

## That You May Continue to Believe...



### AN EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## The Risen Lord John 20:1-31

The gloominess of that Sabbath settled on their downtrodden souls like sundown on someone who is blind. It only made the darkness darker. Yes, it was the Sabbath. It was the God-given blessed day of rest but they did not have the strength to rest. Their hearts were heaving, panting, wrestling with unrelenting grief. To make things worse, they were stuck. They were a long way from Galilee and they were bound by the traveling restrictions of the Sabbath to sit and to wait. And that is what they did. They sat and they waited and they grieved. They wept when they tried their prayers. They closed their eyes but they didn't sleep. When they lay upon their pallets, they heard soldiers and temple police in every passing footstep. They had not even been able to bring themselves to light the Sabbath candles. But then there was nothing that they particularly wanted to see. They had seen enough.

What they really wanted was to go home. They wanted the Sabbath and the evening that followed it to be over. They wanted to go back to Galilee. They wanted out of this accursed city, the city of God that kills God's prophets. They wanted to get back to the rolling hills and to the green of Galilee. But they were

stuck and so they waited.

, on Saturday evening when the sun began to set and the Sabbath came to a close, the women began to get up and get busy trying to occupy their minds with activity to assuage their grief. Mark tells us that when the Sabbath came to close, they decided to go out and buy some spices to prepare to anoint Jesus' body the next morning at daybreak.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Mark 16:1**...When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

Luke tells us that they brought the spices back to where they were staying and carefully prepared them as a token of their continuing devotion and love for Jesus.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 23:56**...When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

All three of the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that these Galilean women went to the tomb early on Sunday morning, just as dawn broke, to apply additional spices and perfumes to our Lord's body. Let's look at their accounts together.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 28:1**...Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 24:1**...But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the

tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Mark 16:1**...When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

Now let's look at John's account.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:1**... Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

Do you notice any differences? Now the first thing I want you to notice is that the other gospels seem to disagree with John's account. Now, I don't think for a minute that they actually disagree but they certainly read differently. Let me see if I can explain what I mean. The other accounts have more than one woman going to the tomb. John seems to have only Mary. The other accounts seem to have all the women going at sunrise while John seems to have Mary going before sunrise. Now, how would you resolve that conflict and still remain a person who believes in the infallibility of Scripture? Listen to Calvin.

The discrepancy as to the *time* may be easily solved. When John says that they came before daybreak, we must understand, that they had set out on their journey during the darkness of the night; that, before they came to the sepulcher, the day had dawned;<sup>1</sup>

Do you see what Calvin is saying? He is saying that she started out when it was dark and sunrise was breaking as she moved toward the tomb. I think that works especially since she *could* see that the stone had been removed.

The other aspect that supports that view is the tense of the verbs. You see John tells this story in the present tense. He is not showing us the account that had happened; he is showing us rather the account as it happens. He is striving to be very vivid. The NIV, and for that matter the ESV, translates everything as past tense. But the actual Greek is all present tense. John wants us to walk along with her. I have retranslated the passage to help you get a sense of that. Listen to this...

<sup>TRB</sup> **John 20:1...** On day one <sup>2</sup> of the new week, Mary Magdalene is coming to the tomb, it's very early; it's still dark (now, he uses the word "**dark**" here not the word "night") and she is seeing that the stone had been taken away (ἠρμμένον) from the tomb. So, she is running and is coming to Peter and is saying...

Do you see what I mean about vividness? It obviously covers a significant period of time. Of course, we don't switch tenses like that when we write in English. We don't combine the past tense and the present tense together in the same paragraph, at least not purposely. But the ancients did.

Now, let me say one more thing here. John may have been implying something else by using the word "darkness". You know he sometimes let words function ambiguously. That is, he sometimes chose words that could mean two things at once. Such usage is often symbolic.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 10:22...**At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,<sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.

Here the word "winter" communicates not just the season but also the reception Jesus received from the Pharisees and scribes.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 13:30**...So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

Here the word “night” communicates not just the time of day but also the darkness of Judas is about to do.

Now, I think the same thing is happening here with the word “**dark**”. I think the point is that “understanding” of the resurrection has not yet dawned upon them. Because they don’t “understand” what has happened they are in the dark and it’s not until you get down to verse 8 that the “light” of understanding ever broke in on any of their dull hearts. John says there, “**Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.**”

Now, there is one other thing I want you to notice in this passage is the word used to describe the stone which had been removed from the tomb. I mention it because the word is very different in John than the word used in the other gospels. The other gospels use a word that means “rolled away” or at least “rolled.”

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 28:2**...Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone (ἀποκεκύλισται) and sat on it.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Mark 16:2**...And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" <sup>4</sup> And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back (ἀποκεκύλισται)--it was very large..

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 24:2**...And they found the stone rolled away (*ἀποκεκλισμένον*) from the tomb,

John's word means, "**taken away**" or "**lifted up**". It is the same word used by him when he describes the unfruitful branches in John 15. It is the same word Jesus used when He asked the Father not to take His disciples out of the world but to protect them. The implication is that the stone was lifted up and removed. If it were the kind of stone that rested in a track, like many scholars think, it would have been rolled completely out of its track and cast aside. <sup>3</sup> Of course, that would fit very well with Matthews's account where it says, "an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it." You see what we have here, I think, is a scene to stir the heart and mind.<sup>4</sup> The thing that seems to be emphasized is not just resurrection but the sheer power and violence of His victory over death. In John, the stone is not just rolled away, it's taken up and cast aside like a pebble.<sup>5</sup>

**Verse two reads...**

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:2**...So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "**They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.**"

Mary raced off to find Peter and John.<sup>6</sup> When she found them she lamented, "**They have taken the Lord out of the tomb...**" It is not clear whether she thought it the work of grave robbers or of the chief priests and scribes. But look what she says in the second half of the verse, "**...we don't know where they have put him!**"

That tells you almost certainly, that Mary was not alone. You see, and this is very clear in Greek, it's not **"I don't know."** Rather, its **"we don't know"**. That means Mary was clearly with someone else. Of course, the way it is phrased leads to the question, **"Why would John only mention her? Why would he narrow his focus to one woman out of three or four women?"** I'll try to answer that question as we move further down in the text. Anyway, Mary's words panicked Peter and John. They started off toward the tomb running just like Mary had.

Look at verse 3.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:3...** So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.

I take it that John was younger than Peter and thus faster on foot. <sup>7</sup> Still, John lacked Peter's boldness. He stopped at the entrance of the tomb and after bending over and peering into the tomb (most of the time the openings to such hand-hewn tombs were short, maybe three feet high) saw the linen strips lying there. Peter didn't stop, however, at the door of the tomb. He rushed straight in perhaps on hands and knees. When he did, he noticed the strips of linen lying together in their place and towel used to cover Jesus' face rolled up (folded up) in a separate place.

Now, the word used to describe the linen strips in the tomb is a very specialized

word.<sup>8</sup> It means “strips of linen” something like an Ace Bandage.<sup>9</sup> The other word that is used to describe the cloth about His face is borrowed from Latin and means something like handkerchief or towel. It often referred to a “**sweat rag**.” I think in Texas, we would call it a “**bandanna**”.<sup>10</sup> It was used to cover the head, or perhaps to hold the jaw of the dead person shut. Some Catholic scholars have tried to alter the meaning of that word and make it mean something like “shroud”. In fact, while I preparing for this lesson I found a really interesting quote in Calvin. Now, as you listen to his frustration see if you can figure out what he is referring to.

“When the Evangelist says, that a napkin was wrapped about his head, *he refutes those* who pretend that the whole body was sewed up in one linen garment, which they hold out to the *poor* populace, calling it “the holy *shroud*”...To this *they have* added *the* fabulous miracle, which they have contrived, to this effect, that the likeness of Christ’s body continued to be visible in the linen cloth. I appeal to you, if such a miracle had been wrought, would nothing have been said about it by the Evangelist, who is so careful to relate *even the unimportant things?*”<sup>11</sup> (Edited)

Now, there is a great deal of speculation concerning what those strips of linen looked like. Some commentators think Jesus’ body just passed through the strips like He will later pass through the doors of the room where the disciples locked away. Those that think that speculate that there was something like an empty shell formed by the strips of linen that more or less just caved in when the His body left it.<sup>12</sup> They speculate that you could tell the strips were empty but that you could also still see the form of the body. Of course, all of that is just that, speculation. What does seem to be true is that tomb was orderly.<sup>13</sup> The strips were in their place, perhaps on the shelf or niche where the body had lain. The cloth that covered the face was rolled up (folded up) and in a separate place and

the point of all that is that it did not appear that grave robbers had taken the body. Actually, if they had they would have taken the body, the strips of linen and the valuable spices attached to both.

Verse 8 tells us that after Peter had entered the tomb the other disciple, whom I believe to be John, entered the tomb but more importantly he tells us that something happened when he saw what was there. Let's read verse 8.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:8**...Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;

Now let me ask you a question, "**Believed what?**" The answer almost certainly has to be that he believed that Jesus had risen from the dead or that Jesus was alive. I say that because of verse 9.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:9**...for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

You see the point is John believed (apparently Peter did not believe until later) and he believed simply because of the visible evidence not because He had made any connection to the Old Testament promises. Peter saw more after he entered than John did in his first glance, but John saw into the meaning of it all better than Peter. Peter had more sight, John more insight. John was the first to believe that Jesus was risen from the tomb even before he saw him.<sup>14</sup>

That idea seems to be supported by Luke 24:12.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 24:12**...But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

Anyway, as soon as they saw the body was not at the tomb and they saw what the arrangement of the wrappings, Peter and John left. Look at verse 10.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:10**...Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Now, of course, they did not go home. The Greek say they returned “to themselves” which the ESV translates homes. They returned to where they had been staying, perhaps with friends. They didn’t go home. They both lived in Galilee.<sup>15</sup> Anyway, Peter and John left and when they did they left Mary alone at the tomb. Look at verse 11.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:11**...But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb.

The word used to describe Mary’s crying here is that of uncontrolled sobbing or wailing.<sup>16</sup> It is the exact same word the Septuagint uses to describe David weeping for he and Bathsheba’s dead baby. As she was crying and the text is clear about this, she just kept on crying, she leaned down and looked into the tomb and saw two angels dressed in white. Look at verse 12.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:12**...And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

Now, I want you to understand what this text is saying. Mary was standing there as Peter and John went into the tomb. She kept standing there even as they left.

During that time, she was weeping uncontrollably. As she wept, she leaned down and looked into the tomb and there were two angels, one at the foot and the other at the head of where Jesus' body had lain. Do you see what I mean? They weren't there and then they were there. Peter and John did not see them. Only Mary saw them. Now the thing I want you to notice is that Mary seems to take no note whatsoever of the miracle that has just taken place. She is not shocked or frightened or even curious about whom these men might be. She doesn't even speak to them. Finally after a pause, they initiate the conversation with a question.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:13...**They said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping?**" She said to them, "**They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.**"

Now, I want you to notice that her answer to the two angels is different than what she had said to the disciples early on. To the disciples, she had said, "**They have taken *the* Lord away and *we* don't know where they have put Him.**" Here she says, "**They have taken *my* Lord away and *I* don't know where they have put Him.**"<sup>18</sup>

Now there is some hint in the text that the angels are doing something to cause her to turn and look behind her. They don't answer her question; perhaps, they nod or even point. I wonder if perhaps she thought they were referring her to the person that moved the body.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:14...**Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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."**

I love the question the Lord Jesus asks her. He is always so wise and tender and compassionate. He doesn't ask, **"What are looking for?"** Instead He asks, **"Who are you looking for?"**

Now, I want you to notice the lack of timidity on Mary's part. She is fearless when it comes to Jesus. She says and I want you to think about the potential danger of saying something like this, **"Look if you are the one that took him away, tell me where you put him and I will go and get him."**

Now, brothers and sisters, that is the voice of love speaking not logic. She was not thinking about how she was going to be able to manage moving a dead body. She wasn't thinking about the fact that He might already be undergoing decay. She was thinking about what He had done for her and how much she loved Him.

Now up until this point she had not recognized Jesus. It isn't clear whether she was so grief stricken that tears blurred her vision or if Jesus somehow veiled her recognition of him like He did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke's gospel. What is clear is that she had not recognized Him up until this point. And then He spoke. I love verse 16.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:16...**Jesus said to her, **"Mary."** She turned and said to him in Aramaic, **"Rabboni!"** (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> 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.'"**

Now you don't have to be a literary expert to figure out what happened between verse 16 and verse 17. In fact, Matthew tells us what happened.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 28:9**...And behold, Jesus met them and said, "**Greetings!**" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

The only question really is what Jesus meant when He said, "**Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.**"

I used to think that He was saying I am going to ascend to the Father right now so do not touch Me and that is, of course, the way the KJV translates the passage. I used to think that perhaps He had some other thing to accomplish in the presence of the Father that meant that He could not be delayed or defiled by Mary.<sup>19</sup> But now I don't think that was His point at all. I think rather the point is that there is much to do. I think the point is that there will be time for the expression of all these affections. I think He is saying, "**I am not yet returning...so go and do so and so.**"<sup>20</sup>

Now, I want you to look at what it is that He wanted her to do. He wanted her to go and tell His brothers that He was returning to His Father and their Father, His God and their God. Now the emphasis is not on the fact that He is returning but rather on the fact that they are now in a new relationship with the Father. Still, He didn't say our Father and our God. He says my Father and your Father, my God and your God. I really like the way Lightfoot says it:

The disciples are never to forget that His relationship to the Father is by nature and right while theirs is by adoption and grace.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, I want you to see what Mary thought He meant when He referred to His “brothers”. Now the term he uses is the term for “biological brothers”. But that is not where Mary goes. Look at verse 18.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:18**...Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "**I have seen the Lord**"--and that he had said these things to her.

Now before I move on I have to say a word about Mary Magdalene and the fact that she was the first person to whom the Lord revealed Himself after the resurrection. I think there is extraordinary significance that Jesus first revealed Himself to a woman and not to a man. I also think that it speaks volumes about the manner in which Jesus views the genuine heartfelt love that she had for Him. Now I am not talking about any of this modern tripe about erotic love or anything like that. She viewed Him as her Lord and her teacher because He had delivered her from the depths of sin and oppression. She loved Him for that and she loved Him with an unbounded affection that was not deterred by fear or danger. I think if I were a woman, I would keep that in mind. I know that there are biblical restrictions on the kinds of ministry in which women can engage but let me say this there is no restriction on the opportunities for a godly woman to express her love and affection for those things Jesus has wrought in her life. There is no limit to the mercy the Lord Jesus has poured out on women. I know you know that's true.

Every time I think of Mary Magdalene, I think of a story that Dr. McGee used to tell. He said that there was a very godly, elderly woman in his church in Los Angeles who used to minister continually to the poor and infirm of their congregation. She did what she did without ever receiving any honors or

accolades. Eventually, the woman grew ill and died and suddenly everyone began to praise her for all of her labors. Finally someone asked Dr. McGee, **“Dr. McGee, won’t you be glad when you get to heaven and are able to see her again?”** Dr. McGee surprised the person by saying **“I don’t expect I’ll ever see her in heaven.”**

They were shocked by his answer. **“What do you mean you won’t see her?”** they asked.

Dr. McGee responded, **“I expect she’ll be so far to the front and I’ll be so far to the back that I’ll never get a chance to see her.”**

Sisters, don’t hold back. Cast yourself into His service. If you love Him, come and serve Him wherever and however you can.

Now verse 19 describes Jesus’ meeting with His disciples later that night. Notice He is going to speak a word of peace to them and He is going to breathe the Holy Spirit upon them and that in doing so He is going grant to them special authority.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:19...**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.”** <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, **“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”** <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, **“Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”**

Now it looks as if there are two really difficult issues here. First, there is the question of what did it mean when He said to them, **“Receive the Holy Spirit.”** Secondly, there is the question of what He meant when He said, **“If you forgive anyone his sins, etc.”**

Now, historically **“Receive the Holy Spirit”** has been explained four ways. First, some have said that John just didn’t know about the Day of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church that happened there. Those that hold to that view think that John wrote from a different tradition and just didn’t know the truth or perhaps knew the truth and that the book of Acts just got it wrong. Of course, to hold that view would imply a very weak view of inspiration a non-eyewitness view of authorship.

Secondly, some people hold that the spirit spoken of here is an impersonal “spirit” not the person of the Holy Spirit and what Jesus was saying was something like, **“Receive a spirit of holiness”** which would be something like a **“power of boldness.”** That view does not seem to take into account verses like...

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 7:39**...Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Thirdly, some hold the view of Calvin that:

I reply, the Spirit was given to the Apostles on this occasion in such a manner, that they were only sprinkled by his grace, but were not filled with full power;<sup>22</sup>

His idea is that this was a temporary giving of the Spirit to sustain them till

Pentecost. Now, I almost always agree with Calvin but not here. I think he is wrong, not badly wrong but wrong.

I think and I think most commentators think that this is prophetic. He was giving them a picture of what was going to happen on the day of Pentecost. There He would breath upon them and they would be empowered to preach the gospel. In fact, it is that empowering to preach that explains verse 23.

**<sup>ESV</sup> John 20: 23...If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."**

You see the disciples and all Christians after that would be able to proclaim the forgiveness of sins or the retention of sins based upon the reception of the message of the gospel. Now, we know that from the verbs used here. Everything is plural. The first "you" is plural and even the "his" is plural. You see He's talking about the reception of gospel by whole groups. It brings to mind chapter nine where Jesus pronounced against the Pharisees:

**<sup>ESV</sup> John 9:41...Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."**

Finally there is the last section of this chapter starting in verse 24.

**<sup>ESV</sup> John 20: 24...Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."**

Now you notice that no mention of Thomas has even made up and until this

point. Apparently, he was off doing something else when the disciples gathered together that Sunday evening. Thomas expressed complete skepticism. He uses four words...hands, finger, hands and side.

Then a week later, Jesus met with the disciples again and Thomas was there this time. Notice too that the doors were locked and Jesus just appeared in their midst anyway. Some have speculated that that meant that Jesus did not have a real body. Of course, He was about to prove to Thomas that His body was real indeed. Notice how Jesus repeats Thomas' words almost exactly...hands, finger, hands and side.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:26...** Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you.**" <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "**Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.**" <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "**My Lord and my God!**"

Notice Jesus final admonition to Thomas, "**Stop doubting and believe**" and notice how that is tied to both verse 29 and 31. But we'll talk more about that next week.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 20:29...** Jesus said to him, "**Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**" <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on John* (Calvin CD Rom by Ages) 20:1, 637.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John Rvd.*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 733. The use of the cardinal "one" instead of the ordinal "first" most likely shows the Semitic or Hebrew influence on the writer.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John V29a* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 982. Brown writes: "The Synoptics speak of its being "rolled away." In Mark and Luke this had been done before the women arrived, presumably by the angels who were there to greet the women; Matt xxviii 2 is more specific: "An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone." The *Gospel of Peter*, 37, reports that the stone rolled by itself and went off to the side. John gives no hint of how he thinks the stone was moved.

John uses *ek*, "from"; Luke xxiv 2 has the same phrase with *apo*; Mark xvi 3 has "from [*ek*] the door of the tomb"; a few textual witnesses of John have the Marcan expression with *apo*. We are probably to think of a horizontal cave tomb rather than a vertical shaft tomb. Palestinian archaeology shows us that the entrance to such tombs was on ground level through a small doorway, usually less than a yard high, so that adults had to crawl in (notice "bent down to peer in" in vs. 5). The tomb could be sealed by a boulder rolled against the entrance; but the more elaborate tombs had a wheel-shaped slab of stone that rolled in a track across the entrance, having the effect of a sliding door. (Matt xxviii 2 apparently supposes a boulder rather than a wheel-stone; for the angel is said to roll away the stone and sit upon it, and a wheel-stone would have been rolled back into a rock recess.)"

Of course, the logic that the stone was a bolder instead of a wheel-stone is based upon the idea that the stone was not completely removed from its groove.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, 942, 959. Some have connected it to the scene in the Garden of Eden. They would say just as the angel of the Lord was sent down to guard the Garden of Eden and to protect the Tree of Life against the intrusion of sinners so an angel of the Lord comes down to seal off the door to death for believers. Of course, that could be reading too much into the text but there is no doubt that John uses, and is the only gospel writer to use, the word "garden" to describe where Jesus was buried for a reason. Some try to make the case that John is presenting Jesus as the new Garden of Eden and perhaps even the Old Tree of Life in that garden or at very least the New Adam. They would see that in Mary's confusion in calling Jesus a "gardener". The idea being that Adam failed to tend his garden but our Lord tended His well and rightly. Brown thinks such ideas are going too far. Perhaps he's right.

<sup>5</sup> B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 289. Westcott notes the phrase as "very peculiar" without making interpretive judgments. Morris is not so timid. Cf. Morris, 734. Footnote 10 reads, "'Removed" is the translation of ἠρμένον. The verb has the meaning "lift up," "take up," and is not the word we might have anticipated. When the stone was put in place it was "rolled" (the verb is ἀποκυλίω, Matt. 27:60; Mark 15:46). John may imply violence, all the more so since the preposition following is *e,k*. This seems to imply that the stone was lifted out of the groove in which it ran (*Amplified* renders, "lifted out of the groove across the entrance of the tomb"). The perfect of this verb is unusual and may be intended to give an air of finality.'

<sup>6</sup>The word for “run” is not used literally very many times in the New Testament. Paul uses it figuratively pretty often as in Galatians 5:7...“You were running a good race.” However of the eight times is it used literally, four of those are related to the resurrection. It made people move.

<sup>7</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 325. See also: Morris, 735. Morris displays genuine wit when he argues that “we must bear in mind, speed and youth are not synonymous.” In my world they are completely synonymous.

<sup>8</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament: V.5 The Fourth Gospel & Hebrews* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932), 307.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Bauer, (Rvd. By Arndt, Gingrich and Danker) *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 555d Cf. Henry George Liddell, and Robert. Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon* Rvd. By Sir Henry Stuart Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) p.1200d.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Bauer, (Rvd. By Arndt, Gingrich and Danker) *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 759. See also: Cf. Henry George Liddell, and Robert. Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon* Rvd. By Sir Henry Stuart Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 1621.

<sup>11</sup> Calvin, 639-40. Calvin clearly alludes here to the Shroud of Turin or something very much like it. Fascinating.

<sup>12</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John's Gospel* (Sage Digital Library) 85, 711. Perhaps a lot of that speculation comes from Chrysostom's comment: “When then she came and said these things, they hearing them, draw near with great eagerness to the sepulcher, and see the linen clothes lying, which was a sign of the Resurrection. For neither, if any persons had removed the body, would they before doing so have stripped it; nor if any had stolen it, would they have taken the trouble to remove the napkin, and roll it up, and lay it in a place by itself; but how? they would have taken the body as it was. On this account John tells us by anticipation that it was buried with much myrrh, which glues linen to the body not less firmly than lead; in order that when thou hearest that the napkins lay apart, thou mayest not endure those who say that He was stolen. For a thief would not have been so foolish as to spend so much trouble on a superfluous matter.”

<sup>13</sup> Robertson, 310.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 310.

<sup>15</sup> Morris, 738. I hold this view in spite of Morris' argument to the contrary. He writes: “Some hold that πρὸς αὐτοῦς does not mean “went home,” for which εἰς τὰ ἴδια would be required as in 1:11; 19:27. The expression used here is found, however, in just this sense in Josephus, *Ant.* 8.15.4 (where, incidentally, the meaning is not that they all went to the same place, but each to his own home). Black finds evidence of an Aramaic construction, the use of the *dativus ethicus*. He thinks

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that the present expression “corresponds to Aramaic לה לוא, as in the example from the Elephantine Papyrus above, ‘took him off’, ‘went him away’” (AA, p. 77). This must be treated with respect, and the Aramaic, may not be altogether out of mind. But in view of the passage in Josephus it is difficult to deny the correctness of NIV.” Of course, I am not worthy to empty Morris’ trash bin but I think the NT makes it clear they were only “at home” in Galilee. Perhaps, Acts 20:6 supports my point. <sup>NIV</sup> **Acts 20:6** But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later **joined the others** at Troas, where we stayed seven days. “Joined the others” is the same phrase here as “returned to their homes”.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Bauer, (Rvd. By Arndt, Gingrich and Danker) *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 433. See also: Cf. Henry George Liddell, and Robert Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon* Rvd. By Sir Henry Stuart Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 955-6. “I shall end him home crying, howling.”

<sup>17</sup> Westcott, 291. He writes: “The pronoun (ἐκεῖνοι) which I inserted here, like the name which is inserted in vs. 15 marks the pause during which Mary regarded those before her without speaking.”

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 291.

<sup>19</sup> Morris, 742. Morris is as clear as anybody, “The references to ascending are not completely clear. It is not easy to understand what difference the ascension could make to Mary’s clinging to Jesus. Some point out that, whereas we use “the Ascension” as a technical term, this was not done in New Testament days. The point may be conceded, but it does not get us far. Whether “ascend” is used in the technical sense in this verse or not, it clearly refers to a decisive parting as Jesus returns to his Father. Part of the thought appears to be that Jesus was not simply returning to the old life. Mary was reacting as though he were. Since he had not yet ascended he could appear to her, but she must not read into this a simple return to the former state of affairs (such as no doubt happened in the case of Lazarus). But part of the thought also will be concerned with the fact that the ascension was as yet future. Some exegetes maintain that John thought that the ascension took place on the same day as the resurrection and cite this passage as proof. But this is to ignore the subsequent happenings narrated in this very chapter. Verses 26ff., to name no other, show clearly that John thought of Jesus as active here on earth after the day of resurrection. The words we are discussing must be understood in the light of a future ascension. It is as though Jesus were saying, “Stop clinging to me. There is no need for this, for I am not yet at the point of permanent ascension.”

<sup>20</sup> Morris, 742.

<sup>21</sup> Morris, 743. Quoted in the footnotes.

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, 655.