



From Tragedy to Triumph

John 20:1-23

INTRODUCTION

The resurrection of Jesus is the most profound and important event in human history. Nothing compares to the awe and wonder of the empty tomb and the risen Lord. It is the climax of all four Gospels and the central theme of the rest of the New Testament.

Each of the four Gospels gives a slightly different account of the events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus. All agree that the tomb was empty and that Jesus was indeed alive. The minor differences in the accounts support the truth that these were eyewitness accounts of those events.

John gives us the most personal and intimate of the accounts. His focus is on specific individual encounters with the resurrection. Throughout the Gospel of John, John refers to himself as the disciple who Jesus loved. John, along with Peter, encountered the empty tomb for himself.

A central concept in the entire Gospel of John is a call to believe. Over 50 times, in his Gospel, John uses the word believe. After his account of the resurrection of Jesus, John summarized his message in John 20:31. ***But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

The truth of the resurrection is still being debated today. The evidence for the resurrection is great, but it is not enough. It can take us only so far. We have to come to the point where we believe the truth by faith.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Study 1: John 20:1-9

Early on Sunday morning the women, led by Mary Magdalene, made their way to the tomb to mourn for Jesus. They went expecting to find a dead Jesus. Instead, they discovered an empty tomb.

1. Mary discovered that the tomb was open.
 - a. What emotions do you think Mary was experiencing?
 - b. How did Mary react to her discovery?
 - c. What did Mary think had happened?
2. Mary took her news to Peter and John (the disciple Jesus loved).
 - a. Why would Mary have sought out these two disciples?
 - b. How did Peter and John respond to the news?
3. John arrived at the tomb first.
 - a. What information is given that hints at this being an eyewitness account?
 - b. What did John do when he reached the tomb?
 - c. What do you think John thought at that point?
4. Peter arrived after John and rushed into the tomb.
 - a. What did Peter discover?
 - b. Why is this significant?
5. How did John respond when he entered the tomb?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. If you had been with Mary, what questions would have come to your mind when you discovered the empty tomb?
2. What did Mary **not** assume when she found the empty tomb? Why?
3. Look carefully at what Peter discovered when he entered the tomb. Why is this significant proof for the reality of the resurrection?
4. Peter and John did not immediately understand that Jesus had been raised from the dead. What keeps people today from believing in the resurrection of Jesus?
5. What difference does it make for you that John was an eyewitness to the empty tomb?
6. How would you explain the empty tomb to someone who did not believe in the resurrection?

Study 2: John 20:10-18

Mary was one of the first to discover the empty tomb, and the first to encounter the risen Jesus. John gives us a very personal look at this amazing encounter.

1. Mary lingered at the tomb after the disciples left.
 - a. Why do you think Mary stayed?
 - b. Why would Mary look back into the tomb that she knew was empty?
 - c. What happened when she looked back into the tomb?
 - d. What is surprising about John's account at this point?
2. What was consuming Mary's thoughts as she stood by the tomb?
3. In the midst of Mary's grief, Jesus appeared to her.
 - a. How did Mary respond at first to Jesus' presence?
 - b. How was Jesus' question to Mary more profound than she knew?
 - c. How was her grief blinding Mary?
4. Jesus broke into Mary's grief.
 - a. What caused Mary to recognize Jesus?
 - b. How did Mary react to Jesus?
 - c. What did Jesus tell Mary?
 - d. What is surprising about verse 18?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. In what ways does grief distort our perception of life?

2. In what ways does grief immobilize us and keep us from looking forward?

3. John 10:3 tells us that Jesus, our Good Shepherd, calls us by name.
 - a. What does this say about the level of Jesus' love for us?

 - b. How does this change our response to our grief?

4. Encountering the risen Lord Jesus dramatically changed Mary.
 - a. How can encountering the risen Lord Jesus, by faith, change you?

 - b. What keeps you from recognizing Jesus in your life?

5. Jesus did not allow Mary to linger in the garden. He gave her an assignment to accomplish.
 - a. Why do you think Jesus did this?

 - b. What does this tell us about our response to encountering Jesus?

Study 3: John 20:19-23

The disciples did not expect Jesus to rise from the death, even though He had told them that He would. When they first heard the news from the women, they did not believe them. (Luke 24:11)

1. How does John describe the mood of the disciples as they gathered together? What does this say about the expectations of the disciples?

2. Jesus appeared to the disciples.

a. What important piece of information does John include?

b. What do you think was the disciple's first reaction?

c. How did Jesus identify Himself to the disciples?

3. John gives his version of the Great Commission here.

a. What does it mean for Jesus to give the disciples peace?

b. What assignment did Jesus give to the disciples?

c. What gift did Jesus give to the disciples?

d. What charge did Jesus give to the disciples?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. How would you have responded if you were one of the disciples?

2. Look at Luke 24:36-43.
 - a. How did the disciples first react to seeing Jesus?

 - b. How did Jesus reassure the disciples that it was Him?

 - c. The disciples were still uncertain. Why would they have been?

 - d. How did Jesus give them further evidence of His reality?

3. What things can keep us from fully trusting in the resurrection?

4. What kind of evidence do you need to fully trust in the resurrection?

5. How does the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives confirm the reality of the resurrection?

Study 4: Luke 24:1-12

Luke gives a slightly different account of the women discovering the empty tomb.

1. What was the purpose for which the women went to the tomb?
2. What did they discover once they arrived?
3. How did God reveal to the women the reality of the resurrection?
4. What message were the women given?
5. What did the women do with this new information?
6. How did the disciples respond to the women's message?
7. Why would Peter have run to the tomb?
8. What did Peter discover in the tomb that would have startled him?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. If you were among the women, what would have been your first thoughts when you arrived at the tomb?
2. What surprises you about the reaction of the women to the two angels?
3. How does grief often dull our senses?
4. The disciples refused to believe the women. Why would this have been so?
5. If you were one of the women, what would have been your response to the unbelief of the disciples?
6. What might have kept Peter from fully believing the truth of the resurrection, even after he saw the empty tomb and the linens?
7. What keeps people today from believing the truth of the resurrection, even in spite of the evidence?