

Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further
International Bible Lessons

John 20:1-10 & 1 Peter 1:3-9

Sunday, April 16, 2017

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be *the answers* to the discussion questions. These indeed are “hints” a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class. The *Class Preparation Guide* includes the questions below, and it can be given to students at the end of the previous class so they can pray, read, and think ahead to prepare for the next week’s Bible class.

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?

John wrote his Gospel to testify; that means he wrote what he himself saw and heard as a witness. In a court of law, he could only testify to what he himself witnessed firsthand. For example, he could testify to the fact that Mary Magdalene came to him and what she told him when she came, and this he did in his Gospel. He also had at least two witnesses to what she said (both Peter and himself). John was very strict with himself when he restricted his Gospel account of the resurrection to include only testimony that could be admitted into a court of law as an eyewitness account. Later, he wrote of the two angels and what they said to Mary, and Mary’s meeting with Jesus, because he was reporting what she told him before other witnesses. This was Mary’s very important meeting with the Lord, and His first meeting with any of them (see John 20:11-18). The Holy Spirit guided John to write only what he needed to write, because the other gospels included other details and experiences; furthermore, John wrote: “But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

2. 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?

She said “they” (for she did not know “who”) had taken the Lord out of the tomb, and because she believed the Lord was still dead, she assumed “they” had laid His body someplace. The “they” would probably have been His and their enemies; otherwise, she, Peter, and John would have known what was being done. She assumed this because she could not conceive of Jesus being raised from the dead, even though He had told them and others that He would rise from the dead within three days. Since she was not expecting Him to raise himself from the dead, we can see that only by Him personally convincing her that He had raised himself would she believe in His resurrection (see John 20:11-18).

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

John reported exactly what he saw without drawing any conclusions at that time. He writes in a strictly chronological order and without drawing “lessons to be learned” at every step in his Gospel. He testified that the tomb was empty except for the burial wrappings and the special placement of the cloth that covered Jesus’ head. Later, a researcher could see how his testimony would be consistent with Jesus raising himself from the dead; therefore, it becomes good evidence from which to support the fact of Jesus’ resurrection. It is quite apparent to any impartial student of the Bible that John’s testimony about the grave wrappings was not contrived but consistent with the facts of the case.

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

John believed the report that Mary Magdalene had brought to Peter and John, for he had seen with his own eyes exactly what she reported. He and Peter ran to the tomb to verify the facts of what she said. So, two witnesses in addition to Mary could testify that Jesus’ body was gone from the tomb. I think this belief is consistent with the facts before them at that time. In the next verse, John wrote, “for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead” (John 20:9). If they had understood that verse, they would have concluded that based on the evidence of the empty tomb, Jesus must have risen from the dead. They believed after Jesus appeared to them, and His appearance was consistent with His appearance to Mary in the Garden. Mary must not have run back with Peter and John, but remained in the Garden, where she met Jesus. The fact that Jesus appeared to His disciples (that He called brothers), in the evening instead of earlier in the day is explained by the fact that He had not yet ascended to His Father and their Father, which He explained to Mary (see John 20:17).

5. Does someone need to see Jesus to become a true believer in Jesus? Why is this truth important for both believers and unbelievers to know?

Read 1 Peter 1:8-9. We do not need to see Jesus in order to believe, and the Apostles and writers of the New Testament did not encourage people to try to see Jesus before He returns in the clouds as He left. This truth is important so people are not misled into various “ways” to practice in order to see Jesus, or told that true believers have seen Jesus, or told that you must see Jesus to have assurance that you are saved.

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