

John 20:17-20 | Sunday January 12, 2025

It is hard to imagine the flood of emotions that the Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene experienced on the Sunday of the resurrection. The Sabbath had put a pause on events, now fear had set in not knowing if the Jewish leaders would pursue Jesus' followers or not. Mary Magdalene was desperate to tend to the body of Jesus and then she found the tomb open. She ran to tell the disciples. As she came back to the tomb she kept looking for the dead body of Jesus. Her emotions were charged with fear, desperation, grief, sadness, and maybe a wonder if something else had happened. Then everything changed when Jesus said her name.

John 20:14-20 ESV

(14) Having said this, she turned around **and saw Jesus standing**, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

(15) 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."

(16) Jesus said to her, "**Mary.**" She turned and said to Him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

(17) Jesus said to her, "**Do not cling to Me**, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.'"

(18) Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that He had said these things to her.

(19) On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

(20) When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Jesus stood standing talking to Mary as she was looking for where He had been laid. She was overwhelmed when she realized it was Jesus. He is alive! She reached out for Him but then He gives her a very interesting warning, "**Do not cling to Me.**" Mary is the first person to see the risen savior. It makes sense that in her desperation she would fall down in worship and cling to Jesus. **The problem with this translation though is this Greek word typically means, to touch, make close contact.** In comparison look at what Jesus says, after His interaction with Mary, to another group of women. These are the women that Mary started out with, but she left them to run to the disciples.

Matthew 28:9-10 ESV

(9) And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" **And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.**

(10) Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

These women are overwhelmed that Jesus is risen and they take hold of Him. This word is much more aggressive, and means **to take control of someone or something, seize.** Also notice that **Jesus does not tell them to stop.** He encourages them and gives them the instructions to go

and tell the disciples. Which makes Jesus' interaction with Mary all the more interesting.

John 20:17 NET (New English Translation)

(17) Jesus replied, “**Do not touch Me**, for I have not yet ascended to My Father. Go to My brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’”

If this is how the passage is supposed to read, Jesus telling Mary not to touch Him, then something unique is happening. Because it is clear that within the same day Jesus will be encouraging people to touch Him.

Luke 24:37-39 ESV

(37) But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.
(38) And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?
(39) See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. **Touch Me, and see.** For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Jesus goes out of His way to show that He is not simply a spirit, or some type of ghost. He is in a resurrected body, that can be touched. So why tell Mary not to touch Him? **Jesus give Mary the reason.**

John 20:17 NET (New English Translation)

(17) Jesus replied, “Do not touch Me, **for I have not yet ascended to My Father.** Go to My brothers and tell them, ‘**I am ascending to My Father** and your Father, to My God and your God.’”

Jesus tells Mary not to touch Him because He has not yet ascended to His Father. He goes on to tell her that He is ascending to His Father. I personally believe He is in the very act right then. Which explains why everyone after this can touch Him, He has ascended at that point. To make sense of why Jesus was ascending we need to understand where He went when He died. His physical body was taken to the tomb by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, but where did the soul of Jesus go?

Luke 23:43 ESV

(43) And He said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me **in paradise.**”

Jesus promised the thief on the cross that they would be in paradise together once they died. **What is important to realize is that paradise was not the same place as heaven. No Old Testament believer had gone to heaven yet, because the sin payment had not been given.** They were looking forward to it, waiting for the messiah. So God set up a temporary place for the dead until the blood payment was given.

Ephesians 4:7-10 ESV

(7) But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.
(8) Therefore it says, “When **He ascended on high He led a host of captives**, and He gave gifts to men.”
(9) (In saying, “He ascended,” **what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?**
(10) He who **descended** is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

Notice it says that Jesus descended into the lower regions of the earth. So when Jesus physically died **He descended into paradise**. This place of the dead, had two sides to it. Paradise which is also called Abraham's bosom was where believers went. Then there was Hades where those who rejected a future messiah went.

Luke 16:19-23 ESV

- (19) "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.
(20) And at his gate was laid a poor man **named Lazarus**, covered with sores,
(21) who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.
(22) The poor man died and was **carried by the angels to Abraham's side**. The rich man also died and was buried,
(23) and **in Hades, being in torment**, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.
(24) **And he called out, ...**

This is much more than a parable because proper names are never used in parables. When Lazarus who was a believer died He descended into paradise. The rich man descended into Hades and was in torment. The two sides could see each other and call out to each other but **there was no moving from one side to the other**. This is where Jesus descended to, Abraham's side, paradise. He had a very important message to share.

1 Peter 3:18-19 NAS95

- (18) For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;
(19) **in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,**

Jesus made a proclamation when He descended. I think He declared what He had accomplished. The believers on the paradise side, rejoiced because He was the one they were waiting for. This proclamation sealed the rejection of those on the Hades side. No one transferred sides, this proclamation confirmed why they were on the various sides. This is where Jesus went from the cross and it is where He left on Resurrection Sunday. **Then when He left paradise He emptied it out**. This is what Ephesians 4:8 meant by **"When He ascended on high He led a host of captives."** Those Old Testament believers could now go to heaven. Jesus had died on the cross. So when He left paradise He took them with Him, only leaving those on the Hades side. He ascended from paradise, and put on His resurrected body, and was headed to ascend to the Father. This is the context of what He tells Mary.

John 20:17 NET (New English Translation)

- (17) Jesus replied, "Do not touch Me, **for I have not yet ascended to My Father**. Go to My brothers and tell them, **'I am ascending to My Father** and your Father, to My God and your God.'"

Jesus was ascending to the Father, with the Old Testament saints. He conquered the grave and sin had been paid for perfectly on the cross. Now was the time to go to the Father and present what He had accomplished.

Hebrews 9:11-12 NLT

(11) So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. **He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven**, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world.

(12) **With His own blood**—not the blood of goats and calves—He entered the Most Holy Place once for all time **and secured our redemption forever**.

He ascended to Heaven and entered the perfect heavenly tabernacle that was not made by hands. **He presented the blood payment**. He secured our redemption forever. It is so unfortunate that teaching about paradise/ Abrahams' bosom is viewed as complicated. Without it, then salvation of the Old Testament because a lot harder to understand. These Old Testament saints were waiting for Jesus, to make the payment of His blood.

They were waiting for Him to be resurrected. He was the first one. In fact His resurrection happening on Sunday had a lot of significance.

Leviticus 23:10-11 ESV

(10) "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring **the sheaf of the firstfruits** of your harvest to the priest,

(11) and he shall **wave the sheaf before the LORD**, so that you may be accepted. **On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it**.

The day after the Passover started the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was a seven day feast and a special offering was to be given **on the day after the Sabbath**. Israel was to present the first fruits of the harvest, and the priest would wave them up as an offering to God. Israel was to give God the first fruits. Jesus is the first fruit of the Resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 ESV

(20) But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**.

(21) For as by a man came death, by a Man has come also **the resurrection of the dead**.

(22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

(23) **But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits**, then at His coming those who belong to Christ.

Jesus was resurrected on the day of the first fruit offering. Resurrection Sunday, was the day after the sabbath, during the feast of unleavened bread. **He was the first one resurrected and He presented Himself to God the Father**. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice and offering on so many different levels. It is truly amazing how He fulfilled it all.

John 20:18-19 ESV

(18) Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "**I have seen the Lord**"—and that He had said these things to her.

(19) On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, **the doors being locked** where the disciples were **for fear of the Jews**, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Mary went back to the disciples and gave them the tremendous news she had seen Jesus. It was not just an empty tomb, but He is resurrected. I find it so interesting that even with this news there is **still a lot of fear in the disciples**. That evening they met together with all the doors locked.

Notice it is doors plural. Jesus in His resurrected body is able to appear without the doors ever opening.

Looking at the details about the resurrected body of Jesus gives us clues as to what our resurrected bodies will be like. He could be touched (Luke 24:39), still had His scars (v.20), yet could camouflage His appearance (Luke 24:16), could eat (Luke 24:43), was not bound by the laws of physics (v.19).

1 Corinthians 15:35-37; 42-44 ESV

(35) But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? **With what kind of body do they come?”**

(36) You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life **unless it dies.**

(37) And what you sow **is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel**, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

(42) So is it with the resurrection of the dead. **What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.**

(43) It is sown in **dishonor**; it is raised **in glory**. It is sown in **weakness**; it is raised in **power**.

(44) It is sown a **natural body**; it is raised a **spiritual body**. **If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.**

The natural body like a seed that must die, in order to take on the perfect resurrected body. The comparison is amazing. This body is full of dishonor, and weak and our resurrected body has glory and power. It is a spiritual body, that can eat, be recognized beyond physical appearances, and go past locked doors. **Seeing Jesus’ resurrected body should make us long to be with Him and have our resurrected bodies.**

2 Corinthians 5:1-4 ESV

(1) For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, **eternal in the heavens.**

(2) **For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,**

(3) if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.

(4) For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, **so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.**

This tent of a body is wearing out and temporary. We groan in it. These bodies keep finding new and creative ways to wear out. Our resurrected bodies, are eternal, a building that will not wear out. The mortal must be swallowed up by life! **Jesus was showing His disciples what it meant to be swallowed up by life.**

John 20:19-20 ESV

(19) On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, **“Peace be with you.”**

(20) When He had said this, **He showed them His hands and His side.** Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

The disciples who had abandoned Him and fled, were greeted by an amazing first word from Jesus, **Peace**. There is no chastisement or correction. His disciples can fully experience peace, because of what He has accomplished. He proves this by showing them His scars. **They are the reason we can have peace.**

Isaiah 53:5 ESV

(5) But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; **upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.**
