

THE RESURRECTED KING WHO REIGNS

John 20:1-18

This Easter we have been studying in significant depths the account of the apostle John about Jesus' death burial and resurrection. Again, when John wrote his gospel, he wrote with an emphasis on the deity of Christ – the fact that Jesus is God. And part of emphasizing His deity meant emphasizing His Kingship. In chapters 18 and 19 of John, it's Christ's Kingship is the central topic. That's the main accusation that got Jesus crucified was the fact that is a king. And what we're going to study today is that **He is now the exalted King**. And this King is something we want to behold this year as John 19:14 states, "Behold, your King!". To "**behold**" something is really to stop and consider it – to look at it and reflect on it and let it sink in. It requires us to pause a little bit and concentrate, which is something our culture typically impedes with all of its busyness and even its common courtesies. In just about every culture, it's rude to stop and stare at someone. Parents tell their kids not to stare because it's awkward. However, we can't let that cultural conditioning affect our ability to behold the Lord because the Bible instructs us and commands us to behold our God and to behold the things that He does. Beholding our God deepens our understanding of Him and our relationship with Him.

The **act of beholding** is not something that falls short of practicality in our lives. Beholding has a transformative effect on us. **We become what we behold**. 2 Corinthians 3:18 – "We all, with unveiled face, **beholding** as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image." When we behold the divine glory of Christ through things like the crucifixion and resurrection, we become transformed into His image. We become like Him – obedient lovers and sacrificers who live for something more. You have to behold Christ to become like Him.

Today we behold *The Resurrected King Who Reigns*. The Exalted Christ as King. He may have been crucified and they may have tried to get rid of Him, but in so doing, we have seen that they were only accomplishing the will of God. This King isn't dead for very long. If you'll turn with me to John 20, we'll examine the evidence of this King's empty tomb. Verse 1 of chapter 20. We'll first read verses 1-10.

"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again to their own homes."

The first main subject at hand that John observes is that empty tomb of Jesus Christ.

I. **THE KING'S EMPTY TOMB (VV. 1-10)**

And by empty we don't mean that there wasn't anything in the tomb like His burial cloths. What we mean by empty is that **His body is no longer there!** And this is quite confusing for those who

show up first to the tomb. Mary Magdalene and other women. The synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us there were other women there with her – Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna and others – but according to John, Mary Magdalene may have arrived there first, ahead of the other women.

A. Mary Magdalene is first to the tomb. (vv. 1-2)

Remember Mary Magdalene is the one whom Jesus cast out more than a handful of demons from and had a pretty rough background. The other women also were faithful supporters and followers of Jesus. But Mary, probably restless and not able to sleep – probably still in complete grief and horror from watching her Jesus die, and then being buried in a hurry because of Passover haste, brings spices to complete His burial. We know that Nicodemus brought a hundred pounds of spices already and they bound it in the wrappings, but she brings more out of love for Jesus. It kind of reminds us when someone brings flowers to a grave site shortly after their burial, but Mary is actually concerned about anointing Jesus' body itself with more spices. She's not looking to just put the spices by His grave – she's determined to somehow roll back this giant disc-shaped stone from the door and anoint Jesus' body with the spices. One giant stone door wasn't going to stop this woman or the other women from showing their love and respect for Jesus. They want to get to Jesus and they don't care what it takes. We could learn a lot from these women.

Upon arrival at the tomb, however, they discover that all of their talk about how they were going to move this door was in vain because the door has already been rolled away (we know from an earthquake and an angel)! And this should have been great news! The King was no longer buried in that tomb! But Mary didn't understand it all yet. She actually thinks that someone has taken the body so she runs to tell Peter and John. She gets her morning exercise in! She runs and she tells them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." A resurrection isn't even in her mind yet. She is afraid that Jesus' body has been stolen.

So we see...

B. Peter and John run to the tomb. (vv. 3-10)

They didn't waste any time. They ran to the tomb together. John may have been younger or faster because he arrived at the tomb first (maybe this is his way of slightly bragging a bit – as he does like to call himself the disciple whom Jesus loved – I get kind of kick out of the way John presents himself – I think he's having fun with it without it being over the top – we some of the fun side of his personality here). John though, it says, he stops at the entrance to the tomb and looking in sees, the linen wrappings. Peter, however, when he gets there, he goes right in! He runs into the tomb! Sounds so typical of Peter. Upon entering the tomb, they see the face cloth curiously rolled up and put in a place by itself! And there is something about the wrapping still being there and especially the face-cloth in particular, that explains the next verse about John believing something.

The next verse says, John (the other disciple) who came to the tomb first, entered and saw and believed. What did he believe? Well, none other than a resurrection took place! Seems to me that he believed Jesus was alive! No one who would've been interested in taking the body would've left these wrappings. They would've taken it all. It may sound a bit graphic and fall on sensitive ears at the moment but the reality is, you don't unwrap a corpse to carry it around. You wrap it up and then move it. The first thing a person does to move a

corpse is to put it in a body in a body bag. It's easier to move that way and more sanitary. John says it's these small, but significant evidential pieces become a sprout of faith in the resurrection for him. And we can see why – this isn't the first time they saw grave clothes come off. They just saw it days ago in the case of Lazarus, when Jesus raised him from the dead.

I want us to really get this though. This is important for everyone one us, especially those who consider themselves doubting Thomas' today. **John saw and believed! Thomas saw and believed. All the apostles saw and believed.** There is nothing wrong with that because we need their eyewitness accounts. A lot of people want to make it sound bad that Thomas needed to put his fingers in Jesus' hands and side. But I like Thomas. Thomas was a realist. He wasn't one to just run with the crowd. He had a mind of his own and wanted to think about it. After all, nobody just got crucified and was walking around 3 days later. He had questions and wanted answers. He reminds me a lot of a lawyer who wanted clear evidence. When Jesus started talking about how He would be going away in John 14, He said, "And you know the way where I am going." Thomas actually spoke up and said, "No, we don't". "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" Thomas wanted answers. Clear answers. And you have to respect that. As Chuck Swindoll said about Thomas, it's better to have questions and ask them than to sit there and pretend like you get it, when you don't. Ask the questions. Seek out the answers. That's noble. Chuck Swindoll preached an amazing sermon on Thomas last year that totally changed the way I thought about Thomas growing up. The title of that sermon is *A Resurrected Christ...A Transformed Life* – a 2 part sermon on Insight For Living's website I highly recommend. I've even thrown the hyperlink in the footnotes.ⁱ

Thomas is a lot like David Limbaugh, a modern day lawyer who wrote "Jesus On Trial" – scrutinizing the evidence of the resurrection through a legal lens. Or like Lee Strobel who tried to prove Christianity wrong by proving the resurrection wrong. Well, he couldn't and wrote the book called "The Case for Christ." Or "Evidence That Demands a Verdict" by Josh McDowell. These men are modern Thomas' appealing to other Thomas' who need the evidence. And we all need to know that the resurrection is a real, historical moment that can be backed up with evidence – because if it isn't, then our faith is in vain. And that's why the apostle John writes this. He is an eyewitness who is writing these things so that we may believe. He says in 20:30, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name." These are things that he saw and things he and all the others were willing to die for. We need to make the point from this that:

❖ **Our faith is based on eyewitness accounts of historical evidence.**

It really happened. When you place your faith in Christ, you place your faith in a living Savior.ⁱⁱ

But we notice by the next verse that John's fledgling faith still needs to be grounded in something more than what he was seeing. He needed to read and hear something in verse that we see in verse 9. "For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." He needed the Scriptures! Faith doesn't just come by seeing but by hearing the Word of God – by hearing and reading the Word about Christ from the

Scriptures. When Peter and John went home you know I think they did? I think they went and open up the Scriptures and rehashed the Scriptures. The story of Isaac. The story about Jonah in the whale for 3 days. The Psalms about a suffering Savior. The sacrifices and the escape goat from the Levitical Law. There's a number of Scriptures they could've turned to as they realized it was all written about Jesus dying for sins and being buried and being raised again to life. Jesus took the disciples on the road to Emmaus to Scripture. So there's another point to made here that deserves our attention and it is that:

❖ **The prophetic Scriptures are the main source of evidence for us that gives fuller meaning and assurance to our faith.**

John believed, but it was the prophetic Scriptures that later bolstered his faith. Our faith must get grounded in the Word of God personally. If you want your faith to get stronger you must get into the Word of God. Even Peter later said that it is the Word of God, not experiences, that should be the basis of our faith (1 Peter 1:12-21). I think all of us would have liked to have been there at the resurrection and have been able to see these thing but we are blessed to be living when we do with all of their eyewitness accounts written for us. Even Jesus said in John 20:29, "Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

Let's move on now to verses 11-18. Remember the disciples just left and went home.

"But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that He had said these things to her."

Here we see what appears to be the first appearance of the resurrected King.

II. THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE RESURRECTED KING (VV. 11-18)

He appears to Mary who stuck around to weep. It says she is standing there weeping. I can picture her with both hands over her face and her sack of spices just laying on the ground nearby. The others have left but she stays. But what else was she going to do and where else did she have to go? It's quite obvious that Jesus is everything to this woman. He was her Savior. He's the one who delivered her from darkness and has freed her to find new life and spoke the words of life to her. She wanted nothing but Christ now – and this was the last place she knew Him to be. It is a precious moment that reminds us of Jeremiah 29:13 – "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me will all your heart." Mary is seeking Jesus with all her heart and it is Jesus that she finds. And when that happens, her weeping turns to joy. Weeping lasts for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

A. Mary's weeping turns to joy. (vv. 11-16)

Apparently she can't believe her eyes or didn't spend much time looking around the first time so she peeps into the tomb again through her tears, finds that even though two men just left, there are still two others inside the tomb. It says she saw two angels in white sitting at the head and feet of where Jesus was laid. There is no indication that she knew

immediately that they were angels because when they typically appear like this they appear as men. Besides that, she is grieving heavily and really doesn't care about anyone or anything other than finding Jesus. But they ask her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Which is kind of a ridiculous question at a gravesite, right? – but they know something she doesn't. They know that her weeping is improper for she's still seeking the Living One among the dead and their question is a way of merrymaking. They're excited to watch her find Jesus – angels long to look into those thing Peter said – people finding Jesus.

This story of Mary finding Jesus has been called the greatest recognition scene in all literature. She tells them she is sad because someone has taken the body of her Lord and she doesn't know where He is and as she says this, she becomes aware that someone was standing behind her. Either the angels motioned to it, or the shadow the ground revealed it, or she could hear it – but she turns around and she sees Jesus! And at first glance she still thinks He's the gardener! It's early and she's thinking who else would be in the garden but the gardener? Maybe she literally just saw the gardener on her way to the tomb and suspected him. Remember, in her mind, Jesus is still dead – which is why she probably doesn't recognize Him. I don't think He deliberately disguised Himself as He did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-32. I just think she hadn't considered Him alive and was blinded by grief. She says bluntly and basically, "If you've taken, let me know so I can bring Him back here to this grave!" But Jesus isn't going back into that tomb!

And apparently she turned around again because when Jesus says, "Mary!" in a way that only Jesus said her name, she turns around again and says, "Rabboni!" and she embraces Him! Tightly! And apparently won't let go! It's a beautiful moment. A tender moment reminds us of John 10:27 – "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Mary knew Jesus' voice and she begins to cling to Him. She did not want to lose Him again! Apparently she has been hugging Jesus for a while now and out of this intense love for Him does not want to let Him go anywhere or do anything so He has to say, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father [yet]." A hug can only last for so long and there will be more time. In the meantime, she has divine work to do!

B. Mary has a new work to do by telling others about Christ. (vv. 17-18)

She shouldn't be restraining Him because she has work to do for Him by going and telling the others! It would be selfish for her to keep Him for herself. And that's essentially what He'll tell the disciples just before He goes – the Great Commission to go and preach this good news of the resurrected King to the nations. In Matthew 28 He tells them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

But I think when Jesus says this, He's indicating gently to her that things are going to change. Her relationship with Him is going to be reshaped a little bit. His resurrection is different than Lazarus's because He's going back to the Father in Heaven and she's going to have to learn to cling to Him through the Holy Spirit's ministry soon. Even now, you won't find Jesus's body on this earth because He is glorified and in heaven. He is exalted there as Lord and Savior, seated at the right hand of the Father. He is the glorified King who reigns and will reign.

And that's the last image John has of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation – a book John also wrote. That's where we'll finish this series in chapter 1.

III. JOHN'S LAST VISION OF THE KING (Rev. 1:10-18)

The context of John in Revelation is that he has been exiled on this island of Patmos, just west of Turkey, for persecution, where he received a vision which becomes this book of Revelation. It says he was in the spirit (caught up to heaven) on the Lord's day (Sunday-the day He raised), and he hears this loud voice like the sound of a trumpet and in verse 12 he turns to see the voice that is speaking with him and it says, "having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in the furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength." And we don't have time to go into much depth here but we know from the context that this is Jesus Christ and He is getting ready to examine the churches and speak to the churches.

And much of this symbolic but at the same time it's also very real and very much the first thing I expect us to see and understand when we die – we'll see the resurrected King. And as soon as we see Him we'll understand what John meant by all of this. But look at what Christ's glorified appearance makes John do in verse 17, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man." This is the same John who spent 3 years with Jesus and used to lean on Jesus' bosom and saw the resurrected Christ on earth. But when He gets a glimpse of Jesus enthroned in heaven in full glory, it's a totally different story! He is falling on His face as a dead man. He is awestruck by Christ's awesome appearance and position. John's a very observant man and pointed out several things about His appearance that are symbolic.

- Christ's **robe** and **sash** resemble that of a Kingly judge and a victor.
- His **head** and **hair**, white as wool or snow, represent His purity and maturity.
- His **eyes** of fire represent His judgment – His omniscience, being able to see through everyone and everything and test it.
- His **feet** of burnished bronze represent the firmness of His judgment.
- His **voice** of many waters speaks with complete authority.
- His **mouth** is described as a two-edged sword. It is powerful and effective.
- His **face** is like the sun shining in all its strength. There is a visible radiance.

And it makes John tremble. But notice what Jesus says to him.

He says to John, "Do not be afraid [Fear not!]; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and **behold** [there's our word again!], I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Jesus says "Fear not!" I love that. If you've placed your faith in Jesus Christ you don't have to fear death. He has conquered it! He is alive forevermore. There is not a more relevant or needed message for this world today than to know that Jesus defeated death. In a world that has been reminded of how temporal and fragile life is, that is gripped by fear of death, how amazing is it to know that Jesus died for you so that you could live with Him forever. And that one day we too will be raised with Him to worship Him forever.

❖ We will worship this King for eternity.

Jesus' resurrection is an important theological factor that reminds us He doesn't just care about redeeming the spiritual. He cares about redeeming and restoring the physical part of us as well. We

too, will be resurrected. We too, will be glorified with Him. His 1st Coming as King opened up the spiritual restoration to His kingdom. But when He comes the 2nd time, He literally brings the Kingdom of Heaven to earth and after this earth is gone, we spend eternity with Him after that on a New Heaven and New Earth. No more tears or death or mourning or crying or pain. That's what He promises to those who believe in Him and love Him.

It seemed appropriate to close this with 1 Peter 1:8-9 – “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

ⁱ Chuck Swindoll, *A Resurrected Christ...A Transformed Life*, accessed 11 April 2020.
<https://www.insightforliving.ca/broadcast/easter/ES19D02>

ⁱⁱ David Thompson, *John 20:1-18*, www.texascornersbiblechurch.org, accessed 11 April 2020.