

God's Love as Victory over Death

Key Verse: “*Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.*”
—**John 20:8**

Selected Scriptures:
John 20:1-10;
I Peter 1:3-5,8,9

THE EVENTS IN OUR LESSON took place on the third day from when Jesus died on the cross. The Scriptures record the following concerning the hours immediately after his death: “Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.”—John 19:41,42

Mary Magdalene was at the sepulcher twice on the morning of Jesus’ resurrection. The first time was while it was yet dark, accompanied by Salome and the “other Mary.” (Matt. 28:1) Observing that the stone had been removed from the entrance to the tomb, Mary Magdalene immediately left to inform Peter and John. (John 20:1,2) The other Mary and Salome remained for a short time at the sepulcher, then departed, having been instructed by an angel to inform others of the Lords’ disciples. (Matt. 28:5-8) Soon afterward Peter and John came to the tomb, having been informed by Mary Magdalene that Jesus’ body was missing.—John 20:3-7

Mary had evidently followed Peter and John back to the tomb, and this was her second visit there that morning.

She lingered as Peter and John departed. As she stood weeping just outside the sepulcher, she looked inside and saw two angels sitting. They asked her, “Why weepeth thou?” She responded, “Because they have taken away my Lord.” (vss. 11-13) Then Jesus appeared to her, though she supposed that he was the gardener. After asking him if he knew where the body of her Lord had been taken, “Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”—vss. 14-16

Our Key Verse states that the disciple, believed to be John, “saw, and believed.” It would appear that his and Peter’s belief was not that the Lord had risen, but that Mary’s story was true—that Jesus’ body had been removed. Soon after this, however, they perhaps began to think of the words which the Lord had spoken respecting his resurrection on the third day: “They shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.” (Luke 18:33) Though they may have begun to believe in the possibility that he had risen from the dead, it was no doubt with much confusion of thought at first.

Looking back, we see that the death of Christ is the greatest event in mankind’s history, and his resurrection is of equal importance. The death of Jesus, without his resurrection, would have left mankind just as helpless and hopeless as before. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which . . . hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”—I Pet. 1:3

Through the love of God, he not only gave his son to provide the ransom price, but he also resurrected him. “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (I Cor. 15:20) Christ being the “firstfruits” of those who have slept in death implies that there are to be “afterfruits.” The Scriptures thus testify, “An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth.”—John 5:28,29, *New American Standard Bible* ■