

Exegetical Notes, John 20:10-18
“Resurrection”

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John 20:10-18

Verse 10

Then the disciples went back to their homes,

- The disciples did not understand that Jesus would rise from the dead, so the news that his body was missing left them confused.
- Because there were no answers to be found at the tomb they simply returned to the places where they were staying.

Verse 11-12

but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

- When the others had gone, Mary Magdalene remained at the tomb. She was crying (the Greek word means wailing, crying uncontrollably from deep grief) because she did not know that Jesus was alive but assumed his body had been taken out of the tomb by someone. She was distraught.
- She bent down and looked into the tomb of Jesus. Inside, she saw two angels guarding the place where Jesus’ body had been

Verse 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 put him.”

- At their request, Mary explains to the angels the reason for her sorrow. Someone has taken Jesus’ body somewhere and she does not know where they have put it.

Verse 14

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

- Mary stood up and turned around. Jesus was standing near her but, as she thought him to be dead, she did not recognize him.

Verse 15

“Woman,” he said. “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

- Like the angels, Jesus asked Mary why she was crying. He also asked her whom she sought.
- Assuming that Jesus was the gardener and that he had removed Jesus’ body from the tomb, Mary asked him to tell her where he had put the body. She promised to take it away.

Verse 16

Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

- At the sound of his voice speaking her name, Mary recognized Jesus. She greeted him as her teacher with deep surprise and respect.

Verse 17

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.’”

- Jesus told Mary not to cling to him because “he had not yet returned to the Father.” The phrase may mean that Mary should not touch him before his ascension to God. However, in verse 27, Jesus encourages Thomas to touch him and this would still have been before the ascension. More likely, Jesus is dealing with Mary’s emotional desire to hold him on earth rather than release him to God’s greater plan. Her lingering in the garden after the others had gone would indicate that she was having a great deal of trouble letting go of the earthly Jesus. For her own sake, she needed to let go so that the plan of God could be realized in her.
- Jesus gave her an assignment. She was to carry his message to his disciples. She was to be included in his ministry even after his ascension.

Verse 18

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

- Mary did as she was instructed.

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