

# John Chapter Twenty

## THE RESURRECTION

### John 20:1-10

We now have the distinct privilege of hearing the truth about the single most important occurrence in all of history as told to us directly by God and written down by His servant John. Throughout Christ's ministry He had restored life to a number of people who had died, but in each case He did so before they had been buried. So never before in all of history had anyone been physically raised from the dead after being in the grave for several days, with the exception of Lazarus who had been brought back to life by Jesus perhaps seven to ten days earlier. As I meditate on the verses surrounding each of these events I have come to believe that Jesus may have raised Lazarus for a number of very good reasons. One of those reasons could very well have been to prepare His followers with a first-hand witness that resurrection from the dead was well within the power of Jesus Christ.

“A number of years ago, and I cannot be certain of the exact date, but would assume it occurred toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a man named Brown was hanged in Philadelphia. In ten minutes after he was legally dead he was resting on a table in the physiological laboratory. Around the table were three of the most famous physiologists of the scientific world. Could motion and life be restored to that inanimate body? Science waited anxiously for an answer to the question.

“A **sharp wire**, charged with electricity, was applied to the various nerve centers of the body and brain. A superstitious layman would have been horrified at the result. Brown raised first his right hand and then his left. His head moved. His mouth twitched in a convulsive grin. The cords of his neck swelled and the mouth opened as if he would complete his unfinished sentence on the scaffold. The hands drew up and then extended. Unceasingly the **electric wire** prodded center after center in the nervous organism. At a fresh touch from the plying needle the body sat upright. There seemed to be breath, for the respiratory

organs were agitated. Would he walk? Would he talk?

“Science was anxious; another stroke and it had found the secret of life. But placed on the floor, the body fell over limp—dead. Science had demonstrated wonders, but had failed to raise the dead.”

—S. T. Nicholls<sup>1</sup>

As smart as mankind considers itself to be and as hard as they try, they will never be able to create life from nothing. Only God can do that. As smart as they think they are and as capable as they believe themselves to be, they seem to conveniently forget that everything they do is the result of utilizing the gifts and materials God gave them.

- ✓ God gave them the mathematical perfection of the universe.
- ✓ God gave them the minds with which to figure out these complex formulas.
- ✓ He provided them the materials and know-how with which to use these scientific principles.
- ✓ He gave them bodies with physical characteristics to implement those things their minds figured out.
- ✓ He gave them a world that supported their physical needs in order to accomplish those things they are capable of accomplishing.
- ✓ And you know we could go on like this page after page.

And what has mankind given to God in thanks for such precious gifts? They have thanked Him by being selfish and hoarding as much as they can for themselves. They have been openly disobedient to God’s manual for living a good and happy life. They have made false gods for themselves that make them most comfortable by continuing in their sins and disobedience. They insult, humiliate, degrade, and blaspheme God in every imaginable way, and they take for granted all that they have been given. They have a feeling of entitlement that says “*I deserve all these things and I shouldn’t have to work for them.*”

Now before we get too far off track here we want to re-emphasize that only God can create life and it is only God who can restore physical life to one who is physically dead. Let us now read John chapter twenty.

John 20:1-10 NLT:

<sup>1</sup> *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.*

<sup>2</sup> *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!”*

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<sup>1</sup> Tan, Paul Lee: Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations : *A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers.* Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

<sup>3</sup> Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>9</sup> for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then they went home.

John 20:11-31 NLT:

<sup>11</sup> Mary [Magdalene] <sup>2</sup>was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in.

<sup>12</sup> She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying.

<sup>13</sup> "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her. "Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

<sup>14</sup> She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was JESUS, but she didn't recognize him.

<sup>15</sup> "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

<sup>16</sup> "Mary!" Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

<sup>17</sup> "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

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

<sup>21</sup> Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."

<sup>22</sup> Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>2</sup> Brackets mine.

<sup>23</sup> *If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

<sup>24</sup> *One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came.*

<sup>25</sup> *They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side."*

<sup>26</sup> *Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," he said.*

<sup>27</sup> *Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"*

<sup>28</sup> *"My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed.*

<sup>29</sup> *Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."*

<sup>30</sup> *The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book.*

<sup>31</sup> *But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.*

We would like to tell you one more story before we transition into some detailed study of this chapter.

"In Tewin churchyard, a short distance from King's Cross Station, in England, stands a great four-trunked tree growing out of a grave. Its presence there has given rise to much speculation among the residents of that section. The grave from which it grows is that of Lady Anne Grimston.

"Is the tree a monument to a woman's disbelief or did it happen to grow there merely by chance? Nobody knows. Lady Anne Grimston did not believe in life after death. When she lay dying in her palatial home, she said to a friend, 'I shall live again as surely as a tree will grow from my body.'

"She was buried in a marble tomb. The grave was marked by a large marble slab, and surrounded by an iron railing. Years later the marble slab was found to be moved a little. Then it cracked, and through the crack a small tree grew.

"The tree continued to grow, tilting the stone and breaking

the marble masonry until today it has surrounded the tomb with its roots, and has torn the railing out of the ground with its massive trunk. The tree at Lady Anne Grimston's grave is one of the largest in England.

Was it mere chance that caused the tree to grow there?  
Perhaps God the Almighty took her challenge."<sup>3</sup>

John 20:1 AMP:

<sup>1</sup> *NOW ON the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been removed from (lifted out of the groove across the entrance of) the tomb.*

It is the first day of the week following the Jewish Sabbath. While still dark some women left whatever shelter they had been provided for the night, "*bringing the spices which they had prepared.*"<sup>4</sup> They came in order that they might anoint the corpse "*with sweet-smelling spices.*"<sup>5</sup> Who were these women? Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James (or simply "the other Mary") are mentioned by name in the other Gospels.<sup>6</sup> Mark adds Salome.<sup>7</sup> Luke adds Joanna, and seems to indicate that there were others.<sup>8</sup>

John probably assumes that the readers are acquainted with the other Gospels and confines his story to Mary Magdalene. However, he implies that other women had accompanied Mary (John 20:2). As they made their way to the tomb they were worried about how they would move the huge stone that had been placed over the entrance (Mark 16:2, 3). They certainly could not anoint Jesus' body if they could not get in. By the time they reached the tomb the sun had risen.

As they approached the tomb they saw that the heavy stone had been rolled away. Now our first thought might be, "*Wow, Jesus came back to life, rolled away the stone by Himself, and escaped into the night.*" As Paul Harvey might say: "*That is only part of the story, but now let's hear the rest of the story.*" However Jesus rose from the dead, whether it was by the assistance of the Holy Spirit or a combination of the work of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, the bottom line is that it was a God thing, and we could probably never understand how it worked anyhow.

Now we believe that God allows us some discretion to read between the lines of Scripture as long as we stick to the script and do not in any way alter the meaning that God intended. With that understanding we might want to read the passage again and think

<sup>3</sup> Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations : A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers.* Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996. c1979.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 24:1.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 16:1.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10.

<sup>7</sup> Mark 16:1).

<sup>8</sup> Luke 24:10; Luke 23:55 24:1). 19:25.

very carefully about the information that we have already been given. So considering everything we have been told, why do you think the stone was rolled away from the entrance to the tomb?

It certainly was not necessary for the stone to be rolled away in order for Jesus to get out, because if we look ahead a few verses to John 20:26 (AMP), John tells us this: *“Eight days later His disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, though they were behind closed doors, and stood among them and said, Peace to you!”* This makes it clear that the resurrected body of Jesus does not need doors to enter or leave a room, or a tomb, or anything else.

However, the stone needed to be removed in order for those who came to the tomb to see that it was empty. This confirmed that Jesus had risen and was alive again. Now some skeptics will say that Jesus’ disciples stole Jesus’ body during the night and made up the story that He had risen from the dead. That is simply absurd. Pilate had placed a number of guards at the tomb and sealed it, which means it was in effect locked so no one could enter without a fair amount of work. Now, can you imagine Jesus’ disciples sneaking up on the tomb in the middle of the night and removing the seal and rolling back the stone while a dozen or so Roman soldiers stood there cheering them on? Even if the soldiers were asleep, all the commotion would certainly have awakened them. Then the disciples would have had to throw Jesus’ body over their shoulders and run down the road hoping that they would not be seen. There is no way that it could have happened that way.

It may also have been God’s intent to show that with the resurrection of Jesus, death had been conquered and everlasting life could be had by those who believe in what He did and why He did it.

While the mother of James the Less, the mother of James and John, Joanna, and the other women entered the tomb but did not find the body of Jesus (Luke 24:3), Mary Magdalene started to run away in order to get help for she did not know what to do. She may well have thought the Romans took the body and threw it on the garbage dump, or perhaps she thought the Jewish leaders could have done the same thing.

John 20:2-5 AMP:

<sup>2</sup> *So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus [tenderly] 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> *Upon this, Peter and the other disciple came out and they went toward the tomb.*

<sup>4</sup> *And they came running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and arrived at the tomb first.*

<sup>5</sup> *And stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not enter.*

Mary was obviously stunned when she saw that Jesus’ tomb was empty (Mark 16:8), so she ran to find Peter and John and told them that someone had taken Jesus’ body

from the tomb and no one could tell them where it was. Peter and John did not expect the resurrection. They must have thought that Mary had seen the stone rolled away, panicked, and ran for help. But nevertheless they ran to the tomb. John, being younger and faster, arrived first. The entrance was probably low requiring anyone who wanted to look in *to stoop*. As John stooped and looked, he saw *the linen bandages*, but he did not go inside. He may have remained outside the entrance out of reverence for Jesus' burial place or perhaps just out of shock. What John saw, however, must have convinced him that Jesus had risen from the dead.

John 20:6-7 AMP:

<sup>6</sup> *Then Simon Peter came up, following him, and went into the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there;*

<sup>7</sup> *But the burial napkin (kerchief) which had been around Jesus' head, was not lying with the other linen cloths, but was [still] rolled up (wrapped round and round) in a place by itself.*

Then Simon Peter arrives and also sees the linen cloths and the wrapping that was around Jesus' head. J. Vernon McGee comments:"

“Remember that Joseph and Nicodemus had wrapped the body in the linen and had sealed it with the myrrh and aloes, which made a sort of glue to seal in the body. How could the body get out of such an encasement without unwinding all that linen?”<sup>9</sup>

Do you remember that when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Lazarus came forth from the grave all wrapped in the graveclothes and Jesus had to tell them to loosen Lazarus from those grave clothes? When Lazarus came out his body was wrapped in the old grave clothes. The body of Lazarus would have to die again. However, Jesus Christ came forth in a glorified body which will never see death. This is the Resurrection!<sup>10</sup>

Jesus' body was obviously no longer there. They knew that the disciples had not removed it, nor had any enemy of Jesus removed it. They would have taken the wrapped body and made a quick get-away. In either case the bandages would have remained on the body and would no longer have been present.

John 20:8-10 AMP:

<sup>8</sup> *Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, went in too; and he saw and was convinced and believed.*

<sup>9</sup> *For as yet they did not know (understand) the statement of Scripture that*

<sup>9</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 20".

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

*He must rise again from the dead.*

<sup>10</sup> *Then the disciples went back again to their homes (lodging places).*

Peter must have been stunned as well. Looking at the linen cloths, however, laid out so neatly, he must have quickly come to the understanding that only God had the power to remove the body from those cloths in such a manner. Peter may have called to John to come in as well. Can you imagine yourself there with them, first looking at the clothes, then one another, then back to clothes, and one of them or perhaps both of them in unison saying, "He is risen!" Scripture says, "They saw and believed," even though they did not understand. "For as yet they did not know the statement of scripture that He must rise again from the dead." But they had sufficient proof to believe that He had risen, so "then the disciples went back again to their own homes," in order to consider what had happened and plan what they would do next.

Can you imagine what they must have said to one another as they huddled together in someone's home? What would you think if one day you and others buried a dear friend or family member, and early the next morning you came for a memorial service and found the grave dug up, the coffin opened, and the body missing, with your friend's clothing laid out just as they were when he/she was in them. Did some sick prankster do this? Or perhaps some local politicians looking for gold fillings? No, that would be impossible because the family had hired a security firm to place guards around the grave for several days after burial. What then could have happened? There could only be one conclusion. Not only must the friend have risen from the dead, but was also able to do so undetected by the guards. Therefore he/she must have taken on a new form of body that could make it invisible.

The ramifications of the Resurrection are huge and we will look more closely at them as we proceed through this chapter. But keep in mind that we serve a living and powerful Lord. That fact should give us hope and strength as we face our daily challenges. As we return to our homes today, let us reflect prayerfully on how Resurrection power is evident in our lives.

What follows in this story should be very interesting to us because whatever qualities Jesus' shows us with His resurrected body will be available to us as well when we go through the process of resurrection. So we hope you will anxiously await "The rest of the story."