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John 20:17 & 27: the 2nd coming? Kenneth Lent 2022

Did Jesus return for His second coming when He appeared to Thomas, after He had previously appeared to Mary Magdalene? What saith the Word of God? The below verses are quoted by preterists to deduce that Jesus ascended to heaven shortly after His resurrection, then returned to appear to the brethren in Acts chapter one. The claim is that Jesus told Mary to not touch Him since He had not ascended to the Father, but then later told Thomas to touch Him. Therefore the assumption is made that Jesus ascended to heaven immediately after His visit to Mary, then came back for his “second coming” to appear to the disciples including Thomas.

John chapter 20

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

John chapter 20

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

From here we are told that Jesus ascended to the Father after He appeared to Mary, then returned to Earth to appear to Thomas and the other disciples, thus His “second coming”. This is nowhere mentioned or even hinted at in the account. It is preterist speculation to make their doctrine “fit”. When we look up the word “touch” as used in John 20:17 (touch me not) we note it is the Greek word *haptomai* at Strong’s #680. This Greek word is used in several different applications depending on the sentence context. It could mean *touch* in a secondary or tertiary meaning, but the primary meaning is “to attach oneself to” from #681 “to fasten”. This is the meaning of *haptomai* in accord with what had just transpired with Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection.

We can picture the emotional scene as the Bible unfolds the story to us. Mary Magdalene was earlier healed by Jesus and she became one of His most devout followers. Then He was lost to her by the horrible crucifixion upon the cross. Mary, as the rest of Christ's flock, was devastated with sadness. Then, lo and behold, Jesus appears to her having risen from death! What joy indeed! Mary had no intention of letting Jesus leave again and had "fastened" herself to Him as anyone would a long lost friend who had returned from some hopeless circumstance. In her mind, being overwhelmed with elation and love for Jesus, she wasn't going to let Him go. But Jesus had to inform her, "Mary, you are going to have to quit hanging on me, I have important things to do, I can't stay." (paraphrased). Among the work that Jesus needed to do was to teach the disciples about the Kingdom for 40 days. So He did.

There is no mention at all that He ascended to heaven then returned. He did not leave the Earth at this time. We soon read that Jesus appeared to the disciples, among whom was "doubting Thomas". Jesus told Thomas to handle His hands and side where His wounds were. Thomas then believed. This is simply the plain story of what the Scriptures record about the events. [To attempt to force another interpretation into the account leads to a domino effect of many other misleading ideas. It is not the purpose of this short treatise to elaborate on the false doctrines that follow this belief.]

Then while Jesus was still on the Earth after His resurrection (not having ascended to the Father) we read in Acts chapter 1 that He spent 40 days teaching the disciples about the Kingdom.

Acts chapter 1:

1 "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:
3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:
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9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.
10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;
11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Here we have the clear teaching that Jesus' ascension to the Father was after 40 days as He had taught the disciples the appropriate fundamentals about His Kingdom. His return in power and glory will not be a dubious one. It will be "on clouds" and it will be impressive indeed. Jesus is the visible manifestation of Yahweh and the type of power clouds He "rides" is the powerful cherub. Here's a link: [Cherub \(pg 5 & 6 of that study\)](#).

There are various takes on Christ's return proposed by preterists with some claiming that Jesus returned "in spirit" as the collective Roman army which destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD, with the "clouds" being the "dust clouds" kicked up by the massive Roman army legions. But our King is unambiguous that His return will be notably seen above and it will be from *east to west*. This disqualifies the preterist doctrine that says Jesus returned "as Rome" with the power of the Roman army that traveled *west to east* to put Jerusalem under siege. The destruction of Jerusalem was not Jesus' second coming.

Luke 17: 24 "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day."

Mat.24:27 "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Finally, concerning the phrase "touch me not" (KJV) in John 20:17 as Christ communed with Mary Magdalene, may I respectfully point out to the Bible researcher that this author is by no means the first to observe that the translation is lacking in accuracy of meaning. The realistic context in the Greek text tells us that our Master could not stay long with Mary because of His need to instruct the disciples before He was called to ascend to the Father. It had nothing to do with Jesus supposedly telling Mary "nobody can touch me until after I go to heaven". Below are just a few Bible translations which point out the Greek text correctly in this verse:

"Jesus said to her, Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father," (New American Standard Bible)

"Yahshua saith unto her, Be not detaining Me, for not yet have I ascended unto the Father ---" (Rotherham Version Bible)

"Don't cling to me," Jesus told her, "since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (Christian Standard Bible)

"Do not cling to me, said Jesus, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (Weymouth New Testament)

Acts chapter 1 tells us that Jesus' ascended to the Father after 40 days teaching His disciples. Jesus could not be detained by Mary (Jn.20:17) and told her as much. 3