

John 20        “I Have Seen the Lord!”  
Ezekiel 37:1-14  
Psalm 16

April 1, 2018

What is the point of this vision?

Ezekiel has been speaking of the redemption of Israel in the new covenant,  
when God will pour out his Spirit upon his people.

This is what God promised to do for Israel.  
He promised that he would raise his people from their graves,  
put his Spirit/breath within them,  
and restore them to their own land.  
And so all faithful Israel looked forward to the resurrection.

In John 11, we discover that Martha understood this well:  
She found comfort in the doctrine of the resurrection.  
Even though her brother, Lazarus, had died,  
she says:  
“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” (Jn 11:24)

But Ezekiel 37 speaks of the resurrection of Israel.  
There is no hint here of the resurrection of the *Messiah*.  
At least, not so long as you think of the Messiah and Israel as two separate things.  
And that was Martha’s problem—  
and the problem of the rest of the disciples as well!

They could imagine the Messiah doing the work of God in raising Israel from the dead.  
But they could not imagine the Messiah *becoming* Israel through death—  
especially the death of the cross—a cursed death that rendered Jesus unclean,  
isolating him from the covenant community.

As we saw Friday night, Deuteronomy 21:23 declares  
that a man who is hanged on a tree is cursed by God.

This was why the Romans liked to crucify Jews –  
because the Jews would never think of a crucified man as a martyr!  
Because a crucified man is hanged on a tree – and thus is cursed by God!

A crucified Messiah is a contradiction in terms!

But of course, God has a long habit of confounding the wise!  
And so he who knew no sin, became sin for us,  
and he bore, as Isaiah had said, the iniquities of us all.

Our psalm of response is Psalm 16 –

a Psalm of the resurrection  
as it speaks of how God would not allow his holy one to see decay!

Sing Psalm 16  
Read John 20:1-18

### **1. According to the Scriptures: The Disciples and the Empty Tomb (v1-10)**

*Now on the first day of the week*

Why do all four of the gospels emphasize the first day of the week?

After all, Jesus has said repeatedly that he will be raised on the *third day* –  
so why don't they focus on the *third day*?

Matthew says, "Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week..."

Mark says, "And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen..."

Luke says, "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn..."

John says, "Now on the first day of the week..."

Each of the four gospel writers have their own distinctive way of saying things,  
so when all four say something exactly the same way,  
you should sit up and take note!

The resurrection is *all about* the first day of the week!

Because Jesus died on the sixth day—the day of preparation for the Sabbath.

As the first Adam was created from the dust of the ground on the sixth day,  
so the last Adam was returned to the dust of the ground on the sixth day.

God had created man to work six days, and rest on the seventh.

That seventh-day rest was a picture of God's eternal rest,  
which he entered on the seventh day of creation.

But Adam had broken covenant with God.

And therefore man could not enter God's rest.

Every seventh day was both a reminder of God's rest,  
and a reminder that man could not get there.

It is interesting that the Sabbath in the OT  
was not particularly a day of worship.

The great feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles  
were not designed to coincide with the Sabbath.

These, after all, were feasts of redemption.

Therefore the Passover is celebrated on the first day of the feast,  
Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after the Passover Sabbath  
Seven times seven—plus one.

(In other words, Pentecost was always on a Sunday).

And the sacred assemblies of Tabernacles were held on the first and the 8th days.  
In addition circumcision was performed on the eighth day;  
after seven days of consecration,  
the priests entered their service on the eighth day;  
and the unclean were restored to the community on the eighth day.

In other words,  
most of the major redemptive moments in the Israelite calendar  
were associated with the first or the eighth day.

And John associates every major event in his gospel with a feast or Sabbath.  
Chapters 12-19 have been organized around the final Passover in Jerusalem.  
Chapter 20 is organized around the first day/the eighth day.  
20:1—now on the first day of the week...  
20:19—On the evening of that day, the first day of the week...  
20:26—Eight days later...

If Israel is going to enter God's rest, there must be another day for man.  
Jesus could not be raised on the Sabbath,  
because the Sabbath is a sign of endings—not beginnings.

And in the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week,  
a new creation has dawned.  
—the new creation promised in the sign of circumcision  
—the new creation promised by the Levitical feasts and sacrifices  
—the new creation promised by Ezekiel 37, when God would raise Israel from the dead

The first Adam was made from the dust of the ground on the sixth day,  
and in his fall, he returned us all to dust.

In death, we all face our "sixth day" when we fall short of God's eternal rest.

And all through that last Sabbath—that final seventh day—  
our Lord Jesus Christ "rested" in the grave.  
Never again would the Sabbath have the same meaning.  
Our Lord had healed the sick on the Sabbath,  
provoking the wrath of the Pharisees.  
He spent his Sabbaths giving rest to the weary—as Moses had commanded.  
And now, one last time, he spent his Sabbath giving rest to the weary.  
And on the first day of the week—the eighth day of the old creation—  
the first day of the new creation—  
he rose from the dead.

*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. <sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>[a]</sup> head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.<sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;<sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.<sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went back to their homes.*

Mary Magdalene had stood by the cross of Jesus that Friday afternoon.

Luke 8 tells us that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene.

She was one of those few who had believed in Jesus through good and bad.

Even his death could not drive her away.

She knew that this one had been sent by God to bring his kingdom.

In this hour of doubt and confusion,

she could not deny the work of God’s grace in her life.

Many others had been healed.

Many others had been freed from the dominion of demons.

Where were they?

When Jesus healed ten lepers, only one returned to say thank you.

Jesus had cast demons out of many people,

but only one now comes to the tomb “early, while it was still dark.”

The darkness still lingers here on this first Easter morning.

As Nicodemus had come to him in the dark of night,

as Judas had gone out into the night to betray him,

and as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had buried him

in the gathering dusk that Friday evening,

so also Mary Magdalene comes while it is still dark.

The light of the world had not yet dawned on that first day of the new creation.

But in the midst of that primeval darkness on the first day, God said,

“Let there be light.”

And it was so.

The stone was rolled away and the light of the world arose

to shine on our darkened world.

But at first, all Mary can see is that Jesus is missing.

She does not understand the scriptures.

In anxiety and grief, she runs to Peter and John and tells them,

“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,

and we do not know where they have laid him.”

Alarmed at the news, Peter and John run to the tomb.  
John was faster, but Peter more impetuous.  
John arrived there first  
and wondered at the moving of the stone.

Peter, brushing past the disciple whom Jesus loved,  
went in to see—and John followed.

Seeing the empty tomb with the graveclothes folded,  
they now believed.

But they do not understand the scriptures.  
They do not understand what has happened.  
They simply return to their homes.

This is faith seeking understanding.

“As yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.”  
Where does it say in the Old Testament that the Messiah must rise from the dead?  
If you are looking for a direct statement, you won’t find it.  
But the New Testament is emphatic that Jesus was raised from the dead,  
according to the scriptures –  
and the whole of the OT demands nothing less!

But that’s the point!

The disciples didn’t get it.  
They did not understand the scriptures.  
The death and resurrection of the beloved Son is what the whole OT is about!  
(Actually, that is the title of a book by a *Jewish* scholar  
who does *not* believe in Jesus!  
But he *does* think that the whole OT  
is about the death and resurrection of the beloved Son!)

## 2. “My Father and Your Father”: Mary and the Resurrected Lord (v11-18)

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

<sup>12</sup> And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup> 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.” <sup>14</sup> 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.” <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic,<sup>[b]</sup> “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.’” <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.

Mary, however, remained at the tomb, weeping.  
And as she looked into the tomb, she saw two angels sitting there.  
And they asked her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"  
Mary replied, "They have taken away my Lord,  
and I do not know where they have laid him."  
When she turned around she saw Jesus, but mistook him for the gardener.  
This has occasioned lots of speculation.  
Did Jesus look different after his resurrection?  
Did his voice change?  
Why didn't Mary recognize him?  
There is no need to speculate.  
If you think that someone is dead,  
you might chalk up resemblance to coincidence.

But Jesus asked her the same question as the angels:  
"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."  
Perhaps Joseph had changed his mind.  
Maybe he didn't want Jesus' body interred in his tomb.

As morning dawns at the garden tomb,  
Mary is still living in the Old Testament.  
Dead people stay dead,  
and the hope of Israel is for vindication at the end of history.

But now the light of the world also dawns at the garden tomb.  
Mary is brought from death to life as she beholds the one who said,  
"I am the resurrection and the life,  
the one who lives and believes in me will never die."  
But this time, all he says is one word: "Mary."

One word.

"Mary."

He called her by her name, and the scales fell from her eyes.  
And as the light of the new creation illumined the eyes of her mind,  
she saw the risen Lord and cried,  
"Rabboni"-- "Teacher"

Truly the eighth day had come--  
the day when God's people would enter his rest.

All of her grief and fear is removed.

This one who had spoken the word of God to her,  
who had cast out the seven demons and given her peace,  
is indeed the Teacher sent from God.

Now she sees with new eyes the promise of the resurrection.

No, I am not saying that she suddenly understood everything intellectually.

Rather, she saw Jesus.

She saw with new eyes the promise of the resurrection  
standing bodily in front of her.

But now the Teacher must teach her something difficult.

He cannot stay.

His work is not finished until he ascends to the Father.

“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.”“

Literally he says, “Do not touch me.”

This, too, has prompted much speculation.

Why did Jesus not want her to touch him?

The word means to touch or to lay hold of.

Jesus does not want Mary to lay hold of him.

The context explains why:

He is ascending to the Father.

This is the same thing that he said to the eleven:

It is good for you if I go to the Father,  
because then I will send the Holy Spirit.

So Mary must not get too used to having Jesus physically present.

She—with the rest of us—will have to walk by faith and not by sight.

But in these words of Jesus to Mary we hear the most exciting news of all.

All throughout John’s gospel, Jesus has spoken of “my Father.”

He has highlighted the uniqueness of his relationship to the Father.

The disciples were no longer servants but friends—  
but that was as good as it got.

Now he calls them brothers.

“Go to my brothers.”

Until now, Jesus was a master and a friend.

Until now, Jesus was the one and only Son of God.

He was unique—the only begotten Son.

But now, in his resurrection, Jesus becomes your brother.

Jesus says that he is ascending to *my* Father and *your* Father.

Something has happened since Friday afternoon.

Something has happened since Jesus hung from the cross and looked at his mother  
and said, “behold, your son;  
John, behold your mother.”

He was the Son of God from all eternity.

But as the eternal Son he had no brothers.

He was unique.

But the eternal Son was called to a new sonship.

He was called to be the created Son of God,

the second Adam who would become the firstborn of many brothers.

And to this end he was first born of a woman—born of the Virgin—

but now at the end of the ages he had another sonship to inherit.

As Hebrews 1:1-4 says,

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,

but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,

whom he appointed the heir of all things,

through whom he also created the world.

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,

and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

[this speaks of the eternal Son]

After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

having become as much superior to angels

as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

What name is that?

What name did Jesus inherit?

Verse 5: “For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”?”

Jesus, the eternal Son who became the created Son, has now inherited the name of Son.

The eternal Son has become the eschatological Son

through the resurrection from the dead,

as Paul says that Jesus “was descended from David according to the flesh

and was declared to be the Son of God in power

according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.”

(Rom 1:3-4)

The resurrection is the moment when Jesus inherits the name of Son.

He had always been the eternal Son.

Since his conception he had been the incarnate Son.

But now he has inherited that sonship that Adam had forfeited.

He has become the last Adam—the eschatological Son.

In his resurrection he receives the inheritance that God had promised to man.



In other words, he enters God's rest.

And so it is precisely in the resurrection of Jesus that we become his brothers.

As Hebrews 2:14-15, 17 says,

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood,  
he himself likewise partook of the same things,  
that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death,  
that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death  
were subject to lifelong slavery....

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect...”

The eternal Son of God came as the unique Son, the incarnate Son,  
so that he might become the eschatological Son—the firstborn among many brothers.

The one message that Jesus wanted Mary to give to his disciples on that first Easter morning  
was that they were now his brothers.

The one message that Jesus wants me to give to you on this Easter morning,  
is that you are now his brothers.

You may be fearful as Nicodemus, wavering as Peter, doubting as Thomas,  
but if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,  
then he calls you brother.