

Dr. David L. Turner, John, Session 20,

John 20:1-21:25

6-Min. Video Overview

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Alright, let's dive right in. Today, we're going to unpack the absolutely dramatic final chapters of the Gospel of John. We're talking everything from the mystery of that empty tomb all the way to Jesus' powerful appearances to his disciples.

It's quite a story. So let's start with a really thought-provoking question. This one comes from the theologian Dr. David Turner.

Think about it. Was that massive stone in front of Jesus' tomb rolled away to let Jesus out? Or was it moved so that everyone else could get in and see that he was already gone? That is such a brilliant way to frame it, right? It totally shifts your perspective. The resurrection isn't about some secret escape.

It's an open invitation for the whole world to come and see the impossible. And that question perfectly sets the stage for our first scene. Because this whole thing doesn't kick off with a big triumphant moment.

Nope. It starts with total confusion, bewilderment, and the mystery of an empty tomb. So Mary Magdalene shows up super early.

And what's fascinating is where her mind goes first. It's not, "He's risen. Not even close.

Her immediate thought is grave robbery. She literally takes off running to find Peter and the others, totally panicked, saying they've taken the Lord out of the tomb. It just goes to show you, at this point, the disciples were not expecting a resurrection.

It wasn't even on their radar. Okay, so Peter and the beloved disciple, who we're pretty sure is John, the guy riding this whole thing, they hear this and just bolt for the tomb. And I love this part because it shows their personalities perfectly.

John, he's faster. He gets there first, but he kind of hesitates at the entrance. But Peter, oh, you know, Peter, he arrives second and just barrels straight inside.

And what they find is key. The burial cloths are neatly folded. Now think about that.

That's a tiny detail, but it's huge, right? It screams that this wasn't some rushed, frantic grave robbery. So John, the beloved disciple, sees this evidence and he believes. But then the author, John himself, adds this really important side note.

He says, look, this belief was happening before they really put two and two together with all the prophecies from Scripture. They were basically grappling with a reality that their minds just hadn't fully processed yet. It was a lot to take in.

Right. So that initial belief, the one based on the empty tomb and the folded cloths, that's really just the starting line. Now the story shifts gears.

We're going to see how that kind of intellectual belief gets transformed into something way deeper, into real, profound faith. And the trigger for that transformation you'll see is almost always a direct personal encounter. Take Mary.

She stays behind at the tomb, just completely overwhelmed with grief. And her grief is so thick, it's like it literally blinds her. She doesn't even recognize Jesus standing right there in front of her.

She thinks he's the gardener. It's only when he says one single word, her name, Mary, that the fog lifts. In that one moment, everything clicks into place, and she knows it's him, her teacher, her rabbi.

Meanwhile, what about the other disciples? Well, they're huddled together, terrified. They've literally locked themselves in a room for their own safety. And then bam, impossibly, Jesus is just there, right in the middle of the room with them.

And what does he do? Does he scold them for being afraid? No. His very first words are a gift: peace be with you. He shows them his hands and his side, and you can just imagine their fear melting away into pure joy.

But there's always a but, isn't there? One of the disciples, Thomas, wasn't in the room. So when the others excitedly tell him what happened, he's just not buying it. He basically says, nope, unless I see it with my own eyes and touch the wounds myself, I will not believe.

He needs hard physical proof. And this demand, this ultimatum, it sets the stage for one of the most powerful moments in the whole story. So a whole week goes by.

Can you imagine the tension? They're all back together, and this time, Thomas is with them. And just like before, Jesus appears, and he doesn't beat around the bush. He goes straight to Thomas, calls him on his doubt, and meets his challenge head-on.

He says, "Go ahead, touch my wounds; stop doubting and believe. And here's the kicker: Thomas doesn't even need to do it. Just seeing Jesus there, knowing that Jesus heard his private doubts, that's all it takes.

And in this amazing, beautiful twist, it's Thomas, the one we call doubting Thomas, the one who needed the most proof, who ends up making one of the most powerful statements of faith in the whole gospel. His doubt didn't push him away. It actually led him to this incredible moment of clarity.

And this right here, this is the pivot point. Because Jesus uses this moment with Thomas to speak to everyone who wasn't in that room, to speak to us, really. He looks beyond that moment in time and gives this incredible blessing to all the future believers, to everyone who would have to rely on faith without seeing.

A faith built on the power of the story and the word of those who did see. So after that big universal blessing, the story makes a major shift. We're talking a change of scenery and a change of focus.

We leave those tense, locked rooms in Jerusalem and head back to the familiar open shores of Galilee. And here, the camera zooms in, so to speak, on one specific person who really needs this, Peter. First, Jesus helps them with this insane, miraculous catch of fish.

Then they're all sitting around a charcoal fire on the beach. Now that detail, the charcoal fire, that's not random. It's meant to echo another fire, a much darker moment.

And when Jesus pulls Peter aside, one number becomes absolutely crucial. The number three. You remember Peter's absolute lowest point, right? Standing by a charcoal fire, denying three times that he even knew Jesus.

Well, here we are by another charcoal fire, and Jesus asks him, "Do you love me? Not once, not twice, but three times. But you have to understand this isn't about shaming him or rubbing it in. It's this beautiful, deliberate, and incredibly powerful act of restoration.

Jesus is giving him a chance to cancel out each denial with a heartfelt declaration of love. And it doesn't stop there. With every single yes, every affirmation of love, Jesus gives Peter a new mission, a new purpose.

He recommissions him. Think about that. The guy who failed so spectacularly is now being put in charge.

He's told to be the shepherd for all of Jesus' followers. It's just this profound message about forgiveness, second chances, and finding a renewed purpose. Okay, so we've talked a lot about the what of the story.

Let's take a quick time-out and talk about the where. It's a natural question, right? As Dr. Turner points out, people want to know: can we actually go and see the place where all this stuff happened? Well, there are basically two main candidates for the tomb's location. There's the garden tomb, which is a really peaceful and beautiful spot that was proposed back in the 1800s.

But then you have the church of the Holy Sepulcher. This one has the weight of ancient tradition behind it, going all the way back to the fourth century. And here's the clincher.

Archaeology there has actually found first-century tombs from the right time period. So from a historical and archaeological standpoint, it's by far the more likely location. All right, so after all of these incredible stories, the empty tomb, those amazing personal encounters, Peter's big comeback, the author himself steps in and basically tells us, okay, here's the whole point.

Here's exactly why I wrote this book. He comes right out and says, look, what you've just read is the greatest hits album, not the complete box set. He makes it super clear that Jesus did tons of other amazing things, but he has specifically chosen these stories for one very specific reason.

And here it is, the thesis statement for the entire gospel of John. This whole thing wasn't written just to be a history book. It was written to do something.

It was written to persuade you, to invite you, the reader, to believe and, by believing, to find what he calls true abundant life. And that really brings us to the big final question that this whole gospel leaves hanging in the air for us to think about. Thomas was convinced that seeing was believing, that it was essential.

But Jesus's blessing for those who haven't seen really pushes back against that idea. So the question for us as we finish up is this: is seeing truly essential for believing, or can faith actually thrive on the power of a story well told, a testimony shared from person to person, and a promise that you choose to believe in?