from Mary's standpoint.

From the standpoint of the disciples. The book is closed at that point. They don't know what's happened.

[3 : 09] Except they took the body. They have been the authorities. Those who were supposed to be guarding the tomb.

And you know, you record in Matthew that they were told when the resurrection occurred, the soldiers were paid to tell a story. So that people would believe it.

So what we've got in front of us is a situation where Mary, like the others, but Mary, because she was first there at the tomb, was shocked and distressed.

Hope's blasted. What's going on? Our Redeemer's gone. And just in case you're wondering about that, just think about the two disciples later on going down to Emmaus.

Sad. Bewildered. We said, when they met the stranger who was the risen Jesus, we thought he was the one who would redeem Israel.

[4 : 25] So it impacted the disciples terribly. It gripped them. It hadn't gone the way they thought. And here we have Mary.

Mary probably was moved more than the others. She felt this most keenly. And this is not about what one at least has written a book on what is blasphemously asserted.

She was married to Jesus. None of that false stories. She cared because he cared for her in a wonderful way.

She was enslaved by devils. And Jesus delivered her. The powers of darkness controlled her life, bringing her own world further and further to destruction.

They controlled her. And the fact that the Savior delivered her made such an impact on her that her heart was distressed, that now he had been, his body had been stolen.

[5 : 43] She's looking for the body of the Lord. So let's just look at three things. First of all, the scene at the tomb. Now from all the four Gospels, we see that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and John, Salome and Joanna, they were at the tomb early when it was dark.

You know, I sometimes say, when I see the industrious nature of ladies in the church, if it was any for the women, what would we do?

And here we have them. Here we have them at the tomb first. Now, of course, they went because they had bought, you remember before the Sabbath came on, they had bought ointment with a view to anointing Jesus' body.

But of course, all that was beautifully done by Joseph of Arimathea, whose tomb it was, and Nicodemus. And so, but they were there. They were impelled by a sense of loyalty to Jesus and love for Jesus, even although he was dead and gone.

And when they got there, of course, dark as it was, but when they got there, the thing was altogether different than they had expected.

[7 : 18] They were shocked, if not horrified, that the huge stone had been removed from the entrance of the tomb. Don't know if anybody's been to the garden center tomb.

But if you haven't, then there's an excellent reality check on the size of the stone that was on the face of the tomb.

I knew a minister, Peter Donald, who served there with his wife for years, and we chewed the fat very often on the subject.

And it fits the criteria of the rich man's garden, the rich man's tomb, and so on. But they came to it, and it was clear the stone had been rolled away.

And it was clear that the body of the Savior was not in the tomb, it was gone. And they wanted to know simply what's happened.

[8 : 25] And the conclusion, of course, is obvious. They've taken it away, and we don't know where they have laid it. And that was the message she ran to communicate to Peter and John, and we read in the passage, they thought they better have a look anyway.

And they did. They ran and saw the tomb was empty. And still, you see, and you've got to think about this, here were disciples who were with Jesus from the outset.

They listened to him. They saw his miracles. He enlightened them in the Old Testament, in the Hebrew Bible passages, concerning Messiah, and so on.

And they just did not get it. He had to die. Now, for us, that seems incredible. But you've got to go back to where they were.

And you've just got to factor in, that's the way it was for them. So that we're taking this step by step, bearing in mind that as far as they were concerned, Jesus had not risen.

[9 : 44] It wasn't even on their radar screen. What was on it was, he's dead and gone. We need to find the body. And we know from the gospel accounts that three of the women, Mary, the mother of James and John, Joanna and the other woman, they stayed.

But Mary went back to report. And when Peter and John came to the tomb, the other women had gone away. But Mary came back. And that's where we picked up the reading.

She stood at the tomb. And when she got back there, Mary stood, verse 11, weeping outside the tomb.

And as she wept, she looked into the tomb. And she saw the two angels in white where the body of Jesus had lain. And here we have her, being questioned by them, woman, why are you weeping?

That was not a silly question to ask, but it was a probing question. Why are you weeping? They knew. They knew that he was risen.

[11 : 06] She didn't. And Mary simply answered, as a heartbroken follower of Jesus, you see it there in the verse, 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 them. Actually, if you think about it, if, hypothetically, of course, but if it was a case of she found the body, what was she going to do?

She wouldn't carry it. That's true. You see what I'm saying? But she was so caught up so caring, the body had to be found.

They have taken it, and notice in the midst of her grief, she calls Jesus, my Lord. We'll come back to that.

Clearly, Mary wasn't going anywhere in a hurry until she had obtained answers as to what happened to the body of Jesus.

[12 : 20] She wanted an adequate explanation, and she hadn't got one this far. But I come back to it. There's not a glimmer of hope here that Jesus is alive.

And if you think about it, and you need to get into it, to think about how dreadfully sad believing that must have been for them.

He's not coming back. All the hopes we had about him, they're all darkness.

But her return to the tomb on her own is most instructive for us. You know, there's a passage in Song of Songs which depicts the figure of the Lord's people under the Shulamite and the king as the king.

And she says, I sought him whom my soul loved. She wanted to get some certainty on this.

[13:41] And I think this is a practical point. That's the way we should be. In our spiritual lives we ebb and flow. Let's be honest about it to ourselves and to the Lord.

Here she is showing us a better way. She's not giving up. She wants to find the saviour. And although we know he wasn't dead, she didn't.

And she just wanted with all her heart to solve this terrible problem. I sought him but I could not find him.

And Christian life as I've said just a moment ago is sometimes is bound up with us drifting from our allegiance to the saviour.

We sometimes just get bogged down in our own interests. And we gradually get a bit colder in our hearts.

[14:46] We're not as committed. Perhaps we don't see it initially. Maybe we don't see it for a wee while. And then suddenly we realise we're not where we were in our connection with the Lord.

some of you will know the words of William Cooper. Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?

Where is that soul refreshing view of Jesus in the word? And then he goes on to talk about the dark times he had and how his devotion to the Lord waned.

And we need to be on our guard here. Let's learn from Mary's wonderful persistence in seeking him even although she didn't realise how actually near he was to her.

Second thing is the Saviour's revelation to Mary. Suddenly Mary we're told is disturbed by the appearance of another person.

[16:03] She turned to see but saw not. That's what we're told here. Jesus said to her she didn't know it was Jesus 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.

Now various suggestions have been made about why she didn't recognise him. She didn't recognise his voice in the two questions.

She didn't recognise him and interpreters have gone into all the options. Was it that the resurrection body was so different?

Was he dressed in gardener's clothes and so on and so on? We don't know. I tend to think with others that she was in a distressed state.

[17:15] If somebody's been weeping a lot and the salty tears have been falling and they've been grieving you don't see too well.

Those of you who have been there you'll know what I'm saying. We don't see too well. And it seems to me that this angle on it the fact that she had wept herself so and she was filled with grief.

She didn't recognize him. Of course some interpreters take the view that he withheld recognition from it. But the bottom line is she didn't recognize him.

She didn't recognize his voice in these two questions. You see there in verse 15 we just read it. She doesn't recognize him. He questioned her and she didn't really recognize his voice. And like I say if we're honest about it we don't know really why she didn't recognize him.

[18:33] But that was the way it was. Jesus could have let her know like that. He could have made everything crystal clear. But Jesus had his own time and his own way of working.

And my dear friends that's a practical point for us we should take on board. In providence he never works the way we think he'll work. He sometimes brings us into situations we never imagined.

Perhaps we should have. Hindsight's very helpful but it's no use when you're coming up towards it. He brings us into situations that we never expected to confront.

And Mary Magdalene I think again if I may quote in the words of the Shulamite in Solomon 3.3 tell me she's saying to the gardener tell me she's saying did you see him whom my soul loves?

And there should be a connection in you and me as Christians with those words when we have drifted or when we've been wearied or thrown off course by providence by the difficulties the Lord has brought in our way.

[20 : 06] We perhaps are in gloom or agony or uncertainty and we need a word from the Lord Jesus Christ to change all that.

But he will do it his own way and he will do it in his own time. And the beauty of Mary here is she persevered. She was earnest in seeking him who was all in all to her. Her heart was sore but the Savior knew her heart was ready now. And that's what we come to there in this revelation he made.

she was now ready for the resolving of the mystery so to speak. He simply called her name Mary verse 16.

Now you see it there Jesus said to her Mary and there was instant recognition. no actually in the Greek in verse 16 the word is Miriam and it would have been the mother tongue it's in the ESV as Aramaic but it was Hebrew it's Hebrew for Miriam Mary and it's Miriam in verse 16 and it was at that point the whole thing changed for her.

[21 : 49] That one word it was proof positive that Jesus was using her name the way he used her name.

Don't forget Mary is an anglicized version of Maria which is in the Greek sometimes and the fact that verse 16 takes us to where the river hits the road Miriam that was her Hebrew name and now I'm not going to endeavor to get into the tone of Jesus speaking to it I have a daughter my youngest of the four girls is Miriam and I can list a few ways a few tones I would use given whatever situation it was if she was doing what she shouldn't have been doing I know what I would say I know the tone if I was praising her I know the tone and you see here it's the tone as well as the name he calls her by her name but there was no mistaking it and doubtless the tone of it touched her heart she knew at once it was her beloved savior and we got to think about the good shepherd here can't not think about it good shepherd he talked about it enough in john 10 to allow us to look into it for a moment the good shepherd knows his sheep and they know him and they follow him and that one word with the name and the tone changed everything no one calls me like that no one without tone he knows his sheep tell you a wee story just as we're moving on forgotten the time hope we're not too late here anyway so those of you who are have been in the free church a long time will know that we had communion season decades ago that were really preaching occasions fellowship occasions so we had a man

I better watch what I'm saying but we had a man from he was a native of Skye so he knew a lot about sheep and in my first charge there was a glebe there was actually 25 acres worth and the men looked after it and then they thought we're going to give it back to the minister that was the custom that was a tradition going back generations so anyway we had sheep on the glebe and he was itching the visiting minister was itching to get out and have a look at the sheep you see because he knew about sheep so off he went in front of me and he called the sheep bear with me he called the sheep and they took off to the extremity of the glebe well would you I better watch my accent here well would you believe it fancy that so

I just called them I called them the way I called them heads up round and up the field like rockets the good shepherd he knows his sheep and when we hear a word from him we know it's not a man simply like a preacher but the Lord is speaking to us through him the same as when we're reading the word and it comes in power and we know it's a word from the Lord to us whatever others may be getting we don't know but when it comes to us in power we hear his voice as it were how often when we've been worried and anxious perhaps about our health the health of a loved one employment something that's weighty serious and we're afraid and you come down to your reading and what do you end up with

Jesus telling his disciples be not afraid it is I fear not I am with you be not afraid I am your God I will strengthen you I will uphold you with my righteous right hand and many another could be quoted and this revelation came at precisely the right time for Mary and it made maximum impact on her yes that's the way the Lord works he knows we may not agree with his timing till afterwards but we see that it was best after an all he he as we will be we mentioned in the in the catechism

[27 : 34] Jesus loves his own because with his blood he bought them body and soul and they're precious to him they matter to him and he won't leave them in the darkness and on and on and on no light will come and with that lovely word I can say I'm not going to attempt how the saviour said it

Miriam and all was light and life and joy and peace well one last thing before we finish and that is Mary's response to Jesus revelation as we noted it was the voice of her beloved saviour calling her Miriam and there was an instant recognition she exclaimed as you see it there rabboni now I'm I'm I'm not going to get into the semantics of

Hebrew and Aramaic but a rabboni is emphatically Hebrew but the thing is it's very revealing because John of course records you'll see there which means teacher in brackets now that a born was the teacher or the master the scholar but there's an interesting suffix on the word the ebit and it is personalized it's a personal pronoun my let me give you the best example I can when our dear saviour was on the cross in the hour of forsaken the hours he cried out at the deepest darkness my god you see the ebit is the suffix it's stuck on at the end my and this is what she was saying my master my teacher and this is a wonderful insight into how she viewed him interestingly enough the famous gospel preacher john westley had a favourite name for the saviour no prices for guessing rabboni that's what he called the lord rabboni interesting because that's what the lord was to my master my teacher and here we have it all that

Mary knew about eternal life the way of salvation came from Jesus and it was about Jesus rabboni my teacher my master she had been delivered as we said earlier on from heading down broadway to destruction and he had delivered her and brought her into the kingdom and Jesus saved her from that eternal ruin and he had become her lord how many times do we read they have taken the lord they have taken my lord and the angels that's what she said to the angels at the tomb they've taken my lord and I don't know where they have laid him and here at the sound of her own name her heart is touched there's only one answer to

Miriam Rabboni and it's useful for us in closing that if we're listening to this at our own level in the faith then we take to heart that that's what he is to us the word may come in reading the word may come in reading a deeper book on the subject it may come from a preacher the preacher will not necessarily know but it comes from Rabboni himself to us and there may be I don't know who's listening online and I don't know who's listening here tonight who may not have made a commitment yet but see if you're listening as it were with a degree of uncertainty about where you are spiritually then it's perfectly appropriate to simply say

Lord Jesus save me save me from destruction be my Rabboni grant and this ties in actually with what Bill was preaching earlier on grant your resurrection life and power to me that I may finish my earthly course and be with you at last Rabboni Amen Amen Thank you.