

Commentary on John 20:1-10, 19-20
International Bible Lessons
Sunday, April 8, 2012
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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, April 8, 2012**, is from **John 20:1-10, 19-20**. Five **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse by verse **International Bible Lessons Commentary** below. The **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, which are also available on the **Bible Lesson Forum**, will aid teachers in class preparation and in conducting class discussion. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **The Oklahoman** newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

John 20:1-10

(John 20:1) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

In Jesus' day, the Sabbath was Saturday. The first day of the week was Sunday. Today, some calendars show the first day of the week is Monday. When Mary went to the tomb it was still dark, and John does not tell us whether or not the sun rose while she stood at the empty tomb door. The tomb was a cave with a stone door that had been rolled away so she could see into the tomb, though perhaps the light was dim. The other Gospels give even more details about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the guards, and the appearance of angels.

(John 20:2) So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

John, the author of this Gospel, is considered "the one whom Jesus loved." John never claimed that Jesus loved him more than the other disciples; Jesus loved them all and called them His friends. John simply did not prefer to say, "Peter and me" or "Peter and John" because of his humility and objectivity. Mary assumed that Jesus' body had been "taken" or stolen by people she did not know (notice: she did not assume that Jesus was alive and raised from the dead). She expected His dead body to have been "laid" somewhere, and she knew not where. She never expected that He would be able to walk away from His

tomb or talk to anyone, even though He had foretold this many times to His followers.

(John 20:3) Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb.

Peter and John took the responsibility upon themselves to verify Mary's report. They were staying at the same home in Jerusalem during Passover. The other disciples would have been in other homes. After Judas murdered himself, there were now 11 disciples of Jesus, in addition to the women and other friends and followers; therefore, they could not all have slept in the same house. When Jesus was arrested most of the disciples fled, but Peter and John followed Jesus to the trial in the high priest's home, and John followed Jesus to the cross (see John 19:26). John and Mary and some others would have known the exact location of Jesus' tomb, because we can expect them to have helped bury Jesus in the tomb.

(John 20:4) The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

Because John was at the cross, he most likely helped take Jesus' body down from the cross. He probably also helped carry Jesus' body to His burial place, but John does not draw attention to himself in his Gospel by always saying, "I did this." He and Mary knew without a doubt that Jesus was dead, so they expected

to find His body in the tomb unless others had moved it. John probably outran Peter to the tomb, because he knew exactly where it was located. After Peter denied Jesus, we have no evidence that Peter went with John to the cross or to the burial site before he and John ran to the site on that first resurrection Sunday morning.

(John 20:5) He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

John bent down and looked into the tomb. He could see into the cave because of the rising sun. The tomb opening probably faced East, so the rising sun would have shown into the tomb. The linen wrappings were most likely white and could be easily seen by Peter and John from outside of the tomb. The wrappings were there, but Jesus body was gone. We do not know why John did not enter the tomb.

(John 20:6) Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there,

Peter's personality influenced him to go into the tomb first. Though Peter had denied knowing Jesus during Jesus' trial, many times in the past he had demonstrated his bravery. When Jesus questioned His disciples about who people said He was, Peter was the first to tell Jesus that He was the Messiah. Peter

became a witness to the fact that the burial wrappings were there in the tomb, but Jesus' body was gone. Mary, Peter, and John saw that Jesus' body was gone, and from the Old Testament we know that two witnesses were needed to establish a fact. It would have been highly unlikely that Jesus' body would have been moved by grave robbers and the wrappings left behind. Grave robbers would most likely have carried a body away still wrapped for burial. So, the fact that the wrappings were there and the body was gone is evidence for and consistent with the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

(John 20:7) and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

Much has been said of the wrappings that were left behind. We know that if the body had been stolen, most probably the robbers would not have taken the time to carefully and neatly lay the head wrapping to one side. They would have hurriedly tossed the head wrapping aside or taken it with the body still wrapped. The Romans certainly would not have been this careful if they had moved His body. The Jews would not have defiled themselves by touching a dead body, especially during Passover, because they would not even enter Pilate's headquarters for fear of becoming defiled during Passover. The evidence of the grave cloths being left behind is consistent with the fact of Jesus' resurrection.

(John 20:8) Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;

Following Peter, John also entered the tomb. He saw exactly what Peter saw and what Mary had reported she saw. Therefore, in his Gospel, John recorded that three witnesses had seen that the stone had been rolled away and Jesus' body was gone. As John explained in the next verse, they did not yet understand the scriptures nor did they expect the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; therefore, John may have meant that "he saw and believed" that the body of Jesus was gone. John's Gospel reports what he himself witnessed rather than giving a secondhand report of what others experienced.

(John 20:9) for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Up to this point, they did not remember or understand what Jesus had taught them about His resurrection from the dead or raising up "this temple" in three days. Peter and John only confirmed what Mary had told them, so we do have eyewitness accounts that are consistent with Jesus' resurrection and appearances. They had to be convinced by Jesus himself that He was alive; so, Jesus found ways to convince them by appearing to them in different ways and times. Because they were difficult to convince, we

have good evidence that they were convinced by ample and sufficient evidence that Jesus was raised and alive.

(John 20:10) Then the disciples returned to their homes.

John reports that Peter and John (and perhaps the other disciples that they reported to) returned to their homes instead of going back to the empty tomb, which might be dangerous for them if Jesus' enemies had stolen His body. The disciples believed the testimony of Mary, Peter, and John; therefore, they did not need to go see the empty tomb for themselves. No one knew why Jesus' body was gone, but they all believed that His body was gone based on reliable testimony.

John 20:19-20

(John 20:19) When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Though they feared the Jews (or "religious leaders"; for all the disciples were Jews), the disciples had agreed to meet again that evening. Probably, they met where Jesus had celebrated their last supper (Passover) together, for that room would have been

large enough for all of them. Though the doors were locked, somehow Jesus came into their room. Once in the room (He would not have needed even to pass through a solid wall or force open a locked door), He stood and calmed their fears by speaking words of peace to them and by giving them peace in His presence.

(John 20:20) After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus also showed them the nail marks in His hands (now healed) and the mark in His side where the Roman spear had pierced Him (also now healed). As He had foretold to them, within three days He was healed completely and raised from the dead. The disciples not only believed He had risen and was not a ghost, they also rejoiced in the knowledge that Jesus was their risen Lord and Savior.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think John omitted from his Gospel some of the important events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus that the other Gospels included; such as, the presence of the guards?
2. Compare these verses from John (John 8:18; John 15:26-27; 1 John 1:1-2; 1 John 4:14) to Luke 1:1-4.

How does Luke's Gospel differ from John's Gospel?

3. What reason did Mary Magdalene give Peter and John for why the tomb was empty? Why do you think she assumed this? Why is her assumption important evidence in support of the fact of the resurrection?

4. What importance do you place on the emphasis John placed on the tomb being empty except for the burial wrappings?

5. John said he believed. What do you think he believed? Give a reason for your answer.

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