

John Chapter 20

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1. The rulers were convinced they had defeated the Man from Nazareth. But this chapter shows how miserably they failed.
2. This story is the climax of the Gospel of John. It is the evidence that convinced John the writer himself that Jesus rose from the grave. The other gospels had been in circulation for perhaps 40 years at this time, but John replays his own eyewitness evidence. He went back to the very moment when he himself first believed the resurrection, and recounted in the most amazing detail exactly the evidences he had seen and which first overwhelmed his soul with the certainty that Jesus was risen from the dead. That dawn of belief in his heart is recorded in John 20:1-10. That grasp of the resurrection is John's foundation in faith.
3. William Lyon Phelps (Yale) said, "Our faith in God, in Christ, in life itself, is based on the resurrection; for as Paul said,
It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you -- unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place.
(1 Corinthians 15:2 NLT)

HIS BODY IS NOT IN THE TOMB!

(20:1.) Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

- **While it was still dark, Mary** from Magdala came to the **tomb**. **The stone** that had been sealed by the Roman government had

been rolled away from the **tomb** entrance. Something unusual had been going on earlier.

(2.) She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"

- Note the **we** word. Mary was accompanied by several other ladies.

Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. (Mark 16:1-2 NLT)

- Mary **ran** to where **Peter** was staying and also where John was staying and reported the body of **Jesus** missing. She was not expecting a resurrection. She may have surmised that the enemies of Jesus had stolen the body so they could abuse it even more. **William Barclay** correctly observes:

“One of the illuminating things in this story is that Peter was still the acknowledged leader of the apostolic band. It was to him that Mary went. In spite of his denial of Jesus -- and a story like that would not be long in being broadcast -- Peter was still the leader. We often talk of Peter's weakness and instability, but there must have been something outstanding about a man who could face his fellow-men after that disastrous crash into cowardice; there must have been something about a man whom others were prepared to accept as leader even after that. His moment's weakness must never blind us to the moral strength and stature of Peter, and to the fact that he was a born leader.”

(3.) Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb.

- These inner-circle **disciples** ran to **the tomb**. There was no hesitation. **The other disciple** was most assuredly John, the writer and beloved **disciple**.

(4.) They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

- John wants his readers to know that he ran faster than **Peter**, who was probably older also.

(5.) He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in.

- John was reticent to enter but noticed **the linen wrappings** that had been on the body were **lying there**. The body left the tomb without **the linen wrappings**. John may have waited to enter so Peter could see what was there without any thought that John had changed the evidence.

- Notice the normal use **wrappings** in the case of Lazarus:

And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!" (John 11:44 NLT)

A viewer must face the fact that the wrappings of Jesus were *empty*.

(6.) Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, (7.) while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings.

- The wrappings weren't unwrapped. The cocoon was empty -- laying on the floor. Jesus had passed through the cloth, leaving it intact and removing only the head portion. It was like the body had evaporated through the wrappings.
- **Peter** observed the same grave clothes, but the **cloth** that had been on the head of Jesus was there also, **folded**. This shows a lack of haste in leaving.

(8.) Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed --

- John **believed** when he saw the evidence that Jesus was gone. This was his turning point. From this time forward, John was convinced of the resurrection. The disciples went out, not to

announce an empty grave, but a risen Lord. Others believed because they *met* the resurrected Jesus, but John believed *before seeing* Jesus.

(9.) for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.

- They could *see* that Jesus had risen, but they did not **understand** this from the **Scriptures**.
 - **Scriptures** would have included Psalm 16:
For You will not leave my soul among the dead or allow Your holy one to rot in the grave. (Psalms 16:10 NLT)
 - It would have included the story of Abraham offering Isaac and used as an illustration in Hebrews:
Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead. (Hebrews 11:19 NLT)
 - It would have included the Old Testament case of Jonah, who returned symbolically from death:
For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. (Matthew 12:40 NLT)
 - It would have included Psalm 110:
The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit in the place of honor at My right hand until I humble Your enemies, making them a footstool under Your feet." (Psalms 110:1 NLT)

For Jesus to be at the Father's right hand He had to be restored from death. Indeed, the Old Testament had spoken of the resurrection of Christ.

(10.) Then they went home.

- Why linger? Something that could not be explained had happened in the past few hours.

We must note several recent writers who have been convinced of the resurrection:

Simon Greenleaf was among the founders of *Harvard Law School*. He wrote *The Testimony of the Evangelists*. The 946 page version is available as a free download from Gutenberg.org at no cost. Lawyer Greenleaf changed from being an unbeliever in the resurrection to being a believer.

Wright, N. T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

Lee Strobel. *The Case for Christ*. Available as book (Amazon) and video presentation (YouTube). Mr. Strobel, former legal editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, cross-examines a dozen experts with doctorates from schools like Cambridge, Princeton, and Brandeis who are recognized authorities in their own fields.

https://www.divinerevelations.info/pdf/the_case_for_christ.pdf

THE FIRST APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE

(11.) Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in.

- Now the focus is on **Mary**. She was heart-broken that someone had stolen the body of Jesus. While John was convinced of the resurrection, **Mary** didn't grasp it.

(12.) She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying.

- **Two angels** from God appeared to Mary. One was where Jesus' **head** had been while the other was at His **feet**.

(13.) "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her. "Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put Him."

- **They** refers to some of His enemies. She didn't have a clue where the body had been moved to.

(14.) She turned to leave and saw Someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize Him.

- In a few hours others would see **Jesus** and not recognize Him also. This was part of the Father's plan.

(15.) "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought He was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if You have taken Him away, tell me where You have put Him, and I will go and get Him."

- We often recognize the voice of others, but His voice must have been different also. In Mary's mind, this was **the gardener**.

(16.) "Mary!" Jesus said. She turned to Him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

- **Jesus** spoke her name and she recognized who He was. Mary did not recognize **Jesus** because He identified Himself, but because He identified her. Her eyes may have failed, but not her ears.

(17.) "Don't cling to Me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find My brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.'"

- Mary must have grabbed **Jesus** to hold Him. He explained that He had to go **to the Father**. This shows the body was real. A myth has formed based on the *King James Version* that Jesus was not to be touched. **Cling** is a more accurate word here than *touch*.
- **Hendriksen** paraphrases this way:

"Do not think, Mary, that by grasping hold of me so firmly you can keep me always with you. That uninterrupted fellowship for which you yearn must wait until I have ascended to be forever with the Father."
- Then Jesus commissioned Mary Magdalene to go and tell "**My brothers.**" This is the first time He uses that word to describe His followers. From here on, Jesus is big brother to God's family. Paul also says this in Romans:

For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

(Romans 8:29 NLT)

- Mary was also commissioned to announce the **ascension** of Jesus. It would happen soon.

Then Jesus led them to Bethany, and lifting His hands to heaven, He blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up to heaven. So they worshiped Him and then returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy. And they spent all of their time in the Temple, praising God. (Luke 24:50-53 NLT)

Mary had several honors.

(18.) Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them His message.

- While **Mary** became the messenger, she experienced rejection of her **message** by the disciples. (Luke 24:10-11) The Jewish courts did not accept the testimony of a woman, but Jesus used it. **Mary** was the first person to announce the resurrection.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE TO THE DISCIPLES

(19.) That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," He said.

- **The disciples** had planned to meet Sunday **evening**. **The first day of the week** was becoming important for the assembly of believers. They met the following Sunday **evening**, too.
- Since the **Jewish leaders** had killed their leader, they were **afraid** to meet without being **behind locked doors**.
- How did **Jesus** get in? Just as He had passed through the linen wrapping in the tomb, He is no longer restricted by **doors** and **locks**.
- His greeting was a blessing of **peace**. This would be a relief to the disciples because most of them ran off when the pressure was on Thursday evening. But there was no rebuke or blame. **James Smith** says "All would be well going forward."

(20.) As He spoke, He showed them the wounds in His hands and His side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!

- Jesus **showed** the hard, irrefutable evidence: His wounded **hands** and His wounded **side**. On this point, the disciple's view rested on tangible evidence.
- Fear in verse 19 turned to **joy** as they were convinced that Jesus was truly there.

(21.) Again He said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you."

- A second time He spoke the blessing of **peace**.
- Now they get their travel orders. Just like He was **sent** into the world by the **Father**, so they are being **sent** out by the Son. Even though they had deserted **Jesus** a couple of days before, He still trusted them.

(22.) Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

- So Jesus had **breath**. He was not a disembodied spirit.
- They received a large scale measure of **the Holy Spirit** as the church began on Pentecost.

(23.) If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

- As they proclaimed the gospel, they could honestly tell people who believed in that message that their **sins** were **forgiven**, and they could honestly tell people that did not believe in the message that their **sins** were not **forgiven** and that they stand condemned in God's eyes. Jesus said,

And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment. (John 3:36 NLT)

Peter was listening and see how he used the information:

He is the One all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in Him will have their sins forgiven through His name. (Acts 10:43 NLT)

Those who preached the information about how to receive **forgiveness** of **sins** were, in a sense, **forgiving the sinners**.

MY LORD AND MY GOD

(24.) One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin.), was not with the others when Jesus came.

- Note that John still speaks of **the Twelve**, even though Judas is out of the picture. The number will soon be restored to **Twelve** with the addition of Matthias in Acts 1:26.

(25.) They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in His hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in His side."

- The other disciples were convinced by the *personal appearance* of the **Lord**, but Thomas drew the line. He said he needed to *touch* Jesus before he could **believe**. He had to have empirical proof.
- Whether deserved or not, this comment has earned him the title of *Doubting Thomas*.

(26.) Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," He said.

- The next week, **Thomas** was present and **the doors were** again **locked**, but **Jesus** came in anyway.

(27.) Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at My hands. Put your hand into the wound in My side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"

- Jesus, ever the aggressor, confronted **Thomas** and his doubts. They melted quickly. Jesus knew what Thomas had said sometime during the previous week!
- **Thomas** was not convinced by his fellow disciples. He wanted his own proof. When that proof was produced, then he made the strongest statement of all of the men.

(28.) "My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed.

- **Thomas** quickly confessed: **My Lord and my God**. Thomas called Jesus **God** and Jesus accepted the title. Both men were guilty of blasphemy unless it was true. And we know that it was.
- An angel first revealed the resurrection. The empty tomb confirmed the report of the women. Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene was a further step in showing that He was alive. The disciples going to Emmaus proved His presence. He showed Himself to the Eleven, proving that he was human by eating food. Now, the climax of the evidence convinces Thomas who made the outburst affirming that Jesus was his Lord and God.

(29.) Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen Me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing Me."

- While acknowledging the **belief** of Thomas, **Jesus** spoke of a greater **blessing** of those who could not **see** or touch and yet would **believe**. Only a few would have the privilege of **seeing**. Peter, who was present, spoke of this later:

You love Him even though you have never seen Him. Though you do not see Him now, you trust Him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. The reward for trusting Him will be the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8-9 NLT)

R. C. Foster notes,

John opens his gospel with a profound statement concerning Jesus as the incarnation of God. He closes his gospel with this great declaration of Thomas which is a result of actual experience and association. Thomas sums up in one dramatic explanation the message of the entire gospel. The disciple who doubted the most gives at last the final statement of his faith. Thomas hails Jesus as God and Jesus accepts the identification as Thomas worshiped Him.

- **Paul Butler** summarizes John like this:
The purpose of John has been all along to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the Incarnate Word - the Very Son of God, co-equal with the Father - indeed Immanuel, God with us ! This was John's stated purpose in his Prologue (1:1-18),

These climactic verses 30-31 show US that from start to finish the Fourth Gospel is a book of signs that Jesus is the Son of God. This is the first purpose of the book. If the deity of Christ be established and told in a vivid and captivating way then men will be led to believe in Him and gain eternal life. This is the stated second purpose of the gospel record: to bring men to faith and salvation in obedience to the will of Christ (I.e., in His name). The purpose of the gospel record has just been vividly portrayed in the experience of Thomas : he has been brought to a complete faith in the deity of Jesus and commits his life unto Him. “The Fourth Gospel began with the unfolding of the mystery of life which has its source in the Word. It closes with the offer of life to all who will accept Jesus.”

(30.) The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book.

- Some of the **signs** of **Jesus'** ministry are written in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Many were not recorded at all.

Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in Him. (John 2:23 NLT)

In the following chapter, John refers to the abundance of unrecorded **miraculous signs** by **Jesus** again with these words: **Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.** (John 21:25 NLT)

(31.) But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him you will have life by the power of His name.

- The central purpose of this book is to bring about **belief** in **Jesus**, and that leads **to life by the power of His name.**

MUSIC BOX	
<i>Come, let us sing to the LORD! (Psalms 95:1 NLT)</i>	
<i>Verse</i>	Link:
17	<i>Now I Belong to Jesus</i> http://bitly.ws/osoC

There is one more chapter of events following this grand climax and we will take it up next session.