



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #334 Jesus' Resurrection and Eternal Ministry

The Five Resurrection Appearances of Jesus on Easter Sunday

Jesus' First Resurrection Appearance: To Mary Magdalene JN 20.10-28 (Parallel Text: Mk 16.9-11)

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^MWhen Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.

¹⁰ ^JThe disciples (Peter and John) went back (from the tomb) to where they were staying. ¹¹ And Mary stood outside the tomb, continuing to cry. As she was weeping, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have laid him."

¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "*Woman, why are you crying? Who are you seeking for?*"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "*Mary.*"

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "*I command you to stop holding on to me, for I have not yet permanently ascended to the Father. I command you instead to go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'*"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went ^Mout ^Jto the disciples--^Mthose who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping-- ^Jand she announced to them: "I have really seen the Lord--I will never forget the sight!"

And she told them that he had said these things to her. ^MWhen they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	The New Garden Tomb, and the Upper Room
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IX: The Resurrection and Eternal Ministry of Jesus
	The Resurrection and 40 Day Ministry of Jesus
	The Five Resurrection Appearances of Jesus on Easter Sunday
Title:	Jesus' First Resurrection Appearance: To Mary Magdalene

Today's reading begins the sequence of Eleven glorious appearances by Jesus that comprise the 40 Day Resurrection Ministry of Jesus. The first five appearances of Jesus all occurred on Easter Sunday. It was a day as glorious as the birth of the universe itself.

We use the term "appearance" for these encounters with the risen Jesus because he has the ability to make his resurrection body visible or invisible at will. In each of these eleven encounters Jesus made his presence temporarily visible, and then made himself invisible again.

One critical reason for "appearing" in this manner to his own disciples was that Jesus was showing them (and us) that his living presence with them (and us) does not depend up whether we can see him or not. Whether in "visible" or "invisible" mode, Jesus' resurrection presence is surely with us.

Each of Jesus' appearances was carefully selected by the gospel writers for specific purposes. Because today's reading describes Jesus' first resurrection appearance, it is particularly important. And, because John wrote the narrative, it is unusually dense with insight and meaning, and it is quite extensive as well. We will only touch the peaks of this text in our comments. This text warrants a lifetime of meditation and study.

Jesus chose Mary Magdalene for the first, pace-setting appearance for a reason. What was it? The text does not explicitly say, but Jesus' rationale is implied in the overall flow of John's narrative. We will trace this now.

The key principle is what Jesus laid down in Ch. 14 of the "Farewell Discourse," in which he instructed his disciples in the "new" kind of spiritual relationship with him that they would be enriched by after his resurrection and ascension. He had promised:

"The person who has my teachings/commands and obeys them is the one that really loves me; and the one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love that person, and I will reveal myself to them." JN 14.21 (see 14.23-24 also)

Love is the key. In response to Jesus' love, we are to love him by (1) **"having"** his commands, and (2) **"obeying them."** He then promised to further reveal himself to the one who loves him through obedience. In other words, Jesus will reveal himself the most to the disciple who loves him the most through obedience, or faithfulness.

According to this principle then, Jesus revealed himself first to Mary Magdalene, because she loved him the most. The resurrection narrative bears this out.

Mary was one of the women who stood by Jesus through all of his sufferings on the cross. She stood by him after he had died, and endured the agony of wanting desperately to prepare his body for burial, but being forced by circumstances to let Joseph and Nicodemus do it instead.

Mary found their ministrations inadequate, for after watching at the graveside until the last minute, she spent the rest of the Friday night and Saturday preparing a new batch of spices to re-anoint Jesus' body with on Sunday morning, according to her plan. She did not let herself begin to grieve, because her Lord's battered body demanded her priority attention.

Then, when the women headed out just before dawn on Sunday morning, Mary ran to the tomb and arrived first. After the encounter with Angels in the empty tomb, when the women headed back to the upper room to deliver the news, once again she ran ahead and was the first one to arrive. Nothing could hold her back. Her love was powerful.

Furthermore, when Peter and John ran to check the conditions at the empty tomb, Mary alone out of the women ran after them, and arrived back at the tomb just after Peter. The two apostles left after they had checked out the empty tomb and position of the burial cloths. Mary stayed.

The Greek makes it clear that Mary was weeping, and it was not just a brief emission of tears. She continued to cry--unstoppably. Her broken heart would not be comforted until she found Jesus' body and honored him properly with the best burial preparation ever lavished on a dearly loved, dead Master.

In all these matters, Mary was the most intense and passionate in her desire to honor her Lord, and she was instant and complete in obedience. She literally ran as fast as she could to fulfill every instruction she was given, and then she continued to run because her own love demanded it. The narrative tells us that Mary loved Jesus more through her obedience and attitudes than anyone else. So he appeared to her first. He *"revealed"* himself to her, just as he had promised on Thursday night.

As much as Mary loved Jesus, she did not recognize him at first because she was so consumed with locating his dead body. She was not fazed by two different encounters with Angels! Nothing mattered to her until she found and honored Jesus' body. This was hers to do.

All it took was one word from Jesus to shatter the sorrow and single-minded focus that had taken Mary to the very edge of sanity.

"Mary."

Jesus spoke her name, and she instantly knew it was him! There is so much here. Jesus had said:

"The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep...he calls his sheep by name, and leads them out..." (JN 10.2-3)

"I AM the good shepherd; I know my own, and my own know me." (JN 10.14)

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (10.27)

There was no other sound on earth to Mary like the sound of her Lord's voice, calling her name. The physical appearance of Jesus in his spiritual, resurrection body was similar enough to his flesh and blood

body to recognize, yet it was different, too. However, his voice remained utterly the same. Mary recognized the sound of her name when it was spoken by Jesus more clearly than anything else she had ever heard. This instantly made her believe in the risen Jesus, without first seeing him!

We are the same.

Jesus' command not to cling to him shows us that she instantly threw herself at his feet and held on for dear life. She clung to him like she never would let go. Jesus directed her not to cling to his physical presence. His command to her, and all the disciples was to **"abide"** in him, but it was to his spiritual presence that she must cling, by the Spirit he would soon send her, not his physical body. This was another crucial message of the this first resurrection encounter.

There is SO much more here that we cannot comment upon. The principles that the risen Jesus reveals himself to us more and more, as we love him for obediently; that it is by hearing his voice in his Word that we come to behold him in all of his risen glory; that we are to cling to him by "abiding" in his spiritual, invisible presence with us through his Spirit--these resurrection truths are illustrated magnificently in Jesus' appearance to Mary.

Note how Mary continued to love her Lord with passionate obedience after the encounter. She did exactly what he said, immediately, by going to the apostles with the news of her encounter with Jesus, and faithfully delivered his message to them.

APPLICATION:

One of the four mighty promises of the New Covenant is this:

"And they shall not teach every one his fellow-citizen, or every one his brother, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them." Heb. 8.11; Jer. 31.31

Every believer has the same opportunity to know God personally through his Son and Spirit. There is no partiality with the Trinity. However, our response to the unconditional love of the Trinity through our obedience determines how well we actually get to know God.

Jesus had promised he will reveal himself to us. It is up to us to "have" his commands through passionate study of his life and Word, and then "obey" them. There is no limit to how much Jesus will reveal himself to those who love him fiercely in obedience.

How much of a priority is loving God through obedience, for you?

How does Mary's example challenge you?

How do you need to recommit yourself to knowing God today?