

## 34. John 20:1-23

### Getting started

What have you seen that you would not have believed if you had not seen it?

### Observation

1. Who was the first person to see that the stone had been rolled away from the front of the tomb?
2. What was the order of events after that? *[Take care. A lot happens.]*
3. How many people saw the risen Jesus, according to John?

### Interpretation

1. Like the other three gospels, the resurrection is said to occur on 'the first day of the week'. Why describe it this way, rather than as the 'third day' after the crucifixion? *[To show that something new had started.]*
2. What do you think Mary was thinking when she reported that Jesus' body had been taken? *[Probably not that Jesus had risen but that his body had been stolen.]*
3. What is the significance of the details about burial clothes being folded? *[Jesus' resurrection was ordered, as you would expect from the God of order. It also suggests this was not the work of grave robbers.]*
4. What thoughts are conveyed in verse 9? *[We need Jesus to help us understand God's plan of salvation and restoration.]* What do you make of verse 10?
5. How would you describe the emotional flow within Mary from verse 10 to verse 16? *[At the least, anguish and despair replaced by astonishment and delight.]*
6. What is the significance of Jesus calling out 'Mary'? *[See 10:3-4, the Good shepherd calls his own sheep by name.]*
7. What is meant by Jesus saying don't hold onto me? *[Various suggestions are given by commentators. Probably the simplest is right. That is that now was not a time for Mary to cling to Jesus but to go and share the good news with the other disciples.]*

8. Can we read verse 17 as Jesus commissioning Mary Magdalene to preach the first Christian sermon? *[The terms 'preach' and 'sermon' are anachronistic and inflammatory. Yet, it is hard to think that Jesus was just asking Mary to pass on some information. In my view, Jesus commissioned Mary to be the first person to preach the gospel after the Cross. Some argue Jesus was just 'giving them a message', but anyone who thinks she would have just passed on the words in John 20:17 without comment has not thought much about Mary or the circumstances in which she found herself. It would be far more reasonable to expect her to have said something like, 'He's ALIVE, He's ALIVE. All that he ever said is true. He has defeated death. There is hope etc.']*

9. Verses 19-20, what does Jesus' appearance say about his physical body? What conclusions can we draw from Jesus showing his hands and side?

10. What are the implications of Jesus' greeting of peace? *[It is hard to see it only as a formal greeting. It is more a blessing from the one who had conquered death and evil so that peace was now assured.]*

11. Does verse 23 apply only to the disciples or to all followers of Jesus? What does it mean?

**Note:**

*A question arises how Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit into them fits with the account in Acts 2. Various suggestions are given by commentators. They are too numerous to mention here. As Don Carson says, we should not make John's account captive to the account in Acts 2. I think it is most likely that this was a private conferral of the Holy Spirit, followed by the public outpouring at Pentecost.*

## **Implications**

1. Do you find this account of the resurrection believable?

2. If you find this account believable, what more do you need to do to get eternal life? *[Believe that Jesus died for you. No one is saved by historical facts. They are saved by a personal commitment to the Lord who died for them.]*

3. For further reflection, look at 1 Corinthians 15:1-33 *[or just 15:1-11, if you are short for time]*. How important does Paul say the resurrection is?

## **Prayer suggestions**

1. Praise that the Father honoured the Son by raising him from the dead.
2. Ask for confidence in the historical truth of this account of the resurrection.
3. Ask that those who doubt Jesus or doubt his resurrection examine the evidence.