

Series: Easter Sunday	Reference: John 20:1-18	Title: Who Are You Seeking?	Date: 04.01.18
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Website Writeup:</b></p> <p>The question everyone is asking is what will fulfill me? But the real question should be, not what, but who? The tomb's empty, the promises aren't - Christ Lives! In this sermon we compare the similarities between the inner sanctum of the Holy of Holies &amp; the Ark of the Covenant with Christ's tomb &amp; resurrection.</p>			

### Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

We talked last week of the Passover in Egypt as it related to Jesus as the final Passover Lamb. Challenging the idolatry of Egypt, and to free the Israelites from slavery, God sent 10 plagues. The last plague - all firstborn of every household would die the evening before the Exodus. Every family of Israel was to sacrifice a perfect lamb, the blood of which they were to paint on the doorposts of their homes which caused the Angel of Death to pass over them, saving their firstborn child. This foreshadows Jesus in that as we come under the blood of Christ, God's wrath's averted. It covers & saves us from the penalty of death which sin brings.

Today I want to begin by talking about the Temple which housed the Ark of the Covenant. The Temple was a holy structure, the place God dwelt; made up of different sections with the most inner sanctum being the Holy of Holies. Within that room was the Ark of the Covenant, a golden box housing the gold jar of manna, Aaron's budding staff, and the two stone tablets of Moses. It's described in Hebrews 9:1-10.

*Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship & an earthly place of holiness. <sup>2</sup> For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lamp stand & the table & the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. <sup>3</sup> Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup> having the golden altar of incense & the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup> Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*

*<sup>6</sup> These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, <sup>7</sup> but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself & for the unintentional sins of the people. <sup>8</sup> By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing <sup>9</sup> (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts & sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, <sup>10</sup> but deal only with food & drink & various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.*

That's the image of the Temple, and ongoing sacrifices which were in place to atone for the people's sin which had caused their separation from God. Why? Because God's holy.

Holiness & sin can't coexist, like oil can't commingle with water, God can't with sin. He isn't against us, but he can't commingle without sin being atoned for. Yet, God loved his people & opened the way. To do so, the judgement of a holy god against sin had to be paid for with blood. We may say blood atonement is an archaic concept, but don't we all still cry for blood in certain instances? A career criminal rapes & murders a young girl - we want blood. God's standards are just higher, as they need to be.

The Great High Priest goes into the Holy of Holies once a year & stands before the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat on top. There the presence of the Lord met the high priest, and that's where atonement for the people was made with the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the Mercy Seat between the two golden angels bent towards the center. But Scripture's clear, this was all provisional, imperfect, a foreshadow of something real to come in the future. Hebrews 9 sheds light...

*<sup>11</sup> But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater & more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) <sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats & calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats & bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

This speaks of the finality of his sacrifice as He takes on, not only the role of the perfect sacrificial lamb, but also of the Great High Priest who enters God's presence on our behalf making atonement for the sin of God's people. *Which means...(15) he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant...*

*<sup>22</sup>Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. <sup>23</sup> Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup> For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. <sup>25</sup> Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, <sup>26</sup> for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup> And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. <sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : English standard version.* 2001 (Heb 9:1–28). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Remembering that image of the Temple & its contents, let's look at the resurrection story. At this juncture, Jesus has been crucified, died, and been buried in a tomb, and we notice some similarities between the story of his resurrection in John 20 with the Temple in Hebrews 9...

*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, & they were going toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter & reached the tomb first.*

It's funny that John, who's writing this, refers to himself in the third person as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' & who 'outran Peter'. **John reaches 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' 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.*

Recap - Mary shows up. Runs to get these guys. Even though they knew the Scriptures, and had heard plenty from Jesus directly, they didn't expect him to rise from the grave. So they went home...and this is where it gets interesting...

*<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 & 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."*

The two angels were sitting at either end of the burial slab. Having read the description of the Holy of Holies & the Ark of the Covenant, what's that bring to mind? Not to mention, the word, Ark, is also translated as coffin.

God's provided us with a visual image of who Jesus is & what he does for us. His burial slab/coffin becomes the Mercy Seat where atonement is made. The two Angels sitting at the head & foot of it become the Cherubim of the Ark. And the tomb has suddenly become the Holy of Holies; the inner sanctum of the Temple. As the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat between the two Cherubim in the Holy of Holies, so the blood of Christ is spread on this burial slab as the new covenant enacted for anyone who would put their faith in Christ. Just as last week we saw Jesus foreshadowed in the Passover Lamb, this week we see he was also foreshadowed in the

Holy of Holies, the Mercy Seat, and the Great High Priest. Notice, as the Holy of Holies was the place one met God, now Christ's empty tomb becomes the place we meet Jesus. And who enters the Holy of Holies & meets the resurrected Christ first? A woman. In a patriarchal society, the door's swung wide open.

If Mary didn't grasp the imagery then, I imagine she woke up one day & said, "I get it! The Ark! Jesus - the perfect sacrifice!" All the imagery of the Temple coming into focus in her mind's eye! But it gets better...*since it's Easter, this Lamb lives again!*

*<sup>14</sup> Having said this, she turned around & 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?"*

*It could've still been dark, with tears in her eyes she doesn't recognize him at first. Then Jesus asks the question he asks everyone...whom are you seeking? We mistakenly ask, *what am I seeking?* Our question reflects what God said in Haggai (1:5-6), "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."*

The hamster wheel. Looking for the next thing to satiate desire. Career. Sex. Money. Pleasure... Thirsty, but never satisfied! The *What* never satisfies - the *Who* does. But it's gotta be the right who....so whom are you seeking? ...*Mary found him...*

*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."*

*He calls her by name - an intimate moment. The two of them together. Her teacher. The One she's followed, and who drove 7 demonic spirits from her life, and whom she watched crucified & buried. All her hopes were shut up with a giant stone at his burial - but the stone's been rolled away, the doors open, and there he stands. At first it must've seemed like a cruel joke, but now Resurrected Jesus calls her by name, and her tears of sorrow turn to tears of joy, as *She turned & said to him in Aramaic, "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 & say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father & your Father, to my God & your God.'*"*

Here everything gets personal. He'd called these guys servants (John 13:16), disciples & friends (John 15:15), but now He calls them brothers, "Go to my brothers." "My father." "Your father." "My God." "Your God." All familial intimate terminology. Something's switched in Jesus language, something's happened as a result of the crucifixion & resurrection. And we see why in Mark 15:37-39 as *Jesus died on the cross... <sup>37</sup>With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. <sup>38</sup>The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup>And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"*

The curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the Temple was rent in two, creating an opening to the inner sanctum where the presence of God resided. Even the High Priest couldn't go in there, but once a year on the day of Atonement. This curtain was a visual image of our separation from a Holy God. Before Jesus, you couldn't go past that & enjoy God's presence. This 60' tall, 30' wide, 4" thick linen & woven yarn tapestry of purple, blue & scarlet was ripped from top to bottom upon Christ's crucifixion signifying all could now enter God's presence through Jesus. And as the tomb was shut up with a rock, sealing off Mary's hope, it was now open! The Son of God, the final sacrifice, the open door. The Great High Priest, Jesus, went into the Holy of Holies & opened the way of reconciliation, providing the only sacrifice which could absolve His people of sin. The final sacrifice of Jesus brings us back into relationship with the Father. The curtain which could not be ripped, was. The stone which could not be moved, was. Now there's free access to all to come fellowship with God through Jesus.

As it states in Hebrews 10:19-23... *19Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

We no longer worship from afar, or rely on mediators. God's done for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. In Christ God says, come close, the barrier's fallen. The Curtain's been rent, revealing my presence. Let your Father embrace you in the cross & empty tomb. Let God show you how much he loves through the sacrifice & resurrection of Jesus. Let Him get personal & make you part of the family!

Mary then ran to the disciples & shouted, "I have seen the Lord!" She'd found who she was looking for! She had Jesus back, the promise *wasn't* empty, because the tomb *was*! Because of Jesus we enter boldly into God's presence as children. The question isn't *what*, but *whom* do you seek? If that stone was never rolled away, the curtain never ripped, Jesus never appeared, all hope would've died on the cross. But it didn't. Even critics of the story can't explain how so many trustworthy people witnessed this event.

Christ lives! It became personal to the disciples - later Jesus breathes out the Holy Spirit on them (v22). This isn't religion, it's relationship, experiencing his power. Jesus taught them the heart of God, and by his resurrection gave them the power to live it - they receive the Holy Spirit & relationship with him is infused with power.

When looking for fulfillment, remember the question, "Who am I seeking?" We typically seek the 'what'. The world's full of empty promises, but Mary walked upon an empty tomb full of promise & power to become one of God's family.