

JOHN

Lesson 19 w/Answers

John 20:1-31

In this lesson, we will take a close look at the empty tomb, just as Mary, Peter, and John did. I am praying that this study will add to your understanding of the events surrounding the empty tomb, and that you will come to appreciate the testimony of the Apostles that much more.

In the previous lesson in this series, Jesus had been crucified and hurriedly buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Witnessing all of this was John the writer of this Gospel, and three Marys: Mary the mother of Jesus, her sister who also named Mary and who was the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Let's keep all of these people in mind as we pick up with John's account of Jesus' resurrection in Chapter 20.

Let's read through John Chapter 20 and consider the following:

1. We know from the previous lesson that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus asked Pilate for permission to remove Jesus' body from the cross and bury him; and Pilate approved. Quickly, before the beginning of the Passover meal, they took the body to a private garden owned by Joseph, wrapped it in linen, and a stone was rolled in front of the tomb. Their intent was to return after the Passover celebration and finish the job of preparing his body for interment in the tomb. However, who is it who actually comes to the tomb to finish preparing the body before either Joseph or Nicodemus? Furthermore, how did they know where the body had been buried, given that the two men had taken him to a private garden and tomb, and that it had been sealed with a large stone? (See John 20:1, Matthew 27:61, and Mark 16:1.)
 - a. ANSWER 1: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, all arrived at the tomb very early on Sunday morning, before anyone else had even thought of going. We do not know how the three women thought that they would be able to move the stone in order to enter, but that didn't stop them from going.
 - b. ANSWER 2: As far as the location, they knew where to go (both the location of the garden and the tomb), and they knew about the large stone that had been rolled in front of it. They knew all of this because Mary Magdalene and the other ladies with her at the crucifixion had traveled along with Joseph and Nicodemus to the burial site following the removal of Jesus' body from the cross two days earlier.
2. It may seem curious that John only mentions Mary Magdalene's presence at the tomb in his gospel; but I assume that this is because, of all the ladies present, she will be the one who will actually convey the good news to the disciples, as noted in John 20:18 and Mark 16:9. Mary will actually visit the empty tomb twice that morning. During her second visit, she will see the two angels inside the cave, sitting where Jesus' body was laid. Read Mary's reaction to the empty tomb in John 20:2-14; she is very emotional and extremely upset. When she looks inside the empty tomb and sees two angels, she begins to cry. Why is she crying, and who is she referring to when she says "they?"
 - a. ANSWER: In both of her visits to the empty tomb, Mary does not understand that Jesus has actually risen from the dead. She is not alone, because in fact no one expects to find an empty tomb. She is upset because she cannot finish the process of preparing Jesus' body for burial; and she is upset because she assumes that someone has stolen his body. She believed that grave robbers had come in the night to steal the body, along with any objects that may have been put in the tomb with it.
3. Having read the chapter and seen the evidence that John documents, what is the prophetic evidence in John 19:23-24 and Psalm 22:18 that Jesus is the Messiah?
 - a. ANSWER: Once again, John points us to prophetic scripture about the Messiah. In this passage, he reminds us that what they did to Jesus was just as had been prophesied in Psalm 22: "they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."
4. In John 20:3-10, we see the well-known story about the first two disciples who saw the empty tomb: Peter and John. However, if we examine this passage closer, we find something deeper than a simple visit to an empty tomb. First, who actually got to the site of the Tomb first?
 - a. ANSWER: John actually got to the opening of the tomb first.
5. Continuing our examination above, who actually went into the empty tomb first?
 - a. ANSWER: Peter ran, or rushed, past John and went straight into the tomb itself while John remained outside looking in.
6. While Peter was in the tomb, John was outside looking in. What did John see as he peered into the empty grave?
 - a. ANSWER: He essentially saw the same thing from outside the tomb as Peter did from inside the tomb. John saw "the strips of linen lying there but did not go in."

7. Peter rushes in and also sees the strips of linen, as well as the "face-cloth" that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. It was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Given that basically both disciples saw the same things inside the empty tomb, what was the difference between Peter's reaction to what he saw versus John's reaction to what he saw? See John 20:8-9 and Luke 24:12.
 - a. ANSWER: The referenced scripture passages indicate that John "saw" and believed. In the original Greek language of the day, the word "saw" meant that his eyes were opened, and he realized what had happened and believed—even though he still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Nevertheless, seeing the empty tomb and the items left behind, he believed. Peter, however, having seen the same thing as John was still trying to figure things out as they both went back to where they were staying.
8. Jesus then appears to Mary Magdalene, but she does not recognize him at first. We will see more examples of this kind of reaction to the risen Christ later in this study. So how is it that Mary finally recognizes that it is indeed Jesus, and what can we learn from it? See John 20:14-17, John 5:28-29, and John 10:27.
 - a. ANSWER: Mary recognizes that it is Jesus from his voice, just as we as followers of Christ know his voice as well. Today, it is via the leadership of the Holy Spirit, but a day is coming when all of us will directly hear his voice.
9. Following his appearance to Mary Magdalene, Jesus proceeds to reveal himself to his disciples. (See John 20:19-29.) Read the following scriptures and for each scripture, identify each of the people who physically saw, and in some cases touched Jesus and ate with him after his resurrection:
 - a. John 20:18
 - i. ANSWER: Mary Magdalene
 - b. John 20:20
 - i. ANSWER: The disciples
 - c. John 20:29
 - i. ANSWER: The disciple Thomas
 - d. Matthew 28:9
 - i. ANSWER: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary
 - e. Luke 24:13-25
 - i. ANSWER: Two disciples on the road to Emmaus
 - f. 1 Corinthians 9:1 & 15:8
 - i. ANSWER: Paul, who was previously called Saul
 - g. 1 Corinthians 15:6
 - i. ANSWER: Over 500 believers
 - h. 1 Corinthians 15:7
 - i. ANSWER: James the skeptic
 - i. Matthew 27:56
 - i. ANSWER: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons
10. As we can see from long the list above, well over 500 people saw the resurrected physical Jesus. Our faith is not built on myth or fiction. These events actually did happen, and Jesus did indeed rise from the grave to be seen by a large number of people during the forty days he spent with his disciples before ascending into heaven. What does John tell us about those who saw Jesus, and what about all of us who have not yet seen him, but live in hope that someday we will? See John 20:29-31.
 - a. ANSWER: Jesus tells us, as he told them, that we who have not yet seen him but believe anyway are "blessed." It is because of his great redemptive work and the work of the Apostles in building up His church, that today we can believe though having not yet seen him. We are able to do this because we have the first-hand testimony of the Apostles and their eyewitness accounts as documented in the New Testament. John tells us that this is why he has written this Gospel: "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."

During the forty days that Jesus spent with his disciples before his ascension into Heaven, he accomplished many things. In the next lesson, we examine one of last lessons that Jesus teaches his disciples. It is a lesson that we can benefit from today as well.

Have a great week, and thanks for studying with us.

In Christ, **Wes**