

Gospel Reflections:

JOHN 20

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JOHN 20:1-10 – THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST BEGINS

- 1: The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.
- 2: Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom JESUS loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away The Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.
- 3: Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.
- 4: So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.
- 5: And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.
- 6: Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,
- 7: And the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.
- 8: Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.
- 9: For as yet they knew not The Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.
- 10: Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

What would have been the faithful's first thoughts? Where were the Roman soldiers who were posted to guard against any dishonest attempts to remove The Master's Body, so as to claim He was risen from the dead? There is no mention of them here by Saint John! We find this precaution recorded in MATTHEW 27:62-64, "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first."

The last thing Pilate wanted was more trouble from any of these different factions of the Jews – either the Sanhedrin or the disciples of JESUS. So he readily agreed to the request for a guard at the tomb of CHRIST, which is recorded further for us in MATTHEW 27:65-66, "Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch." And yet, when the women and the disciples come to the tomb of The Master, the soldiers are all fled! The tomb is open. The Body of The Lord is gone. And let us not take lightly any Roman soldier deserting his guard post. For if they were not struck dead in fright at the sight of The CHRIST arising out of the tomb, they knew their end would be exactly that at the hand of their officers!

JOHN 20:11-18 – CHRIST APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE

11: But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12: And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where The Body of JESUS had lain.

13: And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.

14: And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw JESUS standing, and knew not that it was JESUS.

15: JESUS saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take him away.

16: JESUS saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

17: JESUS saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My GOD, and your GOD.

18: Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen The Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.

We find Mary Magdalene written of by Saint Luke in LUKE 8:2, “And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils...” We find this same Mary Magdalene as one of the women at The Cross of CHRIST as recorded in MATTHEW 27:55-56, “And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed JESUS from Galilee, ministering unto Him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.”

This may also be the same sinner woman we encounter in LUKE 7:37-38, who anointed The Lord's feet with her tears and with oil, wiping his feet with her very tears, “And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that JESUS sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”

Explaining this woman's joy, The Master explains to the Pharisees at table with Him, “To those who have been forgiven much, much is their joy! See, this woman, formerly at great sinner, I have forgiven her sins as she has repented in her faith. And great is her thankful joy!” And so to Mary Magdalene The risen Lord appears. For she, chief among the many healed and forgiven sinners so blessed by JESUS, knew face to face what Saint Paul would later set down in ROMANS 8:33-34, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of GOD's elect? It is GOD that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is CHRIST that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of GOD, Who also maketh intercession for us!” Though the disciples did not yet have this assurance, Mary Magdalene knew that nothing could ever separate her from the love of GOD in CHRIST!

JOHN 20:19-29 – JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES

19: Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came JESUS and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

20: And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw The Lord.

21: Then said JESUS to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.

22: And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye The HOLY GHOST:

23: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

24: But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when JESUS came.

25: The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen The Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.

26: And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came JESUS, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

27: Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing.

28: And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my GOD.

29: JESUS saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Now The risen Lord appears to the assembled Apostles, minus Saint Thomas, and declares, "Peace be to you!" This is The Peace of The Almighty that soothes our restless souls, calms our fears, steadies our hands in adversity, gives us strength to serve Him by serving others, to stand against evil and prevail. This is The Presence of The Creator's hand upon, around and within our lives and souls. As Saint Augustine says, "Our souls are restless, O LORD, until they rest in Thee!" This Divine Peace of The Cross upon the lives and souls of the redeemed we see in Saint John's greeting in II JOHN 1:3, "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from GOD The Father, and from The Lord JESUS CHRIST, The Son of The Father, in truth and love!" It is a Peace, without which, no man may have rest.

The risen Lord also gives The Gift of The HOLY SPIRIT to the assembled faithful. He in fact "breathed on them." In GENESIS 2:7 we find the very breathe of GOD animating the body of Adam, "And The LORD GOD formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." In PSALM 51:10-11 we find that David pleads with GOD, "Create in me a clean heart, O GOD; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy Presence; and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me." It is The Spirit of GOD working to renew, wash clean and remake our souls into The Likeness of GOD that cleans the inside of the cup of a man, that the outside of the cup of his life might bring forth good works that glorify

GOD. And as Saint Paul says in I CORINTHIANS 3:16, “Know ye not that ye are The Temple of GOD, and that The Spirit of GOD dwelleth in you?”

So in The Power of The HOLY SPIRIT, the faithful of GOD in CHRIST go forth as His servants to help bring forth The Kingdom of GOD on earth as it is in Heaven. He directs us and, as we obey, He uses us for His purposes to this glorious end! And what a joy it is to life in faith within The Body of CHRIST! How destitute and hopeless are men who reject The Cross of The Redeemer and turn from The Light, preferring to suffer and die in the darkness!

The risen Lord blessed the disciples who believed, including Saint Thomas, because they beheld Him and believed. But then He says, “Blessed are those who, not having seen Me, yet believe!” Some of us require more miracles than others, more Grace than others, more Mercy than others, to come to and remain in a living relationship of faith with our Loving Saviour. Others less. GOD supplies that which is needed to precede, purify and preserve His elect.

JOHN 20:30-31 – MANY OTHER SIGNS OF CHRIST NOT WRITTEN DOWN

30: And many other signs truly did JESUS in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in This Book:

31: But these are written, that ye might believe that JESUS is The CHRIST, The Son of GOD; and that believing ye might have life through His Name.

Those who approach The Bible with the expectation that every single word and event that ever transpired related to GOD’s plan of salvation for mankind are quickly disappointed. By The HOLY SPIRIT, GOD ordains and causes to be written in The Holy Scriptures those things which He knows are necessary for man to know for salvation. The Bible is certainly, being The unerring Word of GOD, accurate in the historical events recorded therein. But there are for example gaps that we apparently need not know. Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt with the child JESUS. His days there are unknown to us. They are not necessary for us to know for our salvation.