



‘But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’
2 Peter 3:18

April 4

Easter Day

Gospel reading: John 20:1-18

Pray for growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus and **read** the passage together...

Looking around

Immediate context

Our passage contains the first resurrection appearances recorded by John, each report focusing on individuals and Jesus:

1. Mary Magdalene (20:1-2)
2. Peter (20:2-7)
3. Mary Magdalene (20:11-18)

Following our passage the focus on individuals continues with Jesus and Thomas (20:24-29).

Its place in the structure of the Book

John’s resurrection narratives (Jn 20) follow his passion narrative (Jn 18:1-19:42) and are themselves followed by Jesus’ reinstatement of his disciples (21:1-25).

Its contribution to the message and purpose of the book

Jesus performed many other signs, but his resurrection from the dead is the climactic one, being God’s vindication of his Son and confirmation of his identity (see Acts 17:30-31; cf. Jn 2:18-22). This climactic sign is met with the book’s climactic confession in Jesus as Lord God (Jn 20:28; cf. 1:1, 18).

Jesus' resurrection definitively demonstrates that he is God's Messiah whom God would not ultimately abandon or allow to see decay (Ps 16:8-11). Jesus' resurrection forms an essential part of the bedrock of our faith in him, faith in Jesus as God's Son, Messiah, being the purpose of the book (20:30-31).

Jesus is now living proof of what the kingdom of God is about - that you may have true life in His name (Jn 10:10; 17:3). Jesus is the eternal Son of God who gives eternal life.

Is the passage or part of it quoted elsewhere in the Bible or does it quote other parts of the Bible?

All four Gospels have a resurrection narrative. John's is distinguished by a concentration on individuals and their very human and negative responses to the empty tomb – grief, fear and doubt – that underscore the narrative's authenticity.

The early Christian preaching made much of Jesus' resurrection, showing it to be in accordance with the Scriptures (Ps 16:8-11; 110:1) and confirmation of Jesus' identity as the promised Messiah (eg, Acts 2:22-36; 13:26-39).

How the passage contributes to our understanding of God, Jesus, humanity, God's salvation, life together as Christians, discipleship.

Jesus' resurrection provides believers with an objective, historically-grounded, eyewitness-observed, Scripture-promised, foundation for their faith and life. Jesus declared as blessed those who have not seen and yet have believed (Jn 20:29). John goes on to point out that his eyewitness testimony constitutes the basis of faith in Jesus for subsequent generations of readers (20:30-31). More can be said in this vein. John's Gospel stresses the superiority of faith in God's word over against faith in what can be seen (Jn 2:23-25; 4:46-54). In our passage, John's faith based on witnessing the empty tomb is presented as inferior to a faith based on the testimony of the Scriptures (20:8-9; cf. 20:28-31).

God has done this (see Acts 2:24, 32) !

This is fundamental to our understanding of God's salvation for humanity. It is God's hand at work not ours. God raised Jesus from death by his mighty power. This is the same power that brings people from spiritual death to life and that is at work in believers (Eph 2:1-6; 1:19-20; cf. Jn 11:25-26). Jesus'

bodily resurrection is the pattern and guarantee of the physical resurrection of his people (1 Cor 15:12-23; cf. 15:35-58).

Then as now, Jesus is interested in encountering and reassuring individuals. As John recorded earlier, Jesus knows his sheep and they know him. He calls them by name (Jn 10:14, 3).

Looking Behind

Relevant historical, political social, geographical information helpful for understanding the passage.

The two witnesses to the empty tomb renders the evidence to be admissible under Jewish Law, where a legal matter must be established by two or three witnesses (Jn 20:1-10; Deut 19:15; cf. Jn 19:35; 21:24).

It is important to recognise that in spite of Jesus repeatedly telling his followers that he would die and rise from the dead, they were not expecting a resurrection (Jn 20:2, 11-13, 25). Even after seeing Jesus, Mary didn't believe (20:11-13; cf. Mt 28:17). In Jewish theology, the resurrection was believed to take place at the end of history, not during it (see Jn 11:24)! Far from the report of Jesus' resurrection being a (Jewish) fabrication, it records a totally unexpected and astounding true event and does so in a way that does not massage out the presence of unbelief and doubt.

Looking within

Movements or structure in the passage

The empty tomb report that establishes two witnesses (20:1-10).

Jesus' resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18).

Important or repeated words, ideas, themes

Seeing and not understanding

Seeing and believing

Mary weeping (mentioned twice – 20:13, 15)

Weeping turned into joy - "I have seen the Lord" (20:18)!

**Important contrasting words (but, although, whereas, whilst)
explanatory words (therefore, so that, for, because, since, in order that), timing words (next immediately, after, when)**

'For as yet' (20:9a): the explanatory 'for' with the 'as yet' implies that the reason that John believed on the basis of sight was that he had not yet come to believe in the resurrection on the basis of Scripture.

Looking clearly

Using all of the above, work out the passage's main idea and supporting ideas:

Main idea

Supporting ideas

Try to summarise these in a clear, succinct statement:

Try to represent what the passage **says** and **means** with a drawing. No art show entries necessary! Invite *willing* people to explain their drawings, unpacking what is being said and the meaning.

Looking at Jesus

Doing this helps grow disciples of Jesus...

How has this study enlarged or enriched your understanding of Jesus and his claims, call and promises?

How do you respond to Him?

Looking in the mirror

Doing this helps grow disciples of Jesus...

What personal and corporate (your home group or church) beliefs you hold does this study confirm to be true?

What personal and corporate beliefs has this study challenged and corrected?

What personal and corporate values, attitudes and priorities has this study reinforced or challenged?

What personal and corporate behaviour and traditions has this study endorsed or challenged?

Looking forward

Doing this helps grow disciples of Jesus...

What encouragements, comforts and changes will you or your group take with you today?

Resolve to help one another move forward in repentance and faith.

Prayer and praise