

Worksheet #21: John 20:1–31

Summary: John chapter 20 draws the “Book of Exaltation” (which began in chapter 13) to a close. The chapter resumes on “the first day of the week” following the crucifixion (20:1), and recounts the discovery of the empty tomb by the women, who then alert Peter and the “beloved disciple” (20:1–10). John’s account is unique in its mention of Mary Magdalene by name in 20:1, and he alone recounts the later meeting between Mary Magdalene and Jesus in the garden (20:11–18). The account of Jesus’ appearance to the disciples in vv. 19–23 seems to parallel the account in Luke 24:36–43, but John’s primary focus is upon the encounter with Thomas recounted in vv. 24–29 and nowhere else. Throughout this chapter, John places an emphasis upon belief in Jesus as resurrected Lord, an emphasis which appears at the end of the chapter in vv. 30–31 where we have “a purpose statement that summarizes virtually all the major themes of the Gospel.”¹

Abbreviated Outline² (current passage in bold):

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE WORD MADE FLESH (1:1–18)
- II. THE BOOK OF SIGNS: THE SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH (1:19–12:50)
- III. THE BOOK OF EXALTATION: PREPARING THE NEW MESSIANIC COMMUNITY AND THE PASSION OF JESUS (13–20)
 - A. *The Cleansing and Instruction of the New Covenant Community, including Jesus’ Final Prayer (13–17)*
 - B. *The Passion Narrative (18–19)*
 - 1. The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus (18:1–11)
 - 2. Jesus Questioned by the High Priest and Denied by Peter (18:12–27)
 - 3. Jesus Before Pilate (18:28–19:16a)
 - 4. Jesus’ Crucifixion and Burial (19:16b–42)
 - C. ***Jesus’ Resurrection and Appearances, Commissioning of Disciples (20:1–29)***
 - 1. **The Empty Tomb (20:1–10)**
 - 2. **Jesus’ Encounter with Mary Magdalene (20:11–18)**
 - 3. **Jesus’ First Appearance, to His Disciples (20:19–23)**
 - 4. **Jesus’ Second Appearance, to Thomas (20:24–29)**
 - D. *Concluding Purpose Statement (20:30–31)*
- IV. EPILOGUE: THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF PETER AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE (21)

¹ Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 559.

² Adapted from Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 307–308.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Notice what Mary Magdalene assumes about Christ's body in 20:2. What does this tell us about the disciples' initial impressions on the morning of the resurrection?
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2. How does the arrangement of the grave clothes in the tomb contradict the idea that the body was stolen (20:6-7)?
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3. In what sense could the disciples "believe" (20:8) when "as yet they did not know the Scripture" regarding the resurrection (20:9)?
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4. In what way does Jesus' statement in 20:17 indicate a change in his relationship to his followers?
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5. Compare John 7:39, 14:16-18, 25-26, 16:12-15 and Acts 2 with John 20:21-23. Based on these references, how should we understand Jesus' words here?
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6. Compare John 20:29 with 20:9. Through what means does someone believe without seeing? Why would Jesus describe this as being a greater blessing than believing by means of sight in 20:29?
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7. Reflect on the purpose statement in 20:30-31. What are some passages in this book that have significantly impacted your faith in Jesus as Christ and Son of God?
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Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage tell us about Jesus? How does it help us to understand "his place in the sweep of redemptive history"?³
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9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?
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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?
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³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 102.