

GOSPEL OF JOHN

# Chapters 20–21

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*All Scripture quotations from the English Standard Version (ESV)*

John 20:1–31

# Chapter Twenty

*The Resurrection — Appearances and Confessions*

# The Empty Tomb

*“The other disciple... saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.” — John 20:8–9*

- Mary Magdalene comes while it is still dark — the last darkness before the dawn; grief that cannot stay away from the place of loss
- Peter enters first; the Beloved Disciple sees and believes — the race to the tomb and the different responses: action vs. perception
- The linen cloths lying there, the face cloth folded apart — not the scene of body-snatching but of an ordered, sovereign departure
- They did not yet understand the Scripture — belief precedes full comprehension; the Beloved Disciple believes before he understands why

**thonia:** *linen cloths, burial wrappings — the grave clothes lying undisturbed in the tomb; the resurrection body passed through them; the old wrappings were left behind*

# Mary Magdalene: Rabboni

*“Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).” — John 20:16*

- Mary weeping at the tomb — angels appear, but she cannot see past her grief; she mistakes the risen Lord himself for the gardener
- The first resurrection appearance is to a woman, the least likely witness in first-century culture — the Gospel’s logic subverts human rankings
- Jesus speaks her name — the Good Shepherd calls his own sheep by name (10:3); recognition comes through the voice, not the eyes
- “Do not cling to me” — the old mode of physical presence is ending; the new mode of Spirit-mediated union is beginning

**Rabboni:** *my Teacher, my Master* — an Aramaic title of great intimacy and honor; Mary’s cry is both personal recognition and the first post-resurrection confession

# Peace Be With You

*“Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.” — John 20:19–20*

- The doors locked for fear — the disciples are gathered but imprisoned by fear; the risen Jesus passes through locked doors and locked hearts
- “Peace be with you” — the promise of the Farewell Discourse (14:27) is now given by the risen Lord in person; the peace is the peace of finished work
- He shows them his hands and his side — the risen body is the crucified body; the wounds are not erased but glorified; this is not a different Jesus
- The great commission: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” — the mission of the Son becomes the mission of the church

**eirēnē:** *peace* — the risen Lord’s first word to the disciples fulfills the Farewell Discourse promise; *shalom:* wholeness, right relationship, completed redemption

# My Lord and My God

*“Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” — John 20:28–29*

- Thomas’s condition: “Unless I see... I will never believe” — the most explicit demand for physical evidence; Jesus meets him exactly on his own terms
- Eight days later — the risen Lord does not abandon the doubter; he returns for the one who was absent; no disciple is written off
- “My Lord and my God!” — the highest Christological confession in the Gospel; echoes “the Word was God” in the Prologue; resurrection produces fullest recognition
- The Gospel’s purpose statement: “that you may believe... and that by believing you may have life in his name” — the whole Gospel in one sentence

**kyrios kai theos:** *Lord and God* — Thomas’s double title is the climax of Johannine Christology; the confession that opens the Gospel (1:1) is now spoken by a witness to the risen Christ

John 21:1–25

# Chapter Twenty-One

*Restoration, Commission, and Witness*

# The Miraculous Catch of Fish

*“He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.” — John 21:6*

- Peter: “I am going fishing” — the disciples return to the familiar; a night of labor catches nothing; apart from Christ even the experienced produce nothing
- The Beloved Disciple recognizes Jesus first: “It is the Lord!” — love perceives what competence cannot; recognition comes before comprehension
- Peter throws himself into the sea to reach Jesus — the impetuous love of Peter is still there; the failure of the cross has not extinguished the fire
- The charcoal fire on the beach (*anthrakia*) — the same word as at 18:18; the stage is deliberately set for restoration to answer denial

**anthrakia:** charcoal fire — appears only twice in John (18:18 and 21:9); the verbal echo is intentional: the fire of Peter’s denial is answered by the fire of his restoration

# Do You Love Me?

*“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” — John 21:15*

- Three questions, three answers — the number matches Peter’s three denials; the risen Christ systematically undoes the failure; restoration is as explicit as the fall
- The shifting of the verb for love (agapaō / phileō) — on the third question Jesus meets Peter where he is; the grace is precise and tender
- “Feed my lambs / tend my sheep / feed my sheep” — three commissions restoring Peter to pastoral leadership; the denier becomes the shepherd
- The prediction of martyrdom: “when you are old... another will carry you where you do not want to go” — full restoration includes the full cost

**agapaō / phileō:** *two Greek words for love — the interplay in vv. 15–17 marks the emotional texture of restoration; Jesus meets Peter where he is and raises him to where he must go*

# The Beloved Disciple and the Gospel's Purpose

*“This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.” — John 21:24*

- Peter asks about the Beloved Disciple's fate — restored disciples still compare; Jesus redirects: “What is that to you? You follow me!”
- The misunderstood saying corrected — the community received a garbled version; the Gospel itself corrects the error; the text is self-aware about transmission
- The Beloved Disciple as the Gospel's eyewitness author — “we know that his testimony is true”; the Gospel is not myth but attested historical witness
- The world cannot contain all the books — the closing hyperbole: the life of Jesus exceeds all telling; what is written is sufficient, but the reality is inexhaustible

**martyrōn:** bearing witness — the Gospel closes as it opened: with testimony; the Beloved Disciple's eyewitness account anchors the community's faith across every generation

## Key Themes: Chapters 20–21

- The resurrection is bodily and historical — the empty tomb, the grave clothes, the wounds, the charcoal fire; John insists on physical reality, not spiritual symbol
- Recognition of the risen Jesus requires more than eyes — Mary hears her name; the Beloved Disciple sees and believes; Thomas needs the wounds; each comes by a different path
- Thomas’s confession “My Lord and my God” is the Christological climax of the Gospel, answering the Prologue’s “the Word was God” with a witness’s testimony
- The restoration of Peter (21:15–19) is as deliberate and structured as his denial — the risen Christ does not merely forgive; he reinstates and recommissions
- The Gospel ends with testimony — the Beloved Disciple’s witness grounds the community’s faith; the Gospel is not biography but proclamation