

GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

20



CHRYSOSTOM

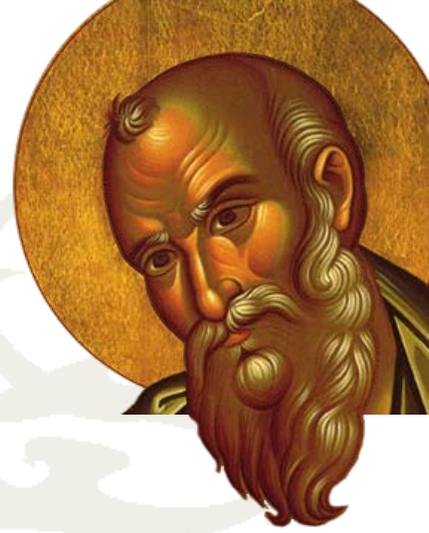
Read St. John Chrysostom's homilies on John chapter 20.



PRACTICE QUIZ

Take a quiz to test your knowledge of John chapter 20.

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Christ's Resurrection is the focus of chapter twenty. The chapter begins with St. Mary Magdalene—one of the Myrrhbearing Women (see Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12)—seeing the empty tomb (20:1). Believing that Jesus' corpse had been moved, she told Ss. Peter and John about the supposed tragedy (20:2); the disciples then went and investigated the empty tomb and the carefully folded burial cloths inside (20:3-10).

While the disciples returned to their homes, St. Mary Magdalene stayed weeping outside the empty tomb. There she was confronted not only by two angels, but by Jesus Himself (Whom she initially mistook for a gardener); all three asked her why she wept, to which she could only express her dismay at Jesus' absence and her desire that she be taken to retrieve His body (20:11-15). Only after this did Christ allow St. Mary to recognize Him, commanding her to tell the disciples that He would be ascending to God the Father (20:16-17). She quickly told the disciples that the Lord had risen (20:18);

unfortunately, however, they did not initially believe her (see Mark 16:11). Jesus finally appeared to ten of the disciples later that evening, proclaiming peace and proving from His wounds that He had risen from the dead (20:19-21).

This miraculous event initiated the transformation of the disciples into apostles: Jesus commissioned them to go forth into the world, breathed upon them to give the Holy Spirit, and gave them the power to forgive sins (20:21, 23). You might wonder: if the Christians were filled by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (see Acts 2:1-4), then what happened here? Blessed Theophylact summarizes the answer of the Church Fathers in this way: "Now He breathes on them and gives them the Holy Spirit—but not the entirety of the gift He would bestow at Pentecost. 'Receive the Holy Spirit' means, 'Let this partial bestowal of grace make you ready to receive later the fullness of the Holy Spirit.'" St. John Chrysostom clarifies this "partial bestowal of grace" by saying, "it would not be wrong...to say that they received then the gift of a certain spiritual power, not to raise the dead and do miracles but to remit sins."

Jesus later appeared to the disciples with St. Thomas, who had been missing during His earlier appearance. St. Thomas doubted that Jesus had really risen from the dead, saying that he would only believe if he could actually touch Christ's wounds (20:25). Christ therefore appeared in the disciples' midst—again saying "peace to you"—and invited St. Thomas to see His wounded hands and touch the gash

in His side (20:27). This inspired deep belief in St. Thomas (20:28), which pleased Jesus, but our Lord added something that has great meaning for us today: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (20:29). As St. Cyril of Alexandria proclaims, "Blessed, therefore, is everyone who believes the message of the holy apostles who, as Luke says, were eyewitnesses of Christ's actions and ministers of the word. If we desire eternal life and long for a dwelling place in heaven, we must listen to them."

The chapter concludes with a statement about the entire gospel according to St. John: this gospel is not a comprehensive account of everything Christ said and did, but what it does contain is intended to lead us to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31).



LIFE TIP

St. Gregory the Dialogist tells us to imitate St. Mary Magdalene and the Myrrhbearing Women: "We too, who believe in Him Who died, approach His sepulchre with spices if we are strengthened with the sweet smell of the virtues, and if we seek the Lord with a reputation for good works. And the women who came with spices saw angels, since those who advance toward God through their holy desires, accompanied by the sweet smell of the virtues, behold the citizens from on high."