Exploring the Bible—Gospel of John (21)

The Resurrection of Christ

**Scripture Reading:**

1 Now on the first day of the week, Mary the Magdalene came early to the tomb while it was yet dark and saw the stone taken away from the tomb. 2 She ran therefore 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. 3 Peter therefore went forth, as well as the other disciple, and came to the tomb. 4 And the two ran together, yet the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came first to the tomb. 5 And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there; however, he did not enter. 6 Then Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beheld the linen cloths lying there 7 And the handkerchief which had been over His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in one place apart. 8 At that time therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, entered, and he saw and believed; 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He had to rise from the dead. 10 The disciples therefore went away again to their own home. 11 But Mary stood outside at the tomb weeping. Then as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb 12 And beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 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. 14 When she said these things, she turned backward and beheld Jesus standing there, yet she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? She, supposing that He was the gardener, 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 Hebrew, Rabboni! (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God. 18 Mary the Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that He had said these things to her. (John 20:1-18)

**Ministry Reading:**

John 20 is a chapter about the Lord’s resurrection. The Lord’s death was for His resurrection. In 12:24 He said that He was the grain of wheat which would fall into the ground and die that it might be released to impart its life into many other grains. In other words, He had to die that He might rise up and become many grains. This seems strange and mysterious to the human mind. The human mind has never entertained the thought that there is such a thing as resurrection following death. Even Satan thought that death would put an end to the Lord Jesus. To Satan, death was the end. But to the Lord, death was not the end; it was the pathway for Him to enter into resurrection. Thus, to the Lord, death was not a defeat but a way to victory. By being put into death, He gained the victory because death became a door and an entrance into resurrection. Without death, He never could have produced the church. Without death, He never could have regenerated us to be the members of His Body. Therefore, everything was dependent upon the Lord’s death which led into resurrection.

The Lord resurrected “on the first day of the week” (20:1). The resurrection of the Lord was a new start opening the way to a new generation and a new age. This is why the Lord resurrected “on the first day of the week.” This day is the greatest day in the Bible. That it is called “the first day of the week” means that it is a new beginning. A week is a period of seven days, and the first day denotes a new start. In the old creation there were seven days. God created for six days and rested on the seventh. These seven days were the generation of the old creation. By the resurrection of the Lord Jesus another generation was newly started. In other words, by the resurrection of the Lord, the old creation has passed away and a new creation has begun; the old generation is over and the new generation has started. Thus, the first day of another week signifies the beginning of a new creation, a new generation, and a new age.

Although the Lord’s resurrection had been accomplished, the discovery of it required the seeking of His disciples. The discovery of His resurrection was made by the loving seekers of the Lord Jesus. John chapter twenty shows the kind of person who will realize the Lord’s resurrection, the kind of person to whom the vision of His resurrection can be disclosed. How can we have the revelation of the Lord’s resurrection? There is such a wonderful and mysterious fact as the Lord’s resurrection accomplished in this universe. But how can we know it? How can it be revealed to us? How can we have this vision? Only by loving the Lord and seeking Him.

Why is it that when you come to a meeting you have nothing to minister or to testify about? It is simply because you have not made the discovery and lack the revelation. Look at Mary. What did she do after she made this discovery? She ran to the disciples to tell them something new. When you meet the Lord in the morning and make a new discovery about Him, you will surely come to the evening meeting and burst out with something to tell us.

This shows us a picture of how to seek the Lord. The first one who saw the tomb was Mary, and the first person who entered into the tomb was Peter. Here the brothers are really the brothers because they are clearer in the mind and find it easier to believe the fact than the sisters do. The two brothers saw the empty tomb, the linen cloths, and the napkin, and were very clear that the Lord must have been resurrected. Although they saw the fact, realized it, and believed in it objectively, they did not have the experience subjectively. After being satisfied with the objective fact, they left the tomb. However, Mary, the sister, lingered, for she was still waiting, looking, and expecting. It was her additional seeking that gained the experience of the Lord’s resurrection. Since the Lord revealed Himself to her, she not only received the fact but also the experience. She was the first to experience the resurrected Lord.

Here we see a picture disclosing the two sides related to the Lord—the fact and the experience. You may believe in the fact but not have the experience. Peter and John realized and believed in the fact, but they lacked the experience of the Lord’s resurrection. Mary had both the fact and the experience. For example, you may have the fact of the Lord’s crucifixion but fail to experience the cross. In the same principle, you may have the fact of the Lord’s resurrection but fail to experience the resurrected Lord. We need both the fact and the experience. Mary firstly saw the revelation of the fact, but she was not satisfied merely with the fact. She went further and received the experience of the resurrected Lord.

In 20:17 the Lord Jesus said to Mary, “Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.” The Lord Jesus told Mary, “Go to My brothers.” Here we come to one of the greatest points in the Gospel of John, a point which not many Christians have seen clearly. Prior to His resurrection, the Lord never called His disciples “brothers.” The most intimate term He used before that time was “friends.” In 15:14 and 15 He said, “You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his lord is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things which I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” But now, after His resurrection, His “friends” have become His “brothers.” Through His resurrection, His disciples have been regenerated (1 Pet. 1:3) with the divine life released by His life-imparting death, as indicated in 12:24. All His disciples were regenerated in His resurrection. Remember that on the cross the Lord told His mother to take His disciple John as her son, and that He told His disciple to take her as his mother (19:26-27). On the day of His resurrection, the Lord’s word on the cross was fulfilled. At that time, John became a brother to the Lord; hence, the Lord’s mother became his mother.

By the resurrection of Christ, the disciples became the brothers of the Lord because they now had the same life as the Lord. The Lord regenerated them by His resurrection, and thus they were no longer merely disciples and friends but also His brothers. The Lord was the one grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died and grew up in resurrection to bring forth many grains for the producing of the loaf which is His Body (1 Cor. 10:17). Before His death, He was only one, unique grain. But after His resurrection that one, unique grain became the many grains. This is the multiplication of life through the death and resurrection of Christ.

Question for Discussion: Share with one another your knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Discuss what it means to us in our experience.

Reference: Life-Study of John, Msg. 44-45