

## I. John 20:1-21:25 – Jesus’ resurrection appearances

### A. John 20:1-10 – The tomb is empty

1. John 20:1 – *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.* Very early Sunday morning, right after the Sabbath, some women came to the tomb. Scripture does not say how many, it just emphasizes that it was **women** who came first. Luke 24:1, 10
  - a. From scripture, we see that many women followed Jesus. They were Jesus’ **disciples**, as shown by the fact that they called Him Rabbi and contributed in various ways to His ministry. Some of these women had witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion (Mark 15:40-41) and now came to anoint His body with burial spices.
  - b. The women were amazed when they saw the *large* (Mark 16:4) **stone** removed from the entrance of Jesus’ tomb. They had expected to find the tomb closed. Matthew 27:59-60, 66; 28:1-2; Mark 16:1-4, 15:46; Luke 8:2-3, 24:1-2, 10
2. John 20:2 – *So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”* In her deep grief, Mary Magdalene thought someone had removed or **stolen** Jesus’ body. Matthew 27:62-64
  - a. Since there were other women with Mary Magdalene and other disciples with Peter (Mark 16:7), it is interesting that John mentioned **Mary** and Peter specifically. Mary Magdalene was the demon-possessed woman whom Jesus had healed (Mark 16:7-9) and Peter was the disciple who had recently denied Jesus three times (Mat. 27:56).
  - b. As he did numerous other times throughout his Gospel account, John referred to himself in this verse as the *disciple whom Jesus loved*. John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20, 24
3. John 20:3-4 – *So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first ...* Upon hearing Mary’s report of the open tomb, Peter and John ran to see. John **outran** Peter.
4. John 2:5 – *And stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.* John got to the tomb first. John **saw** the situation before him.
  - a. The fact that he had to stoop down to see inside suggests that the tomb opening may not have been very large. When John looked, he saw the linen **cloths** lying there.
  - b. Although the text does not specifically say, it is likely the cloths were lying in the shape of a **body**. Jesus’ glorified body likely passed right through the linen wraps.
5. John 20:6 – *And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there .* Peter was **perplexed** with all he saw. Luke 24:12
  - a. The Greek word for *saw* in this verse means to stare **orgaze**, to discern. It is stronger than the word for *looked* in the previous verse.
  - b. John *looked* into the tomb, but Peter entered the tomb and studied the wrappings, trying to **discern** their meaning. Peter noticed something else.
6. John 20:7 – *... and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a **place** by itself.* This was not the scene of a body-snatching.
  - a. If Jesus’ body had been taken as Mary reasoned, the linen strips would most likely also have been **missing**. With guards outside the tomb, no robber would have taken the time to unwrap the body.
  - b. Also, we note the care with which the cloth used to cover His face was placed. It was by itself and neatly **folded**, not what you’d expect in the case of a grave robbers.
7. John 20:8 – *So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.* Upon processing this information, John now *saw* EIDON with understanding, and then he believed that Jesus was truly **alive** from the dead.
  - a. The word for *saw* in this verse speaks of internal perception or knowledge. When John eventually went inside, he saw the evidence and believed. He saw and believed Jesus had **risen** from the dead.
  - b. This is not speaking of John’s faith for salvation. According to Jesus, other than Judas, all the disciples were

already saved by faith (Jn. 13:10-11). However, as the disciples' understanding grew, their faith progressively solidified and **increased**.

8. John 20:9 – *For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.* No one can believe what they do not **understand**. Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”
  - a. Even though Jesus' resurrection was prophesied in the Old Testament and Jesus had **told** them on more than one occasion that He would die and rise again on the third day, the disciples had not put it all together. Psalm 2:6-8, 16:10; Isaiah 53:10-12; Hosea 6:2; Jonah 1:17; Matthew 16:21-22; Mark 9:9-10, 31-32
  - b. The events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion plunged the disciples into a rollercoaster of **emotions**. If they had understood the Old Testament better and paid more attention to Jesus' words, they would have been more equipped to handle current events.
  - c. For this reason, Christians need to study God's word. Knowing God's word keeps us **stable** in the middle of turbulent circumstances and events. Psalm 18:30-31, 119:165
9. John 20:10 – *So the disciples went away again to their own homes.* These two disciples immediately went back to the **places** where they were staying in Jerusalem. They did not stay at the tomb searching for Jesus' corpse or looking for evidence of a robbery.

## **B. John 20:11-18 – Jesus' revelation of Himself to Mary Magdalene**

1. John 20:11 – *But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb ...* Mary Magdalene was very emotional at this point, making it difficult for her to **understand** what was happening; clearly, she had not yet believed in Jesus' resurrection. Mark 16:9-11
  - a. Apparently after telling Peter and John about the open tomb, Mary again **returned**.
  - b. Arriving at the tomb, deep sadness overwhelmed her. In her **grief**, Mary bent down and looked intently inside the opened tomb.
2. John 20:12 – *and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.* To her amazement, there were two **angels** sitting at either end of the place where Jesus' body had lain. Very likely they were sitting at either end of Jesus' now vacant grave cloths.
  - a. This scene reminds us of the two cherubim at each end of the mercy seat. Ephesians 2:4-7 describes the great **mercy** God had on us as sinners by sending Jesus Christ.
  - b. Romans 4:22-25 says that Jesus died and was raised again for our justification. Because of His death on our behalf, we will never face the **wrath** of God. John 1:16-17
3. John 20:13 – *And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.”* Amazingly, the angels spoke to Mary. They asked her **why** she was crying.
  - a. Mary was sure someone had **taken** Jesus' body.
  - b. The angels' **question** should have made her stop and consider that there might be another reason His body was missing from the tomb. However, at that moment it did not enter her mind that Jesus must have risen from the dead as He had said He would.
  - c. Mary referred to Jesus as “**my Lord**.” This statement shows the type of relationship she had with Him.
4. John 20:14 – *When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.* Mary was the **first** person to see Jesus after His resurrection.
  - a. Jesus did not appear first to the great or **elite** people of Jerusalem, instead he appeared to one of His most humble followers.
  - b. Why would Mary not have recognized Jesus? It is because when Jesus came back to life, He had a **glorified** body. Jesus' new body has similarities to His earthly body but is also very different. Mark 16:12; Luke 24:28-35, 39
  - c. Jesus' new body is not subject to the normal laws of nature. After Jesus came back to life, He could pass through walls and vanish at will. Jesus' new body will never die nor decay. At the Rapture, all believers will receive this same **type** of upgrade; we will receive a body like Jesus received at His resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:20, 42-53
5. John 20:15 – *Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”* Jesus asked Mary the **same** question the angels asked her.
  - a. Jesus asked her why she was **crying**. He also asked her for whom she was looking. Not even for a moment

did Mary think she was talking with Jesus.

- b. Since the tomb was in a garden, Mary mistook Jesus for the groundskeeper and asked him about the **location** of Christ's body.
6. John 20:16 – *Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher) . When Jesus spoke to her by **name**, she immediately recognized Him and exclaimed, "Teacher!" Mary could not believe her eyes and ears. With just one word, Jesus jolted Mary out of her sadness.*
7. John 20:17 – *Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"* If you lost a loved one and then he or she suddenly came back to life, you would hang on to them also and never want to let go. But Jesus had a **job** for Mary.
  - a. Jesus was not telling Mary to not touch Him, because in Matthew 28:9 we read about women holding on to Jesus' feet and in Luke 24:39 Jesus told His startled disciples to **touch** Him. Both instances occurred after His resurrection.
  - b. Jesus just wanted Mary to move on the task at hand. She had **work** to do and so did He. He needed to be about His Father's business. John 9:4-5
  - c. Jesus wanted Mary to take a very special message back to the disciples. The content of this message was likely **strange** to Mary. Mary was not in the Upper Room on the night of Jesus' betrayal. Jesus taught the disciples extensively about His return to the Father.
  - d. But as soon as she told the disciples Jesus' words, "*I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God,*" they would **remember** what He said that night. Since Mary was ignorant of that conversation, the disciples would immediately know and believe the message was truly sent from the resurrected Christ. John 14:1-3
  - e. In forty days, Jesus would indeed go to heaven where He would sit at the Father's right hand. Here Jesus specifically said, "*My Father and your Father.*" Jesus also called the disciples, "*My brethren.*" This is because a new spiritual **relationship** was being formed.
  - f. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection and our identification with Him, God now adopts us as His very own **children**. Therefore, now in this age after the resurrection of Christ, spiritually speaking Jesus is our brother and God is our Father. Ephesians 1:5, Romans 8:29, Hebrews 2:10-12, 1 John 3:1
8. John 20:18 – *Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her . A woman, Mary Magdalene, was the first to see the angels, the first to see the risen Lord Jesus, and the first to be sent on a **mission**.*
  - a. Magdalene was the first person commissioned to go and **tell** others of the resurrected Savior.
  - b. Those who claim Christianity is negative toward **women** have not examined the scriptures.

### C. John 20:19-25 – Jesus' first appearance to the disciples, as a group

1. John 20:19 – *So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."* It was still the day of the resurrection. The disciples, minus Thomas, were gathered in a **room** with the doors locked.
  - a. They had reason to **fear**. Their leader had just been brutally and treacherously assassinated. Their heads were spinning. What were they to do?
  - b. Suddenly, Jesus appeared among them, and according to Luke, *they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit* (Lk. 24:37). Jesus' greeting, "**Peace** be with you," was timely.
2. John 20:20 – *And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord .* When the disciples recovered from their **fear**, they rejoiced to see the resurrected Savior. Jesus patiently showed them the scars on His hands and side.
  - a. The disciples had been told by Mary Magdalene and the other women (Matt. 28:9-11) that Jesus was alive. According to Luke 24:34 Peter had also seen Jesus (1 Cor. 15:5). At the moment Jesus appeared in the room, the two men from Emmaus were relating how they had just seen Him earlier that day as well. Even still, the disciples were **doubtful**.
  - b. Luke 24:41 says that when *they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement* , Jesus asked for some food. So, they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and He **ate** it before them. Luke 24:13-43
  - c. Even though Jesus is presently in heaven in His glorified body, He still bears the scars of His crucifixion. John wrote of Jesus in heaven as a Lamb who appears to have been slain (Rev. 5:6-13). Unbelievably, someday we will be in heaven with perfect bodies, no scars or blemishes, yet apparently Jesus will carry the

**marks** of our redemption for eternity.

3. John 20:21 – *So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”* Jesus was sent by the Father’s **authority**. The Lord’s commission of the disciples was similar to the Father’s commission of Him. 1 Timothy 2:3-6
  - a. On this very first appearance after His resurrection, Jesus already gave the disciples the Great Commission. The **Great Commission** was the subject of most of Jesus’ post resurrection appearances. Matthew 28:19, Luke 24:47, Mark 16:15
  - b. The message of how humanity can have peace with God through Jesus Christ is the greatest message ever told. God wants **all** people to hear the gospel and be saved. Luke 2:14; Romans 5:1, 10:14-15; Colossians 1:22; 2 Peter 3:9
  - c. Amazingly, Jesus entrusted this great message to a small group of frail men who had all recently **deserted** Him in His hour of trial. Why would He choose such weak people for the building of His church?
    - 1) These were **ordinary** men of ordinary means. We know that God purposefully chooses weak vessels so that His glory can be maximally displayed. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, 15:8-10; 2 Corinthians 4:5-7; Ephesians 3:8
    - 2) However, these weak, ordinary men could have confidence because Jesus, the highest **authority** on earth, was sending them forth and He promised to be with them everywhere they went. Ephesians 1:20-23
    - 3) And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “ *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the **nations** ..and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age .”* Matthew 28:18-20
4. John 20:22 – *And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit .”* Here Jesus gave God the Holy Spirit as a **temporary** gift to His disciples. The Holy Spirit would not come as a permanent gift until after Christ’s ascension. John 14:16-17, 25-26, 15:26-27, 16:7-15
  - a. Since Pentecost, whenever a person **believes**, he or she immediately, upon belief, receives the Holy Spirit as an eternal gift. John 7:39, 14:16-17; Ephesians 1:13-14
  - b. Here Jesus gave a command for the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit. The fear-filled disciples needed this temporary gift in order to **survive** the next 50 or so days before Pentecost.
5. John 20:23 – “ *If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained .”* This verse does not teach that the disciples or any other **person** can eternally forgive sins. Only God gives eternal forgiveness, but we can by faith grant practical or personal forgiveness by means of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:22, Mark 2:7
  - a. The Lord Jesus taught them that it was their responsibility to personally **forgive** those who had wronged them, just as we should do to those who hate us for the sake of Christ. This degree of lovingkindness is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 6:12, 18:21-22; John 15:18-25; Ephesians 3:16
  - b. The disciples had just witnessed horrific events that could easily embitter their hearts against the national leaders of Israel and their capricious followers. If they held on to the wrongs done, they would not grant Israel forgiveness. Jesus did not want unforgiveness or **bitterness** to prevail in their hearts. Ephesians 4:31, Hebrews 12:15
6. John 20:24 – *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came .* Just as they were to grant forgiveness by faith to Israel, Thomas was called to receive the testimony of his fellow disciples by faith. Thomas wanted to **see** Jesus for himself before he would believe, but the Lord wanted him believe without seeing.
  - a. Thomas was a believer, just like the other disciples (Jn. 13:10-11), but something caused Thomas to be absent that night. We know he struggled at times with his **faith** (Jn. 11:16), as we will observe in the verse that follows.
  - b. At the very time Thomas should have been getting encouragement from being around **others**, he was absent. This was to his detriment. Hebrews 3:12-13, 10:25
7. John 20:25 – *So the other disciples were saying to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”* When the disciples told Thomas that Jesus had appeared to them, he did not **believe** them.
  - a. Thomas said he would not believe it unless he himself personally saw Jesus. Thomas’ **skepticism** may sound logical, but in reality, it was a lack of faith. John 20:27
  - b. Not only had Jesus **said** He would rise again after three days, His resurrection was predicted in the Old

Testament, and now the other disciples reaffirmed it.

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