



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## John 20:1-10 & 1 Peter 1:3-9 New American Standard Bible April 16, 2017

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, April 16, 2017**, is from **John 20:1-10 & 1 Peter 1:3-9**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(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.**

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 \*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."**

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) So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to 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. Since the disciples scattered, the other disciples probably 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. Though many of them would have been in the same house after Pentecost; not wanting to miss receiving the promised Holy Spirit. 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; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to 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) and stooping and looking in, he \*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 directly 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 immediately.

**(John 20:6) And so Simon Peter also \*came, following him, and entered the tomb; and 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 and impulsiveness. When Jesus questioned His disciples about who people said He was, Peter was the first to answer 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 face-cloth which had been on His 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) So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, 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. They still needed to see Jesus alive, raised from the dead, to believe in Him.

**(John 20:9) For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again 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) So the disciples went away again to their own 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. In John 20:11-20, we learn that Mary Magdalen was the first person to see the Lord alive, raised from the dead, near the garden tomb. The time she spent with the Lord is immortalized in the hymn *In The Garden* by Charles A. Miles.

**(1 Peter 1:3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

The word blessed can mean happy. When Christians walk by faith, they can bring happiness to God. Peter remembered and wrote in his letter that our Lord Jesus Christ talked about and prayed to God as His heavenly Father (since Jesus is the Son of God). By our way of life, we show our love for God and our desire to bring happiness to our Lord Jesus Christ and our heavenly Father. God’s love and grace moved God to extend mercy toward us through His Son. True Christians enjoy a new birth; therefore, Christians should live as differently from the darkness of this world as a baby lives differently from the darkness of life in their mother’s womb. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we now have hope for a better life and future after we die.

**(1 Peter 1:4) to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,**

As exiles, our true home is heaven until we return to Earth when Jesus Christ returns as visible Lord. As exiles, our hope is in the future that God has prepared for us. Since Jesus Christ died for us, believers will inherit what Jesus has prepared for them through His death and resurrection. Since Jesus rose from the dead, He guarantees we will receive our inheritance as believers in Him. Our inheritance is not like a worldly inheritance that someone might receive or another person might steal from us. Some receive a worldly inheritance that has been defiled by the sins of their parents, but Jesus did not sin so our inheritance from Him is undefiled. The inheritance God has planned to give us will never be defiled, but is pure and holy; an inheritance that God plans for us to put to a holy use in heaven and again someday on Earth.

**(1 Peter 1:5) who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

Not only does God protect our inheritance, He also protects us so we will receive our inheritance even though we may suffer and die for our faith (as Peter learned that he would die for his faith). God's gracious power will help us maintain a strong faith no matter what our earthly circumstances. Our faith in Jesus Christ our Lord will result in our salvation, which will be fully revealed in the last time (when Jesus Christ returns to Earth as visible Lord and King over all creation).

**(1 Peter 1:6) In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,**

Peter and Paul both suffered in prison in Rome, and both died for their faith in Jesus Christ and for continuing to declare the truth of the good news about Jesus Christ in all circumstances. Suffering in this life for any reason and in any way will always be for "a little while" compared to rejoicing for eternity with Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, whose very presence face-to-face with us will be the most wonderful inheritance.

**(1 Peter 1:7) so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

Testing, trials, and suffering can give Christians the opportunity to show God and others that we genuinely live by faith in Jesus Christ instead of just saying that we believe in Jesus while living by this world's standards and values. Faith in Jesus Christ, trusting in Jesus Christ while we live and even suffer, is more precious than possessing gold, for our faith can bring praise, glory, and honor to Jesus Christ when He returns and everyone sees Him.

**(1 Peter 1:8) and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,**

Typically, Christians do not see Jesus until they die or when He returns, though some claim to have seen visions of Jesus Christ (Who is now seated at the right hand of God the Father). The Bible does not encourage us to try to see Jesus in any way before we die or He returns (to try to see Jesus in this life can lead us into deception). Rather, Peter wrote that without seeing Jesus, by God's grace through faith we love Jesus, we believe in Jesus, we rejoice in knowing Jesus, and we can give Jesus praise and glory and honor now and forever. The glorious joy of knowing and loving Jesus without having seen Him is indescribable with our limited human language, which makes seeing Him with our eyes unnecessary to believe in Him.

**(1 Peter 1:9) obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**

Our inner spiritual reality, our souls, who we really are spiritually as created in the image of God, indwells our material, physical, fleshly human bodies. As a result of faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, when we die we will go to heaven (our souls will experience salvation). In heaven, we will enjoy our inheritance until Jesus Christ returns to Earth, at which time we will receive our resurrected glorified perfect human bodies, and be physically and spiritually whole once again.

### **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. 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?
3. What importance do you place on the emphasis John placed on the tomb being empty except for the burial wrappings?
4. John said he believed. What do you think he believed? Give a reason for your answer.
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?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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