



**Sunday School Lesson for April 8, 2007 (Easter)  
Released on April 4, 2007**

**"Christ is Risen!"**

**Printed Text: Revelation 1:12a, 17-18; John 20:11-16**

**Background Scripture: Revelation: 1-9-20; John 20:1-18, 30, 31**

**Devotional Reading: Romans 14:7-12**

**Revelation 1:12a, 17, 18**

12a And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.

.....

**17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:**

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

**John 20:11-16, 30, 31**

**11 But 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.

### **Lesson Aims**

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Describe Mary Magdalene's role as a witness to the resurrection of Jesus.
2. Explain the importance of eyewitness testimony for the resurrection of Jesus.
3. Develop a personal faith-statement in Jesus, which is grounded in the biblical evidence for His resurrection.

### **Introduction**

The cross is the most recognizable religious symbol on earth. It appears as jewelry, in logos, on buildings, in cemeteries, and in countless other places. Some churches often use a cross with Jesus included, called a crucifix. Other churches prefer an empty cross, symbolizing that Jesus' work on the cross is finished. Still other churches favor another symbol: an image of the risen Christ over the cross. This reflects an understanding that while Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross is essential to our salvation, it is His resurrection that validates that work and completes His mission on earth.

This week's lesson is for Resurrection Sunday (Easter). This has been celebrated by the church since her earliest days as the central event in all of human history. We will explore what it means to be a witness to the risen Christ and how such witnesses have continuing significance for us today.

### **Lesson Background**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb is the keystone of the Christian faith. Everything stands or falls with the resurrection. If Christ did not rise on the third day, He is either a liar or a lunatic-but certainly not the Son of God. As Paul pointed out to the Corinthians, if Jesus' resurrection never happened, we would still be lost in our sins and without hope (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

In many of the sermons recorded in the book of Acts, the first preachers of the gospel were careful to proclaim the resurrection of Christ (2:24; 3:26; 5:30; 10:40; 13:37; 17:31). True gospel preaching always declares that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;...was buried, and...rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). That all of this happened "according to the scriptures" sounds another note of early Christian preaching, namely, that Christ fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

At the heart of all gospel preaching is Christ's sacrifice and His glorious resurrection on the third day.

## **Alive Forevermore (Revelation 1:12a; 17-18)**

### **1. Who was speaking to John in Revelation? How is He described (Revelation 1:12a)?**

In the Book of Revelation, John receives a series of signs. He received a vision of Jesus. In this vision, John does not see the Jesus he was expecting. Jesus was clothed in His glory.

At first, John only heard behind him "a great voice, as of a trumpet" (Rev. 1:10). The One speaking identified Himself as "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (v. 11), and commissioned John to write to the seven churches of Asia. Then John "turned to see the voice that spake with [him]" (v. 12) and was astonished at what he saw.

Since John had been with Jesus during His ministry, he probably expected to see Jesus as he last saw Him. The vision, however, showed the exalted Jesus (vs. 13-16). Reading this apocalyptic description of Jesus, we can understand why John responded as he did.

### **2. Where was John when he received this vision from the Lord? Why was he there?**

John lived at a time when Roman authorities were openly persecuting Christians, primarily because they would not acknowledge the emperor as divine. Consequently, John was exiled to "the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 9) Patmos was a small, rocky island in the Aegean Sea about seventy miles southwest of Ephesus. The Romans used it as a penal colony. "Apparently, the Asian authorities had interpreted his preaching as seditious and removed him from the mainland in an attempt to inhibit the growth of the early church" (Mounce).

How willing are we to preach the risen Christ today at home, work, school, and even out in the streets. Are we willing to tell the world about Jesus at any cost, or do we fear losing our livelihood, relationships, and even freedom. Christians have the best news in the world, and we should be willing to share that Good News with everyone.

### **3. What reassuring words did the Lord speak to John (v. 17)?**

Can you imagine going in front of a judge and having to go on trial, where your fate is in the judge's (or jury's) hands? For most people, this is a fearful experience, even if you never actually committed a crime. Multiply that fear by a million, and you have a glimpse of what John experienced. We're talking about Jesus as the highest authority in existence. He is the one who has all power in His hands.

John was so paralyzed with fear that he was motionless. John probably felt that he would not survive this experience (cf. Isa. 6:1-5; Dan. 10: 7-9). Jesus, however, laid his right hand on John and reassured the apostle with His familiar "Fear not" (Rev. 1:17). Literally, the Greek text says "Stop being afraid."

As the voice previously identified Himself (v. 10-11), so the Lord again declared, "I am the first and the last" (v. 17). This calls to mind the title "I AM," which the Lord used when He appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). We are also reminded of the many "I am" statements in John (6:35; 8:12, 56; 10:7, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). Indeed, Christ is the eternal One. It is Christ that created time; thus he is the beginning and the end.

#### **4. What keys does Christ have (v. 18)?**

When Satan influenced men to betray and murder the Son of God, he did not realize that Christ was dying for the sins of the world and would rise from the dead. Although those responsible for the crucifixion were in no way exonerated for their actions, it was nevertheless part of God's eternal plan for the redemption of mankind (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8).

Jesus tells John that He has the *keys* to unlock the strongholds of *death*. Through the resurrection of Christ, the power of death over the human race was forever broken! Christ alone has "the keys of hell and of death" (v.18).

As Christians, the worst thing that we will face on this earth is physical death. For the unbelievers, they face something worse than physical death. That is spiritual death, or permanent separation from God. The unbeliever's ultimate fate is torment in hell. Of course, it is the responsibility of the Christian to reach out to as many unbelievers as possible so that at least each unbeliever will have a choice to choose whether to accept Jesus or reject Him. Those who accept Him will receive life from Jesus.

#### **Appearance to Mary (John 20:11-14)**

#### **5. Which Mary is John 20 speaking of? What do we know about her?**

Mary Magdalene was one of the most devoted followers of Christ. Although she has often been identified as the sinful woman in Luke 7:37-39, this is an unfounded assumption. She was, however, delivered from demons (Mark 16:9). She was among a group of women who provided material support for Christ and His apostles (Luke 8:1-3). Mary also stood faithfully at the cross (John 19:25), even though most of the apostles forsook Him.

There is a saying in many churches that those whom the Lord has delivered from a lot of sin praise Him the most. This was certainly the case with Mary Magdalene.

#### **6. Why did Mary and the other women come to the tomb early on Sunday?**

Jesus had died Friday afternoon, and His body was placed in the tomb shortly thereafter. Since the Sabbath began at sundown, there was little time to prepare the body for burial. The Sabbath (Saturday), during which no work was permitted, was observed until sundown. This is why Mary and the other women who wanted to anoint the body waited until daybreak the "first day of the week" (v. 1) to perform the task of preparing the body. They wanted Jesus to have a proper burial because they loved Him.

## **7. Why was Mary weeping at the tomb of Christ? (v. 11-12)**

Mary and the women arrived at the tomb to prepare Jesus' body only to find that the stone had been moved (Luke 24:2). This stone was so big and heavy that it would take several men to move it. They rush in to see what happened, and they found the body missing. After witnessing the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene (and the other woman) ran to tell Peter and John, who immediately ran to the tomb to see for themselves (John 20:2-8). Once they saw that what the women had reported was true, they returned to the city. However, those who initially heard the report of the women were skeptical. Luke 24:11 says, "Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

Mary returned to the tomb, where she stood alone and wept (John 20:11). Looking at the sepulchre, Mary saw two angels (v. 12). These heavenly messengers brought news from God Almighty (Luke 2:9-14). Whenever angels appear, we know that there is an important issue at stake.

The angels questioned Mary concerning her sadness. They of course were not sad, for Christ had risen from the grave, forever defeating the powers of death.

Not realizing that Christ had risen from the dead, Mary stated the reason for her sadness: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (v. 13). Mary was upset because she thought that Jesus would not be given the proper burial He deserved.

## **Assurance of Jesus (John 20:15-16)**

## **8. When Christ appeared to Mary, who did she think He was? Why? (v. 15)**

While still weeping in the tomb, she turns around and sees a man behind her. This man was actually the risen Lord, but because of Mary's extreme grief, she did not recognize Him immediately. Tears might have blurred her vision, and she was not expecting to see Jesus alive.

The Lord asked Mary the reason for her sorrow and whom she was seeking. Mary's emotional state and tears clouding her vision could account for the fact that she assumed that the person she was addressing was the caretaker of the garden.

## **9. What is meant by "Rabboni" (v. 16)? Why did Mary address Jesus this way?**

Jesus wanted Mary to understand that the person that Mary was talking to was in fact Jesus, himself. Now He addressed Mary by her name. Instantly, she recognized the voice and saw that Jesus was standing in front of her. Upon recognizing the voice of her beloved Friend, Mary responded with the highly respectful "Rabboni," which means "Master" or "Teacher." She now saw that Jesus had risen from the dead. Now, Mary has a reason to rejoice instead of weep.

Notice that Mary does not find the living Christ because of her seeking (remember: she is looking for a dead Christ). Rather, *the living Christ finds her!* This has huge

significance for us today. The risen Jesus is alive still and is still seeking disciples. Jesus said He came to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). If we make ourselves available, call on His name, and follow the biblical plan of salvation, Jesus finds us and changes us.

We will never be the same when this happens. We can be transformed from death to life (John 5:24). Our great fear of death no longer paralyzes us, for "now is Christ risen from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:20) and "in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Even if we die, we will be raised to eternal life and "so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

### **10. Now that Jesus has risen, what is every Christian's mission?**

Those that knew Jesus best saw Jesus crucified, but they once again saw Jesus alive physically. Once they were convinced of this truth, they risked their lives to proclaim the risen Lord (Acts 5:27-33).

Two thousand years later, we still hear about the risen Christ. Our mission is to keep preaching and teaching about our risen Lord and lead others to Him so that they can receive salvation from Him. We are recipients of His love, so let's continue to spread that love by drawing others into the family of God. Jesus will be certainly pleased.

### **Conclusion**

Some years ago there was a series of documentary programs produced for television entitled The Long Search. The shows examined the origins and beliefs of the world's great religions, including several varieties of Christianity. The premise of the series was that religion consists of the human search for God. This search turns out differently for different searchers, thus producing diverging faiths. In this way of thinking, religion is largely the product of human imagination and experience.

Biblical faith, at its core, is decidedly different. The Bible is not the record of humanity's search for God. It is much more the story of God's search to redeem His lost children. Yet there are those who, like Mary, still search for a dead Christ. Some seek Him as only a historical figure from 2,000 years ago. They find an enigmatic figure, a person very difficult to explain using the standard criteria of history.

Others seek Christ only in the pages of tradition. They see Him as the originator of a great system of ethical teaching: selflessness and service. Still others seek a Christ that fits their predetermined needs. They want a Savior according to their expectations, not according to His terms and demands. Therefore they seem to serve a dead Christ. He makes no impact on what they do, how they behave, or their future plans.

The great news of Resurrection Sunday is that we serve a risen Savior. He was alive on that morning when Mary visited the tomb. He is alive today and still seeking those who would serve Him, love Him, and be His disciples. As believers we can walk daily with the confidence of Jesus' presence in our lives. He is not dead! Hallelujah, He is risen indeed!

## **Prayer**

Father, we thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to die for our sins on the cross. Jesus, we are thankful that you rose on the third day and paid our sin debt in full. Let us remember your sacrifice Jesus. We take it very seriously. Though salvation did not cost us anything, Father, it cost you your only Son. Let us rejoice and be thankful for what you did Jesus. We pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen.

## **Thought to Remember**

The risen Christ **still** offers eternal life.

## **Anticipating Next Week's Lesson**

Chapter 4 of Revelation is the next lesson. Since it is loaded with symbolism and strange beings, encourage your students to do some serious studying and praying for this lesson.

## **Lesson Summarized By**

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