

# FINDING THE MESSIAH

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



### John 20:1-18

#### Sorrow Encounters the Resurrected Lord

##### DAY ONE Observation

John 1-12 record Jesus' **public ministry** to Israel. John 13-17 record Jesus' **private ministry** with His disciples. John 18-21 record Jesus' **universal ministry** to all humanity through His death and resurrection.

*The twentieth chapter of John is the climax of the book. ...Although it was necessary for John's purpose to demonstrate the fact of the resurrection so that he might induce belief in his hearers, it was equally imperative that he should describe its effect on those who witnessed it. ...John stressed the change which was produced in the lives of the witnesses. Five groups or individuals were mentioned in this chapter: Mary Magdalene; Peter; the unnamed disciple, who was doubtless John himself; the ten or eleven disciples as a group; and Thomas.* —Merrill Tenney

**Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read John 20:1-18. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Record the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.**

Now the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

<sup>3</sup> Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. <sup>4</sup> So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying *there*; yet he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, <sup>7</sup> and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. <sup>12</sup> And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. <sup>13</sup> Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.”

<sup>14</sup> Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher).

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and *to My God and your God.*’”

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her. (NKJV)

**What stands out to you after reading this passage? Why?**

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**Write down 3-5 observations that you can make about Mary Magdalene from this passage.**

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**What question is asked of Mary Magdalene by both the angels and Jesus (20:13, 15)?**

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**What does Mary Magdalene do after coming to realize the resurrection of Jesus (20:16-18)?**

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**DAY TWO  
Meditation**

**Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Jesus' words in John 20:16-18 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.**

Jesus said to her, "Mary."  
She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).  
Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her. (ESV)

**Which words, phrases, or images stand out to you? Why?**

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**Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.**

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## DAY THREE Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

**The four gospels each present a different perspective on the events of Easter morning. John's focus is on individuals whereas the other gospels provide a more general overview of Christ's resurrection appearances. Read the following accounts and answer the questions at the end.**

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." <sup>8</sup> So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (Matthew 28:1-8)

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. <sup>2</sup> And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" <sup>4</sup> And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. <sup>5</sup> And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." <sup>8</sup> And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (Mark 16:1-8)

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup> And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. <sup>5</sup> And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." <sup>8</sup> And they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, <sup>11</sup> but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened. (Luke 24:1-12)

When did the women go to the tomb? \_\_\_\_\_

Who all were in this group of women? \_\_\_\_\_

What did the women see? \_\_\_\_\_  
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What message do the angels give to them? \_\_\_\_\_  
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What was the women's initial response to the angels' announcement? \_\_\_\_\_  
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What was the disciples' response to the women's report? \_\_\_\_\_  
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What differences do you see in the other three gospels from John's account in 20:1-18?  
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John was the last gospel account written and he appears to be very aware of the accounts of the other gospels. He, however, wanted to focus on individuals; thus, he does not mention the other women but instead focuses on Mary Magdalene. Putting together the four gospel accounts, the chronology of that Sunday morning appears to be something like this:

1. The group of women come to the tomb very early on Sunday morning.
2. They see the stone rolled away from the tomb.
3. Mary Magdalene immediately runs away to tell Peter and John.
4. The other women stay and encounter the angels, appearing in human form.
5. As the women depart from the tomb, Peter and John arrive with Mary Magdalene.
6. Peter and John examine the empty tomb and then leave, each to their own home.
7. Mary Magdalene stays behind and encounters the resurrected Lord.
8. As Mary Magdalene leaves to tell the disciples, Jesus encounters the other women on their way to tell the disciples as well (cf. Matthew 28:9-10).

Read Tim Chaffey's online article, "Christ's Resurrection—Four Accounts, One Reality" for further information. This article can be found at [www.answersingenesis.org/jesus-christ/resurrection/christs-resurrection-four-accounts-one-reality](http://www.answersingenesis.org/jesus-christ/resurrection/christs-resurrection-four-accounts-one-reality). You can Google the title of the article to find it more quickly.

## DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on John*.

**20:1-10.** The chapter we have now begun takes us from Christ's death to Christ's resurrection. Like Matthew, Mark, and Luke, John dwells on these two great events with peculiar fullness and particularity. And we need not wonder. The whole of saving Christianity hinges on the two facts, that Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification....

We are taught in the passage before us, *that those who love Christ most are those who have received most benefit from him.*

The first whom John names among those who came to Christ's sepulcher, is Mary Magdalene. The history of this faithful woman, no doubt, is hidden in much obscurity. A vast amount of needless ridicule has been heaped upon her memory, as if she was once an habitual sinner against the seventh commandment. Yet there is literally no evidence whatever that she was anything of the kind! But we are distinctly told that she was one out of whom the Lord had cast "seven devils" (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2)--one who had been subjected in a peculiar way to Satan's possession--and one whose gratitude to our Lord for deliverance was a gratitude that knew no bounds. In short, of all our Lord's followers on earth, none seem to have loved Him so much as Mary Magdalene. None felt that they owed so much to Christ. None felt so strongly that there was nothing too great to do for Christ. ...In a word, having received much, she loved much.

...We are taught, secondly, in these verses, *that there are widely different temperaments in different believers.*

This is a point which is curiously brought out in the conduct of Peter and John, when

Mary Magdalene told them that the Lord's body was gone. We are told that they both ran to the sepulcher; but John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, outran Peter, and reached the empty grave first. Then comes out the difference between the two men. John, of the two more gentle, quiet, tender, reserved, retiring, deep-feeling, stooped down and looked in, but went no further. Peter, more hot, and zealous, and impulsive, and fervent, and forward, cannot be content without going down into the sepulcher, and actually seeing with his own eyes. Both, we may be sure, were deeply attached to our Lord. The hearts of both, at this critical juncture, were full of hopes, and fears, and anxieties, and expectations, all tangled together. Yet each behaves in his own characteristic fashion. We need not doubt that these things were intentionally written for our learning.

Let us learn, from the case before us, to make allowances for wide varieties in the inward character of believers. To do so will save us much trouble in the journey of life, and prevent many an uncharitable thought. Let us not judge brethren harshly, and set them down in a low place, because they do not see or feel things exactly as we see and feel, and because things do not affect or strike them just as they affect and strike us. The flowers in the Lord's garden are not all of one color and one scent, though they are all planted by one Spirit.

...We are taught, finally, in these verses, *that there may be much ignorance even in true believers.*

This is a point which is brought out here with singular force and distinctness. John himself, the writer of this Gospel, records of himself and his companion Peter, "As yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must

rise again from the dead." How truly incredible this seems! For three long years these two leading Apostles had heard our Lord speak of His own resurrection as a fact, and yet they had not understood Him. Again and again He had staked the truth of His Messiahship on His rising from the dead, and yet they had never taken in His meaning. *We little realize the power over the mind which is exercised by wrong teaching in childhood, and by early prejudices imbibed in our youth.* Surely the Christian minister has little right to complain of ignorance among his hearers, when he marks the ignorance of Peter and John, under the teaching of Christ Himself.

**20:11-18.** The interview between the Lord Jesus and Mary Magdalene immediately after His resurrection, described in these verses, is a narrative peculiar to John. No other Evangelist has been inspired to record it. Of all the accounts of the appearances of our Lord, after He rose from the dead, none perhaps is so affecting and touching as this.

We see, first, in these verses, *that those who love Christ most diligently and perseveringly, are those who receive most privileges from Christ's hand.* It is a touching fact, and one to be carefully noted, that Mary Magdalene would not leave the sepulcher, when Peter and John went away to their own home. Love to her gracious Master would not let her leave the place where He had been lain. Where He was now she could not tell. What had become of Him she did not know, but love made her linger about the empty tomb, where Joseph and Nicodemus had recently laid Him. Love made her honor the last place where His precious body had been seen by mortal eyes. And her love reaped a rich reward. She saw the angels whom Peter and John had never observed. She actually heard them speak, and had soothing words addressed to her. She was

the first to see our Lord after He rose from the dead, the first to hear His voice, the first to hold conversation with Him. Can anyone doubt that this was written for our learning? Wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world, this incident testifies that those who honor Christ will be honored by Christ.

...We see, lastly, in these verses, *how kindly and graciously our Lord speaks of His disciples.* He bids Mary Magdalene carry a message to them as "His brethren." He bids her tell those who His Father was their Father, and His God their God. It was but three days before that they had all forsaken Him shamefully, and fled. Yet this merciful Master speaks as if all was forgiven and forgotten. His first thought is to bring back the wanderers, to bind up the wounds of their consciences, to reanimate their courage, to restore them to their former place. This was indeed a love that passes knowledge. To trust deserters, and to show confidence in backsliders, was a compassion which man can hardly understand. So true is that word of David--"Like as a Father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Ps 103:13-14)

Let us leave the passage with the comfortable reflection that Jesus Christ never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. As He dealt with His erring disciples in the morning of His resurrection, so will He deal with all who believe and love Him, until He comes again. When we wander out of the way He will bring us back. When we fall He will raise us again. But he will never break His royal word--"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.) The saints in glory will have one anthem in which every voice and heart will join--"He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." (Psalm 103:10.)

What stands out to you from Ryle's words? Why?

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**DAY FIVE**  
**Application**

Re-read John 20:1-18 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your daily life.

What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of John 20:1-18? Why?

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Sorrow is a reality in this world. Take a moment to examine the depths of your own heart. What causes you sorrow right now in your life? What saddens you or grieves you?

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Jesus asks the question, "Why are you weeping?" Try to go a little deeper into your heart. Why do you think you feel sorrow or sadness over the things that you listed above? What do you feel like you have lost or might lose?

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How does the resurrection of Jesus Christ give you hope? \_\_\_\_\_

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*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21:4)*