

“I Didn’t Recognize You!”

We bump into people all the time we’ve not seen in years, and often don’t recognize them. It happens at family reunions, class reunions, church homecomings or we run across pictures of old friends & college buddies on Facebook. In the Easter story, Jesus was not immediately recognized by His close associates in His resurrected, glorified body. The reasons why still obscure His identity to some people, as we will see in today’s Templates of Truth.

When Mary Magdalene came to the burial place of Jesus on the third day after His death, she found the tomb empty. When she later beheld the risen Lord, the Scripture says, *she did not know that it was Jesus* (John 20:14). Several accounts in the Gospels reveal the same reaction by others in their first encounters with Jesus after His resurrection. There was something about the characteristics of His glorified body that temporarily obscured His physical identity to them. Until the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead transforms our earthly bodies into glorified bodies, we will not fully understand what those divine features are. In the meantime, several observations may explain Mary’s inability to recognize Her Savior right-away.

First, she *did not fully understand the Scripture* (John 20:9). Jesus made it a point on numerous occasions to teach those around Him that He would be crucified & buried, but come back to life on the third day. Whether that was too good to be true, or just too unscientific to believe, Mary and all the others among His disciples just couldn’t wrap their heads around that truth. Many people today just cannot bring themselves to accept the Bible as God’s authoritative & inspired truth. They listen to too many liberals, skeptics and other so-called “experts” who question its historical accuracy, divine inspiration and inerrant nature. Modern society more and more regards the Bible as just another piece of ancient literature that is laced with metaphors, symbolisms and mythological moorings that simply cannot be taken literally or realistically. When left with those options, people can dismiss its commands and live any way they choose regardless of whether God’s Word affirms or condemns their lifestyles, attitudes and behaviors. The Jesus of the Bible becomes obscure to them in the compromise.

Because Mary did not fully understand the Scripture, she was, secondly, looking in the wrong place - she *came early to the tomb* (John 20:1). Why would you go to a tomb to look for a person who had been raised from the dead? Mary would not find Jesus in a place where He had already declared He would not be. Many today seek God in ways and in places He cannot be found. You won’t find Him among a group of viable options. He is not one of many gods, He is the One and only true God. There are not many ways to Him, there is only one way to Him and that is through His Son Jesus. You won’t connect with him though some means of transcendental meditation, astral projection, paranormal investigation or sitting in a Yoga position communing with mother Earth. He reveals Himself through His Son, through His Word and through the faithfulness of His church and His people. Jesus is not recognizable to many because they look for Him in all the wrong places and in all the wrong ways.

Mary couldn't recognize Jesus because she was too distracted by emotion – *Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping* (John 20:11). Jesus asked her directly, “*why are you weeping?*” (John 20:13). She still did not recognize Him. Faith certainly involves feeling, but feeling can distract our faith when we allow our emotions to run too far out of control and overwhelm our ability to focus on what God wants us to see. Even excessive grief can rob us of hope, health and happiness in spite of the losses of life. We cannot mistake feeling for faith when it comes to giving our life to Christ. Many people have lost sight of Jesus because they couldn't shake their fears, sensations, and the unstable, unpredictable nature of mere feelings.

Finally, Mary was confused by too many false assumptions – *supposing Him to be the gardener* (John 20:15). Because His body was no longer in the tomb, she assumed someone had stolen or taken His body somewhere else. She couldn't see Jesus because her focus was on other things that held no semblance of reality. Paul teaches that Satan blinds the eyes of the unbelieving so as to keep their focus on anything and everything except the message of the Gospel that can save them and set them free from the condemnation of sin.

It was not until Mary heard Jesus call her name that she turned and recognize Him (John 20:16). That personal appeal of the gracious Savior is that which pricks our heart with His affection for us and compels us to turn away from our sin and surrender our life to Him. Then we come to know Him as He knows us. When Mary reported her encounter to the disciples, she shouted – *I have seen the Lord!* (John 20:18). Have you truly seen the Lord? Have you pulled back all the scales that obscure your vision and actually seen the living Savior? The risen Jesus is calling your name!

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.