

John: The Gospel of Light and Life
Adam Hamilton
Chapter 6 Discussion
Eternal Life (pgs. 147-159)

Opening Prayer

Holy God of light and life, thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ. Thank you for the Resurrection, for new life, and new possibilities. Thank you for your amazing and steadfast love. Open our hearts and minds as we study John's Gospel and explore the wonderful reality of the Resurrection. Grant us courage and direction as we share the good news of the Resurrection with others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Before we start.....

Read John 20:1-18 (pg. 162-163) (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible pg. 1854-1855)

- What is the setting of the reading?
- the setting of this parable is after Jesus has risen from the dead, waiting in the garden for the news that he will soon rise to the father to be taken and shared with the disciples.

Bible and Book Study and Discussion

The Resurrection Story

- As we begin this section of our study, sit comfortably and relaxed, free of all distractions.
- Clear your minds of everything from today's events.
- Give a few minutes of silence for reflection and mediation.
- Play some Zen music or some music for relaxation to help set the mood.

Reflect

- What did you hear?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.
- What did you see?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.

- What feelings did you experience?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.

- What surprised you?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.

- What other insights or reactions would you like to share about this passage?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.

Mary Magdalene

- Read the opening verses in the four Gospel accounts that describe the women finding the empty tomb.
- What is similar?

- What is different?
- *After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb. (Matthew 28:1)*
- *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' dead body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb. (Mark 16:1-2)*
- *Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing fragrant spices they had prepared.... It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. (Luke 24:1, 10)*
- *Early in the morning 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 taken away from the tomb. (John 20:1)*

- It is important to note that Mary Magdalene is the only women that is mentioned by all four Gospel writers of these stories.
 - Mary Magdalene:
 - Her name indicates that she may have been from Magdala, a town located on the coast of the Sea of Galilee.

- Luke 8:1-3 tells us that she was healed of seven demons, was one of the women who traveled with Jesus and his disciples and helped provide for the needs of Jesus and his disciples out of her resources.
 - John 19:25 tells us she was at the Crucifixion and “Stood near the cross.”
- What do you imagine Mary Magdalene’s life may have been like before she met Jesus?
 - Her life was changed forever by her encounters with Jesus, however, before she met Jesus it was difficult, and probably not as prosperous.
 - Mary’s past was troubled, it was said that she had “Seven Demons.” (Luke 8:2).
 - Keep in mind when we talk of demons in the first century, we are not talking specifically about things pertaining mainly to evil, but to things that are unknown such as an unexplained physical illness, psychiatric trouble, addiction, spiritual wrestling, that may have involved an actual spiritual entity, or anything unknown to humans at this point.
 - A *demon* is in reference to any of these things.
 - She was truly afflicted until she met Jesus, who set her free from her *demons*.
 - How do you think her life was different after she met Jesus?
 - Her life was changed forever by her encounters with Jesus, however, before she met Jesus it was difficult, and probably not as prosperous.
 - She had a more focused and abundant life.
 - She was a little wealthier than some, after her deliverance at Jesus’ hands she was named as one of the several women who followed Jesus and his disciples.
 - How did Mary respond to Jesus’ gift of healing?
 - Mary was completely changed by Jesus.
 - Mary’s work and devotion to Jesus was shown in how she loved him and followed him and his disciples.
 - She showed her love by being present at the crucifixion.
 - She showed her love by accompanying his body to the grave.
 - She showed her love by going to the tomb after his death to preserve his body.

- She also represents each of us who has lost a dear loved one.
- What might she have been thinking and feeling as she went to the tomb after Jesus died?
- The things that she may have been thinking were familiar to how we feel when we have lost a loved one.
- Upon arriving at the tomb, she may have been thinking a number of things
 - Where is the body of my God?
 - Who came and poached the body of the King of Kings?
 - Why would anyone do this?
 - I can't believe this is happening, I am broken and lost someone that I love dearly and completely what am I going to do?
 - I am in utter despair.
 - Help!! Help!! God please Help!!
 - She may have even been too shocked to even think anything, because seeing a loved one die, or even executed is traumatizing, and can cause sever PTSD.
 - We know that she wept uncontrollably.

Mary Magdalene's relationship with Jesus changed after the Resurrection. She recognized him not by sight, but by voice when he called her name. She responded by calling him a name she had called him during his earthly life: "Rabbouni," which in Aramaic means "Teacher." As she fully realized the good news of the Resurrection, both her name for him and her relationship with him changed. She proclaimed to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." (John 29:18)

- How do you respond to the story of Mary encountering the risen Christ?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.
- In what ways has Mary's story been your story?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.

The Impact of the Resurrection

Hamilton makes a point in our book that the Resurrection has the power to transform our sorrow into joy and hope and our fear into peace and courage.

The Garden

Read Genesis 2:8-9 (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible pg. 9)

Read John 18:1-2 (pg. 138) (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible pg. 1847)

Read John 19:41 (pg. 143) (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible pg. 1854)

Read John 20:15-16 (pg. 162) (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible pg. 1855)

- In the beginning “God created a Garden.”
- The arrest of Jesus, one of the key events leading to the Crucifixion, took place in a Garden.
- Jesus was buried in a Garden.
- What point is the Gospel writer making by recalling creation imagery in the story of Jesus’ resurrection?
- God created a garden where Adam and Eve lived.
 - Jesus was crucified and buried in a garden.
- Genesis opens with the words “In the beginning.....”
 - John opens with “In the beginning.....”
- God was the first Gardener.
 - Mary thought that Jesus was the gardener.
- Upon eating the forbidden fruit Adam and Even were expelled from the garden.
 - The earth was placed under a curse, and death comes into the world. Jesus died to expel the sin and death.
- Maybe.... Jesus the Gardner who took on the flesh in Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection has gone about setting the world aright again, working to bring back functional mortality, works of good service without needing reciprocation, and even monetary compenstation.
- How does the resurrection Jesus call us to the work of restoring creation to the way God intended it to be?
- Although the resurrection was just the beginning of God’s work with the resurrection of Jesus.

- We still currently live in a world of material possessions, violence, deception, and many things that are even worse than this.
- What realities and forces in our world today work against the efforts of Christ's followers to restore creation?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.
- How have you been involved in the work of restoring creation through serving others in the name of Christ?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.

Heaven on Earth

The author points out that Jesus taught less about heaven and more about creating "heaven here on earth." Three examples of this are:

- *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*
 - *The Parable of the Sheet and Goats*
 - *The Sermon on the Mount*
- *How have you experienced "heaven on earth?"*
 - Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.
 - *How do you experience new life in Christ in your daily living?*
 - Let the participants answer, as this is more of an individual reflection and answer.

Wrapping Up

John's Gospel Speaks to Us

Remember that one of the biggest themes in this study has been TRUST.

Journal Reflection (Optional)

- How have you grown in your relationship with Jesus Christ through this study?

- Let the participants answer, as this is more of a individual reflection and answer.
- How have you grown to trust God more?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of a individual reflection and answer.
- What do you plan to do now in response to John's call to follow the resurrected Christ and share the good news of the Resurrection with others? (This question may not be supported by all religions)
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of a individual reflection and answer.

*Celebrate the Resurrection
Hymn Study and Discussion*

*Redeemer
Nicole C. Mullen*

*Who taught the sun
Where to stand in the morning
And who told the ocean
You can only come this far
And who showed the moon
Where to hide till evening
Whose words alone can
Catch a falling star*

*Well, I know my Redeemer lives
I know my Redeemer lives
All of creation testifies
This life within me cries
I know my Redeemer lives
Yeah*

*The very same God
That spins things in orbit
Runs to the weary*

*The worn and the weak
And the same gentle hands
That hold me when I'm broken
They conquer death to bring me victory*

*Now I know my Redeemer lives
I know my Redeemer lives
Let all creation testify
Let this life within me cry
I know my Redeemer*

*He lives to take away my shame
And He lives forever I'll proclaim
That the payment for my sin
Was the precious life He gave
But now He's alive and there's an empty grave*

*And I know my Redeemer, He lives
I know my Redeemer lives
Let all creation testify
Let this life within me cry*

*I know my Redeemer
I know my Redeemer lives
I know my Redeemer lives
I know that, I know that, I know that, I know that, I know
I know my Redeemer lives
(Because He lives, I can face tomorrow)
He lives, I know, I know, I know.
He lives
(I spoke with Him this morning.)*

*He lives.
(The tomb is empty)
He lives.
(I've got to tell everybody)*

- What does this piece talk about?

- This piece talks about the death and resurrection, that as Christians we believe that he lives, in us, with us, around us, and among us. Working to set things more in line with God's plan.
- How does it speak to you?
- Let the participants answer, as this is more of a individual reflection and answer.

- How does this piece continue to support Christ living in our lives today?
- The message of this piece gives hope, life, encouragement, and comfort. All things that humans need right now in our world because of how our society has evolved into worshiping false gods, materials possessions, and other things that adeptly alter our being as a human.

Closing Prayer

Loving God of light and life, thank you for the Resurrection. Thank you for the sure and dependable hope of salvation and eternal life. Guide and strengthen us so that we may be your faithful witnesses whenever we go. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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John Chapter 20-

The Empty Tomb

The first day of the week, in the early morning, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb.

The Sabbath ended on Saturday at Sunday so this was no longer a deterrent. Mary's travel to the tomb in the dark, even though she is not from the environs of Jerusalem, requires serious commitment.

She saw that the stone had been rolled away. She ran to Simon Peter and another disciple, the one Jesus loved and said "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

In this area a tomb entrance was often covered by a disk-shaped rock, a yard/meter in diameter requiring multiple people to move it. Such a stone lay in a groove but could not be moved from inside; the practice is common enough for John to take for granted here that his audience understands it.

The authorities would have sometimes deposited the bodies of executed in group graves designated for criminals, handing them over only after a year.

It was dark when Mary travelled.....

Aside from it being dark when Mary headed for the tombs men in ancient Mediterranean world often viewed women as undependable in their testimony. Even if they trusted her fully, however, they would want to discover where the body was.

So the disciples headed for the tomb. They were running. **The other disciple outran** Simon Peter and reached the tomb first. They saw the linens laying in the tomb where Jesus had been laid, but Jesus was not there. The linens that were used for the head and the other parts of the body were separated from the other.

Ancient writers compared not only good and bad figures, but good and better ones also. Athletic young men (like these fisherman) sometimes competed with one another as friends, the beloved disciples strength expresses devotion to the Lord, as does Peter's in 21:7, 11.

Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, went inside, saw and believed. (They did not quite understand Scripture just yet. They went back to where they were staying.

The disciples had to bend down to see into the tomb, because some tombs in this time had really low entrances.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. She wept, she too looked in the tomb to see for herself, two angels in white, seated where Jesus had been laid, one at the head, and the other at the feet, asked her why she was crying.

She said they have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have laid him. She turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him at first.

Jesus asked her, woman why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?

She thought at first, he was the gardener (Connection to Genesis).

Jewish people told stories of angels who came disguised and initially unrecognized, and someone's of God disguising some people's appearances. Jesus' resurrection body differs from usual human bodies in this age.

Gardeners were of low social status.

She asked, "the gardener" to just let her know where he had laid the body of Jesus, but he called her by name, and she turned around and shouted "Rabbouni!" which means teacher.

Being from Mary's mother tongue would be Aramaic; "Rabboni" means "my master."

He told her not to hold on to him, he has not yet ascended to the father.

Gentiles had many stories of spiritual ascensions, including the explicit Biblical example of Elijah. Ancient writers combines reported predictions that would be fulfilled only after the work's conclusion. Go. Jesus sending Mary is striking, given the wider culture; both Jewish and Roman law normally regarded women's testimony as quite of limited value.

Rather he instructs her to go out and tell his brothers that he was ascending to the father, my God and your God.

Mary went to share the good news.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

On the first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders.

The first Sunday evening after the crucifixion the disciples would still be inside Jerusalem. Not only was the festival continuing, but they were in mourning. The first week of mourning was particularly heavy, making travel unusual; so far they knew, they had several more days left in this week of mourning, doors locked. The doors are probably barred or bolted. *Peace Be With You!* The conventional Jewish greeting constituted an implicit prayer to God for the well-being of the person addressed.

Jesus came and stood among them and said, “*Peace be with You!*” then he showed them his hands and his sides. They were overjoyed.

People often displayed wounds to demonstrate their commitment; here Jesus uses them to confirm his identity, just as documents often cited scars as identity markers.

Jesus then again said to them *Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me! I am sending you.*

A Commissioned agent could act on the authority of the sender to the extent that the agent accurately reflected the commission.

Then he breathed on them and said “*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.*”

As God breathed into humanity the breath of life; so, Jesus here imparts the spirit. In the Old Testament, God alone could bestow the Holy Spirit (i.e., God’s Spirit, Jewish sources including the Old Testament, often associate the Spirit with prophetic empowerment. (relevant for v. 21)

Jesus Appears to Thomas

Now Thomas, one of the twelve was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he did not believe them for he needed the marks of the hands the feet to believe.

Romans most often tied persons to crosses with rope, but sometimes nailed them, as a sadistic (but often death-harassing) variation on the execution. Unless the person could not be simply nailed to it through the palm of the hand, as this would not support their weight (the hand would simply tear open). The Greek term translated “hands” does allow for he nails to be in the forearms.

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Jesus enters again through locked doors and said, “*Peace Be with You!*”

Then he said to Thomas “*Reach out your hand and put it into my aide. Stop doubting and believe.*”

Thomas said to him “*My Lord and my God!*”

The emperor who reigned when John’s Gospel was probably written, Domitian, reportedly desired to be called “Lord God” (Suetonius, Domitian 13). Those familiar with the Septuagint, the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament , however, would already recognize Thomas’ confession as divine title.

Jesus told Thomas that because he has seen him, he has been blessed, and he has believed. Jesus then says, “*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.*”

The Purpose of John’s Gospel

20:30- Jesus performed many other miracles/signs in front of the disciples, that are not recorded in this book.

Writers often reinforced a major point in a statement concluding a work or section. Jesus affirms Thomas’s recognition of Jesus’ deity as faith, but greater faith belongs to those who have not seen (vv. 28-29), now, John concludes this book records the signs so that those who have not seen may believe. Writers often noted, as here, that they could have recounted many other stories (see note on 21:25).

Papyrus was expensive, so only the well-to-do could afford long works; the Gospels, like other ancient biographies, were the appropriate length for circulation.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John Chapter 21

Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

Preface to Chapter 21-

Twentieth-century critical scholars often viewed Chapter 21 as a later addition to John's Gospel, noting that it was anticlimactic after the conclusion of 20:30-31.

While they were correct to not that 20:30-31 offers a conclusion to the body of the work, epilogues could continue after such conclusions (and works could end without either). Moreover, Greco-Roman antiquity's most widely circulated work, the Iliad, has a closing anticlimactic section(Book 24). Today, noting the shared vocabulary and especially narrative connections with the Gospel's body, an increasing number of scholars treat Chapter 21 as an integral part of John's Gospel.

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee.

Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I am going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, we'll go with you.

Commercial fishing around the lake was an important part of the local economy, although in this case, it may be simply to provide food for more immediate consumption, *that night*. Galilean fishermen could work with torches at night, farther from the shore; they could catch fish in a dragnet, which had weights around its wider edges so it could drag deep. (In the present account it could not be dragged between two boats, however, as only one boat is involved.)

So, they all went fishing, but caught nothing.

Early in the morning Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

He called to them "*Friends, haven't you caught any fish.*"

They answered "No!"

He told them to “*Throw your nets on the right side of the boat and you will find some.*”

Some commentators have suggested that the fisherman normally cast nets from the left side of the boat, because the steering oar was on the right side.

They did this and they were amazed by the number of fish that they caught.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “*It is the Lord!*” As soon as Simon Peter heard this, he wrapped his outer garment around him and jumped into the water (because he had previously taken off the outer garment).

Fisherman were usually considered rugged and strong and accustomed to the rigors of working in the elements. Unless the morning was unusually cold, Peter had probably taken off his outer garment because of the exertion of his work; men often removed their outer garment when working hard.

The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, only about one hundred yards.

When they had reached the shore, they saw a fire with burning coals, with fish and some bread.

Jesus told them to bring some of their fish. Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net to shore. It was full of about 153 large fish. He was amazed that that many fish had not torn the net.

People probably wove the nets from hemp or flax ropes; the net’s failure to break itself viewed as miraculous. The large number of fish reinforces the miracle. Scholars suggest a wide range of reasons for the number 153 (e.g., it is a triangular number with a base of 17). Perhaps the disciples, excited about the catch simply counted afterward.

Jesus said to them “*Come and have breakfast!*” The disciples were afraid to ask who he was.

Jesus took bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples upon raising from the dead.

Jesus Resonates with Peter

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “*Simon Son of John, do you love me more than these?*”

Simon replied “*Yes Lord!*” You know that I love you.

Jesus said “*Feed my lambs.*”

Again Jesus said “*Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?*”

Again Simon answered “*Yes Lord! You know that I love you.*”

Jesus said “*Take care of my sheep.*”

The third and final I time Jesus said to him “*Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?*”

Simon responded “*Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you.*”

Against those who read great significance into the two Greek terms translated “love, here, writers in John’s era (including John) often shifted words with the same meaning with for the purpose of literary variation.

Jesus then says the follow quote: “*Fee my sheep. Very truly I tell you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but now when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.*”

In his youth, Peter, who was strong, girded himself (v. 7), but it would be different when he was old. One could stretch out hands in prayer or, perhaps here as in some other ancient sources, to have one’s hands tied before execution.

Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would Glorify God. Then he said to him “*Follow me!*”

This statement echoes 12:32-33, which predicts Jesus’ crucifixion. According to early tradition, the emperor Nero had Peter crucified upside down in Rome c. AD 64.

Peter then turned and saw that disciple whose Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one that asked Lord, who is going to betray you?)

When Peter saw him, He asked Jesus **“Lord, what about him?”**

Jesus answered, **“If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”**

Because of this the rumor spread among believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die, he only said **“If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”**

Early tradition suggests that the apostle John, unlike most of his colleagues, escaped Matyrdom.

This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that this testimony it true.

Legal documents often concluded by naming witnesses. *We know that his testimony is true.* Many scholars believe that this line was added by John’s own circle, who knew him as the witness. Others suggest that it is similar to 19:35; the witness sometimes says “we.” (1 John 1:1-3).

Jesus did many other things as well. If everyone of them were written down I would not have room for other books that would be written, I suppose that even **the whole world would have room for the books that would be written.**

Writers often used similar hyperbole (Hyperbole is a rhetorical and literary technique where an author or speaker intentionally uses exaggeration and overstatement for emphasis and effect) for emphasis, claiming, e.g., that the world could not contain all of someone’s exploits, lies, hardships or the like.

Closing Prayer

Loving God of light and life, thank you for the Resurrection. Thank you for the sure and dependable hope of salvation and eternal life. Guide and strengthen us so that we may be your faithful witnesses whenever we go. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.