

# ***John***

## ***Lesson #18***

### ***The Resurrection***

**(20: 1-31)**

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# Review



Salvador Dali. *Christ of St. John of the Cross*  
(oil on canvas), 1951.  
Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow.

The Persians introduced crucifixion as a capital punishment as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., and the Carthaginians, Macedonians and Romans employed it until the Emperor Constantine outlawed crucifixion in A.D. 337 out of deference to Christ.

Although the Greeks had an aversion to crucifixion, the Romans used it frequently. Crucifixion involved a prolonged, excruciatingly painful death by being nailed to a cross with tapered iron spikes, generally taking a healthy person three or more days to die.

In Lesson #17 we brought Jesus before Pontius Pilate, and we witnessed his crucifixion.

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# Preview

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single most important event in Scripture. Indeed, in addressing the church in Corinth Paul writes:

*“But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then empty is our preaching; empty, too, your faith.”*

(1 Corinthians 15: 12-14)

Without Christ’s physical, bodily resurrection, our faith—no matter how authentic, how deeply felt, or how worthily expressed—is worthless.

The *Gospel according to John* offers a dramatic account of Jesus’ resurrection, including Peter and John’s footrace to the empty tomb, Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene and his disciples, as well as the story of “doubting Thomas.”

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**To understand Jesus' resurrection we need to understand burial customs in the ancient world, especially those in 1<sup>st</sup>-century Palestine.**



Throughout antiquity proper burial of a corpse was essential. In Homer's *Iliad*, Achilles cannot bear to part with the corpse of his beloved friend Patroclus, refusing him burial. Late at night the shade of Patroclus appears to Achilles in a dream:

*“Sleeping, Achilles? You’ve forgotten me, my friend. You never neglected me in life, only now in death. Bury me, quickly—let me pass the Gates of Hades. They hold me off at a distance, all the souls, the shades of the burnt-out, breathless dead, never to let me cross the river, mingle with them . . . They leave me to wander up and down, abandoned, lost at the House of Death with the all-embracing gates. Oh give me your hand—I beg you with my tears!*

*(Iliad, Book 23, 81-89)*

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**The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c. 25 B.C.-A.D. 50) gives an imaginative account of Jacob grieving over Joseph's corpse being devoured by wild beasts:**

*“Child, it is not your death that grieves me, but the manner of it. If you had been buried in your own land, I should have been comforted and watched and nursed your sick bed, exchanged the last farewells as you died, closed your eyes, wept over your body as it lay there, given it a costly funeral and left none of the customary funeral rites undone.”*

**(Of Joseph, 5, 22-23).**

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Proper burial was essential throughout Scripture. Moses warns the Israelites that if they disobey God's covenant their enemies will slay them and their *"corpses will become food for all the birds of the air and for the beasts of the field,"* an unimaginable horror.

(Deuteronomy 28: 25-26).



In New Testament times, Josephus emphasizes the importance of a proper burial for all people, Jew and Gentile, friend and foe, alike:

*“We must furnish fire, water, food for all who ask for them, point out the road, not leave a corpse unburied, show consideration even to declared enemies.”*

**(Against Apion 2.29, 211)**

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In the Gospel according to John we learn precisely how Jesus was buried. Joseph of Arimathea received Jesus' body from Pontius Pilate:

*“[Then Nicodemus] came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom.”*

(John 19: 38-40)

Then they placed him in the tomb.

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**Anonymous. *Entombment of Christ* (Russian Icon), 15<sup>th</sup> century.  
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.**

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**As we saw in Lesson #17, the Garden Tomb provides an excellent visual aid for understanding Jesus' burial and resurrection.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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**Interior of the Garden Tomb, hewn out of rock.**

*Photography by Ana Maria Vargas*

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***Burial Chamber, where Jesus' body would have been placed.***

***Photography by Ana Maria Vargas***

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***A “rolling stone,” sealed the tomb.***

***Photography by Ana Maria Vargas***

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## **John's resurrection narrative consists of five sections:**

- 1. Mary Magdalene discovers the empty tomb and John and Peter race to it (1-10)**
- 2. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (11-18)**
- 3. Jesus appears to his disciples (19-23)**
- 4. Jesus appears to “doubting Thomas” (24-29)**
- 5. Conclusion (30-31)**



## John's Resurrection narrative:

1. **Mary Magdalene discovers the empty tomb and John and Peter race to it (1-10)**
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5. **Conclusion (30-31)**



“On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, ‘They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.’ So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned home.”

(20: 1-10)



## Focus first on Mary Magdalene arriving at Jesus' tomb:

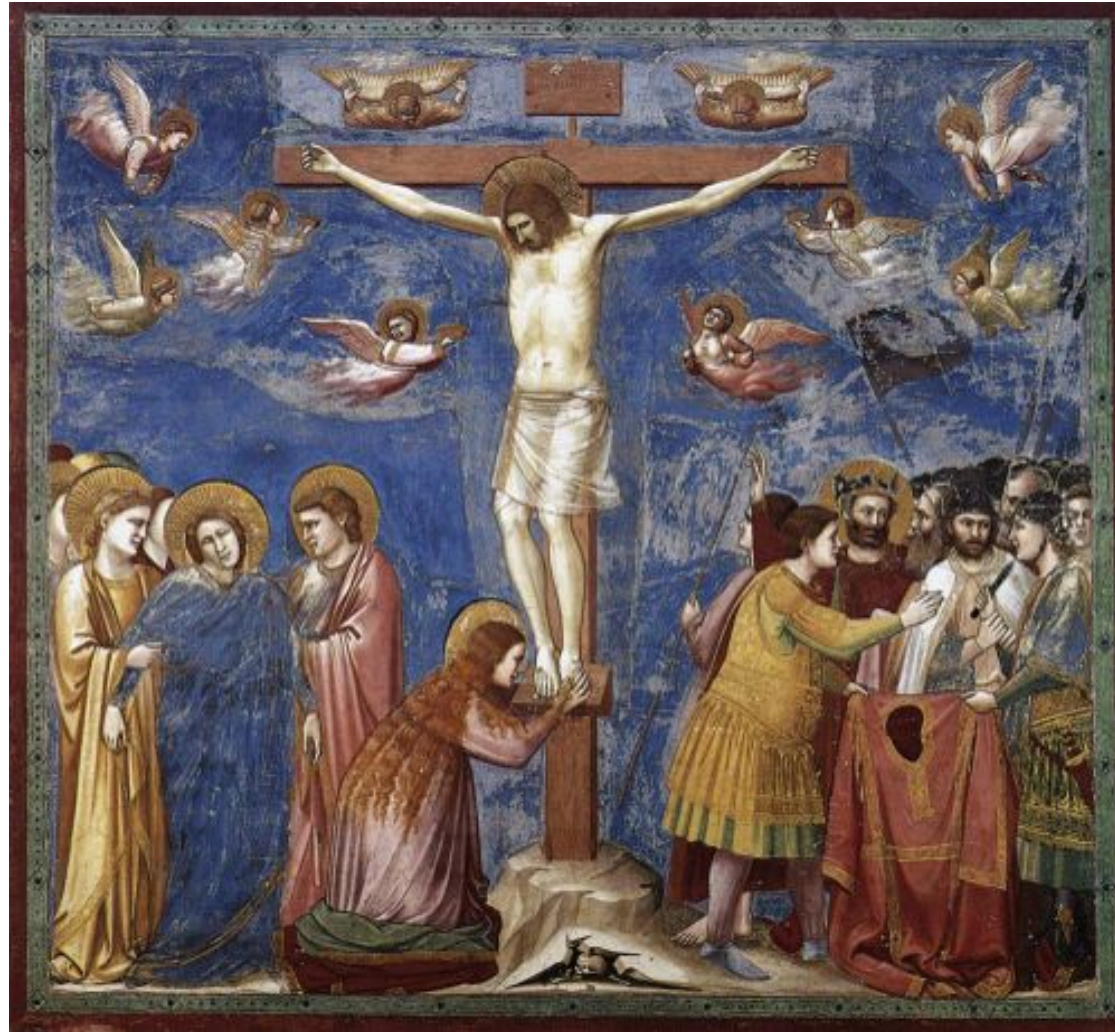
*“On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, ‘They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.’”*

**(John 20: 1-3)**



**Mary Magdalene nearly always appears at the foot of the cross with Mary (Jesus' mother) and John, often with her arms raised toward Jesus or embracing and kissing his feet, as in Giotto's stunning 1304 fresco on the north wall, lower tier of the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy.**

**Appearing with Mary and John, Mary Magdalene kissing Jesus' feet suggests her intimacy with Jesus and her position within Jesus' inner circle.**



**Giotto. *Crucifixion* (fresco), c. 1304-1306.  
Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy.**

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## Notice the details of the scene:

*“On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, ‘They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.’”*

(John 20: 1-2)

- Mary arrives *“early in the morning, while it was still dark.”* She arrives alone in John’s gospel, not expecting to enter the tomb, since the stone would still be in place. Her presence in the pre-dawn hours suggests Mary’s profound grief and her need to be near Jesus, even in death.



*“On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, ‘They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.’”*

(John 20: 1-2)

- Mary *“saw the stone removed from the tomb.”* The word “saw” is βλέπω (*ble’po*), literally, “to see with the bodily eye,” a simple observation.
- Mary’s response is to *“run”* (τρέχω, *tre’-kho*, “to go in haste”) to Peter and John, concluding (understandably) that someone had stolen Jesus’ body during the night.



*“So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both **ran**, but the other disciple **ran** faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and **saw** the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and **saw** the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.”*

(John 20: 3-7)

- Like Mary, both Peter and John “**run**” (τρέχω, *tre'-kho*) to the tomb, reinforcing the scene's tension and urgency.
- Once at the tomb, John “**sees**” the empty tomb (βλέπω, *ble'po*, a simple observation of fact), but he does not go in.
- When Peter arrives, he goes into the tomb, and he “**sees**” (βλέπω, again), observing the burial linens and the cloth that covered Jesus' head, rolled up separately.

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“[Finally] *the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed.*”

(John 20: 8)

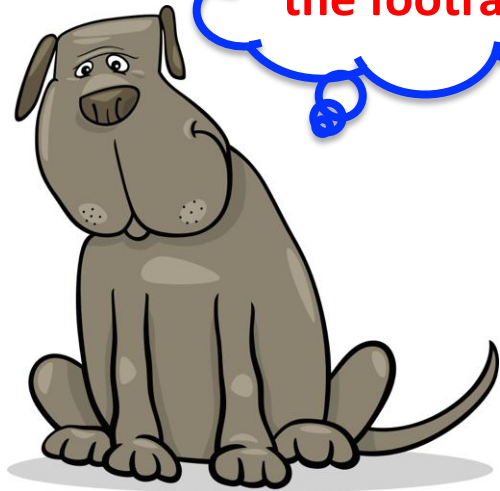
• John “*saw and believed.*” Here John switches from βλέπω, “to see,” a simple observation of fact, to ὁράω (*ho-ra’-o*), “to see,” with full comprehension.





**That is very nicely done!  
Switching from βλέπω, to ὁράω  
moves the action from a simple  
observation of the facts to a full  
understanding of what the facts  
mean.**

**And check out  
the footrace!**



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Eugène Burnand. *Peter and John Running to the Tomb* (oil on canvas), 1898.  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

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*“So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed.”*

**(John 20: 3-8)**



Ha, ha, ha! John reminds us THREE times that he outran Peter!

That's really funny!





***“For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned home.”***

**(John 20: 9)**

• Although John “*saw and believed,*” neither he nor Peter understood from scripture the reality and significance of Jesus’ resurrection: they had not yet connected the scriptural dots. That will come later, between Jesus’ resurrection and his ascension, when Jesus teaches his disciples ***“everything written about [him] in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms”*** (Luke 24: 44).



## John's Resurrection narrative:

1. Mary Magdalene discovers the empty tomb and John and Peter race to it (1-10)
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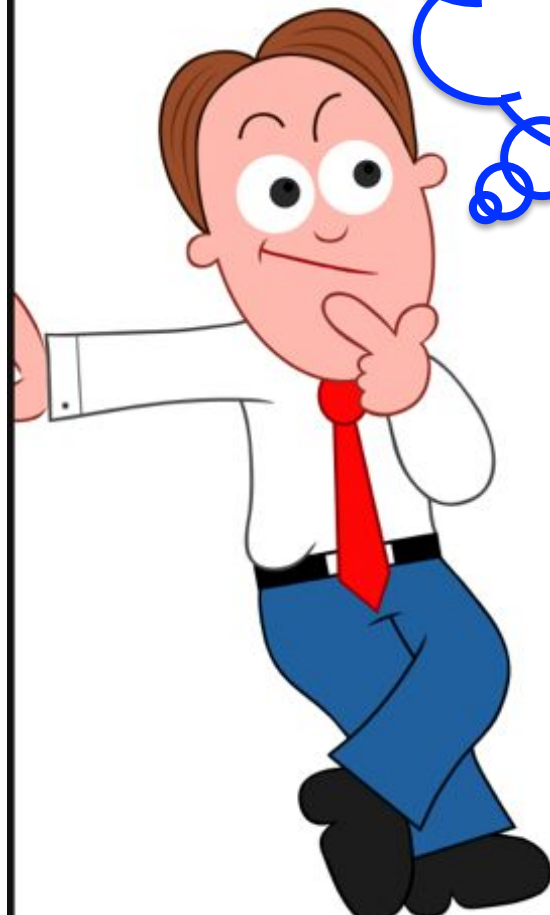
“But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they laid him.’ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ Whom are you looking for?’ She thought it was the gardener and said to him, ‘Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni,’ which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, ‘Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord,’ and what he told her.”

(20: 11-18)



**Alexander Ivanov. *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection* (oil on canvas), 1835.  
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.**





Why doesn't Mary  
recognize Jesus after his  
resurrection?



I bet I'd  
recognize him!

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## Resurrection differs from resuscitation.

Many people in Scripture have been raised from the dead:

1. Elijah raises the widow of Zaraphath's son (1 Kings 17: 7-24)
2. Elisha raises the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4: 8-37)
3. Jesus raises Jairus' daughter (Mark 5: 21-43; Luke 8: 40-56)
4. Jesus raises the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7: 11-17)
5. Jesus raises Lazarus (John 11: 38-44)
6. *"Tombs were opened and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised"* (Matthew 27: 52).

**These are resuscitations, a dead corpse reanimated, not resurrections.**





## Jesus body was resurrected.

- Jesus' crucified, dead body was put into the tomb on Friday, before sunset;
- Jesus' resurrected body came out of the tomb on Sunday, sometime before sunrise;
- When the stone was rolled away from the tomb, Jesus was already gone;
- Jesus tells Mary Magdalene to "*stop holding on to me*" (John 20: 17), as if he is somehow uncomfortable in his newly-resurrected body.
- When people who know Jesus intimately first see him, they do not recognize him;
- Jesus suddenly appears in a locked room;
- Jesus' resurrected body bears the nail marks and side wound;
- Jesus in his resurrected body eats and has "flesh and bones."
- Jesus spends 40 days with his disciples; he then ascends *bodily* into heaven, and he is seated at the right hand of the Father.



## Jesus' resurrected body is the prototype for our resurrected bodies.

*“But some may say, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come back?’ . . . The brightness of the sun is one kind, the brightness of the moon and the brightness of the stars another. For star differs from star in brightness. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It [the body] is sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible . . . If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual one . . . The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven . . . Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.”*

**(1 Corinthians 15: 35, 41-49)**

**As an acorn is**



**to an oak tree,**



**so is an earthly body**

**to a resurrected body.**

*“What you sow is not brought to life unless it dies. What you sow is not the body that is to be but a bare kernel of wheat, perhaps, or of some other kind; but God gives it a body as he chooses, and to each of the seeds its own body.”*

*(1 Corinthians 15: 36-37)*

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“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’”

**(20: 19-23)**





**William Blake. *Christ Appearing to His Apostles after His Resurrection*  
(print, ink, watercolor and varnish on paper), c. 1795.**

**Tate, London.**

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*“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”*

(20: 19-20)

• Notice that Jesus appears in the room even though the doors are locked. Apparently, in his resurrected body Jesus is not subject to a time/space continuum. Yet, Jesus’ resurrected body is *physical*, for in the following scene Thomas will actually touch him, and in Luke Jesus eats with his disciples (Luke 24: 41-42).



*“[Jesus] said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’”*

(20: 21-23)

• *“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”* The word “sent” is ἀποστέλλω (*a-po-stel'-lo*, the verb “to send”), from which we get the word “apostle.” A disciple (μαθητής, *ma-tha-tas'*) is “one who follows, a learner.” A “capital A Apostle” (one of the 12) must be an eye witness to Jesus’ entire public ministry, from his baptism through his death, burial and resurrection (Acts 1: 21-22).



*“[Jesus] said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’”*

(20: 21-23)

- “. . . he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit.’” This is a private gift of the Holy Spirit from Jesus to his Apostles, a gift that—as Luke tells us—enables them *“to understand the scriptures”* (Luke 24: 45), thus “connecting the dots.”
- The Holy Spirit—the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity—enters our story very publically in Acts 2: 1-2.



**“[Jesus] said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’”**

**(20: 21-23)**

- **“Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”** Grammatically, “forgiven” (ἀφίημι, “a-fe’-a-me”) and “retained” (κρατέω, “kra-te’-o”) are perfect passive indicatives, which can be translated “are forgiven”/ “are retained” or more properly “have been forgiven”/ “have been retained.” In the Greek perfect tense, the action of the verb has been completed, and the results of the action continue in full effect. The passive voice indicates that the subject is the recipient of the action.
- The Council of Trent defined that the power to proclaim the forgiveness of sins is exercised in the sacrament of penance.



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5. **Conclusion (30-31)**

“Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail-marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.’ Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.’ Thomas answered and said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.’”

**(20: 24-29)**



**Caravaggio. *The Incredulity of St. Thomas* (oil on canvas), c. 1601.  
Sanssouci Palace Museum, Potsdam, Germany.**





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5. **Conclusion (30-31)**

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of [his] disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.”

**(20: 30-31)**



John ends his gospel by saying that Jesus' disciples witnessed many other signs that he performed, but that John did not record them in his gospel composition. What he did record, however, is to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, and that through our belief in him we may have life [ζωή] in the fullest sense.

That leaves only 1 loose end: Peter. John will address Peter's denial in an epilogue to his gospel.



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**So, stay  
tuned, my  
friends!**

# Questions for discussion and thought

1. What is the difference between resuscitation and resurrection?
2. What was Mary Magdalene doing at Jesus' tomb in the pre-dawn hours of Sunday morning?
3. Why do you think Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene first?
4. How does the footrace to the tomb function in our story?
5. How does John create verisimilitude in his account of Jesus' burial?

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