

John 20

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I. 20:1-10 Mary Magdalene, Peter and John Go to the Tomb

A. 20:5-7 *linen cloths ...handkerchief that had been around His head* Back in 19:40 we were told that the body was wrapped in “strips of linen”.

- i. When Jesus raised Lazarus they used a similar method of wrapping the body. It looked something like our picture of a mummy. While Jesus left these strips of linen lying neatly in the tomb, Lazarus needed help to get himself unwrapped:

John 11:44 (NKJV) And he [Lazarus] who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.”

- ii. This doesn't agree with the appearance of the Shroud of Turin, which is one big cloth from head to foot, both front and back. It will be brought out for public display again in 2010, so expect a big hoopla over it in some circles.

- iii. If someone stole the body why bother to unwrap it? And why fold up the cloth from His head? It would have been quick and easy to simply take the body as is with the cloths

B. 20:9 The Old Testament predicted and the New Testament proclaims that Jesus rose from the dead. Notice the strong wording: “He must rise again from the dead.” The resurrection is one of the non-negotiable points of Christian belief.

II. 20:11-18 Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

A. Mary was the first person to see the risen Lord. Who was this Mary?

- i. Name indicates she is from *Magdala, or Migdal* a town in Galilee.
- ii. Some believe that she was the woman of Luke 7, who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head – the “sinful woman”. Maybe. Magdala was known for sinful behavior. The Jewish Talmud declares that the Romans destroyed the city for its immorality (Lam. R. ii. 2). It's still a big step to say the woman is Mary.
- iii. Luke 8 tells us that she was part of the group that followed Jesus around during His ministry. There were others besides the twelve, including several women.
- iv. Both Luke 8 and Mark 16 tell us that the Lord cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene. We can only imagine what her life was like before Jesus came along.

- v. It's probably safe to say that given her past, she had no life without Jesus and she knew it. That would explain her dedication. The one who is forgiven much loves much. We've all been forgiven much – but some find that easier than others to believe.

B. 20:16 Mary did not recognize the Lord when she first saw Him, but only when He said her name.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

C. 20:17-18 Jesus told her to go tell the disciples (His brethren) and that's what Mary did.

- What can we learn from Mary? Don't keep Jesus a secret. Tell others about Him.

III. 20:19-23 Jesus Appears to the Disciples with Thomas Absent

A. 20:19 *at evening ... the [10] disciples were assembled* Two guys were missing:

- i. Judas: He was already *hanging out* elsewhere.
- ii. Thomas: No explanation is given for his absence. Sometimes when you miss those evening home fellowships you really miss out.

B. 20:22 This is a foretaste of what will happen in Acts 2, but is not yet the “full filling”.

C. 20:23 The tense should be rendered “have been forgiven” instead of “are forgiven,” and “have been retained” instead of “are retained.” This tense signifies action which is past at the time of speaking, yet with abiding results. Any declaration of forgiveness should be done on the basis that God has forgiven. Under the leadership of the Spirit, the church proclaims salvation and the accompanying forgiveness. (See *Believer's Study Bible*)

D. How did these disciples understand this and put it into practice?

Acts 10:43 (NKJV) To Him [Jesus] all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission [forgiveness] of sins.

- **Let's be clear:** Our mission is to proclaim that some are forgiven while others are not. Is this “intolerant” of other beliefs? What if people are really on their way to hell because of their sin and need to be forgiven by a holy God who will only do so if they put their faith in the risen Christ? Since that's how it really is, then showing the difference between guilt and forgiveness and explaining how to be forgiven and is the most radical kind of love.
 - i. According to a recent survey published in the Indianapolis Star, Tuesday, June 24 (front page article) 73% of people in Indiana believe “many religions can lead to eternal life.”
 - ii. The same survey reports that 57% of American evangelical churchgoers also believe that “many religions can lead to eternal life.”
- I hope we're doing better than that at Horizon Central.

IV. 20:24-29 Jesus Appears to the Disciples with Thomas Present

- A. 20:27 Jesus responds to what Thomas said, even though He wasn't there when Thomas said it. Pretty impressive – and Thomas is impressed.
- B. 20:28-29 *to Him* Thomas calls Jesus “My Lord and my God!” – an expression of worship, an acknowledgment of Christ's deity. Thomas completely grasped the significance of both seeing and touching the risen Christ.
- i. This is not just an expression of surprise like “Oh my God!” He is saying it **to Jesus**.
 - ii. An expression of surprise wouldn't have been proof of Thomas' faith, yet Jesus viewed it as such. A moment ago he doubted; now he believed and expressed his faith with these words.
 - iii. Jesus receives what Thomas says and doesn't correct him for it. If anything he scolds him for not believing it sooner. Jesus is God. He has power over sin, over death and over hell. His resurrection proves it. He said He would rise from the dead and He did.
- C. Belief in the resurrection is essential to the Christian faith.

“Anyone can be sentimental about the Nativity; any fool can feel like a Christian at Christmas. But Easter is the main event; if you don't believe in the resurrection, you're not a believer.”
– John Irving, *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (1989)

Romans 10:9 (NKJV) that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NKJV) ³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up...

V. 20:30-31 John's Purpose in Writing This Book

- A. John admits that he could have written a lot more about Jesus and what He did while here on earth. This is not an exhaustive collection of Christ's life and work.

Q. Why did he stop here?

A. If you follow a dead prophet, you'll want to make sure you write down everything possible of what the dead man said or did. You know there will never be any more added to the collection. On the other hand, if you serve a living Savior, you only need to say just enough to introduce others to Him. You explain certain basic facts and no more. Once they know Him, He will speak and act for Himself.