

Commentary on John 20:11-18

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, April 8, 2012

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, April 8, 2012**, is from **John 20:1-10, 19-20**. The Commentary below on **John 20:11-18** is a commentary supplement to the Commentary on **John 20:1-10, 19-20**.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

John 20:11-18

(John 20:11) But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;

In his Gospel, John strongly implied that Mary ran back with Peter and him to the tomb. Peter and John returned to their homes (now believing what Mary had said, because they had seen the empty tomb with their own eyes). Perhaps they took the burial wrappings with them as evidence that they had found the wrappings but Jesus' body was gone. Probably, they and the early church cherished the shroud that had covered Jesus' body. Mary stayed in the garden outside the tomb and continued to weep. Whereas Peter and John had entered the tomb, Mary had not. John's report about Mary meeting Jesus in John 20:11-18 partially explains the reason Jesus saw Mary in the morning and His disciples in the evening (John 20:19-20).

(John 20:12) and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.

As the sky brightened and the early morning gradually turned into day, Mary looked once again into the tomb, probably because of her anxiety and desire to verify once again that it was empty; moreover, she could hardly believe (and perhaps did not really want to believe) that the precious body of the Lord she loved was gone. When she looked this time, she saw two angels, who had entered the tomb without needing to pass through the door (or who were there earlier but invisible). They were seated where Jesus' body had lain.

(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."

These angels asked her a question that implied that if she had believed in Jesus' resurrection from the dead then there was no need for her to be weeping. If she had understood, believed, and remembered what Jesus had taught about the scriptures and His resurrection, then she should have been rejoicing to find the

tomb empty. Of course, she would probably have still felt deep personal loss because of His absence. Instead, she told the angels that she still thought Jesus' dead body had been taken away by others.

(John 20:14) When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Mary had been weeping bitterly over her loss, and having turned from staring into the tomb and now facing the rising sun, when she saw Jesus she was not able to recognize Him. She did not expect to see Him alive, and she could barely see through the tears glistening in her eyes in the early morning sunlight. Her first thought was probably wondering if the person she saw had anything to do with the disappearance of Jesus' body. There might have been some fear or anxiety that the person she saw was an enemy of Jesus and His disciples.

(John 20:15) Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" 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."

Something in His tone of voice reassured Mary as He asked her the exact same question that the angels had asked her. Because of her preconception that Jesus was dead and His body had been removed by the tomb, she supposed the one who tended the garden spoke to her to comfort her and perhaps give her information about the empty tomb she sat beside. Jewish tradition and human feelings would be reason enough for her to be weeping beside the tomb, just as Jesus and the others had wept at Lazarus' grave before Jesus called Lazarus out of his tomb. Mary insisted that she wanted to properly care for the body of the Lord she loved. The angels and Jesus asked her a question that implied she had no real reason to be weeping.

(John 20:16) Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

Mary did not recognize Jesus until He called her by name. Jesus had said that His sheep knew His voice and would follow Him (John 10:27). There must have always been a special bond of tenderness between Jesus and His followers, especially when He called them by name, because Mary did not recognize His voice in His questions, but did when He called her by name. Imagine how special to hear Jesus call you by name! Mary used a title of warm respect for a beloved teacher when she discovered that Jesus was the person who spoke to her.

(John 20:17) Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because 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.'"

Jesus' words partially explain the reason He saw Mary in the morning and His disciples in the evening. Jesus, the Son of God, had to fulfill a responsibility first to His Father, the One Who is God the Father, before He could spend more time with Mary or see His disciples. His Father was also the Father and God of His disciples, which also made His disciples His brothers (for they had the same Father and God; His disciples were His brothers by adoption: Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:5). Jesus wanted to formally and officially finish His work of redemption when He saw His Father in heaven (as though reporting to His Father and God that His redeeming work was complete because of His death and resurrection). In addition, Jesus had told His disciples that He would go away and ask the Father to send them the Advocate, or Comforter, or Holy Spirit (John 16:7). Then, that evening, when Jesus saw His disciples, He bestowed the Advocate or Holy Spirit upon them (John 20:22).

(John 20:18) Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Mary was the first person to share the Good News or Gospel with others, with those who were Jesus' disciples. She shared the Good News that Jesus had risen from the dead and she had seen Him. She told them the Good News that Jesus was still the Lord—the living Lord—and He had good reasons for not seeing them yet, for He was ascending to the Father. The Apostle Paul summarized the Good News: “Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you--unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Write your comments, suggestions, and thoughts on the [Bible Lesson Forum](http://biblelessonforum.com/) at <http://biblelessonforum.com/>. Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson* at [International Bible Lessons](http://internationalbiblelessons.org) at <http://internationalbiblelessons.org>.

— © Copyright 2012 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.