

# STUDY GUIDE — EASTER 2010

“STAINED — BEAUTIFUL IN CHRIST” JOHN 20:11-18

## John 20:11-18

Now 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.

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

He asked her, “Woman, 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.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

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

Jesus said “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

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.

## Historical Fact

Josh McDowell says this about the resurrection:

“For centuries many of the world's distinguished philosophers have assaulted Christianity as being irrational, superstitious and absurd. Many have chosen simply to ignore the central issue of the resurrection. Others have tried to explain it away through various theories. But the historical evidence just can't be discounted.

“A student at the University of Uruguay said to me, ‘Professor McDowell, why can't you refute Christianity?’

“For a simple reason,” I answered. ‘I am not able to explain away an event in history -- the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’”

When considering the evidence, the eyewitness accounts are overwhelming. All the followers of Jesus give witness to the appearances of Jesus after his death. The scriptures list at least 10 separate occasions of Jesus' resurrected glory.

He appears in both physical and spiritual form, proving that the empty tomb of Easter morning is not just a result of grave robbers. This evidence is even more convincing when we consider that the tomb of Jesus was guarded by soldiers to prevent such abduction.

But the most compelling argument comes from the apostle Paul, who was the most aggressive and violent opponent of Christianity in the first century. Paul is converted as he encounters the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. The apostle Paul further reminds us that Jesus also appeared at one time to over 500 witnesses.

The historical fact remains: Jesus was raised from the dead. His victory over death is the ultimate break in history, where God proves that there is no defeat outside of God's life-giving power. Not even death can stand in the way of God's purposes for God's creation.

## The Resurrection of Jesus

The account of the empty tomb and the appearance of the risen Christ to his disciples has many similarities to the tradition recounted in Luke. John has his own distinctive emphases and details. The unique differences of the four gospels reflect the confused joy they must have experienced as they met the unexpected resurrected Christ. The small differences in detail do not diminish the unqualified affirmation – “Jesus is alive!”

20:1-18 The Empty Tomb. In each of the other gospels, several women come to the tomb to complete the preparation of the body for burial. In John's account, only Mary Magdalene is mentioned. This probably is an indication that John had direct contact with Mary and heard her account first hand.

20:2-10. These verses seem to be an expression

(or perhaps correction) of the tradition in Luke 24:11 about the disciples' reaction to the report of the empty tomb. Peter and the “beloved disciple” hasten to verify the testimony. Though they do not see Jesus, they are convinced. The beloved disciple (most likely John, the writer of this gospel), who actually arrives first at the tomb, becomes a representative of all believers. It is interesting to note that Peter is the first to see, but the beloved disciple is the first to see and believe.

20:11-18. Verse 11 takes us back to Mary Magdalene at the tomb, as though verses 2-10 were an interruption. She now sees the two angels (Luke 24:4; only one in Mark 16:5; Matthew 28:2-3), but before they deliver any message, Jesus himself appears. The vision is real, but she cannot grasp him, for the truth of his resurrection is not yet fully revealed. She can only report that she has seen him and he has spoken to her.

## DAILY READINGS

Please note: Each of these passages focus on the resurrection of Jesus. Read these passages carefully each day. Examine your faith and dependence on God. What areas of your life need the resurrected presence of Christ? The study guide readings allow us to dig deeper.

**Monday, April 5. Read Matthew 28** — This is Matthew's account of the resurrection of Jesus. It begins with the declaration of the angels that Jesus had risen from the dead. He then appears to them with the instructions for the disciples to meet Him in Galilee. It is in Galilee that Jesus teaches them and gives them the great commission to “go make disciples of all nations.” How have you followed the words of Jesus to his disciples?

**Tuesday, April 6. Read Mark 16** — Mark includes the shortest version of the resurrection of Jesus. This account, like Matthew, includes the declaration of the angels and His appearance to disciples in Galilee. Mark, not unlike Matthew, includes the Jesus sending out his disciples with the “sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.” If you were to measure your life with Christ on a scale of 1 to 10, what number would you give yourself? If you are not already a 10, what one thing can you do this week to grow closer to Christ?

**Wednesday, April 7. Read Luke 24** — In Luke's account, he expands the resurrection appearances of Jesus. He reports the empty tomb with the appearance of the angels and the affirmation that Jesus is alive. Luke also reports Jesus' appearance to a man named Cleopas and another unidentified person on the road to Emmaus. At first they do not recognize Jesus, but are eager to tell Him of the events of the empty tomb. When Jesus eats with them, breaking bread, their eyes are opened and they realize it is Jesus the Christ. Luke also includes Jesus' appearing to the disciples in Jerusalem, as well as a final appearance to give them final instructions similar to the words from Matthew. Luke's testimony greatly expands the accounts of Matthew and Mark. Luke wants us to understand that Jesus appeared to more than just the disciples, but also to many others who believed. Have there been times in your life when you have experienced the resurrected Christ? Like Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus, we often feel our “hearts burning with us” when we hear the words of Christ and experience His presence.

**Thursday, April 8. Read John 20** — John's account is much like Luke's. In this account, John expands the conversation between Mary Magdalene and Jesus. He also includes the account of Thomas's doubts and then his belief when he see Jesus for himself. In this account, Jesus responds to Thomas with these words, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” These are powerful words for us in the 21st century – **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.** Have you experienced that blessing or is there still doubt in your heart? On this Thursday after Easter, pray that God will bless even your doubts as you strive to follow Christ.

**Friday, April 9. Read John 21** — One of the most touching moments in the Bible is John's story about Jesus' appearance to the disciples in Galilee. While the other gospels give us some details about the instructions of Jesus, John goes into great detail of how Jesus appears to the disciples and how he restores Peter back into relationship, even after Peter had denied him three times on the night of Jesus' arrest. Have there been times in your life when you needed to be restored into relationship with Christ? Have you denied Jesus or betrayed Him? This story in John reminds us that God is about the business of restoring us into full relationship with him through Christ. There is nothing God can't do.