

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 16 (April 16-22, 2017)

The cross and the empty tomb separate Christianity from all other religions. We will look at some passages on the resurrection in this week's devotions. (Reprinted and updated from week 17, 2014)

Sunday, April 16 (read Mark 16:1-8)

*"But go, tell His disciples **and Peter**, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.' "* (Mark 16:7, *emphasis mine*)

The three women who are brave enough to go to the tomb very early on this first Sunday morning after the Lord was crucified, ask each other (v. 1-3), "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" They soon discover a fact that I want **you** to believe: When you exercise enough faith to honor Jesus, God will see to it that obstacles are removed. "When they **looked up** (KLUFROG), they saw that the stone had been rolled away" (v. 4a). Actually, there were **two** angels sitting where Jesus' body had been (see Luke 24:4), but Mark refers to only the one who spoke to the women. He calms their anxiety by telling them that Jesus has risen (v. 6), and commands them to go to the disciples with the good news. My favorite part is that he specifically wants Peter to know he is **still welcome** even though he had denied the Lord three times (see John 18:15-27). Are you confident enough in His forgiveness and restoration that you can "come boldly to the throne of grace, that (you) may obtain mercy and find grace to help in (your) time of need" (Hebrews 4:16, NKJ)?

Monday, April 17 (read John 20:1-2)

*"They have taken **the** Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"* (John 20:2b, *emphasis mine*)

Mary Magdalene does not wait to obey the angel's instructions (see yesterday's devotion); instead, she goes immediately to find Peter and John (the other disciple) to tell them the horrible news (v. 2). I gave you only two verses to read today because I want you to meditate on them. You will be asked someday why Christians worship on Sunday instead of Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. The answer is that we worship **the resurrected Christ** who came forth from the grave on the "first day of the week." I also want you to know that if you can get in the habit of seeking Jesus early in the morning, you will find fewer obstacles between yourself and Him. I emphasized "**the**" in the printed text above for a purpose that you won't see until Wednesday (don't cheat). This amazing story is too important to rush through!

Tuesday, April 18 (read John 20:3-9)

*He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus **had to** rise from the dead.)* (John 20:8b-9, *emphasis mine*)

John outruns Peter and arrives at the tomb first (v. 3-4). John bends over and looks in observing the "crime scene," but Peter barges right in (v. 5-6). The strips of linen that had been on Jesus' body were there as well as the burial cloth that had been on the Lord's head (v. 7). Scripture says that it "was folded up by itself." This seemingly insignificant point is extremely important. In the Jewish culture, a folded napkin says to the servants, "Don't clear the table. I'm coming back." It is enough for John who "saw and believed." I hope that by now you "understand from Scripture that Jesus **had to** rise from the dead." No other plan was ever on the table!

Wednesday, April 19 (read John 20:10-14)

*"They have taken **my Lord** away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put Him." (John 20:13b)*

Mary Magdalene may have loved the Lord more than the others because she had been so needy before He cast seven demons out of her. She knows first hand what it means to be set free from her infirmity (see Luke 8:2). As she weeps, two angels inquire as to the reason she is so brokenhearted (v. 10-13a). She replies, "They have taken **my Lord** away and I don't know where they have put him." I have learned that when **the** Lord (v. 2) becomes **my** Lord (v. 13), I am allowed to see Him too! This is the mystery I presented in Monday's devotion. Often we, like Mary, do not immediately recognize Him, but He is always there (v. 14). Determine this day to allow Jesus to be **your** personal Lord. You'll be amazed by His presence!

Thursday, April 20 (read John 20:15-18)

Jesus said to her, "Mary." (John 20:16a)

Is there a more beautiful moment in time than the one when Jesus calls your name? I always knew that He loved **the world**, but it took some time before I realized how special I am to Him. Once you desire Him to be the Lord of your life, He enters into a phase of intimacy that is far more personal than the words on a page in the Bible. Mary turns toward Him and cries out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" She not only submits to Him as her personal Lord, but she also calls Him "Teacher" in her native tongue. She is willing to be taught so that the Words from His mouth will be her guide for the rest of her life. Are **you** willing to submit to His Word and His will?

Friday, April 21 (Reread John 20:15-18)

*Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my **brothers** and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' " (John 20:17, emphasis mine)*

Jesus said from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He meant that the plan of salvation was completed: the righteous had died for the unrighteous and the penalty for sin had been paid in full. He reappears on Sunday in His new glorious body, but He is going to be on earth for only forty days (see Acts 1:3). The earthly ministry is about to be turned over to the third person of the Trinity, the blessed Holy Spirit. That's why He told Mary, "Do not hold on to me." Likewise, many Christians want to hold on to Jesus in the exact way they have done in the past, but He wants you to continually seek Him and grow in your knowledge and understanding (see Jeremiah 29:11-13). You need to trust Him, even when you cannot see Him clearly. One more point comes from today's printed passage: His death and resurrection allows Him to call us "**brothers**" for the first time. You are joint heirs with Him (Romans 8:17). Rejoice in your inheritance!

Saturday, April 22 (John 20:19-23)

The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. (John 20:20b)

Read Acts 20:20 (my ministry theme verse) along with the printed verse above, and you will see what 20:20 Vision Ministries is all about. We find in today's study text that the nail scars will remain with Jesus throughout eternity to remind us of the price He paid for our pardon and peace (v. 19-20). Jesus can never be locked out of an assembly of believers who truly seek to see Him (v. 19). He now sends them (and us) into the world to proclaim the gospel of peace (v. 21). He then breathes on them the Holy Spirit, but they do not see the evidence of this until the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:1-13). The Spirit will teach them His Word (see 1 Corinthians 2:14), so that they can tell a new believer that his/her sins are forgiven on the authority of the Word of God (v. 22-23). Go and fulfill your commission!