

# The Living Word

Printed Text · John 20:1-10, 19-20

## Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: DESCRIBE the disciples' response to Jesus' death and resurrection; APPRECIATE the beginning of a new life in Christ; and INVITE someone to learn more about Christ.

## In Focus

Brenda wanted her children to look their best for Sunday Service. Late Saturday night her girls' hair was all done and all of the children's clothes were laid out for church. Brenda fell into bed exhausted. She woke up Sunday morning with the sun shining into her room. It was so late! Would she be able to make it to church on time?

No time for breakfast, she thought, as she hastily rushed the children out of bed. No time for Sunday School either, they would really have to hurry if they were going to make it even to the last half of the church service!

As Brenda and her kids squeezed into the overflow room at church, Brenda was feeling cranky and sweaty—not at all in the mood for worshipping the Lord, who lives within our hearts today.

*Brenda vowed to place more time on preparing for worship next Sunday. Let's worship the Lord with all our hearts. Let's remember that He is alive within us every moment of every day.*

## Keep In Mind

"And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD" (John 20:20, KJV).

## Words You Should Know

**A. Sepulchre** (John 20:1–4, 6, 8) mnemeion (Gk.) — A grave or tomb. Jesus was buried in a sepulchre, which was a room carved out of a rocky hill.

**B. Resurrectionanastasis** (Gk.) — The act of having life restored after death.

## Say It Correctly

**Recriminations.** re-KRIM-i-NA-shuns

**Sepulchre.** SEP-ul-ker

## KJV

**John 20:1** The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,  
7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.

9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

**20:19** Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

## NLT

**John 20:1** Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

2 She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

3 Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb.

4 They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

5 He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in.

6 Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there,

7 while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings.

8 Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—

9 for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.

10 Then they went home.

**20:19** That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said.

20 As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!

## The People, Places, and Times

**Mary Magdalene.** She was first introduced to us by Luke, the physician (Luke 8:2–3), as one of the women from whom Jesus cast demons. Mary had been delivered from seven demons and apparently spent her days joining the other women who devoted themselves to ministering to Jesus.

**Simon Peter.** He served as the head of the band of disciples. The other disciples recognized Peter's authority after the Lord entrusted him with the keys of the kingdom. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mary and John would defer to his leadership upon seeing the empty tomb.

## Background

For three years, Jesus walked the earth teaching His disciples and demonstrating before the Jewish religious authorities that He was their long-awaited Messiah. Finally, in an ultimate show of rejection and contempt, the religious authorities conspired with the Roman government and the Jewish populace to kill the Lord. The Roman form of capital punishment was chosen, and Jesus was hung on a cross until He died. After all were certain of Jesus' death, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were permitted to take His body down from the cross and lay it in Joseph's unused tomb. On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene was returning to the tomb to tend to the body of the Lord when she discovered that the stone covering the tomb's opening had been rolled away and the body was no

longer there.

The wealthy people of this time had tombs carved out of the rocky hills. The tomb was usually prepared in advance of death, because the carving was arduous and time-consuming. Usually a small room with a low ceiling was carved out with a slab that served as a bed for the body. Tombs that have been discovered in this area and from this period usually had large round flat stones that served as doors, often with a slanted groove in which the stone was rolled. It was easy to roll the stone down the groove to cover the mouth of the tomb, but very difficult to roll it back up the groove to open the tomb.

## At-A-Glance

1. Mary Magdalene at the Tomb (John 20:1–3)
2. Peter and John at the Tomb (vv. 4–10)
3. Jesus Appears to His Disciples (vv. 19–20)

## In Depth

### 1. Mary Magdalene at the Tomb (John 20:1–3)

After Roman soldiers were certain that Jesus was dead and intervention was made with Pontius Pilate, loving hands were permitted to lower Him from the cross, wrap His body in strips of cloth with spices and ointment, and place it in a borrowed tomb. The tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea's family (Matthew 27:59). On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb only to discover that its stone covering had been rolled away and the body of Jesus was gone. She promptly returned to the city where she informed John and Peter of her discovery.

### 2. Peter and John at the Tomb (vv. 4–10)

The two disciples began running toward the site where they knew that Jesus had been buried. Because he was younger, John outran Peter and arrived at the tomb first, but out of respect for Peter's position as the leader of the disciples, he did not enter. Rather, John waited until Peter arrived and then followed him into the grave.

Peter didn't hesitate before entering the Lord's tomb. The same eagerness and impulsiveness that characterized his life before the Lord's death remained. Once inside, Peter could observe that the burial cloth (napkin), which had been used to cover the Lord's face, was neatly folded together in a place separate from the other grave clothes. John, after following Peter into the cave, was also able to observe the burial cloth. Scripture does not record Peter's response to what he observed. However, John saw, and because of what he saw, he believed. The physical evidence of the empty grave clothes bolstered John's faith, and he was able to believe what he did not understand. In time, Peter would believe as well. Perhaps his exposure to the empty tomb and John's faith helped him.

### 3. Jesus Appears to His Disciples (vv. 19–20)

It was now the evening of Resurrection Day. In spite of the appearance of the Risen Lord to Mary and the evidence of the folded cloth, the disciples were very much afraid. If the authorities would kill the Lord, what would they do to His followers? So they gathered together and locked the doors, probably in the same room where they had eaten the Last Supper with the Lord. We can imagine them trying to sort out the strange things that had happened that day.

Then suddenly Jesus appeared—without the doors opening—and was suddenly visible among with them. The appearance may have occurred among 10 of the disciples— Judas had committed suicide, and for some reason, Thomas was not there. (Although others who followed Jesus were considered His disciples, the original 12 apostles had a unique role.) Jesus’ first words to them were “Peace be unto you” (John 20:19). Maybe the men were expecting some sort of reprimand. After all, they had all run away when Jesus was captured in the Garden of Gethsemane. Instead, Jesus offered a lovely greeting, with no recriminations. We know from Luke 24:37 that the disciples thought they were seeing a ghost, but Jesus proved to them that He was their Lord in the flesh, although a resurrected kind of flesh. Jesus showed them His hands and His side to prove that He was indeed the same Jesus who had died on the Cross for them. At this, they believed and were overjoyed.

### **Search the Scriptures**

1. When did Mary Magdalene go to the tomb where Jesus was buried (John 20:1)?
2. Where was the napkin that had covered the Lord’s face (v. 7)?
3. What was John’s response upon entering the tomb and seeing the napkin (v. 8)?
4. What were the two responses of the disciples upon seeing their Risen Lord (vv. 19–20)?

### **Discuss the Meaning**

1. Why do you think Mary was returning to the tomb before daybreak? Do you think she was alone?
2. Why do you suppose Mary did not enter the tomb with the disciples?
3. What is the significance of the fact that the burial clothes were still present in the tomb?

### **Liberating Lesson**

Movies, DVDs, and books have all conspired to condition our response to the notion of death. We see it as a terrible realm inhabited by demons, zombies, and the like. However, when we lose a loved one to death, our response to that realm as Christians should be completely different. If we are sure that they have trusted in Christ, our fear gives way to a hope that they have gone to a place of light, rest, and peace in the presence of our Lord. How does our relationship with God change the way we view death? Which would you prefer to have: the popularity and wealth of this world or the assurance that when you die, you will go to live with Jesus?

### **Application For Activation**

Jesus, by living a life pleasing to God, broke the bonds of death over those who believe in Him. God confirmed this by raising Jesus from the dead. Write a poem or song celebrating the victory of Christ over death.

### **Follow the Spirit**

What God wants me to do:

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### **Remember Your Thoughts**

Special insights I have learned:

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## More Light on the Text

John 20:1–10, 19–20

**1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.**

Mary Magdalene's association with Jesus most likely begins when He cures her and other women of demon possession (Luke 8:2), sometime during the second year of His ministry. Prior to that time, the Scriptures have no mention of her. Her name indicates that she either came from or was a resident of the town of Magdala, situated on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The identification of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute is widely believed, especially by American Catholics and those in many western European countries where homes for unwed mothers routinely are named "Magdalene" homes. This notion is, however, unfounded and bears no scriptural evidence to support it.

There is, however, plenty of evidence to show that from the time of her deliverance, at the hands of Jesus, all of the Gospel writers acknowledge Mary Magdalene as a constant presence in the life and ministry of Jesus. Her miraculous cure by Jesus brought Him her untiring faith and devotion. She appears to have been a woman of substantial means, as it seems she ministered to the needs of Jesus and the other disciples with her own money (Luke 8:1–3). Interestingly, the account of the sepulchre visitation differs ever so slightly between the Gospel writers. Matthew reports that Mary Magdalene was accompanied by the "other Mary" (Matthew 28:1). Mark records the presence of three women: Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of James; and Salome (Mark 16:1). Luke records the greatest number of women. He writes, "It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them" (from Luke 24:10). John only mentions Mary Magdalene's visit at the tomb. The fact that her name always appears first when listed with a group of women indicates that she was obviously a leader in the female circle of disciples (Matthew 27:56; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10). The only exception is at the foot of the cross when Jesus' female family members' names are listed first (John 19:25).

Faithful to Jesus, even after His death, John presents her rising early and going to Jesus' tomb to anoint His body with precious ointments and spices, as was the custom of the day. Both Mark (15:47) and Luke (23:55) record that Mary and the other women had watched Jesus' burial and the sealing of the tomb. While we are not surprised that Mary could locate the tomb in the darkness of the early morning hours, it is not clear how Mary expected to remove the huge stone placed at the entrance of the tomb. Perhaps she expected the Roman soldiers, who were guarding the tomb, to roll the stone for her. In any case, when Mary Magdalene arrives at the burial site, the giant stone has already been removed.

**2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the LORD out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. 3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.**

At this point in John's narrative, Mary Magdalene runs to tell Peter and the other disciples that Jesus' body is missing. John does not tell us that Mary has yet to enter the interior of the tomb. In John's account, Mary does not enter the tomb until after she notifies the men (John 20:11–12). Matthew's account tells of a "great earthquake" and has the angel rolling back the stone, making the announcement to the women, and inviting them inside the tomb to see for themselves (28:2–6). The narratives of both Mark and Luke indicate that the women enter the tomb and encounter an angel

who announces that Jesus has risen. John's different presentation does not imply any disharmony in the Gospels. Instead, it suggests a contrasting view of the account's significant points. We must also remember that of the four Gospel writers, John is the only writer who was actually an eyewitness to this event. It is quite possible that he prioritized the notification of Peter and himself and simply chose to leave out details that occurred before his arrival at the tomb. This is logical in light of the fact that his Gospel is written after the other three; he knows they have already included this detail. The fact that Mary announces that the body is missing implies she has indeed entered the sepulchre.

Interesting, too, is the fact that John does not name the other disciple, the one "whom Jesus loved" (John 20:2). There is no doubt that it can only be the writer of the Gospel, John, the brother of James. John never identifies himself in his own Gospel, choosing instead to refer to himself only as the son of Zebedee or, as he does in this account, the one Jesus loved.

#### **4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.**

Only John's Gospel records that "the other disciple" outran Peter to the sepulchre. Again, this does not indicate disharmony; rather, it reflects a writer's privilege of highlighting certain details. Here, John, who also happens to be a central character, is relating the sense of excitement he surely must have felt at that time. He was younger than Peter and certainly would have been able to outdistance the older man as they raced to the tomb.

#### **5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.**

Although John arrives at the sepulchre before Peter, he does not go in. Some have argued that perhaps John was afraid to enter the tomb alone. A more likely reason is that he simply defers to the older apostle. It is probably out of respect for Peter's position as leader of the apostles that John allows Peter to enter the tomb first.

#### **6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,**

#### **7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.**

John seems to emphasize the supernatural implications concerning the burial linens. The folded-up cloth would not indicate grave robbers, who would have just hurriedly cast it aside. Also, since Jesus was no longer dead and had conquered death by His Resurrection, He no longer needed burial clothing. The linen grave clothes were for the dead; those who had not risen and could not, and had not, conquered death. Only the Son of God could win and seal the victory over sin and death, therefore securing our own salvation.

#### **8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.**

John's Gospel alone records that upon seeing the empty grave and the discarded grave clothes, he "believed." This is understandable since the writer, better than anyone else, would know this to be a fact. It is interesting to note that in Luke's account, upon seeing the discarded burial clothing, Peter "wonder[ed] in himself at that which was come to pass" (Luke 24:12). While Peter, the elder statesman, puzzles over the occurrence, the younger disciple believes. John uses the Greek word for "believed," *pisteuo* (pist-YOO-o), which means one who had faith or conviction.

#### **9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.**

#### **10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.**

Verse 9 offers a fuller explanation for Peter's puzzlement and John's subsequent belief by emphasizing how unexpected these events were for both he and Peter. Although the two of them were closer to Jesus than any of the other apostles, these events still take these men by surprise. Only a few days earlier, Jesus spoke to His disciples and asked them if they understood what He meant when He said, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?" (John 16:19). The apostles were unsure of what Jesus meant. That He would defy the laws of nature and physically be raised from the dead had not occurred to them. Therefore, in John 20:10, they simply went to their homes again, pondering all that they had seen and heard.

**20:19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.**

John emphasizes that this was the first day of the week. The Resurrection changed everything—even the day that was considered the first day of the week and the day on which Christians have chosen to worship.

Jesus greeted them with the beautiful words, "Peace be unto you." The Hebrew word for "peace" is shalom (shaw-LOME) and is used by Jews today. But the Jews of the New Testament spoke Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Greek. The Greek word for "peace" is eirene (i-RAY-nay) and includes the wish for prosperity, peace, quietness, and rest. When Jesus uttered "It is finished" while He hung on the Cross, He was indicating that the work of atonement was completed; but now that God has raised Him from the dead, He is indicating that our reconciliation with God is complete and we have peace with God and with one another. He is also setting His disciples at ease; this appearance must have been a pleasantly shocking surprise.

**20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD.**

Jesus had promised His disciples that He would turn their sadness into joy. He knew that for the few days between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, the disciples would feel like orphans (John 14:18) and they would grieve, but He promised to turn their grief into gladness (16:20–22). The Greek for "glad" is chairo (KHAH-ee-ro) and it means to rejoice and to be glad.

# Daily Bible Readings

## **Monday**

1 Timothy 1:12-17

## **Tuesday**

John 19:4-16

## **Wednesday**

Leviticus 24:10-16

## **Thursday**

John 19:17-25

## **Friday**

Psalm 31:1-5

## **Saturday**

John 19:38-42

## **Sunday**

John 20:1-10, 19, 20