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Regarding the Treatment of Women, Where Did Jesus Set the Bar?

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Regarding the Treatment of Women, Where Did Jesus Set the Bar?

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Portland State University Urban Honors College - Undergraduate Thesis

Regarding the Treatment of Women, Where Did Jesus Set the Bar?

by

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Abstract

This thesis crafts an argument for greater female education, teaching, and leadership within modern day Christian churches. By examining three key interactions between Jesus and women as recorded in the four canonical gospels, a clear example for gender equality within Christianity emerges. The manner in which Jesus speaks with the Samaritan Woman, Mary of Bethany, and the women at the resurrection, as well as the roles and responsibilities he places on them demonstrates that Christ saw women as capable of learning, teaching, and leading. As the canon of Christianity, Jesus' life on earth is the template that sets the bar for all those following him. Therefore, any congregation claiming to follow the life of Christ must evaluate their treatment of women to ensure strong alignment between Jesus' example and their operations.

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Introduction

Over the course of history, women have made progress toward equality in many aspects of life. Politically, society has progressed from a point in time where women could not vote to a modern day where women serve in high level Legislative, Executive, and Judicial positions, and even run for president. While American women still experience a wage gap, receiving \$0.78 on the dollar compared to their male counterparts, the gap is significantly smaller than it has been historically (National Committee on Equal Pay). In the United States, women have gained greater reproductive control, fairer treatment in the workplace when pregnant or on maternity leave, the ability to serve in the military, and better protection in the U.S. Legal system. Despite all this progress, religion remains a part of life where equality is not the norm. While things vary on a congregation-by-congregation basis, some religions and denominations tend to focus more on equality while others retain male superiority.

As of late 2014, 7 out of 16 of the world's major religious groups do not allow the ordination of women (Masci). In Catholicism, women are not allowed in the clergy, a tradition that has no end in sight despite Pope Francis' more liberal attitude. This prevents them from taking any substantial leadership position within the religion. Even the titles of religious roles within the Catholic Church imply male superiority - men are referred to as fathers while women are called sisters, indicating a significant difference in authority (Allen). In the Southern Baptist church, women are considered "equal in value to men" but are not allowed to hold positions of pastoral leadership (Southern Baptist Convention). This standard suggests a complementarian viewpoint, one where men and women are equal but play different roles (Slick). The issue here is that women are often confined to the support roles within complementarian churches and

relationships, barred from leadership, decision-making, and teaching. In any case where two parties are supposedly equal, but one is granted different opportunities and rights than the other, true equality is not present. Many churches have come to accept and promote women exercising spiritual gifts within their congregation, but there are still great divides on whether or not the bible supports women taking roles of leadership over men (Bellevue).

Some denominations that set the bar for gender equality in terms of women's ordination, and ability to speak and lead within congregations are the United Methodist Church, the American Baptist Church, and Presbyterian churches. Like many denominations, the Methodist Church affirms equality of male and female. The difference here is that the Methodist church backs up these claims of equality, allowing and encouraging women's involvement in all levels of church leadership and decision-making. Women can be ordained in the Methodist church, and have been for hundreds of years (United Methodist Communications). The situation is similar in the American Baptist Church, which not only ordains women, but also strives to stop gender discrimination within its congregations (Masci, United Methodist Communications). In spite of an increasing amount of denominations allowing women to become ordained leaders, a 2012 survey found that women lead only 11% of American congregations. Many female leaders face discrimination based on gender despite the ability to become just as officially qualified as a man (Masci). The overall lack of female leaders and teachers in Christian churches indicates that even when female leadership is theoretically attainable, other things prevent women from holding a fair portion of leadership roles.

Denominations each have their own defenses for their rules and ratios in regards to female church leaders, however much of these arguments drift from the core message of the doctrine. At a fundamental level the Christian life is meant to follow the example Christ laid out

during his time on earth. In the Catholic faith “Catholics share Jesus’ vision and model their lives after Jesus’ example of love” (“What Does it Mean to be Catholic”). The Southern Baptist Church states “Christ-Likeness” as a core value, and that they “depend on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and prayer to make [them] more like Jesus Christ” (Southern Baptist Convention). The Methodist Church lists “following Jesus, answering the call to be his disciple in the world” as a basic belief of the doctrine, and states that “Jesus is God’s picture of what it means to be a mature human being” (United Methodist Communications). All of these denominations – both those ordaining women and encouraging female leadership and teaching, and those preventing women from serving in traditionally male roles within congregations – agree that Christ is the canon of the Christian faith, the precedent setting example by which to live.

This point of view is biblically based - in the gospel of John, Jesus says to his disciples, “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” (John 13:13-15 NIV). Scripture echoes this sentiment in various passages; Matthew 16:24, Matthew 28:19-20, Ephesians 5:1-2, Colossians 3:13, and 1 John 2:6, just to name a few. Statements from respected theologians and scholars only strengthen this perspective on faith. For example, James Campbell writes, “Jesus is not here represented as the author of faith, in the sense that he is the originator of it; he is rather the leader of faith; going before us in the way of faith; teaching us and showing us how to live the life of faith.” (Campbell 1).

From this point of view, the only logical way to construct an argument for gender equality among followers of Jesus today is to go back to the roots of faith by analyzing

interactions between Christ and women, as recorded in the gospels. Henri Nouwen describes the role of scriptures in modern day Christianity, saying “The sacred scriptures help us to look at the rich variety of all that is with the eyes of God, and so discern the way to live with more clarity of vision in the here and now” (Henri Nouwen, Discernment 9). The research question addressed in this thesis is as follows; what are the implications of Jesus’ interactions with the Samaritan Woman, Mary of Bethany, and the women at the resurrection for the treatment of women among followers of Jesus today? Each of these passages demonstrates Jesus’ view on gender equality in a way that is crucial to scripture-based living. After thorough exegesis of the above passages it has become clear that not only is Jesus’ life the precedent setting example for all those claiming to follow him, but regarding woman, Jesus set an example for equality.

General Context

As with any historical record, establishing the context of cultural and societal norms is necessary to form a comprehensive understanding of the text. To understand these passages and their implications, it is crucial to know the environment of the time period, particularly where they pertain to women. In the Roman Empire, men ran society. Only wealthy Roman citizens, typically male, were active in politics and culture. The Empire was made up of many different ethnicities under Roman oppression, which were forced to pay high taxes and concede to the will of Roman soldiers and government officials. A large majority of the female population was viewed as the property of their male head of household, and their worth was measured by their ability to bear children (Wordelman). Failure to have children within the first 10 years of marriage was grounds for divorce, and women gained independence and freedom after they had a certain number of children. In ancient Mediterranean culture, public life was seen as superior to private life, and was a place for men to partake in politics and socialization. Women's main freedoms came in the less important private life (Tetlow, Torjesen).

In order for women to hold any substantial power in the Roman Empire, they needed to have money. Even then, the highest ranked women in Roman society were required to go through a man to exercise their expanded rights. The same standard applied to religious practices; only women who had financial resources to serve the congregation were able to hold any position of authority within the synagogue (Wordelman). Jewish women were not to be educated in the Torah – in fact it was rabbinic law that “the words of the Law be burned rather than taught to a woman” (Papazov). With such limited education in the Torah, any religious roles involving leading, teaching, or decision-making were not available to women.

To establish the example set by Christ for the treatment of women, three scriptural passages will be examined; The Samaritan Woman in John 4 (Appendix A), Mary of Bethany at Jesus feet in Luke 10 (Appendix B), and the women at the resurrection (Appendices C, D, E, F). Each of the selected passages is significant for its own reasons. The interaction with the Samaritan Woman was the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He began by sharing his identity to the least relevant witness he could find – a foreign woman with a bad reputation. Christ's defense of Mary of Bethany's right to learn from his teachings alongside his other disciples addresses the issue of female education. Education impacts an individual's ability to garner respect and knowledge, regardless of gender, and so Jesus opening this up to women is notable. Finally, the passages concerning Mary Magdalene and the women at the resurrection are significant because, like with the Samaritan Woman, Christ selected culturally unreliable witnesses to carry on the Christian faith. All of these stories show something important about Jesus' views of women – what he saw them as capable of, how he expected them to act as his followers, and how he expected them to be treated by their brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Samaritan Woman

The first passage discussed in this paper is the story of Jesus and the Woman of Samaria, which is found in the gospel of John, chapter 4 (Appendix A). In the passage, Jesus comes across a foreign woman drawing water from a well while traveling to Galilee. The interaction that takes place between the two is contextually rich and full of implications for followers of Jesus today.

Socially Relevant History

The relationship between Samaritans and Jews was tumultuous and complicated. Jewish people saw Samaritans as below them and unworthy of interaction (Brown 170, John 4:9). The animosity between the two cultures dates back hundreds of years from this interaction. One of the main sources of conflict was the Samaritans' refusal to worship in Jerusalem as the Jewish people insisted. The conflict grew stronger when Samaritans aided a Syrian war against the Jews and worked to prevent temple reconstruction in Jerusalem (Brown). This issue of where to worship was the most important religious conflict in the Samaritan Woman's life, prompting her to bring it up to Jesus later in their discourse. (John 4: 20)

Jewish people viewed Samaritan women in particular as ritually unclean, warning "one could never count on the ritual purity of a Samaritan Woman" (Brown 170). To be unclean in the Jewish community during this time period was to be an outcast until cleanliness was restored. Unclean people were not accepted ritually, religiously, or socially. The idea of holy, clean, and unclean was built into the fabric of Jewish society. Occupations, medical conditions, and animals were just some of the things categorized as holy, clean, and unclean. People were categorized this way as well – priests were holy, Israelites were clean, Gentiles were unclean. In this way, every aspect of Jewish life bolstered the idea that they served a holy God, and were a people

separated from the rest of the world with the intention of keeping their bloodlines pure. All it took to become ritually unclean was to interact with someone or something that was unclean, such as the Samaritan Woman. By engaging in a conversation with her, Jesus made himself unclean by Jewish standards (Sprinkle).

Public interaction between women and men at this time was frowned upon and uncommon. In fact, “Men were strongly advised to avoid all possible contact with women except what was necessary for the procreation of children. Foreign women were thought to be especially dangerous” (Tetlow). Jewish Rabbis were especially opposed to interacting with women. John 4:27 demonstrates how unusual this interaction was; Jesus’ disciples were “surprised to find him talking with a woman”. It’s important to note that this is the only place in the gospel of John where Jesus interacting with women causes any sort of surprise, indicating that Jesus set an expectation as to how he would interact with women during the remainder of his life on earth with this encounter (O’Day).

While the Samaritan Woman’s relationship history is not the focal point of the passage, and so will not be the focal point of this exegesis, it is important to understand her reputation in the community. She had the type of past Jews and Samaritans both condemned – but Jesus doesn’t focus on her history. Scripture states that this woman had many husbands and an extramarital partner, but this element of her story only takes up one verse out of 45 (John 4). Her status in the community does not prevent her from furthering the gospel – in fact her history of questionable decisions may be something that furthered her testimony. John 4:39 states “many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all the things that I have done’”. If Jesus knew all the transgressions of the town harlot, he could easily know anyone’s past. Regardless, the Samaritan Woman’s status – socially, ethnically, or

sexually – did not prevent her from being the second person to share the good news of Jesus in the book of John, the first being John the Baptist (John 1, 3). This isn't the first time Jesus demonstrates his claim as the Son of God through his omniscience. In John 1:47 – 50, Jesus calls Nathanael to be his disciple by similar means.

The hour at which this interaction occurs brings some context to the reputation the Samaritan Woman may have held. She came to draw water during the 6th hour (John 4:6-7), which was not the typical time of day for such a chore. Drawing water at midday was unusual, as people preferred to do it early in the morning or later at night when the sun was not blazing hot (Brown 169). At midday, other women in the community would be unlikely to be at the well (Wilkins). Many people argue this women's sordid relationship history caused her to be rejected by the rest of the town (John 4:18, O'Flaherty). This interpretation of the passage's setting is used to portray the Samaritan Woman as an outcast with questionable morals. However, Jesus does not focus on her relationship history. He mentions her past as a way of legitimizing himself in her eyes (John 4:19), and quickly moves on from her physical choices in favor of her spiritual needs (John 4:18, John 4:21-26).

Theological Significance

In other parts of scripture the terminology of 'had to' used here alludes to God's will or plan. Geographically speaking, Jesus didn't have to go through Samaria to return to Galilee, there were other routes he could have chosen to avoid interaction with the Samaritans (Brown 169). In this case, Christ 'had to' travel this route in order for this interaction to take place, and set an example for equality of race and gender very early in his ministry.

The type of discourse that takes place between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman after their initial connection is important. She is the first person in the gospel of John to engage in this type of interaction with Christ – an interaction that is characterized by deep, theological discussion pertinent to the people involved. After the woman is confident in Jesus’ spiritual knowledge, she poses one of the most crucial questions in her religious practices – where her people ought to worship God (John 4:12-20). This was a major source of conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans, and supported the racism and bitterness present on both sides (“Hatred Between”). Jesus takes this opportunity to share a glimpse of the future of Christianity with her – one where people worship “in spirit and truth”, and not at any specified physical location (John 4:23). After she demonstrates faith in the promise of a Messiah, Jesus states his true identity as the Son of God (John 4:25).

This entire interaction brings the gender roles of the day into question. Drawing water was a chore for women. It was a female responsibility to ensure the family was well supplied with water from the local well (Bidmead). In drawing water from the well, the Samaritan Woman was fulfilling the expected gender roles of the day. By interacting with a foreign man and sparking a theological discussion with him, she begins to deny her society’s constrictive gender roles, and when she leaves her pot to spread the news of the Messiah she further defies expectations (John 4:28). In addition to this, she takes on the role of teacher or missionary, sharing the gospel – the good news of the come messiah – with the men in her town. The roles of teacher and student were both exclusive to men during this time period, but when Jesus allows a foreign woman to take on these, his ministry is furthered and more people come to follow him (Papazov, Wordelman). Through her choice to abandon gender based cultural expectations, the Samaritan Woman brings the gospel to her entire town (John 4:39).

It's interesting that Christ allows the Samaritan Woman to share her testimony of their interaction – at other points in scripture, Jesus performs miraculous signs and instructs the witnesses not to tell anyone (Mark 1:44, 5:43, 7:36, Matthew 9:30). Here though, he allows the woman to share her testimony with the town, and it was because of that testimony that many Samaritans came to follow Christ (John 4:39). She was the first Samaritan to hear the good news, and the first to share that news with others (Brock 56). Following this line of thought, the people in Sychar would have been the first group of non-Jewish people to receive any sort of Salvation, where Salvation refers to eternal life. Up until this point, the promise of eternal life was considered to be exclusive to the Jews, God's chosen people, but Jesus offers it to an ethnic group detested by the Jews (John 4:22-23, John 4:9). Even more important is how he offered Salvation to them – through a social outcast, a woman with a questionable past. Culturally speaking, Jesus' choice of witness was not practical or logical, a theme that continues later in his ministry at his resurrection.

Another layer of meaning in this passage is its allusions to Eucharist/Communion, a spiritual practice exercised as a way to draw close to God (Nouwen). Before his crucifixion, Christ asks his disciples to drink in remembrance of him, of his identity as the Son of God and as the ultimate sacrifice (Matthew 26:27-29). Here, very early in his ministry, Jesus asks the foreign woman for a drink as a way of sharing the truth of his identity as the Messiah. In sharing a drink with the Samaritan Woman, Jesus draws her and her entire town closer to God. He lets them in on his ministry promising Salvation. The themes of racism and ethnocentrism hold a strong presence throughout the New Testament, as the church works to accept Gentiles as followers of Jesus. Scripture rebukes discriminatory attitudes over and over, emphasizing unity in Christ as God's divine intention (John 10:16, Acts 15: 7-9, Acts 17:26-27, Acts 28:28, Romans 10:12, 1

Corinthians 12:12-13, Galatians 3:14, Colossians 3:10-11). Jesus' interaction here does not only address sexism, it addresses the bitterness and unwarranted disgust between the Jewish people and the Samaritans.

Implications for Today

By taking this stand so early in his ministry, Jesus sets the tone his followers should adhere to – that all are equally broken and equally in need of God's mercy. Regarding gender, the example set by Christ in this passage is clear. If Jesus treated the Samaritan Woman as equal, worthy of education and intellectual conversation, followers of Jesus should treat women in the same way. If women have Jesus' blessing to testify and teach others, they should not be excluded from speaking and teaching in church.

The role of leadership the Samaritan Woman takes on within her town during this passage hints at Jesus' heart for women's place within a congregation. After her encounter with Christ, she physically and spiritually led many of the people in her city to him (John 4:40-42). One role women are especially excluded from within many congregations is that of Elder – the highest place of leadership within a Christian church.

It is often argued that, because the twelve disciples in Christ's inner circle were men, women should be excluded from the highest points of leadership in church. Craig Keener argues:

It was not inconsistent for Jesus to be countercultural in some ways (allowing women disciples) but to accommodate his culture in others (choosing males for the Twelve, whom he would send out to evangelize). Ministry in any culture requires decisions on which priorities we must fight for. Sending out women on

evangelistic travels, either as two women alone (regarded as unsafe) or a woman and a man (scandalous) was impractically provocative and counter productive to the mission. (Keener 195)

Jesus' ministry on earth was not without purpose. There were some scenarios, such as those mentioned above, where utilizing a female follower would have been pointless because of the patriarchal society Jesus ministry was operating within. Christ's pattern of defying and adhering to culture was not random, it was well thought out. He took a stand for gender equality in situations where it would not completely undermine his ministry. Jesus didn't do things the way they'd always been done. He embraced change within his religious activities, and didn't stick to tradition when it was wrong.

Mary of Bethany

While much shorter than the passage featuring the Samaritan Woman, the story of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet while he teaches, found in Luke 10 (Appendix B) holds a fair amount of weight in Jesus' example for the treatment of women.

Socially Relevant History

In a time where a woman's legitimacy was judged by her ability to "care for her children, her diligence in overseeing the work of household slaves, and her skill in spinning and weaving", females were educated exclusively in skills that would allow them to be a good homemaker (Wordelman). Women were most likely educated in domestic skills such as cooking, cleaning, and keeping a kosher home, and would only be literate if a person in their household taught them (Papazov, Hill). In Roman culture, there was often a male head of household who called the shots, which would be carried out on a more detailed level by a female, often his wife. Women who were especially wealthy and/or widowed could act as a household head, but it was a rare occurrence (Wordelman). In the case of Mary and Martha, we know they were not an all female household – they had a brother, Lazarus. If the sisters were in a higher financial class, Martha would have had slaves to help her in cooking and cleaning. Because there was a man in the household, and scripture suggests they did not have slaves, it is likely Mary and Martha's day-to-day lives consisted of keeping a kosher household - cooking, cleaning, weaving, and general homemaking.

Mary's role in this situation was set in stone. She was expected to play hostess, feeding and caring for her household's guests (Luke 10:40). Especially when hosting a prominent religious teacher, the women of the household would have been expected to serve silently. "In

Jewish religion women were kept subordinate and silent. Women were more restricted in Judaism than they had been in the Old Testament” (Tetlow). It was not acceptable for a hostess to take part in the discourse between a Rabbi and his disciples. Mary taking a seat at Christ’s feet as he spoke carries extreme significance - “to sit at someone’s feet meant, quite simply, to be their student. And to sit at the feet of a rabbi was what you did if you wanted to be a rabbi yourself” (Wright). Therefore, Mary was not just listening to Jesus because it was interesting. Mary taking this position defied the cultural standards for female religious education. She was learning from a rabbi, or teacher, with the implications of one day teaching others, despite the fact that as a woman, she was barred from public speaking or reading the Torah out loud (Papazov). In her devotion to learning, Mary was preparing herself to serve the church in ways that challenged her culture’s expectations.

All of this brings the term discipleship into question. What exactly does discipleship entail? Is it dependent on gender, or something bigger? Popular definitions include:

1. (n.) One who receives instruction from another; a scholar; a learner; especially, a follower who has learned to believe in the truth of the doctrine of his teacher; an adherent in doctrine; as the disciples of Plato; the disciples of our Savior. 2. (v. t.) To teach; to train. 3. (v.t.) To punish; to discipline. 4. (v.t.) To make disciples of; to convert to the doctrines or principles.

(Websters)

2. A scholar, Matthew 10:24. In the New Testament it is applied principally to the followers of Christ; sometimes to those of John the Baptist, Matthew

22:16. It is used in a special manner to point out the twelve, Matthew 10:1. A disciple of Christ may now be defined as one who believes his doctrine, rests upon his sacrifice, imbibes his spirit, imitates his example, and lives to do his work. (Bible Hub – ATS Bible Dictionary)

The general consensus is that a disciple is someone who has been educated in some kind of lifestyle/doctrine, and who applies that learning to their day-to-day life. A disciple lives by the example a teacher passed on to them. With this in mind, the implications of Jesus allowing Mary to be educated among his disciples become clearer. The importance of education and wisdom is emphasized through scripture, particularly in Proverbs, and is often linked to commitment to God (Proverbs 1:7, 4:13, 9:9, 9:10, 18:15). These verses are not gender-specific, but a significant lack of religious education in the ancient world became a roadblock to many women (Tetlow). In this time period, a woman's ability to be active within a religious group was often tied to her ability to contribute financially, rather than her intellectual drive or theological knowledge (Wordelman). Mary took on the role of disciple in that she devoted herself to the doctrine laid out by her Rabbi, and allowed that to change the way she lived. Later in Jesus' ministry, Mary shows faith when her brother dies, and devotion to Christ as she anoints him before his crucifixion (John 11:32, 12:3). Mary's commitment to Jesus and his ministry grows as she behaves as a true disciple, despite her gender.

One of the most overlooked elements in this passage is the reasoning behind Martha's demands that Mary come away from her place at Jesus feet to cook and clean. Mary's choice to sit among the male guests was entirely outside of her culture's definition of gender roles. At this time, space was divided into gendered sections – public space for men and private space for

women (Torjesen). In this passage, Martha was in the kitchen, a private space suited for women. The male guests were in a public space, listening to Jesus teach. Everyone was in their proper place; until Mary crossed boundaries by sitting in the public, male dominated space to listen to Christ speak. Martha was not simply upset that Mary was not helping her cook; she was upset because Mary was acting like a man (Wright). It was scandalous for her to be in the men's space, and even worse for her to be listening at the rabbi's feet. Mary was blatantly rejecting people's gender-based expectations of her in front of a prominent rabbi. The scandal and possible humiliation drove Martha's demands on Mary and Jesus.

Theological Significance

Jesus' response when Martha attempts to bring Mary back into the gender norms of cooking and entertaining guests is telling of his attitude towards for female followers. Christ adamantly defends Mary's position at his feet, saying, "Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10: 42). In this way, Jesus protects Mary's place as a disciple, as someone worthy of education, and even as someone who may speak to and teach others. Jesus' example here is wildly different from what was expected in a culture where "all conversation between men and women was discouraged. Women were not permitted to receive any education" (Tetlow), and "women were barred from studying the Torah... women were kept physically separate from men in the synagogue and were not allowed to read at all. Furthermore, women were denied the education which would have enabled them to preach" (Tetlow). Jesus not only chooses Mary as someone worthy of religious education, he defends her choice to defy gendered expectations and her place as a disciple at the rabbi's feet.

Implications for Today

Something that is easily downplayed in an exegesis of this passage is the core of Jesus' actions. Often, we examine the meaning of the situation - the implications of Mary's actions, Martha's actions, and the side of the argument Jesus takes – but we gloss over the simplicity of Christ's reaction. By defending Mary's right to sit at his feet in the male space of the household, fulfilling a male role, Jesus defends gender equality. He does not passively stand by and allow the two women to sort it out for themselves. He does not take them aside to discuss the matter privately. Jesus takes a public stand on women's equality by defending Mary from Martha's conformity in front of the other people present (Luke 10:38-39). Christ took an active role in the situation on the side of equality.

To be a rabbi is not only to teach, but also to lead within the Jewish religion. Webster's defines rabbi as “a person who is trained to make decisions about what is lawful in Judaism, to perform Jewish ceremonies, or to lead a Jewish congregation”. Jesus was not simply educating Mary, he was allowing her to sit as a rabbi-to-be, a role that would one day entail leadership (Wright). Not only should women have access to religious education, they should not be prevented from leveraging that education to teach others and make leadership decisions.

Women at the Resurrection

The final thing this thesis will address is the women at Jesus' resurrection. This story is found in all four canonical gospels, Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20 (Appendices C, D, E, F). Each book brings its own point of view and details to the story, but the basic elements remain constant. After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus chose to appear first to female followers despite their lack of credibility in that time and place.

Socially Relevant History

In this day and age, women were not considered reliable witnesses. Wordelman succinctly states that society viewed “women as mentally and physically inferior beings, irrational and superstitious”, a view that “supported the norm of male political power and authority” (Wordelman 482). This perception bled into every aspect of female existence in the Roman Empire. Women's testimony was not considered acceptable evidence in court, and male-female conversation was frowned upon (Tetlow). Women of this time were denied access to education and were often only taught what they needed to know to properly run a household (Tetlow, Wordelman, Papazov). It wasn't logical to select a female witness to propel news of a resurrected rabbi, given the skeptical and misogynistic audience of ancient Rome. Scripture shows that even Jesus' devoted followers did not believe the female witnesses to the resurrection (Luke 24:11, Mark 16:11).

The only woman mentioned by name in all four canonical resurrection narratives, Mary Magdalene emerges as a prominent figure in this section of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1, John 20:1). As the first person Jesus appeared to and the first to be commissioned to testify, she is known as the First Apostle, and the Apostle of the Apostles (Mark 16:9, John 20:17,

Brock). Feminist biblical scholar Karen King points out Mary's qualifications for Apostleship – she fits the description Paul puts forth in Acts 1:21-22. Despite this, Mary was one of the least effective choices Jesus could have made to further the gospel. Not only was she a woman, susceptible to all of the oppression and underestimation that entailed, she had a past of insanity due to severe demon possession (Mark 16:9). Even the disciples who knew Mary through Christ's ministry did not believe her account of Jesus' resurrection (King, Mark 16:10-11, Luke 24:10-11).

While church tradition has assigned Mary the reputation of a sinful reformed prostitute living promiscuously prior to her time with Christ, there's little support for these depictions. The use of Mary to symbolize an especially sinful yet forgiven person didn't start until the 6th century, but has become a widely accepted concept (McClain, Lockyer, Lundholm). The medieval portrait of Magdalene has almost entirely overshadowed the earlier, more scripturally based view of Mary as an important and faithful disciple of Christ (King). There is evidence that Mary's hometown, Magdala, had a thriving prostitution industry, which is likely where many of the assumptions about Mary Magdalene find their base (Lockyer). However, scriptures depict Mary as an incredibly devoted follower of Jesus. He healed her of demon possession, to which she responded by serving his ministry emotionally, personally, and most likely, financially (Wordelman, Lockyer). Her demon possession is indicative of mental instability rather than poor morals (Lundholm, Lockyer). In King's words "the portrayal of Mary as a prominent disciple and leader is much more consistent with the early sources than that of the repentant whore and countertype to Eve, which has no historical foundation whatsoever" (King 620).

After Jesus' ascension, Mary Magdalene was an influential leader in the early Christian church (King). Further support for her importance and reputation in the years following Jesus

time on earth is found in the very existence of the Gnostic Gospel of Mary. Only three fragmented manuscripts of Mary's gospel have been discovered, leaving our picture of the text incomplete. Translation variance adds to the imperfections of the record. While the texts that remain are not nearly as historically sound as other New Testament writings, the presence of a gospel from Mary Magdalene's point of view shows the important role she played in Jesus' ministry (King). Mary's heart for Christ and for the early church took precedence over her status as a woman.

Theological Significance

The word Apostle is one of the most implicative words in the scriptures. The Greek term *ἀπόστολος* (pronounced ap-os'-tol-os) has unclear origins, but the biblical meaning of the word has been boiled down to two main qualifications (Brock). In the epistles, an Apostle is defined as someone who witnessed the risen Christ and was commissioned to share the news (Galatians 1:11-16, 1 Corinthians 15:8-11). In 1 Corinthians 9:1, Paul states "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?". The implications here are monumental. In John 20:11-18, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene after raising from the grave, saying "... Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (John 20:17). It is this interaction that sparked the title Apostle of the Apostles for Mary Magdalene (Brock). As the first to witness the risen Christ, and the first to be commissioned to share testimony of his resurrection, Mary Magdalene fits the qualifications of the word *ἀπόστολος*. Mary and the other women at the resurrection have gained some recognition for their role in spreading the gospel, and deserve to

be known as “independent, motivated women [who were] both the first witnesses to the resurrection and the first missionaries of the church” (Levine “Matthew” 349).

The resurrection narratives portray the women present as “models of true discipleship” (King 619). The women who served Christ were loyal; they did not abandon him in his hour of need, they went above and beyond to give him a proper burial, and took care of his needs after his death. The women showed incredible faith and determination in sharing the news of Christ’s resurrection, despite the fact that as women, the doubtful disciples were unlikely to believe them. The gospel of Mark is especially interesting in the way it portrays Jesus’ followers. In Mark’s narrative, female followers take a back seat to the male disciples up until the crucifixion. It isn’t until the men following Christ abandon him that the women take center stage, enduring the crucifixion and going to properly bury his body (Tolbert). His female disciples show their devotion in the way they stayed with Christ at the crucifixion, and in their choice to go to his tomb despite uncertainty they would even be able to get inside to anoint his body (Mark 15:40, Mark 16:3). In both of these moments of service, the men are noticeably absent.

The faith displayed by Christ’s female followers carries over to his first appearances post-resurrection. The women who witness the resurrection react with faithful belief, while the other disciples doubt Jesus (Matthew 28:8-9, Luke 24:8-9, Luke 24:36-41, John 20:25). In fact, their faith was so great, in three of the four gospel narratives, these women left to share the news of Christ’s resurrection. In Matthew, the women who go to the tomb believe and travel with intent to testify before ever seeing Jesus in person (Matthew 28:10-11). They immediately leave to inform the disciples after they encounter an angel, despite the fact that Jesus himself does not appear to the women until they are already on the journey back from the tomb (Matthew 28:8-10). The women had enough faith in Jesus when he was alive that they believed the Angel’s

unbelievable message and went to testify, despite their culture's lack of esteem in anyone of their gender.

In addition to this, Jesus' choice to start the spread of his message with women speaks to the character of the message. Women, a portion of the Jewish people that had been given minimal presence in New Testament Judaism, were the first to share a gospel that is open to all people – man, woman, Jew and Gentile (Wainwright). The core message is inclusion of all disciples in Christ Jesus. Paul recognizes this in Galatians 3:28; "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". Jesus deliberately chose female messengers as the first in Christianity, a choice that echoes the very spirit of the gospel. It is a message of salvation to a humanity that is uniformly broken, and equally in need of saving regardless of gender, race, class, reputation, past, or anything else.

Implications for Today

Clearly, Jesus did not see gender as a key factor in apostleship. He chose his followers who were most faithful to him during the crucifixion, the ones who went to his tomb first, to be the first witnesses to his resurrection – a decision he made regardless of gender. He chose women to lead the disciples into the next phase of Christianity; even knowing their gender would be a detriment to others' belief. Once again, his treatment of women set a previously unheard of standard for equality in male/female roles in religion.

When addressing the role of women in church, people often focus on whether or not women can be pastors. While not unimportant, this question does not address the coexistence of pastors and apostles in the early church. The role of apostle was higher than that of pastor, and was a role Jesus bestowed upon a woman first (Keener). Once Jesus placed Magdalene in the

role of apostle, she became an influential leader in the early church, in spite of her gender (King).
Feminine apostleship is not just scriptural evidence for women in teaching roles; it offers support for women in leadership roles as well.

Conclusion

After thorough examination of the text complemented by historical context, it is clear that Jesus treated women as equal to men, fully capable of learning, teaching, and leading within churches. He chose them in multiple instances to further his ministry, allowing them to serve as students, teachers, and apostles. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza describes the biblical depiction of women in Christianity stating:

The evangelists called Mark and John highlight the alternative character of the Christian community and therefore accord women apostolic and ministerial leadership... The writers of Mark and John have made it impossible for the Christian church to forget the invitation of Jesus to follow him on the way to the cross. Therefore... what the women have done is not totally forgotten because the Gospel story remembers that the discipleship and apostolic leadership of women are integral parts of Jesus' "alternative" praxis of agapé and service. The "light shines in the darkness" of patriarchal repression and forgetfulness, and this "darkness has never overcome it. (Fiorenza 332, 334)

Agapé refers to the Greek word ἀγάπη (pronounced ag-ah'-pay), which means love, or goodwill. The Greeks had many different words for different types of love, with agapé referring to divine and pure love. It is found in the New Testament primarily in the writings of Paul, John, Peter, and Jude, but is also used occasionally in other books. Agapé is used to describe love between God and humans, and between Christians (Bible Hub – Thayer's Greek Lexicon).

While Christianity relies greatly on its canonical scriptures, the highest of these is the life and example of Jesus. As the center of the Christian faith, Jesus' interactions recorded in the gospels are the most universally applicable. Other pieces of the New Testament, while still entirely valid and useful in modern day Christianity, were written in specific circumstances to specific groups of people. Much of the New Testament is made up of letters written to certain churches; addressing issues those groups of people were coping with. In contrast, the four canonical gospels, while written with different general audiences in mind, address all followers of Christ rather than specific congregations. Because of this fundamental difference in the nature of the texts, Jesus' interactions take precedence over other parts of scripture in terms of the example for those following Christ.

After examination of Jesus' interactions with the Samaritan Woman at the well, Mary of Bethany at his feet, and the women at his resurrection, it is clear he set a strong example for his followers regarding the treatment of women. With the Samaritan Woman, Jesus educates her as a disciple and allows her to become a teacher to the rest of her town, who she then leads to him. At Mary and Martha's house, Jesus defends Mary's choice to defy gender roles and choose religious education with the implications of teaching over homemaking. Finally, Jesus chose women to be the first witnesses to his resurrection. Through this he made them apostles who went on to teach and lead his male disciples into the next phase of his ministry. The evidence found in these passages can and should be used as guidelines within the church. Jesus saw women as worthy students, teachers, and leaders, roles that should be available to them in modern day churches.

Appendix A - John 4

Jesus Goes to Galilee

1Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John **2**(although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), **3**He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. **4**And He had to pass through Samaria. **5**So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; **6**and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

The Woman of Samaria

7There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." **8**For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. **9**Therefore the Samaritan Woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan Woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) **10**Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." **11**She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? **12**"You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" **13**Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; **14**but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

15The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." **16**He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." **17**The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; **18**for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." **19**The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. **20**"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." **21**Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. **22**"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23**"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. **24**"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." **25**The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." **26**Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

27At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?" **28**So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, **29**"Come, see a man who told me all the things that I *have* done; this is not the Christ, is it?" **30**They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

31Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." **32**But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." **33**So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him *anything* to eat, did he?" **34**Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. **35**"Do you not say, 'There are yet four

months, and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. **36**"Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. **37**"For in this *case* the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' **38**"I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

The Samaritans

39From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I *have* done." **40**So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. **41**Many more believed because of His word; **42**and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

43After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. **44**For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. **45**So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.

Appendix B – Luke 10:38-42

At the Home of Martha and Mary

38As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. **39**She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. **40**But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

41"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, **42**but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Appendix C – Matthew 28

Jesus Has Risen

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. **2** There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. **3** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. **4** The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. **5** The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. **6** He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. **9** Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

The Guards’ Report

11 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. **12** When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, **13** telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ **14** If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” **15** So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

The Great Commission

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Appendix D – Mark 16

Jesus Has Risen

1When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. **2**Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb **3**and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

4But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. **5**As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

6"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. **7**But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

8Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.^a

[The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9–20.]

9When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. **10**She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. **11**When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

12Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. **13**These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.

14Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

15He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. **16**Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. **17**And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; **18**they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

19After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. **20**Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

Jesus Has Risen

28 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. **2** There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. **3** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. **4** The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. **5** The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. **6** He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his

disciples. **9** Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

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11 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. **12** When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, **13** telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ **14** If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” **15** So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

The Great Commission

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Appendix E – Luke 24

Jesus Has Risen

1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. **2** They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. **5** In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? **6** He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: **7** ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ” **8** Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. **10** It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. **11** But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. **12** Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

On the Road to Emmaus

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles[a] from Jerusalem. **14** They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. **15** As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; **16** but they were kept from recognizing him. **17** He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. **18** One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” **19** “What things?” he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. **20** The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; **21** but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. **22** In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning **23** but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. **24** Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” **27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. **28** As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. **29** But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. **30** When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. **31** Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. **32** They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” **33** They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together **34** and saying, “It is true! The Lord

has risen and has appeared to Simon.” **35** Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” **37** They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.

38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? **39** Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” **40** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. **41** And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he took it and ate it in their presence. **44** He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. **46** He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things. **49** I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. **46** He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things. **49** I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

The Ascension of Jesus

50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. **51** While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. **52** Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. **53** And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Appendix F - John 20

The Empty Tomb

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” 3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 13 They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

17 Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” 18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” Jesus Appears to Thomas 24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” 28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Then Jesus told him, “Because

you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” The Purpose of John’s Gospel **30** Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **31** But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

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