

John 20: Overview and Discussion Questions

After Jesus' death, two men came to take down His body and bury Him. The first was a man named Joseph of Arimathea. In Luke 23:50-51, we learn that Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council of priests and religious leaders. He had opposed the Sanhedrin's decision to execute Jesus, and he was, in fact, a secret follower. It was Joseph who asked the Romans for Jesus' body and Luke 23:53 notes that he personally took down the body from the cross. The other man present was none other than Nicodemus, the Pharisee to whom Jesus explained the meaning of what it means to be born again of the Spirit in John 3. Nicodemus brought with him myrrh and aloes to perfume Jesus' body before burial, something that Jewish burial custom would only reserve for someone of great honour. Together, they wrapped Jesus body in linen and placed Him in a tomb that Joseph had himself purchased (Matthew 27:60). The fact that Joseph and Nicodemus did all of this for Jesus testifies to the love they had for Him. Not only did they risk further alienation from the Sanhedrin, but according to the Sanhedrin's interpretation of the Jewish law, members of the council could not come into contact with a corpse lest they be considered ceremoniously unclean. Joseph and Nicodemus love for Jesus far outweighed any concern for tradition, pride, and reputation.

Since the Sabbath was near, Joseph and Nicodemus could not complete the burial process. After the Sabbath, a group of women including Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb to complete the burial. However, when they arrived at the tomb, they found the stone sealing the tomb had been rolled away and Jesus' body was gone. Mary was distraught and ran to tell Peter and John, who confirmed that Jesus' body was no longer in the tomb. John admitted in verse 9 that when he and Peter arrived at the

tomb, they did not understand the significance of the Resurrection that had taken place. But while Peter and John had left to return to their homes, Mary remained at the tomb weeping. It was then that Jesus appeared to her. In this very moving moment, Jesus tells Mary to share with the disciples what she has seen and to tell them about His imminent Ascension into Heaven. He specially asks Mary to tell them in verse 17, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." Through Jesus' death and Resurrection, we now have a restored relationship with God the Father.

Later that evening, Jesus appeared to the disciples and they rejoiced. It was during this joyous reunion that Jesus also imparted the Holy Spirit to them as He had promised in John 14. However, one disciple was not there. For whatever reason, Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus had appeared to them, and yet despite the disciples' testimony, Thomas refused to believe. However, Jesus is patient with those who doubt. Eight days later, Jesus once again appears to the disciples, including Thomas. Placing his hands and fingers on the very places that Jesus was pierced for his sins, Thomas finally believes and says, "My Lord and my God."

The Resurrection is at the core of the Gospel. If Jesus remained in the tomb, there would be no hope for a life free from the bondage of sin and no promise of eternity with the Father. If Jesus remained in the tomb, the Gospel would merely be a free pass to indulge in sin since Jesus had paid it all. Without the Resurrection, the Gospel has no power or relevance for our lives. But the Resurrection is also our ultimate source of comfort, for in our deepest anguish, fears, and doubts, Jesus appears and says, "I am here. Look to me and believe!"

Read the passage prayerfully a few times over and then answer the questions: [John 20](#)

Questions:

1. From a close reading of the Resurrection accounts in the Gospels, as well as other resources you can find, how do we know that the Resurrection is true? ([John 20](#), cf. [Matthew 28](#), [Mark 16](#), [Luke 24](#))
2. Reflect on the responses of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, the disciples, and Thomas to the news of Jesus' Resurrection. What about their responses touches or challenges you?
3. What truths can you glean from Jesus' brief teachings to Mary and the disciples post-Resurrection? ([John 20:17, 29](#))

Application:

What does Jesus' Resurrection mean to you? How can you share the hope of the Resurrection with someone this week?

Conclusion & Heart Prayer:

Lord, what are You saying to me? And what are You calling me to do about it?