

Explore the Bible: March 31

Believe! • John 20:1-17

By Laura Lee Leathers



Leathers

How quickly things can change. One moment, the crowds were following

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Then, within a few short days, the crowds were shouting, “Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him” (John 19:15)!

In the four Gospels, each writer gives an account of the events of the Passion or Holy Week. Before you begin today’s

lesson, read their reports from Matthew 27:32-28:20; Mark 15:20-16-20; Luke 23:26-24:52; and John 18:1-20:29.

John, the brother of James and the son of Zebedee, usually referred to himself in the third person throughout the Gospel of John. He mentions being a witness and writes about his belief in Christ's resurrection, as noted in John 19:35-37.

A Removed Stone (John 20:1-2, CSB) – The opening of chapter twenty immediately takes us to one of the eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. John begins with Mary Magdalene coming to the tomb early Sunday morning while it is still dark.

John only mentions Mary Magdalene, even though the other Gospel writers tell us she came with other women.

Who is this woman? She was from Magdala, located south of Capernaum. She was healed of seven demons by Jesus (Luke 8:2) and followed Him faithfully. Her name is usually mentioned first, possibly because she is the leader among the women. She was the first to see the risen Savior.

Upon Mary Magdalene's arrival at the new tomb, owned by Joseph of Arimathea, she sees the stone has been rolled away. But she doesn't look in. Instead, she runs back to tell Peter and John that someone has taken Jesus's body from the tomb.

An Empty Tomb (John 20:3-10) – Peter and John ran to the tomb upon hearing the news. John won the race. He stoops down, looks inside, and finds it empty. John sees the linen cloths but doesn't enter. He waits for Peter.

When Peter arrives, without hesitancy, he enters the tomb and sees the linen cloths. The head wrapping was folded and put in a separate place. If there had been a grave robbery, the robber would have snatched the wrapped body and the expensive spices.

Writing the Gospel in the third person, John describes himself as the other disciple (v.8) or the one Jesus loved. He is the one who “also went in, saw, and believed.” He believed Jesus was alive, not dead, and that no one had stolen his body.

In Luke 24:12, we are told that Peter was “amazed” at the finding. Did the men fully comprehend what the Scriptures had foretold and what Jesus had said?

The reference to Scripture in verse nine would be from the Old Testament. Possibly a reference to Isaiah 53:10-12 and Psalm 16:10.

The men return to the place where they were staying.

The Living Teacher (John 20:11-17) – Mary Magdalene stood outside the tomb crying. The verb means “wailing in anguish.”

As she wept, she stooped to look inside the tomb, and to her amazement, she found two angels (all the Gospels mention the angels) dressed in white. They were sitting where Jesus’ body had been – one angel at the head and the other at the feet.

They address her as “woman” and ask why she is crying. Mary Magdalene remarks, “They have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” “Woman” was a term of affection or endearment, not disrespect (see John 2:4; 19:26).

There is no evidence that she asked additional questions. Instead, she turns around, and Jesus is standing in her presence. John writes that “she did not know it was Jesus.” And then Jesus asks the same question as the angel, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it that you’re seeking.”

Mary Magdalene considered him a gardener. She states, “If you have carried him away, tell me where you’ve put him, and I will take him away.”

Then Jesus spoke her name, “Mary.” And she knew it was Him! She responded by stating *Rabboni*, which in Aramaic means

teacher.

Jesus warns her not to cling to Him because He has not ascended to His Father. He gives her an assignment, "Go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

"Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'" (v.18).

He has Risen! Yes, He is Risen, Indeed!

Leathers is a member of First Church, Lexington.