

believe
THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE LIFE
STUDY WEEK 2018

section 4

SECTION 4: JOHN 20

a special mary

Jesus first revealed himself to Mary Magdalene, which is unusual when you consider he could have appeared to his mother, or his family, or his disciples. What event in her past tied her so closely to Jesus? (Look up the parallel record in **Mark 16** if you need help)

Aside from this previous event, why else might Jesus have chosen to appear first to Mary instead of the disciples? Apart from coming to the tomb early in the morning, where else had she been (when the disciples had not)? Have a look back through the previous chapter if you're struggling.

Using e-Sword, look up the name 'Magdalene' (you should find 12 references). What do you notice about the order in which her name appears every time (except once)? What might this tell you about Mary?

John's gospel seems to tell the story as if Mary were alone on this early morning, but a little hint in the opening verses tells us otherwise. How do you know she had some companions?

Look up the parallel records in **Mark 16** and **Luke 24**. Who else was with Mary?

A bit of investigation is required to understand what happens next. According to John's gospel, Mary sees the stone rolled away, and rushes off to the disciples (**John 20:2**). However, Matthew (**28:5-8**), Mark (**16:3-8**) and Luke (**24:2-11**) all record a conversation between the women and an angel inside the empty tomb. Regardless of the exact sequence of events, in her state of mind Mary either does not hear, understand or believe the words of the angel. What panicked report does she bring to Peter and John?

As he made his way to the tomb, John ("the other disciple") possibly expected the worst. If they didn't believe the story of the angel, who might Mary, Peter and John think had taken the body away?

Not everyone who witnessed this event – or heard about it – necessarily believed in the same way John did. Look up **Luke 24:19-24**; what was the reaction of the two disciples who unwittingly met Jesus on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection?

Back in **John 20**, what did John particularly take note of when he looked into the tomb? What extra detail does he provide?



BIBLE MARKING: 'seeing is believing'. Colour in the four occasions the word 'seeth'/'saw' appears (between **verse 1-8**)

Thinking about our slogan for this Study Week, what effect did seeing the contents inside the tomb have on John?

This would be a sight that would stay with him for the rest of his life. Look up **John 1:1-3** (his first writing) and **1 John 1:1-4** (one of his last). What is the common idea repeated several times in both passages? (Look up **John 19:35** for another example!)

The precise detail given about the graveclothes demands our further attention. First of all, what material are the graveclothes made from? What clothing was this material typically used for? (You may need to look it up in E-Sword to see where else it appears in the Bible).

One item was deliberately set apart from the rest: the napkin that was about the head. Remember, John was probably expecting to see the tomb completely empty (possibly having been raided by the Jews?) Why did seeing these neatly laid graveclothes make John believe?

This event appears to have been prefigured in the Old Testament prophecy of **Zechariah 3**. This prophecy is set during the time of Ezra, when Israel was trying to rebuild Jerusalem in the face of fierce opposition from the Samaritans (see **Ezra 4:1-5**). In **Zechariah 3:1-5** we meet various characters:

- Joshua (the high priest)
- The Angel of the Lord (probably Michael, per **Jude v9**)
- Satan (the “adversaries” of **Ezra 4:1**)

Read this passage carefully and list out three links/similarities between Zechariah’s prophecy (**3:1-5**) and John’s record of **chapter 20**:

1. _____
2. _____

3. _____

Back in **John 20**, whilst John believed Jesus had risen, it seems other disciples were not so sure what has happened. What summary do **John 20:9** and **Luke 24:11-12** provide?



BIBLE MARKING: take a red pencil and circle the word ‘**But**’ in **verse 11**. There is an important contrast made here. The disciples head to their homes, but Mary is left behind. In *Nazareth Revisited*, Robert Roberts writes:

“Mary does not go back with the two disciples. She lingers at the sepulchre entrance, and she weeps in the coldness and silence and darkness of the early morning as she thinks that not only has the Lord been crucified, but she is denied the very comfort of honouring his dead body.”

When Mary enters the tomb she is met by two angels within. How does Mary’s response to them from the other women? What does this tell you about her state of mind at this point in time?



BIBLE MARKING: Mary is completely and solely focused on her departed Lord. Circle or colour in the words “**my**”, “**I**”, “**him**” in **verse 13** and “**him**” (x3) in **verse 15**.

In her grief, Mary fails to recognise Jesus. Who does she mistake him for, and what is this supposed to remind us of (think back to the beginning of section two)?

What is the main difference between these two gardeners? Look up **Romans 5:17-19** and **1 Corinthians 15:20-23**:

What is it that makes Mary eventually recognise Jesus? **John 10:27** would be an excellent cross-reference to put in your margin.

Why does Jesus say “**touch me not**”? Look at the verse in the ESV; what does this tell us Mary was doing?

Mary may have seemed rather confused by Jesus’ news that he would be shortly departing. Given she had been left alone by the disciples at the start of the chapter, what mission does he give her?

As you’ll recall, **Psalm 22** is a prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What does **verse 22** say, and how does Mary help fulfil this here?

How was this wonderful news actually received by the disciples, according to **Mark 16:9-11**?

Despite the uplifting news delivered by Mary (a first-hand witness of the resurrected Christ) where do we next meet the disciples and why?

How does this compare to the public example set by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea? (**John 19:38-40**)

What lesson should this teach us about our own ecclesial outreach today?

How did Jesus reveal himself to them, and what ‘evidence’ did it take for them to recognise him?

Did the disciples fully receive the holy spirit here? Compare **John 20:22** with what is promised in **Acts 1:5**. What is the difference? What specific authority does Jesus now bestow on the disciples?



BIBLE MARKING: next to **John 20:21**, note down **John 14:27** and **16:33**.

seeing is believing

Thomas called Didymus is often singled out as “doubting Thomas” – but was he really that different from the other disciples? What had they personally witnessed, which Thomas had missed out on?

The disciples now find themselves in the same situation as Mary had been a few days earlier – trying to convince someone they had personally seen Jesus. What is Thomas’ response to this?

Thomas doesn't believe despite the eyewitness of Mary and the other disciples. How can we be like Thomas today? What signs do we fail to believe?


Why do you think Jesus waited eight days before showing himself to Thomas?

Jesus then appears a second time to the disciples. What three similarities do you notice between both appearances?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Thomas' last recorded conversation with Jesus is found in **John 14:5-7**. What did Thomas not understand at that point in time?

His response **"My Lord and my God"** may seem unusual, but what does Thomas now understand? (see **John 14:9**).

 **BIBLE MARKING:** colour in the word 'believe', 'believed' and 'believing'. It appears six times between **John 20:15-31**.

Something amazing occurs in **verse 29** – Jesus Christ talks about you, the person completing this notebook! What does he say and how does this apply to you?

Finally, we've arrived at our key theme for this Study Week! Copy out **John 20:31** in the box below:

This is the whole reason John wrote this gospel! So that you might believe, despite having never seen Jesus Christ. And to all of us in that position, Jesus says: **"Blessed are they"**!