

STANDING BEFORE THE EMPTY TOMB

Resurrection Sunday, John 20:1-18

April 4, 2021

He saw and believed.

John 20:8

Starting in the darkness

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

John 20:1-2

- 1) Creation, incarnation (John 1) and now resurrection begin with darkness
- 2) The ladies are given the blessed task of being apostles to the Apostles

Running through the cemetery

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside

John 20:3-8 (but not all the way to the end of verse 8!)

- 1) All the running reflects the “disbelief with joy” of the eye witnesses
- 2) The grave clothes mean the Jesus’ body was not stolen, he was not resuscitated, not wrong tomb
- 3) Empty tomb means the resurrection is not “spiritual”

Learning from Peter and John

Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

⁹ *(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)*

¹⁰ *Then the disciples went back to their homes*

John 20:8-10

- 1) While many believed WHEN they met Jesus, John believed BEFORE he met Jesus
- 2) Peter and John didn't need to know everything – only that Jesus said he wouldn't be there!
- 3) “Back to their homes” meant they started spreading the word

Mary's story

Then the disciples went back to their homes, ¹¹ but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ *They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”*

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don't know where they have put him.” ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ *“Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”*

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

¹⁶ *Jesus said to her, “Mary.”*

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

¹⁷ *Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”*

¹⁸ *Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.*

John 20:10-18 (see especially D. A. Carson's comments on this passage, included below)

- 1) Mary returned! I don't know these ladies well enough.
- 2) Jesus' response to Mary of Magdala reveals how different he now is and how we are still
- 3) Jesus begins already preparation for his post-resurrection ministry and ascension

John wants us to remember

- 1) Listen to the ladies!
- 2) The empty tomb is the second apologetic – Jesus’ promise was the first!
- 3) Standing in front of the empty tomb is the place John wants us *goyim* to begin

Resources for further studies in John’s gospel

The Bible Project team has great stuff on John at <https://open.life.church/items/179216-john-poster-jpg>

Spurgeon has a “Who is the King?” sermon at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-triumphal-entry-into-jerusalem/#flipbook/>

Spurgeon’s “Gardener” sermon is not, I think, his best at <https://archive.spurgeon.org/sermons/1699.php>

Spurgeon has resurrection sermons at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-power-of-his-resurrection/#flipbook/> and my favorite at <http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/0018.htm>

J. C. Ryle’s commentary on John at http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/ryle_gospel_of_john.htm

Deffinbaugh’s sermon at <https://bible.org/seriespage/28-un-triumphal-entry-john-129-19> and <https://bible.org/seriespage/45-burial-and-resurrection-jesus-christ-john-1938-209>

I have really appreciated D. A. Carson’s commentary in the Pillar New Testament Commentary series (Eerdmans, 1991) and Earl Palmer’s *The Intimate Gospel* (Word Books, 1978)

The two resources on our union with Christ are John Murray’s *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Eerdmans, 1955) and Rankin Wilbourne’s *Union with Christ* (David C. Cook, 2016). I also recommend Marcus Peter’s short study at <https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-union-with-christ/>

S. M. Lockridge’s “That’s My King” at <https://thatsmyking.wordpress.com/words/>

Leon Morris has a short essay on the atonement in John’s gospel at http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/NTeSources/NTArticles/CTR-NT/Morris-JohnsAtonement-CTR.pdf