

Resurrection

November 10, 2024

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

John 20

Session Outline

1. The Empty Tomb (John 20:1-10)
2. The Risen One (John 20:11-16)
3. The Reunion (John 20:17-23)

Theological Theme

The cross did not defeat our Savior and death did not win the battle. This was proven in dramatic form when Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to many.

Call to Action

The crucifixion and resurrection are the central points of the Bible, encourage believers to deepen their understanding of these truths to grow their knowledge and witness of Christ.



Leader Guide

Resurrection

Introduction

Certain events happen in our lives, and we just can't keep the news to ourselves. For some, it is a promotion at work, a child's impressive athletic achievement, or a personal goal being accomplished. Still others spread news of a great sale or favorite products that they are convinced have life-changing effects. It could even be a long-standing prayer that was answered.

Whatever it may be, these types of news are too good to not share. When our lives have been affected by something positively, we want others to know and experience it as well. This is what happened at Jesus's empty tomb. Jesus's miraculous resurrection is too good for us to keep to ourselves.

- ❓ What have you felt compelled to tell others about?
- ❓ How does social media reinforce the idea that people want others to know about things that have made a difference in their lives?

Session Summary

Christ's death and resurrection is the most pivotal point in human history. Just as prophesied, Jesus rose on the third day. The tomb was empty when the women went to finish preparing Jesus's body for burial. After letting the disciples know the tomb was empty, Mary was the first to have a divine encounter with two angels and then the risen Lord.

After speaking with Mary, Jesus miraculously appeared to His disciples where they'd gathered in fear and solidarity. Jesus instructed them to continue the work He had begun during His life and ministry. Jesus also told them to receive the Holy Spirit so they would have power authority to do what He called them to do—namely preach the good news.

1. The Empty Tomb (John 20:1-10)

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are central points of Scripture and God's redemptive plan. As we sought to study the crucifixion with fresh eyes last week, this week we must also open our hearts to what we need to learn from Scripture regarding the empty tomb, seeking a fresh perspective on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The tomb had been sealed and guarded by Roman soldiers once Jesus's body was buried, following His death on the cross. Knowing prophecies about Jesus rising again on the third day existed, the Romans and religious leaders took care that no one could orchestrate events to appear as if Jesus had risen from the dead. They guarded against this possibility by placing a huge stone in front of the tomb's entrance.

Then, on the first of the week, the third day following Jesus's death, Mary came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away. Other Gospel accounts record that there were more women with her, but it was Mary who ran to tell the disciples, and she was the only one mentioned by John. The stone was not rolled away so that Jesus could escape but rather so others could see inside and realize that He was no longer there.

- What do we learn about Jesus through the fact that others knew of the prophecies about His rising but still had no power to hold Him in the grave?

Peter and John immediately went to investigate for themselves when they received this news from Mary. After hearing Mary's report, they ran seemingly as hard and as fast as possible.

Upon reaching the tomb, John saw the grave cloths but did not enter in. Once Peter arrived, he entered the empty tomb and saw the cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus's body. Peter and John were convinced of the fact of the resurrection but still did not understand it fully. This is a reminder that we can know and believe facts about Jesus without understanding the meaning and the implications for our lives.


- How would you describe the difference between knowing a fact about Jesus, like the resurrection, and placing your faith in Him?
- Application: Where is God calling you to move from knowledge to belief in Him?

The First Witness

The first person to the tomb of Jesus was Mary Magdalene. After seeing the stone was removed from the tomb, she ran to Peter and John, exclaiming that someone had taken Jesus from the tomb. Mary did not understand that Jesus's body had not been stolen but that He had been raised from the dead. Peter and John ran to the tomb, finding only the strips of Jesus's burial clothes. Peter and John, as well as Mary, failed to understand that the resurrection had taken place (20:9).

2. The Risen One (John 20:11-16)


After the disciples investigated the tomb and left, we learn Mary remained outside the tomb crying. As a woman she was considered a second-class citizen in that time and culture, yet the Lord chose women as the ones to discover the resurrection and to have divine encounters. The world does not value people in the same way Jesus does. He values and loves all people enough that He died on the cross for their sins.

-  What is significant about the fact that Mary and other women were the first to see the empty tomb? How does this record stand out culturally? What can it teach us about Jesus?


Mary peered inside the tomb to see for herself. When she did, she saw two angels sitting at the head and foot of the place where Jesus's body had been laid.

The angels asked Mary why she was crying. She told them she was looking for Jesus and couldn't find where He has been taken. She planned to finish preparing His body for burial, but her plan was interrupted by the shocking scene.

As she turned and saw Jesus standing right behind her, we are told she mistook him for the gardener. For reasons that are not made clear, Mary was kept from recognizing Jesus in this moment. But Jesus met Mary at her lowest point and was about to change everything.

-  When was a time you felt hindered from seeing Jesus? How does this passage remind you of His nearness in these moments?

The moment Jesus spoke her name, Mary immediately recognized Him as her beloved Rabbi and teacher. Her eyes were opened. Amazingly, Jesus was alive. As she and the other followers of Christ would be reminded, Jesus had done exactly as He promised to do. More than that, Jesus had done what God had promised since the fall in the garden of Eden.

-  Application: How does it build your faith to remember the way Jesus fulfills prophecy repeatedly? How does that give you reason for confidence in Him in the future?

3. The Reunion (John 20:17-23)

After realizing the man she'd believed a gardener was Jesus, Mary was likely tempted to grab onto Him so as not to lose her beloved Savior and teacher again. But Jesus had a plan for Mary as the first witness to see Him risen. Jesus told Mary to go and let the others know about His resurrection.

Soon after, Jesus appeared to the disciples in a locked room and greeted them with peace. These were the same men who scattered from His presence at His death. It would be reasonable for them to expect scorn from Jesus. But Jesus loved them and had a mission for them to carry out in His name. Jesus's death had paid for their sin, including their abandonment.

- ❓ What does this moment teach you about Jesus's willingness to forgive all who trust in Him?

The disciples were hiding because they had witnessed what happened to Jesus and they were linked to Him, so they were also in danger. Imagine their shock when Jesus suddenly appeared among them. Jesus came with peace for their fears of those who might harm them and peace with Him. He then showed them the scars by which He accomplished the finished work of the Father.

- ❓ How might Jesus's scars have served to emphasize the peace the disciples now had available at His return? How do we see their reception of this peace on display?

These men who likely felt as if they had failed their teacher might have expected Him to chastise them or rebuke them, but the words Jesus spoke were of peace. This offer of peace spoke of reconciliation and acceptance, reassuring them that there was no need for fear on their part.




Then Jesus gave the disciples a mission to continue the work He started on the earth. He would send them in the same way He had been sent by the Father. This task was not one to be accomplished by human strength but by the power of the Holy Spirit. The text says Jesus breathed on them as a symbol of the Spirit to come.

- ❓ Application: Why must we have the Holy Spirit to complete the task Jesus has given the church?

Conclusion

The crucifixion and resurrection are central events of the gospel and foundational for Christ followers to understand. No other religious leader has defeated death. Jesus alone is worthy of our praise, trust, and faith. Following His resurrection, Jesus first revealed Himself to Mary and some other women.

Jesus also appeared to the disciples, who were gathered in fear. Speaking words of peace to them, Jesus issued the mission to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. Knowing this task was impossible by human effort alone, Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit and the authority He would bring. All followers of Jesus have received the Holy Spirit and have been given this same authority and mission by Jesus.

-  Why do the crucifixion and resurrection matter to you personally? Why do they matter to the church as a whole?
-  How can we support one another in obediently seeking to fulfill the mission of Jesus?
-  How can you seek a gospel conversation with another person this week by sharing the events of the resurrection?

Prayer of Response

Thank the Father for His perfect redemptive plan. Thank Jesus for being the willing sacrifice to carry out that plan and make salvation possible. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you and to work in your life.

Memory Verse

On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. -John 20:1

Additional Resources

- *John 13–21 for You* by Josh Moody
- *The Gospel According to John* by D. A. Carson
- *John 11–21* by J. Vernon McGee

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of John

Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24–25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1–4).

Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 20:28).

Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

Extended Commentary

John 20:1-23

20:1 The first day of the week was Sunday. Mary Magdalene (and several other women) decided to attend to some matters that had been left undone because of the beginning of the Sabbath (see note at 19:42). The need to complete the care for the dead may have overridden the customary seven-day mourning period (see note at 11:20). On while it was still dark, compare the slightly different time frame depicted in Mt 28:1 (cp. Mk 16:2; and Lk 24:1).

20:2 At this point Mary had no thought of Jesus's resurrection. The Jewish charge that his disciples stole his body (Mt 27:62–66; 28:11–15) shows that grave robbery was not uncommon. The plural *we* suggests the presence of other women besides Mary. On the other disciple, see 18:15–16.

20:3–4 *Went out* translates a singular verb, suggesting perhaps the priority of Peter.

20:5–6 Apparently by now there was enough daylight to see inside the burial chamber through the small, low opening in the cave tomb. The other disciple did not go in, presumably in deference to Simon Peter, a leader among the Twelve.

20:7 Jesus's resurrection body apparently passed through the linen wrappings similar to the way in which he later appeared to his disciples in a locked room (vv. 19, 26). The reference to the head wrapping being folded up in a separate place by itself counters the notion of grave robbers, who in their haste would not have taken the time to fold up this cloth.

20:8–9 The presence of two witnesses rendered the evidence admissible under Jewish law (Dt 17:6; 19:15). The other disciple believed based on what he saw, not on an understanding from Scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. This lack of expectation of a resurrection shows that the disciples did not fabricate the resurrection story to fit their preconceived expectations. Rather, the resurrection shocked them and did not fit with what they understood from Scripture. Only later, aided by the Spirit's teaching (see notes at 14:25–26; 16:12–13), did they come to see that Jesus's resurrection was foretold in the OT.

20:10 When the disciples returned to the place where they were staying, "the disciple Jesus loved" in all likelihood told the Lord's mother, whom he had taken "into his home" (19:27), that he was risen.

20:11 Mary was crying, not because Jesus had died, but because his body had vanished.

20:12 She saw two angels in white. Angels often appeared in pairs (Ac 1:10) and are often depicted as dressed in white (Ezk 9:2; Dn 10:5–6; Rv 15:6). The angels were sitting ... one at the head and the other at the feet of the burial shelf.

20:13–14 The resurrected Jesus is often not recognized immediately. His appearance since Mary saw him last must have changed dramatically. See 1Co 15:35–38.

20:15 Mary mistook Jesus for the gardener, which suggests that Jesus was indistinguishable from an ordinary person. Gardeners often tend to their grounds in the early morning.

20:16 Jesus had already spoken to her. It was when she heard her own name from his lips that she knew who it was.

20:17 My Father and your Father maintains a distinction between how Jesus and the disciples relate to God. Even so, Jesus called believers his brothers.

20:18 In view of the disregard for women in the culture, it is remarkable that Jesus appeared first to a woman and gave her the job of reporting his presence.

20:19, 21, 26 The common Jewish greeting Peace to you (v. 21; representing Hb Shalom alekem) is still used today. Peace was Jesus's gift to his followers by virtue of his sacrificial death on the cross. On feared the Jews (v. 19), 7:13.

20:20 Jesus's scars proved that he was the very one who was crucified and prophesied his resurrection. Thus the disciples rejoiced.

20:21–22 These verses contain the Gospel of John's version of the Great Commission, which culminates in the presentation of Jesus as the one sent from the Father (see 3:16–18). Now the sent one (Jesus) had turned Sender, commissioning his followers to serve as his messengers and representatives (17:18). All three persons of the Godhead are involved in this commissioning. As Jesus was sent by God the Father, so he, the Son, was sending out his disciples (20:21), equipping them with the Holy Spirit (v. 22). John thus demonstrated that each member of the Godhead is involved in the redemption plan and the mission of spreading the gospel to the world. The Holy Spirit was given dramatically and permanently a short time later (Acts 2).

20:23 The reference to forgiveness or lack thereof may echo the reference to “the key of the House of David” in Is 22:22 (cp. Rv 3:7). Jesus bestowed on his followers authority to announce access or disbarment from God's kingdom based on reception or denial of the gospel message. For those who reject Jesus, his messengers are commissioned to say that they do not have forgiveness of sins.¹

References

1. *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).