

John 20:19. *Now, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb, and so she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved. Say Wow. They have taken away the Lord out of the tombs, and we do not know where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb, and the two were running together, and the other disciple ran ahead, faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first. Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrapping lying there, but he did not go in. Simon Peter therefore also came following him and entered the tomb, and he beheld the linen wrapping lying there. And the face cloth which had been on his head, not lying with the linen wrapping, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who had first come to the tomb, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise again from the dead. Oh, you talk about the flow of hearts...So, the disciples went away again to their own homes.*

Verse 10 - *So the disciples went away again to their own homes...and the next two words, but Mary... But Mary was standing outside the tomb, weeping. So as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb, and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him. When she had said this, she turned around and beheld Jesus standing there, and did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her the same thing, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you seeking?" Praise God.*

*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. And Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned to him and said in Hebrew, "Rabboni," which means Teacher. And Jesus said, "Stop clinging to me. For I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God. Mary Magdalene came and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." And that he had said these things to her.*

I want you to know that I would love tonight...I'd just love to see a new era in church history be born this evening. I just really am all for it. I'm not going to stand in the way if it's possible.

Well, there was God, and He was love, and He had no place to love, and He had no counterpart because His nature was One, and yet a paradox in His being was that He needed a place for His love to go. And He had an idea that had never been had before, and that idea was *another God*; someone to match Him. And somehow, He counseled within Himself, counted what that would take, and began. He had a creation. Somehow,

in that decision, He made it necessary to have something visible; I don't know why, but He did.

He made man the most perfect and the highest of all His creatures so that, out of that man, He might have His counterpart. He would have to create something, but it would be short of His counterpart, so He would have to alter Himself and come into His creation. It was too low for Him so that He would raise it higher, and in that created being He would find His counterpart.

That created being, called man, fell. I tell you, I don't know why God did this, but God decided it would be man. If He ever had a wife, a love, a true beloved woman, if He ever had a bride, He was still determined that she would come from that fallen, hideous creature; I'm not using too strong a word...you know how tragic we are. I have a notion that since last Sunday night, when I saw you, every one of you has been a tragedy. Is that not true? It's just been a tragedy. He decided that out of that fallen creature He would still get His bride.

Well, the whole Old Testament is a story of the... not of that bride, but of the picture of that bride. Is it a beautiful story? Most of it's not so pretty. Can you imagine God having a difficulty finding one who would say yes to Him? Yet I would say, probably, if we could talk to the Lord face to face, He would have to say this has been one of, if not His greatest, difficulties: a woman who would take her position beside Him.

That's incredible. The whole Old Testament is the story of that tragedy. *God left out. God not wanted.* The Lord of the universe...not wanted by the girl. That's impossible to believe, and yet that is the story of the Old Testament.

I tried to put something into you the other night, and that is: when Jesus Christ broke out of the pictures and got down to reality, there was fire in His eye, and He said, "I have looked at a picture for a thousand years...turn its heart away from me. I have come for my bride...and I will tolerate no interference. I'm going to have her, and nothing will distract me from her, and once I get her, nothing will distract her from me. That was His burning intensity, and you can see it if you read the Gospels carefully. You can see His heart.

Well...He marked down everything that might stand in the way. What would you say, in one nice, conclusive sentence, stood in the way of Him having this beautiful woman? What? The whole fall, all right. These are...here's the thought I had. It's no better than anyone else's. I was going to say the whole human race. I was going to say more than that. The whole creation stood in the way. It had fallen; everything in it was distracted from the Lord. The whole human race was distracted from Him. The whole human race had no heart for the Lord.

Have you ever read Romans 3? They all together become unprofitable. They've all turned aside. There's none that seeks after God. No, not one. None. They have all together become corrupted. They have all together become sinful. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

This was man. God drew history out in front of Him, and He watched from the beginning of time to the end; somehow, in this initiation of time, God could stand there in eternity and watch every creature being born and living before they were ever born or lived. Before He even laid the foundation of the world, He saw the world; before He laid the foundation of the earth, He saw you. Now I want you to know I cannot understand this. This was even before the fall. Maybe the Lord didn't even see the fall. Gee, I've never been God. I don't know what God has seen. All I can tell you is that, in a way only God can understand, before He ever made the human race, He fell madly in love with a select few. That love was the love of the Spirit because God is Spirit.

There's not one of you in this room, but who has very low self-esteem. Is that not true? Most of the time, except when you're with brothers and sisters, when you're in the kingdom and know it. How many of you have a boss? You work for a living, you're paid a salary, you have a boss right over you. Would you raise your hand? Put your hand down. I want to ask you another question. Do you feel like he likes you? How many of you would say, you really don't think he likes you so well, and would put your hand back up? Okay, alright. How many of you feel your employer is less than satisfied with you? Would you raise your hand? Okay. Thank you very much. And you live under that all the time, don't you? Don't you? I know that feeling. Sister and brother, there just comes with that a sense of unworthiness that I'm at the bottom of the pile.

I'd like you to consider the millions and millions of people God passed over, stopped, and fell in love with you. Now, that's touching, and if it ended there, that would be great, but that's not near the end of where that love drove Him. For one thing, it drove Him to become a creature. It drove Him to become a creature. That was no small thing.

Then He stepped into time and into this fallen human race—this insect-like creature. I don't want to put him down too badly, but I want you to see, from God's view, how far man had fallen from his original state. Then God took on the form of that fallen state, with its passions, its problems, and its temptations. He identified Himself with you so much that He knows exactly what it's like. That is insignificant compared to the driving force of the love behind Him.

He came almost with a sword. He was after those He had fallen in love with before the foundation of the earth. He was after...He was there to get you. He was there to have you. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. My wife pointed out to me the other day that it probably does not mean He gave Him to the cross, but rather that

He literally gave Him as a gift to the whole world. He presented Jesus Christ to the world He fell in love with. Jesus Christ came to this earth to get you, and it was just...He had a lover, and there was a big problem, and He meant to solve it.

Now then, He saw all these things that stood between Himself and His counterpart, the woman who He had fallen in love with before He ever created the universe, capriciously fell in love, and you happened to be... You happened to be what? That person. I'm not going to say *part* of that person.

Okay, you tell me what stood between Him and His counterpart. Name them. Wait, wait, wait. I'd better take them one at a time. Let's get one. Satan. World. Powers and principalities. Sin. Sins. Death. Flesh. The world system. The whole human race. Inside the world system, the religious system. Okay, the whole fallen creation. The whole fallen creation. There is one other thing. What was that? His own personal state. Which was a state of what? Oneness. A state of oneness. He was not like His creation.

His whole creation was created in twos. Two what? Two lions. Two elephants. Two giraffes. Two flies. Two fleas. Two cows. Two horses. What didn't have two? God. What else didn't have two? The angels...and man started out not having two.

Alright, here's the fallen race. He steps into time; He grows up. On the day He's baptized, He becomes fully God, and He is also fully man. A Jewish man is considered fully arrived at total, complete maturity at age 30. God rested upon Jesus Christ at the age of 30. He is now totally God, totally man. He steps forth; I can almost see Him with a sword. He looks around. It's complete. He has entered time after all of eternity and all time with the passion of love for a counterpart in Him; He's alive.

And here is another species, not of His own. What is that species? Tell me what it is. Fallen man. Now He walks the earth. Does He have anyone like His own species? No one else on the whole planet is like His species. And He counts...I've got to get my own species out of this species. This is where it must come from. A lot of sin to be forgiven. A lot of corruption to be put away. Just a lot of things, and I must be divided.

Oh, we went through a lot of things the other night. Do you recall? Do you recall them? We went through many stories. The temptation. We told the story about the little girl, the young maiden, who had seven demons cast out of her, and she also had one other thing happen to her. She had her sins forgiven. We talked about the things the Lord marked throughout His three-and-a-half years of ministry.

Then we came to right before He died, and we looked at a brother. Who? John. John was getting a little smarter. John discovered something. What was it? That the Lord wanted to be loved in return. Well, if you ever had to choose to be one of the twelve disciples, which one would you be? Would you? I think John would choose to be John because he

needed something no one else knew. I think if any of the other disciples were jealous, it was mostly of John. You know, it must have been a startling thing to see the Lord so loved by one of the twelve.

Well, brothers and sisters, that is not the whole story before He was crucified. The Lord did not have to die for you and for me. What motivating power put Him through that terrible, tragic night? One thing: yes, obedience to the Father, but love, brother, love precedes the obedience. You don't obey out of duty. Love for what? For you. Love for you. I mean, a passion to have you. To be satisfied. To come finally to satisfaction. To have a place for that driving love to go.

Alright, when He died on the cross, He took every enemy with Him. Now then, here's where I ask you: do you really believe that? Do you really believe me? If so, then what did He take to the cross? He took all creation to the cross. Was that enough? He also took Himself to the cross.

If you missed the meeting the other night, God is the only reality in the universe. There isn't any other reality; everything else is a picture. Okay, if that is true, who is the only one who can truly die? God alone can truly die. Man, fallen man, is a picture of Jesus Christ. Can he die? He can *kind of* die. Adam *kind of* died; he was put to sleep, and God took out a rib from him. Did God create a woman? No. What did He do? He built her out of what? Adam.

Now, on the cross, Jesus Christ died, and God saw to it that His side was also opened. For what reason? For building. For the purpose of building. Building what? Okay, His bride. Anybody else want to say anything else? Praise the Lord—the rest of the new species and the first of the new creation. God was left in that hour without anything. It was a terrible moment. From God's viewpoint, nothing remained in the universe but His eternal Spirit. God was down to the bare essentials: the eternal Spirit. Christ had utterly died, and in that death, He was able to do the same thing a seed can do: He was able to be divided.

God reached into His side and drew out blood, which speaks of humanity, and drew out water, which tells us of divinity. God started getting the rest, the other half of that species, and He got started getting, for the first time, His counterpart.

Now we come to fact; real, genuine fact. Even in the three years the Lord spoke, He spoke often as though He had already been crucified, to tell people what they would be and what they would become. But now we come to the hour when the cross is over with.

I want to ask you one more time: is the creation put away? You say no? Why? Alright, sister, I'm glad you said no. Sister, you're wrong. Completely 100% wrong. But Gene, that is foolish. I see it here before me. Sister, you see it before you. I see it before me. You all see it before you. Is this not true? God doesn't see it. Now, sister, either God is

wrong, or we are wrong. Now, sister, obviously, who is wrong? We are? No, obviously, God is wrong. Look. What is this thing? What is this? It is the old, fallen creation. You know it's here. I know it's here. But what is God's opinion?

It's not here. Now you know and I know that we are right. Right? Say yes. And God is wrong. Laugh if you wish, but you'll never get to a more important point: that even when God is wrong, He's right. God drew the boundaries between what is real and unreal, true and lie, righteousness and sin. His standard is the standard.

God says that on the cross it was all put away, and through His eyes it is all gone. Now, when He decided that, He's the one who makes the rules; He sets the bounds; He looks through His eyes, and His eyes are the only ones that matter. He's wrong. I know it, you know it...but let's play along with it. (laughter)

Now, brothers and sisters, that has been called true faith, positional truth...and it has also been called something else very dear. It is the accomplished, or finished, work of Jesus Christ. Now, very few people know or have ever heard the term "the finished work of Jesus Christ." Most Christians in the world do not stand in the perspective of God and look at the finished work of Jesus Christ. Many have heard, not all; less than half, maybe only a fifth or a sixth, have ever heard of positional truth. Most Christians have never heard of the finished work of Jesus Christ, completed.

Now, I would like to take this truth that maybe one fourth or one fifth of Christians have heard about, called positional truth, and I would like to dump it...in the garbage can...forever. But what about the finished work of Jesus Christ? What about that? What shall we do with that? What? Believe it. Believe it? Is that what you said? Praise the Lord, they've both got to go. They're both standing in the way of what the Lord wants.

Now, brothers and sisters, when you get to talking about the finished work of Jesus Christ, you have just marched right out into space. I want to say tonight that the finished work of Jesus Christ has got to go. As far as that goes tonight, just about everything's got to go. All of it. Everything. I have a point to make. I may not make it, but I have to make it, whether I make it or not.

Okay, He was crucified on what night? Friday evening. Who put Him in the tomb? Mary, Joseph, and Nicodemus. Well, I think that Nicodemus became a believer in Jesus Christ. If I asked you to prove that Nicodemus became a believer in Jesus Christ, and to prove it scripturally, could you do it? Anyone here who could raise their hand and say, I can do it. I can prove that he became a believer. I think somebody in here can. *I believe he bought some really expensive oil.* He bought expensive oil and embalmed the Lord. He helped Joseph to put His body in a new rock-hewn tomb.

Can you prove he was a believer? He was a seeker, but prove to me he became a believer. Someone here should be able to. It's really simple. Yes? Only two people were present when Jesus Christ talked to Nicodemus, and it got into the New Testament. Jesus didn't tell the story. Who told it? It had to be Nicodemus. I believe he's a brother. He handled Jesus Christ's body.

Okay, He had some sort of robe on, we assume. Then they wrapped His body in grave clothing, put many oils and spices on Him, and wrapped the cloth around Him. Then they put another cloth, a separate cloth, upon His head and wrapped it around His head. They laid Him in the tomb. I'm not going to go into this, but the Greek implies more than that: a giant stone was rolled against the door. It was either a big, cartwheel-like affair that rolled this way, or a huge, natural round stone that rolled this way. Probably it was a cartwheel kind of thing that rolled this way. Very big. Very heavy. Far more than even three or four or five people could move, probably. They pushed it there, against the door. It was sealed for all time.

Saturday passed. It has to be the blackest day in all history. God is there. Where are the disciples? Scattered everywhere. Now, who was the last person who ever believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? The thief on the cross was His last convert. The last? Maybe the only believer that day. Probably the only one who believed in Him that day. Probably he didn't say it. Probably that's not what he said. He probably said, "Oh, there is 'a' son of God." Not *the* son of God. A son of God, speaking of a holy man. I don't know, brother. No one knows about this soldier.

Now, brothers and sisters, on Saturday, did the Lord Jesus Christ have any followers? Let's say, more or less, He had no followers. He was dead, and yet that's not exactly true. Now we come to the real point.

It's about 3 a.m., and a story begins to unfold, the like of which...there's no other story like it in all of history. This is THE love story.

Early, early in the morning, long before five; long before four, while it is still pitch black and there's not another human being up in all of Jerusalem, someone gets out of bed and gets up. Who is it? Mary who? Mary Magdalene. She goes over and picks up some oil and spices she bought late Saturday night from the stores open after the Sabbath.

Where is Jesus Christ? Where is He? Tell me. And what is His state? He is dead. Utterly. Totally dead.

This young girl, this maiden, this little girl...may I call her that? This little girl gets up, dresses, gets the spices and the oils; these embalming materials. She heads for the tomb. What is this? Do you know what this is? This is unprecedented. What is this? A follower of whom? Of Jesus Christ. But He is dead. Is she really still following Him? Yes, but

He's dead. That doesn't matter to her a bit. Alive or dead, she loved Him. Alive or dead, He is her Lord.

Now, is He God? Is He dead? Is she still His disciple? Then I ask you a question – “Is that love?” That's love—someone who will follow Jesus Christ, dead or alive. Someone who will believe in God, believe in the Lord as the Son of God, even though He has died. Did He have any other disciple like that? Never. Nobody.

Let me ask you a question. Has God ever died for you? Wait a minute, I don't mean died for your sin. Has your God ever died? Have you ever lost your God? I have to say...yes. What? My Lord just plain died. You mean, years ago? No, I mean He died. I could not find Him. He was utterly, and I mean that literally, it was just as though He had died. Have you ever had God be that far gone? I know that some of you perhaps have not. Do you have the heart of a Mary Magdalene? Can you love Him dead? Hold on to that. Someday the Lord may ask you that question Himself. Can you love Me when I disappear? Can you love Me dead? She loved Him...dead.

She gathered some other sisters up, according to the other gospel account. It's not mentioned in John. I'd rather tell it the way John told it. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb with one thought in her mind. How am I going to move that great big rock?

A gigantic rock...did that prevent her from going to the tomb? This little girl had a certain element of madness in her. She got the spices; she got up to go lay a dead God, and she was going to finish the embalming procedures, the burial procedures. She had no idea how to get through that rock. I just got one thing to tell you: *she loved Him*. Do you believe Mary Magdalene loved Jesus Christ? If I asked you to prove that Mary Magdalene was in love with Jesus, could you prove it?

There's a very simple reason...because the Bible said she did. As far as that goes, Jesus Christ said it. He looked at her, and He said, “Simon, I want to ask you a question: Who loves more, the one forgiven more, or the one forgiven less?” He said, “More, teacher.” He said, “You're right, Simon. So it is with this girl.”

Did Jesus Christ know Mary Magdalene loved Him? The Bible said she loved Him. Let us settle this once and for all. Mary Magdalene was in love with Jesus Christ. A little bit? A lot? How much? Madly. Passionately in love with the Lord. Let me tell you about Mary Magdalene's love for Jesus Christ. May I? Let me tell you something.

Did she belong to the fallen human race?

(continued in Part 2)