

The Reality of the Resurrection

by Dr. Terry Tramel

PRINTED TEXT: John 20:11-16; Luke 24:28-32; John 21:15-17

John 20:11 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.

Luke 24:28 They drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

John 21:15 When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

ANCHOR TEXT: *“That I may know him [Christ], and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” – Philippians 3:10*

Message Objective

To examine the effects of Christ’s resurrection on those who witnessed it and experience its impact.

Central Truth

Because Christ is alive, we can experience a personal relationship with the Living Lord.

Lesson Outline

1. Recognizing the Risen Christ. John 20:1, 11-18
2. Relationship With the Risen Christ. Luke 24:13-17, 26-35
3. Restored by the Risen Christ. John 21:1, 2, 15-19

Study Helps for the Message

Clarifying the Text

John 20:17 – “*Jesus saith unto her, **Touch me not**; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*” Based on a surface reading of this text in the KJV, some have assumed that Jesus forbade Mary to touch Him. This would be perplexing because later that evening, He appeared in a room with 10 disciples, and it is implied that they touched Him at that gathering (John 20:19-23). This assumption and the words spoken to Mary have led some to conclude that Jesus must have ascended to Heaven later that day, prior to His final ascension. From a careful consideration of all the texts, this seems unlikely. The NASB translates the opening part of this text, “*Stop clinging to Me...*” while the NIV reads, “*Do not hold on to me....*” It is likely from the context that Mary had embraced Jesus, and having lost Him once before, she did not want it to happen again. Jesus’ words to her indicated that His ascension would be soon, but it was not immediate. Thus, He had a special assignment for her to herald the resurrection news. All the authorized translations render the closing language “*to my God, and your God.*” Nowhere in the Gospels did Jesus ever address God as “our Father” or “our God.” The reason He made these dual distinctions to Mary was that her relationship with God was different from His. He was the eternal Son of God; she, by believing, was a member of the family of God (John 1:12).

Luke 24:31 – “***Their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.***” Both the NASB and the NIV translate the statement “*they knew him*” as “*they recognized him.*” In the previous verse, Jesus, the invited guest, begins to act as if He were the host. This action seemingly signals to the travelers His identity. Perhaps they saw the scars in His hands. Nevertheless, their previous condition (Luke 24:16) was reversed, and they recognized Him as their Lord. Immediately, Jesus vanished, but their hearts were ablaze with what He had shared with them.

Historical Background

Luke, as one might expect from a historian, loved to travel. He frequently accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys (Acts 20:5; 21:1; 27:1; 2 Timothy 4:11). Additionally, he was a proven writer, the author of both the Gospel that bears his name and the chronicles known as the book of Acts. In the former he writes what Jesus *began* to do, and in the latter, he followed with what Jesus *continued* to do by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3).

Luke’s fascination with travel is reflected in both these texts which make up approximately 28 percent of the New Testament. The apostles’ missionary travels are a familiar theme in Acts. Likewise, in his Gospel account, Luke traces the Lord Jesus from His birth in Bethlehem to His

death outside Jerusalem. Luke describes Christ's ministry in Galilee (4:14 – 9:50), Judea (9:51 – 13:21), Perea (13:22 – 19:27), and, finally, Jerusalem (19:28 – 24:53). John's writings in both episodes of our lesson today are confirmed by his own eyewitness account. He was the first to look into the empty tomb and believe (John 20:8). He also was the one who identified Jesus on the shore of the sea of Tiberius after His resurrection (21:7)

Literary Background

Close to a dozen post-resurrection appearances of Jesus are recorded in Scripture. Of these, Luke and John record more than any other New Testament author. Matthew records two; Mark notes four, and Paul alludes to four in his Corinthian epistle. Luke relates five of these accounts in his Gospel (repeating one of them in Acts), while John writes of five of these episodes as well. All four authors write of the women finding the tomb empty on Sunday morning. Only Mark and John report the dialogue between Jesus and Mary Magdalene later that morning. Luke alone records the Emmaus Road conversation, and John is the lone evangelist who writes of Jesus' final words to Simon Peter.

Plan Ahead

☐ **PRAYER:** Recognizing that this is the greatest day on the Christian calendar, commit to spending even more time in prayer and preparation for this message. You may have an opportunity to teach some who attend a church service only once or twice a year. Pray that the Lord will use you to deliver the message of Easter rightly.

Introducing the Lesson

☐ **ANCHOR TEXT:** Make sure that Philippians 3:10 is read at the outset and used as the foundation for this Easter lesson. Especially emphasize that even though Paul was in relationship with Jesus Christ, he had a longing to know Him in an even more intimate way than he did.

☐ **IMPORTANCE:** The significance of the Easter message cannot be overemphasized. According to 1 Corinthians 15:14-17, if Christ did not rise from the dead, our preaching is in vain, our faith is in vain, and we are still in our sins. Inform the class (if you indeed believe this) that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then you are going to resign and not be a part of the hoax any longer. However, if you believe in the resurrection of Jesus, then you can believe everything the Bible declares to be so.

☐ **ATTENTION GETTER:** If your congregation is meeting on Sunday, ask your class, "*How was your weekend?*" Explain to them that the weekend is over. Ever since the event of the initial Easter morning, Sunday is *not* the last day of the week; it is the first day of the week. Let them know that Mondays are not so bad when they are the second day of a person's week. There is something significant about starting every week in the Lord's house with the Lord's people.

The Power of the Word

1. Recognizing the Risen Christ (John 20:1, 11-18)

COMMENTARY

a. A Weeping Woman – John 20:11-16. "*Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre*" (v. 11). If John's narrative had

concluded at the end of chapter 19, it would not have been exceptional. All biographies eventually finish with a notation of the subject's death. However, the story continues in all four Gospels. John's record in the opening verse of chapter 20 is that Mary Magdalene came to the sepulcher early on that dark Sunday morning. She was a devoted follower of Jesus, having great gratitude to Him for delivering her from bondage to Satan (Luke 8:2). She was in the last group at the cross (John 19:25), and was now in the first group to the tomb.

Mary was not alone because when she found the stone rolled away from the tomb, she ran to Peter and John saying, "*They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him*" (John 20:2). Thus, John's account harmonizes with the other Gospels (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1). After Peter and John came to the tomb and even entered it, they left to contemplate the evidence they had just seen (John 20:3-10).

When we resume the story at our Printed Text, Mary Magdalene lingered at the gravesite. Twice in verse 11, John notes she was weeping. Her tears were genuine, as the death of her Savior had now been compounded with the horror that someone had done something with His body. Perhaps moved by curiosity, Mary knelt to look in the enclosure of the tomb. To her amazement, she saw two angels in white apparel sitting where Jesus' body had been (v. 12).

In Scripture, when angels appeared to people, they were almost always in human form. They did not have halos or wings. This explains why Mary engaged in a normal conversation with them. After a question-and-answer exchange, she turned around to discover the greatest recognition event in history. Jesus was standing before her. Initially, Mary did not recognize Him (v. 14). Jesus asked her the same question the two angels had asked. He asked her why she was crying and for whom she was looking. Mary thought He may have been the gardener, so she sought knowledge from Him as to the whereabouts of Jesus' body (v. 15).

b. A Master's Message – John 20:16, 17. "*Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God*" (v. 17, not in Printed Text). Finally, Jesus called Mary by name. Upon hearing Him say, "*Mary,*" she recognized Him and responded by calling Him "*Rabboni; which [means] Master*" (v. 16). It is a most significant choice on the part of the Son of God to show Himself first to this woman. She was not a prominent person in a position of authority. Jesus did not appear at all to Pilate, Caiaphas, or any Jewish or Roman official. He did not even show Himself at first to His own disciples. The record of a woman's being the first eyewitness to the Risen Christ is strong evidence of the historicity of the actual account. No Jewish author in the ancient world would have invented a story with a woman being the primary witness.¹

Additionally, this choice is consistent with Jesus' entire ministry of reaching the last and the least and the lost. He may have chosen this moment to honor Mary for her care in continually seeking after Him.

We are not certain as to why Mary did not initially identify Jesus. Either Jesus' appearance was intentionally altered, or Mary's vision was momentarily veiled, as was the case with the Emmaus Road travelers (Luke 24:16). Regardless, Jesus' sheep know His voice, and He calls them by name (John 10:3, 4).

Her joy must have been uncontrollable when recognition dawned in her heart. Evidently, she embraced Him and clung to Him with spontaneous love. Jesus' next words to her were instructional. She did not need to attach herself to His person. He would be with them a few

more days (40) before His ascension to the Father. In the meantime, He had a special assignment for her.

c. A Risen Report – John 20:18 (not in Printed Text). *“Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.”* Jesus’ commission for Mary was to *“go to my brethren”* (20:17). The term *brethren* encompasses more than His biological half-brothers. Jesus was referring to all His disciples, with this term denoting their place in the family of God (Hebrews 2:11). John had already deduced this probability (20:8), and her testimony was going to provide them with another layer of proof until Christ appeared to them later that evening.

TEACHING HINTS AND APPLICATION

❑ **INFORMATION:** The role of women in the first-century Roman Empire was greatly restricted. They had virtually no legal rights, voting rights, divorce rights, or educational rights. However, Jesus’ ministry was especially extended to the last and the least and the lost, which included women in that day. It should be noted that women were the last ones at the cross (John 19:25-27) and the first ones to the tomb (John 20:1, 2).

❑ **DISCUSSION: Ask:** *What will our own glorified bodies be like?* The closest answer to that question we have in Scripture is found in 1 John 3:2. The writer said, *“...When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”* Share with the class this statement: *“We shall be like him.”* Evidently, our immortal body will be similar to the glorified body of our Risen Lord. He could go in and out of a room without using a door. He was not bound by the law of gravity. He could be in one place at one moment and another place at the next moment.

❑ **OBSERVATION:** In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Paul makes the greatest defense of Christ’s resurrection. Not only does He emphatically state that Jesus died and was buried and rose again but also that *“he was seen...”* (1 Corinthians 15:5). The apostle lists an impressive array of people who saw the Risen Christ. Included in these eyewitnesses were Peter, James, the disciples, the apostles, and 500 brethren at one time. Noticeably absent from his list are Mary Magdalene and the women the other Gospel writers mention as coming to the empty tomb. This is an example of the biblical author’s knowing that the testimony of women in that culture would be invalid. Thus, Paul did not mention the role of women at the tomb when trying to make his case.

2. Relationship With the Risen Christ (Luke 24:13-17, 26-35)

COMMENTARY

a. Explanatory Encounter – Luke 24:27 (not in Printed Text). *“Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* Luke alone records the wonderful account of Jesus’ sojourn with two people on the road to Emmaus sometime during the day of the Resurrection. Only one of the disciples is identified by name (Cleopas).

Emmaus was a small village approximately seven miles northwest of Jerusalem. Cleopas and his companion were walking together talking about the arrest, trial, and death of Jesus (24:15). That same verse tells us that while they were conversing about these things, Jesus came alongside them; however, their eyes were veiled from recognizing Him (24:16). Jesus asked them what

they were talking about. Cleopas answered Him by rehearsing the events of the past few days, including the report of the women of seeing angels at His empty tomb (24:24).

Jesus' reply surely caught His new traveling companions off guard. He said, "*O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*" (24:25, 26). The Lord's words indicate that He was chiding them for not knowing from the Old Testament that these events must have taken place. His use of the word *all* served as a caution against being selective in examining only some of the Scriptures related to the coming Messiah. Scripture spoke not only of the coming ruler's glory, but of His sufferings as well (Psalm 2:7; 110:1; Isaiah 53; Daniel 7:13, 14; 1 Peter 1:10, 11). To illustrate His instruction, Jesus began with Moses (the author of Genesis) and proceeded to apply numerous passages in the Old Testament that spoke of Himself. A sample of possible texts He could have referred to includes Genesis 3:15; 22:18; 49:10; Numbers 24:17; Psalm 22:1, 18; 110:1; Isaiah 25:8; 52:14; 53; Jeremiah 23:5; Daniel 2:24, 35, 44; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 3:8; 9:9; 13:7; Malachi 3:1.²

b. Intimate Invitation – Luke 24:28-31. "*They constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them*" (v. 29). As they arrived at their destination for the evening, Jesus indicated He was going to continue to travel on (24:28). It is not surprising that after hearing such revelatory teaching, Cleopas and his fellow traveler urged Jesus to stay with them for the evening because it was nearing sundown. The Lord accepted their offer of hospitality and entered into the dwelling with them.

The next scene we have is at the dining table inside the house. This is a familiar setting in Luke's historical record (Luke 5:29; 7:36; 14:1, 7, 12, 15, 16). The unique twist to the story is that Jesus, the invited guest, began to speak as if He were the host. This was contrary to the custom of that day. Verse 30 declares that Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and distributed it to them. This is the same thing He had done for His disciples in the Upper Room on the previous Thursday when speaking about His impending death (Luke 22:19). Somehow, during this process, their "*eyes were opened,*" and they recognized Jesus (24:31). Again, the Risen Christ had revealed Himself to those who expressed a desire for His presence. The phrase "*were opened*" indicates that the recognition came because of the divine initiative.

c. Resurrection Reflection – Luke 24:32. "*They said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*"

Immediately after the hosts became aware of Jesus' identity, "*he vanished out of their sight*" (v. 31). The Lord's glorified body was now capable of such dramatic manifestations that were not possible during the self-limitation of Christ. Without any additional explanation, Jesus disappeared.

The stunned dinner companions looked at each other and rehearsed His sayings among themselves. Their conclusion was that His words had burned in their hearts as the Living Word walked them through the Written Word. Immediately, the two of them hastily traveled the seven-mile trip back to Jerusalem in the dark. What they had seen was too important to wait! They quickly made the retreat back to the location where the 11 disciples and others were gathered (24:33).

While they were giving their resurrection report, Jesus did it again! He reappeared in their midst. Their fear was vanquished as He touched them and taught them. Those whose "*eyes were opened*" (v. 31) now had their "*understanding*" opened (v. 45).

TEACHING HINTS AND APPLICATION

☐ **REVERSAL:** The story of Cleopas and his companion with Jesus on the road to Emmaus is reminiscent of the account in Luke 2:41-52 when Mary and Joseph inadvertently left the 12-year-old Jesus back in Jerusalem. They thought Jesus was with them, and He wasn't. The two on the road in Luke 24 didn't think Jesus was with them, but He was. Is it possible some people today think they have Jesus but don't? Likewise, are there times when we don't believe He is with us, but He is?

☐ **RESTORATION:** The account of Jesus' walking with people after His resurrection is also reminiscent of Genesis 3:8, which implies that God came down daily to walk with His creation in Eden. Sin destroyed that intimate fellowship between God and man. However, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was provided to restore what was lost in the Fall. This episode on the road to Emmaus is a foretaste of what will come at the consummation of all things, when God will again not only walk with but "*dwell with*" His redeemed creation (Revelation 21:3).

☐ **SPECULATION: Ask:** *What specifically did Jesus refer to from the Old Testament when "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27)? Did he rehearse His preincarnate appearances (such as in Exodus 3:1-14; Joshua 5:13-15; Daniel 3:16-25)? Or did He refer to the specific prophecies He fulfilled (such as Psalm 22; Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12; Zechariah 12:10)? Or did He explain how all the types found their fulfillment in Him (such as Genesis 14:18-20; 22:1-14; Exodus 12:1-14; Leviticus 1:1-13)?* Just the thought of these possibilities makes *our hearts "burn within us"* (Luke 24:32).

3. Restored by the Risen Christ (John 21:1, 2, 15-19)

COMMENTARY

a. Repeated Inquiry – John 21:15-17. "*When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?*" (v. 15) The last chapter of John's Gospel account records the appearance of Jesus to seven disciples at the sea of Tiberius. The beloved writer notes that this was the third occasion when the risen Jesus had shown Himself to His disciples.

After they all had enjoyed a meal prepared by Jesus Himself (21:9-12), the Lord spoke directly to Simon Peter. Three times Jesus asked Simon if he loved Him. Each time the answer was in the affirmative. Each response was met with a command to "*feed my lambs*" or "*feed my sheep.*" A closer inspection of this exchange reveals that Jesus used two distinct Greek words for *love*. The first was *agapao*, which means "an intelligent and purposeful love." The second word was *phileo*, which involves a more personal affection of the emotions. Thus, Jesus was teaching Peter that his love must involve both the will of the mind and the heart to be complete.³

The language of feeding the sheep and lambs is metaphoric of pastoral care. Not surprisingly, this description became a central part of Peter's ministry in the future (1 Peter 5:1-4). Earlier, Peter had denied Jesus publicly three times by a fire (Luke 22:55-61; John 18:17, 25, 27). Now, beside another fire, he publicly attests his allegiance to Christ three times. Because of Peter's past failure, this meeting is a necessity for him and the others to know that he has been fully restored by the Savior.

b. Reversal Indicated – John 21:18 (not in **Printed Text**). *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.”* Jesus again prefaced this next saying with the familiar words that verified the surety of His statement. This preface also often functioned as a signal that a solemn word would follow. The clause *“thou shalt stretch forth thy hands”* appears to be a prophecy of the kind of death Peter would die. Tradition records the death of this apostle occurring in A.D. 67-68 in Rome under Nero, near the time when Paul was also martyred there. At his own request, Peter was crucified with his head downward because he considered himself unworthy to be put to death in the manner his Lord was.⁴

c. Restated Invitation – John 21:19 (not in **Printed Text**). *“This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”* This verse explains the cryptic saying of the previous verse. The words *follow me* are not new to Peter. He has heard this invitation of the Master several times throughout his life. Here, the words are uttered with the specific conclusion to such discipleship prophesied. Three times, Peter has claimed his loyalty to the Lord, even being frustrated that Jesus would seemingly question it (21:17). Now he is made aware that if he fulfills this promise, it will lead him to his own cross. History verified that Peter indeed followed the steps of his Lord.

TEACHING HINTS AND APPLICATION

☐ **OBSERVATION:** When Jesus said to Peter, *“Follow me,”* in John 21:19, this may have been at least the fifth time Jesus had called Peter to do so. Many scholars believe John 1:40-42, Matthew 4:18, 19 and Luke 5:1-11 represent three distinct episodes where Jesus called Peter to follow Him. Additionally, Peter was included with the disciples and people in Mark 8:34 when Jesus invited *“whosoever will”* to follow Him. Thus, it appears that the call of Christ is not always a one-time event in our lives but rather is often repeated in various forms.

☐ **POWER POINT:** From John 21:15 prepare the words MORE THAN THESE on the slide. Ask the audience to think about the things that are the greatest rivals for their love and allegiance to Christ. (Possibilities may include money, houses, cars, clothes, fame, and popularity.)

☐ **FOOTNOTE:** After our Printed Text ends with Jesus’ telling Peter the manner of death that he would die, the Bible continues with Peter noting that Jesus did not mention anything like that to John. So, Peter, being the “friend” he was, said to Jesus, “What about him?” Jesus’ answer to Peter indicated that if He allowed John to live all the way to the second coming without dying, that was to be no concern of Peter’s. Peter was to take care of Peter, and Jesus would take care of John. Is there not a lesson in this “somewhat humorous” episode for us?

Closing the Lesson

☐ **REMINDER:** If the incredible event of Easter really happened, that means we too will live again! His resurrection is a guarantee of ours (1 Corinthians 15:12). Easter isn’t over – it has only just begun. O the anticipation of the second coming of Christ!

ENDNOTES

1. Walvoord & Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1983, p. 342.

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2. Donald Stamps, ed., *The Full Life Study Bible: New Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990, p. 179.
 3. Stamps, p. 230.
 4. Stamps, p. 230.