

**DATE of MESSAGE:** March 27, 2016

**MESSAGE TITLE:** Can I get a Witness?

**SCRIPTURE:** John 20:1-31

### **GETTING STARTED**

In this passage, the eye witnesses to the resurrection show us the transforming power of the risen Jesus. The power that raised Jesus from the dead transformed the fearful and sometimes doubting disciples into powerful witnesses who were eventually willing to die for the sake of the Gospel. That same power is at work in the lives of believers who submit to the rule of Christ in their lives.

### **OBSERVATION**

*What did Mary Magdalene find when she arrived at the tomb of Jesus? What conclusion did she reach based on what she saw?*

*What did John and Peter see in the tomb when they arrived? Most notably, what did they not see?*

*What two parts of the burial wrappings did the disciples find in the tomb? Were these two parts found together or separate? Why do you think John mentioned that the face cloth was folded up separate from the other cloths?*

*When Jesus appeared to Mary, who did she think He was? What did Mary say to this 'gardener' about the missing body? At what point in the story did she recognize Jesus?*

*According to verse 19, who did the disciples fear, and what did they do to hide from those they feared?*

*When Jesus appeared to the disciples after the resurrection, He said to them three times in the span of verses 19-26, 'Peace be with you.' Why do you think He said this three times? Read Joshua 1:1-9. What command does God give Joshua three times? What's similar about these two passages?*

*How did Jesus deal with Thomas' doubts in verse 27? How did Thomas respond to Jesus showing Him his scars?*

*According to verse 31, why did John write about the post-resurrection events he witnessed? What hope does John hold out to those who believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection?*

## **APPLICATION**

*When Jesus called Mary's name, she recognized his voice. John 10:3 teaches that His sheep will know His voice. Are you taking time to listen for Jesus' voice? What is He saying to you? Take time this week to intentionally listen for the voice of Jesus through Bible reading and prayer.*

*When Jesus appeared to the disciples, he gave them what they needed most - peaceful assurance in the midst of their fears. Where in your life do you most need the peace of Jesus to reign? In a relationship? In your job? In your finances? In your inner thoughts?*

*John promised that those who place their faith in Jesus as the risen Son of God will have life in his name. Are you trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior? How are you experiencing His life in your everyday routines? What needs to change to experience more of the life of Jesus?*

## **PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus, we praise you as our risen King! We love reading stories from your Word about the empty tomb. Please bring to us the same peace you brought to the disciples in John 20. Remind us daily of your transformational power to overcome our fears so we become powerful witnesses for you. Give us boldness as we share about you with our friends, relatives and neighbors. We desire to see them come to a saving knowledge of You.*

## **SHARE POINT**

Read John 20:1-31 and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

## **COMMENTARY NOTES**

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. The need to complete the care for the dead may have overridden the customary seven-day mourning period.

20:2 At this point Mary had no thought of Jesus' resurrection. The Jewish charge that His disciples stole His body shows that grave robbery was not uncommon. The plural 'we' suggests the presence of other women besides Mary.

20:5 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' resurrection body apparently passed through the linen wrappings similar to the way in which He later appeared to His disciples in a locked room. 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. 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 did they come to see that Jesus' resurrection was foretold in the OT.

20:10 When the disciples went home, the disciple Jesus loved in all likelihood told the Lord's mother, whom he had taken into his home, that He was risen.

20:11 Mary was crying, not because Jesus had died, but because His body had vanished. She thought someone had removed the body from the tomb.

20:12 She saw two angels in white. Angels often appeared in pairs, as males and are often depicted as dressed in white. The angels were sitting one at the head and one at the feet of the burial shelf.

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.

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

20:19 The common Jewish greeting 'peace to you' is still used today. Peace was Jesus' gift to His followers by virtue of His sacrificial death on the cross. The disciples feared the Jerusalem authorities represented by the Sanhedrin.

20:20-21 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. Now the Sent One had turned Sender, commissioning His followers

to serve as His messengers and representatives. 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, equipping them with the Holy Spirit. 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.

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. 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.

20:24 The term Rabbi means 'teacher,' and is one of seven Hebrew terms translated by John for his readers.

20:25 Apparently Thomas thought the disciples had seen a ghost. Yet John was careful to affirm that Jesus' resurrection body was not that of a phantom or spirit apparition but a genuine, glorified human body.

20:26 After eight days refers to the following Sunday, one week after Easter.

20:28 Thomas' confession of Jesus as his Lord and God provides a literary link with the reference to Jesus as God in the prologue. This is one of the strongest texts in the NT on the deity by arguing that Thomas's statement was merely an exclamation of astonishment that, in effect, took God's name in vain. Such an explanation is unthinkable, however, given the strong Jewish moral convictions of the day and because it is not consistent with the text, which explicitly says that Thomas said these words to him, that is, to Jesus. Thomas's statement is in fact a clear confession of his newly found faith in Jesus as his Lord and God. John's entire purpose in writing this book is that all readers come to confess Jesus as their Lord and God in the same way that Thomas did.

20:29 The readers of John's gospel are at no disadvantage as compared to Jesus' first followers.

20:30-31 John's purpose statement and conclusion of the Gospel proper rehearse the major themes of the Gospel: Jesus' identity as the Christ and the Son of God, his selected messianic signs, the importance of believing in Jesus, and the gift of eternal life.

## **SOURCES CONSULTED**

The ESV Study Bible

The HCSB Study Bible

Serendipity Bible for Personal and Small Group Study

The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament