

Bible Workshop: John 20

Outline

- vv. 1-9 First discovery of the moved stone
- vv. 10-18 Mary meets the angels and then Jesus
- vv. 19-23 Jesus appears to the disciples
- vv. 24-29 Doubting and conviction of Thomas
- vv. 30,31 Conclusion by the author

Discussion points

- Thomas is very demanding in the level of proof he requires (v. 25). Note Jesus' response to Thomas in verse 29. Look up marginal references to build a picture of how we should read Thomas.
- Is there any significance in the detail about the napkin in verse 7? Why was the napkin separate? Why are we told about this?
- Do you think there may be some symbol called to mind by the place the angels are sitting (v. 12)? Can you think of any Old Testament echoes?
- Think about Mary. Why is Jesus' question in verse 13 repeated in verse 15? Does it have a special significance? What does verse 15 tell us about Mary's emotions at this time? How do you think Jesus said "Mary" in verse 16? What tone do you hear in his voice?
- Verses 30 and 31 constitute a summary of the purpose of the whole Gospel. Think about how this is the case. What are the key words which are found both in these verses and throughout the Gospel?

Details

- v. 6.** In what way is this typical of Peter? Why is John more hesitant about going in (v. 5)? Try to think of other occasions on which Peter acted hastily or instinctively.
- v. 9.** At what point did the disciples come to know that Christ must rise from the dead?
- v. 16.** Is there any significance in Mary's 'turning'? Notice verse 14 as well. She literally turns her body, but could there be a symbolic meaning as well?
- v. 17.** What did Jesus mean by saying "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended . . ." Are there different possibilities?

- v. 17.** Look at the pronouns at the end of this verse: "my" and "your", "my" and "your". Why this emphasis?
- v. 22.** Unpack the symbolism of Jesus breathing on the disciples.

Tasks

- Much of this chapter is concerned with recognising and not recognising Christ. Make a list of the incidents in the chapter which contribute to this theme. Look particularly for references to seeing and believing.
- Find out how many times Jesus uses the greeting "Peace be unto you" (or an equivalent) in the chapter. Is this greeting used elsewhere in the Gospel? Is he just saying 'Hello', or is there a deeper significance?
- At certain crucial points in the Gospel, John uses an original language expression which is transliterated ("Rabboni" in verse 16). Where are the other occasions where this technique is used, and what is special about them to cause John to transliterate rather than translate?
- Jesus gives the disciples power to forgive sins in verse 23. Find references later in the New Testament where they make use of this power.

Take-home points

Think about the kind of doubts we may have. What sort of proofs do we sometimes want, and is it appropriate to ask for them? There may be some Old Testament examples which help with this.

What might be the reason why the marks in Jesus' hands and side are retained in his body, even though he has risen to newness of life?

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Comments are welcome and will be considered for publication. Please send them to the Publishing Editor, Brother Tony Benson, address inside front cover.