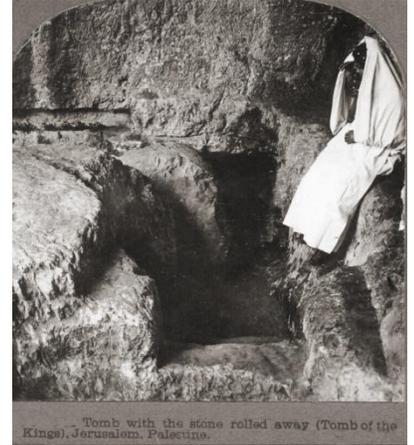


# Echoes of Scripture

## Easter Sunday ~ John 20:1-18

### Summary of John 20:1-18

You were there when he was nailed to the cross. You watched him die. And now as you awaken early that first day of the week, the sadness and the deep sense of loss is reawakened within you. The man who cast out your demons, the man that you followed is dead. You go to his tomb to weep, to mourn, to show your respect, never expecting the tomb to be empty. You go in sadness instead of rejoicing. But then you discover that it is empty. Has someone desecrated his tomb and stolen his body? Wasn't the humiliation of crucifixion enough? You go to get Peter and the other disciple. They come to the tomb and see that it is empty. They leave, but you stay behind. Then you see them—two men in white. They speak. You answer. And then you see him! But you don't recognize him at first. He calls you by name and you realize—He is alive! This is the story of Mary Magdalene and her encounter with the risen Lord!



### Suggested Course of Study

- Read John 14-16 (Jesus' farewell discourse)
- Read 1 Corinthians 15 (where Paul talks about the Resurrection)
- Read John 19:17-20:31 (the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus)

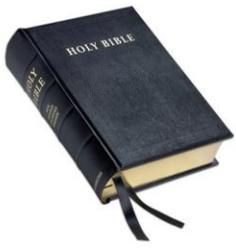
### Immediate Context

John 18:1-14	The betrayal and arrest of Jesus	<b>John 20:1-10</b>	<b>The Resurrection of Jesus</b>
John 18:15-18	Peter denies Jesus	<b>John 20:11-18</b>	<b>Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene</b>
John 18:19-24	The High Priest questions Jesus	John 20:19-23	Jesus appears to the disciples
John 18:25-27	Peter denies Jesus again	John 20:24-29	Jesus and Thomas
John 18:28-38	Jesus before Pilate	John 20:30-31	The purpose of this book
John 18:38b-19:16	Jesus sentenced to death	John 21:1-14	Jesus appears to seven disciples
John 19:17-37	The crucifixion of Jesus	John 21:15-19	Jesus and Peter
John 19:38-42	The burial of Jesus	John 21:20-25	Jesus and the beloved disciple

### The Text<sup>1</sup>

#### John 20:1-18 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." <sup>3</sup> Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he



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## Easter Sunday ~ John 20:1-18

must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples returned to their homes. <sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; <sup>12</sup> and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>14</sup> When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

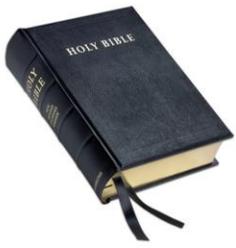
### Key Words

**THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK** – Do we hear echoes to the first creation story in Genesis (Genesis 1:5)? All of the gospels talk about this as being the first day of the week. Is Jesus ushering in a new day? Is this part of the new creation? Sabbath regulations would have prohibited a visit to the tomb on the Sabbath. So the first day of the week (sundown Saturday to sundown Sunday) would have been the earliest she could have visited the tomb. This is also why Christians worship on Sunday—the Lord’s Day—instead of the Sabbath. This is also why Sundays are not included in the 40 days of Lent (because each Sunday in Lent is considered to be a “mini Easter”).

**MARY MAGDALENE** – *Μαρία Μαγδαληνή* (See Matthew 27:56-61; 28:1-10; Mark 15:40-47; 16:1-9; Luke 8:2; 23:55-56; 24:10; John 19:25; 20:1-18). She first appears in John’s gospel at the cross in the company of the mother of Jesus and Mary (the wife of Clopas). Why she had gone to the tomb is unclear in this gospel. In Mark’s gospel she has gone there to anoint the body with spices (see Mark 16:1) but in John’s gospel Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus do the anointing (see John 19:38-40). In Matthew and Mark’s gospels, she is accompanied to the tomb by Salome and Mary (the mother of James). In Luke, she is accompanied by Joanna and Mary (the mother of James). What is interesting is that in John, only Mary Magdalene is mentioned as going to the tomb (as if she was alone), and yet when she runs to Simon Peter to report that the body is missing in verse 2, she says “*We (plural) don’t know where they have laid him.*” This suggests that maybe others were with her at the tomb (Perhaps the other two Marys?). It is also interesting that she assumes that someone has stolen the body rather than that Jesus was resurrected (see John 16:28). Clearly, she did not expect the tomb to be empty. And the fact that it is empty is disturbing to her. She gives no indication at all that she had any expectation that Jesus would be raised from the dead.

**WHILE IT WAS STILL DARK** – (See John 1:5; 3:9; 8:12; 12:35-46 where John talks about dark and darkness). Literally, this shows that she honored the Sabbath law and figuratively, it points out that she is still “walking in darkness”. She hasn’t understood what Jesus had said about his death and resurrection. As the morning dawns gradually, so does the understanding of those closest to Jesus. They don’t “get it” immediately.

**THE OTHER DISCIPLE** – Who is this other disciple? Is it John the gospel writer (see John 21:24)? Is it Lazarus who was raised from the dead (see John 11:3)? If I had to guess (and it’s only a guess), John and the “beloved



# Echoes of Scripture

## Easter Sunday ~ John 20:1-18

disciple” are two different people as the gospel writer refers to him in the third person in John 21:24 “his testimony is true”. He is the authority for the traditions recounted in the gospel, but probably not the gospel writer.

Is it one of the twelve (see Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:14-19, and Luke 6:13-16 for the various lists and note the textual variants with each); John’s gospel doesn’t have a formal list though it does refer to the “twelve” (see John 6:67) and nine are mentioned by name Peter, Andrew, the Sons of Zebedee, Philip, Nathanael, Thomas, Judas Iscariot, and Judas.

This other disciple whom Jesus loved appears five times in John’s gospel: John 13:23 (reclining next to Jesus at the table who asked “Who is going to betray you?”); John 19:26-27 (on the cross he presents his mother to this disciple); John 20:2 (this text); John 21:7 (where Jesus appears to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee); and John 21:20-24 (following Peter and Jesus after Jesus had asked Peter if he loved him; “this is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them”). See also John 13:23-25 and 18:15-16.

**THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY THE LORD OUT OF THE TOMB** – Notice that Mary assumes that the body has been taken rather than resurrected. She assumes that the local authorities have removed the body – or perhaps robbers have stolen the body.

**WE DON’T KNOW WHERE THEY HAVE LAID HIM** – Notice (as mentioned above) that Mary speaks in the plural “We don’t know where they have laid him.” The assumption here is that, although Mary is the only woman named in this event, there were other people accompanying her (as the Synoptic gospels tell the story).

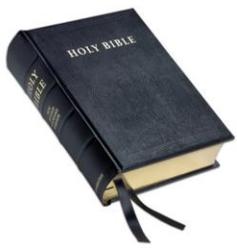
**THE OTHER DISCIPLE OUTFRAN PETER** – This is the most peculiar description of the events of the resurrection. It takes the attention off the event and places it on the apparent rivalry between Peter and the beloved disciple. It’s as if they had a bet (a gentlemen’s wager) to see which one could race to and touch the tomb first. *“First one to touch the stone wins!”* The other disciple wins, but... then Simon Peter does one better. *“No! I win! You didn’t go inside! I said ‘First one to go inside the tomb!’”*

**HE DID NOT GO IN** – Could this other disciple be Lazarus who had died, who had been entombed, and who Jesus brought back from the dead and called out of the tomb? Is that why this disciple is hesitant to go in... because he has been sealed inside a tomb before? He knows what it is like? He knows the smell and the darkness?

**THE LINEN CLOTHS** – (See John 19:40 for the account of the wrapping of Jesus’ body). Both Peter and the other disciple see the linen cloths. But there is a very peculiar detail in this account. The face cloth that had been on his head was not lying with the other linen cloths, but was rolled up in a place by itself. Why is this? What does this signify?

We notice that when Lazarus was raised from the dead earlier in John’s gospel (see John 11:44), he was still wrapped in the linen cloths; his face still wrapped in the cloth. Jesus had to order people to unbind him and let him go. Lazarus was still wrapped in the “cloths of death”, still “bound” by death. Yet when Jesus is resurrected, the cloths are removed, Jesus is no longer bound, and the face cloth is rolled up and resting separately.

Some suggest that the fact that the grave cloths remained behind is evidence that this story is true. The cloths are evidence that Jesus was there but is no longer. The fact that the cloths had been removed from the body and the face cloth rolled up shows that the body wasn’t stolen because there would be no reason to remove the cloths from the body. But isn’t all this just speculation and argumentation? Instead of asking “Is it true? Could it be more important to ask “How is it true?” and “What does this mean?”



# Echoes of Scripture

## Easter Sunday ~ John 20:1-18

**HE SAW AND BELIEVED** – This is a peculiar statement. What did this other disciple believe? That Jesus was raised from the dead? (See the next verse, vs. 9). Or did he simply believe what Mary had said about the body being missing? Is this a case of “seeing is believing?” Is the truth of the resurrection slowly dawning in him?

**AS YET THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURE** – And which scripture didn’t they understand? Which Old Testament passage could the gospel writer have in mind? (See perhaps Isaiah 26:19-21; Isaiah 53:10; Ezekiel 37:12-14; Daniel 12:1-3; and Job 19:25-27). See also John 2:17 (Psalm 69:9); John 3:14 (Numbers 21:9); John 19:24 (Psalm 22:18) for other scriptures quoted, as well as John 12:16. Also note the words in John 2:22. Finally, could it be Psalm 16:10 that says, *“for you will not leave my soul in Sheol, neither will you allow your holy one to see corruption.”*

**THAT HE MUST RISE FROM THE DEAD** – Here there is the divine imperative; δεῖ—it is necessary.

**THE DISCIPLES RETURNED TO THEIR HOMES** – ἀπῆλθον οὖν πάλιν πρὸς αὐτοὺς οἱ μαθηταί (translated literally “went off then again toward them the learners”). The word for home is not mentioned here in the original Greek. The translators of the NRSV assume that “them” meant their “homes”. But perhaps it is better to assume that Peter and the other disciple went back to “them” (masculine plural) meaning the other *disciples* who, in verse 19, are gathered “later that day” in the “house where the disciples had met”. The fact that the “them” is plural makes me assume the gospel writer is talking about people and not the “homes” of the disciples (Peter’s would have been in Galilee). The rest of the disciples gathered in one “home”. They locked the doors of this home for fear of the Jews. So a better translation of this verse would read *“Then the disciples (Peter and the beloved disciple) returned to them (the other disciples).”* The reason the NRSV might translate this verse the way that it did is because of what Jesus says in John 16:32 (*“The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.”*)

**AS SHE WEPT, SHE BENT OVER TO LOOK INTO THE TOMB** – Notice the footnote that indicates that the original Greek lacks the word “to look”. The Greek says ὡς οὖν ἔκλαιεν, παρέκυσεν εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον. Perhaps a better translation is *“Then, as she was crying, she stooped down into the tomb”*.

**AND SHE SAW TWO ANGELS IN WHITE, SITTING WHERE THE BODY OF JESUS HAD BEEN LYING** – The word “saw” here means to watch carefully (θεωρεῖ from θεωρέω; rather than βλέπει from βλέπω as in verse 1). The two angels are dressed in white (see Ecclesiastes 9:8, Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 1:18; Daniel 7:9 and the notion of cleansing in Daniel 12:10).

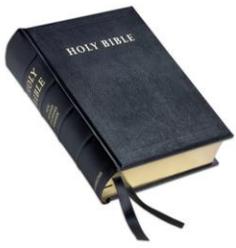
**ONE AT THE HEAD AND THE OTHER AT THE FEET** – The visual image here is strikingly similar to the design of the Ark of the Covenant (see Exodus 25:10-22 and Hebrews 9:4 if you are curious to know what would have been inside).

**WOMAN, WHY ARE YOU WEeping** – The angels/messengers speak to Mary and ask her what is wrong. She alone sees the angels. Peter and the beloved disciple missed out. They call her “Woman” rather than by her name. Jesus will call her by name. The question they ask is a good question. Why is she weeping and not rejoicing? Didn’t she come to the tomb with the wrong expectations? She answers with wording very similar to what she told Peter and the other disciple in verse two.

Verse 2: ἦραν τὸν κύριον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου καὶ οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.

*“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don’t know where they have laid him.”*





# Echoes of Scripture

## Easter Sunday ~ John 20:1-18

Verse 13: ἤραν τὸν κύριόν μου, καὶ οὐκ οἶδα ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.

*“They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they have laid him.”*

Before, she talked about “the Lord”. To the angels, she calls him “My Lord”. Who does she think these men are? Does she recognize that they are angels? And who is the “they” in her response? Does she think it was these two men? Does she think it was Roman soldiers? Jewish religious leaders? Grave robbers? Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea? Does she think Jesus’ body was moved out of respect, mischief, or thievery? Does she think it was moved to prevent Jesus’ burial site from becoming a shrine for his followers?

**SHE TURNED AROUND AND SAW JESUS STANDING THERE, BUT SHE DID NOT KNOW IT WAS JESUS** – She responds to the angels and then turns around and sees Jesus, but she doesn’t recognize that it is him. We are always a bit curious as to why and how. Tears? Grief? Expectations? Forgot her glasses? Jesus repeats the question of the angels, “Woman, why are you weeping?” and adds another “Whom are you looking for?” It feels like an episode of Undercover Boss!

**SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE GARDENER** – This is the most humorous and intriguing description of what is going on in the mind of Mary Magdalene. And that word “gardener” is supposed to stir within us memories of another garden where God dwelled. Do you hear the echoes of the second creation story? (see Genesis 2:4b-3:24; especially Genesis 3:8). Jesus calls her by name “Mary”. And immediately she recognizes him (this reminds us of what Jesus said in John 10:3-4: <sup>3</sup> *The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.* <sup>4</sup> *When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.*) She replies, “Rabbouni!” (Teacher/Master).

**DO NOT HOLD ON TO ME** – Was Mary holding Jesus? Did she reach out and grab hold of him? Or is this a figure of speech? Does he mean it figuratively? Later he will give Thomas permission to touch him.

**I HAVE NOT YET ASCENDED** – For notions of the ascension; consider Psalm 24, 47, 68, 110, and 118. See the story of Enoch in Genesis 5:24 (repeated in Hebrews 11:5) and Elijah in 2 Kings 2:1-18. See also 1 Timothy 3:16; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20-21, 4:8-11; 1 Peter 3:22; Acts 1:9-11, 22; Hebrew 4:14. See also John 8:14, 21; 13:3, 33, 36; 14:4, 5, 28; 16:5, 10, 17, 28. See also Luke 24:51 and Daniel 7:11-14.

**BUT GO TO MY BROTHERS** – Notice that Jesus calls the disciples “brothers” rather than “disciples”. Jesus’ brothers show up at least twice in John’s gospel (see John 2:12; 7:3-10). In John 15:12-17, Jesus calls the disciples “Friends”. Jesus prays for their protection (see John 17).

**I AM ASCENDING TO MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER, TO MY GOD AND YOUR GOD** – Notice the inclusion here. Jesus includes the disciples in the “my” and “your”; recognizing that they belong—that they are family—part of God’s family. Remember John 14:2 (*I go to prepare a place for you*); John 14:18-20 (*in a little while the world will no longer see me*); John 14:28-29 (*you would rejoice that I am going to the Father*); John 16:4-11 (*it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you*); John 16:16-22 (*A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me*); John 16:28 (*I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father.*); John 17:11 (*And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.*); John 17:13 (*But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves*).

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