



## John 20

**John 20**  
**Tape #8088**  
**By Chuck Smith**

To the twentieth chapter of John as we continue our journey. Next Sunday night, we'll finish the gospel of John and then we'll launch into the book of Acts. So John chapter twenty.

The first day of the week [that will be Sunday morning] *cometh Mary Magdalene early (20:1),*

The word translated "early" there is the word for the fourth watch, the Roman soldiers had the night set up into four watches. The first watch went from six to nine, then nine to twelve, twelve to three, the fourth watch was from three to six in the morning. So early in the morning,

*when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre (20:1).*

In reading the various gospel accounts concerning the resurrection day, there do seem to be discrepancies in the accounts. In some of the other gospels, they have Mary Magdalene coming with the other ladies. In the other gospels, they have the other ladies on their way back from the tomb, meeting Jesus, holding Him by His feet and worshipping Him. So what probably is the chronological events on Easter Sunday morning is that Mary started off with the other ladies for the tomb. In her eagerness and desire to get there, she went ahead of the other ladies. When she came to the tomb and saw that the stone was rolled away, her immediate surmised was that they had moved the body of Jesus. She, without waiting for the other ladies to get there, ran to tell Peter and John that the body of Jesus was moved or that the stone was away from the door of the sepulcher. The other ladies then arrived. They saw the angels who told them that Jesus was risen and told them to go tell the other disciples. In the meanwhile, Mary arrives where Peter and John are staying and she tells them that the stone is rolled away. They come to investigate. They are running. In fact, we'll read that tonight as John tells us that they were running to the tomb together and that Mary no doubt decided to come back to the tomb. But by the time she got back, of course, Peter and John saw the tomb and then they left. Mary then came back, not knowing that the other ladies had seen the angels, and at this time she looks into the tomb, sees the two angels and then meets Jesus as we will read in John's gospel.

So that's probably the chronological events which really there is not then a discrepancy with the other gospel accounts. So let's look at John's account as we have started. Then, when she saw that the stone was taken away from the sepulcher, that's all she saw and the surmised was, They've moved Jesus.

*So she ran, and came to Simon Peter, and the other disciple [John], whom Jesus loved (20:2),*

As we mentioned, John is the only one that describes himself that way. You don't read that in the other gospels. It's only in the gospel of John that you read, The disciple whom Jesus loved. And John knew that the Lord loved him. I believe that he believed that the Lord loved him more than anybody else, like I'm sure He loves me more than the rest of you. And you are sure that He loves you more than He does the rest of us. The Lord has that unique way of relating to us where we each one of us feel very special to Jesus because we are each one of us very special to Him.

*and she said unto them, They have taken away the Lord (20:2)*

This is just a surmised on her part. This is just her observation and her immediate judgment of the situation. "They've taken away the Lord,"

*out of the sepulchre, and we don't know where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and they came to the sepulchre (20:2,3).*

John has to get in a little bit here. He said,

*So they both of them ran together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and he came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet he went not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and he went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself (20:4-7).*

The Greek language here would indicate that the linen wrappings were still in their folds. That it was as though He just sort of evaporated out of. If you were going to unwrap somebody, you would unwrap him. But the wrappings were as though the body were still in it, they were still in their folds but the body of Jesus was not inside of the wrappings. The napkin that they had over His head was over in a place separate by itself. So they realized that the body of Jesus was not there, that He was not under the wrappings.

John, it would appear immediately caught the significance of it. He realized that they hadn't moved the body of Jesus. Had they moved the body of Jesus, they would have moved it with the wrappings. Or at least the wrappings would be all disheveled on the floor. But the way the linen wrappings were, he immediately realized that Jesus had risen. And so it says,

*He went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed (20:8).*

He immediately perceived what the meaning was.

*For as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead (20:9).*

That's of course an interesting thing. It shows the blindness of preconceived ideas. Jesus had told them over and over that He was to be crucified. When Jesus spoke of His crucifixion, Peter rebuked Him. Don't want to hear that! And it's interesting when you don't want to hear something, how you can just sort of close that out of your mind. You believe that you have a precept that is correct. The Messiah is going to rule and reign over the earth. That is a correct precept. But He did not come in His first coming to rule and reign. In His second coming, He will come to rule and to reign.

But they thought that the reigning Messiah was the only Messiah. They had sort of spiritualized the prophecies of His suffering. And so this idea of Him ruling was so strong in their minds that they even dismissed it everytime Jesus talked about His death and His resurrection. At the last part of this chapter, John tells us that Jesus did many other signs which He did not record. But these are written, in other words, John was selective in choosing the miracles and all that Jesus did. This happens to be the seventh sign that John records and the greatest sign of all, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He began it by going to Jerusalem and cleansing the temple. You remember He went in and looked about and saw them as they were merchandising there, He made a little whip out of some cords. He began to drive them out and the disciples remembered the scriptures, The zeal of Thine house has eaten Him up. And the rulers came to Him and said, What sign do you show us that You're doing these things? Who gave you the authority to come in here and clean up this place? What sign do You give us? And Jesus said unto them, Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it. They looked at Him rather incredulously and they said, We've been forty-six years building this thing and You say You're going to built it again in three days? We are told that they did not understand that He was talking about His body (John 2:13-21). The temple of His body. Destroy it and in three days, I will rebuild it. He's talking about His resurrection. That was at the beginning.

But the disciples did not catch on. They did not understand that. Later on when Jesus was asked for a sign, He said, "A wicked and an adulterous generation seeks after a sign; no sign will be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39,40). The supreme sign of Jesus as the Messiah, that He is indeed the Messiah is His resurrection from the dead and that is the heart of the Gospel message.

As we go into Acts in just a few weeks, you will see in the book of Acts that in practically every message that was preached, they preached the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. "You with your wicked hands have crucified and slain: but God raised Him from the dead: because it was not possible that He could be held by it" (Acts 2:23,24). Every time they preached, their preaching was of the cross and the resurrection, that's the heart of the Gospel. So as Paul is writing to the Corinthians, he said, "The gospel that we preach unto you, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; was buried the third day according to the scriptures: and rose again according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). That's the message of the Gospel. That's the heart, the soul of the Gospel. So here is the story of the resurrection.

Now in the book of Acts chapter one, it tells us that "He showed Himself alive after His death by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). And thus the resurrection. As far as the disciples were concerned was a proved

fact because they were eyewitnesses, they saw Him. So the story of the resurrection. “Yet they knew not the scriptures, that He must rise again from the dead.” They really thought it was over. They weren’t waiting for the third day, anxiously, Alright, tomorrow, that’s it, man. They weren’t waiting for that. They really thought it was over. As far as they were concerned, it’s done, it’s over. We had hoped in Him for the salvation of Israel. But they put Him on a cross and this is the third day. And they said, Some of the women said that they saw Him but, you know. And Jesus said, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the scripture says” (Luke 24:25). They believed only part of what the scripture said. They only believed the part of the ruling, reigning Messiah but they didn’t believe that part that He would be “wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. Despised and rejected of men. That God would lay on Him the iniquities of us all.” And that He would be “numbered with the transgressors” in His death (Isaiah 53:3,5,6,12). And they would pierce His hands and His feet. “They would part His garments among them, and cast lots for His vesture” (Psalm 22:18). They didn’t believe all that the scriptures said, only part.

Now we read that,

*The disciples then went away again to their own home (20:10).*

According to tradition, John had a home in Jerusalem. We talked about that last week, that he was known to the household of the high priest and that he had a home there in Jerusalem. That his family was wealthy and his father was a fish merchant and that John was probably one of the salesmen in Jerusalem, bringing the fish from the Galilee and it was a tremendous delicacy in Israel. And so it is thought that John had a home there. “They went to their own home.”

*But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping (20:11):*

It could be that they were there when Mary came back or that they had left before Mary came back but she was standing there by the sepulcher weeping,

*and as she wept, she stooped down, and she looked into the sepulchre, And she saw two angels in white, they were sitting there, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She said unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him (20:11-13).*

Several things that are of interest here. Even though He had been dead for three days as far as Mary was concerned, He was still her Lord. She had a love that death could not quench. And rightly so. Jesus said, “Those that are forgiven much love much” (Luke 7:47). Mary, prior to meeting Christ, had a miserable life. We know from the scriptures that He had cast seven devils out of her. We cannot imagine the torment of a person who is possessed by an unclean spirit. The absolute torture and torment. She knew it firsthand. Her life was one of abject misery, hopelessness. When she met Jesus, her life changed. He by a word drove out the darkness and brought in the light. He delivered her from the powers of darkness that had enslaved her. He set her free. And she in response and in gratitude committed her life to Him, fully, completely. Tremendous love. And though He has been crucified, she stood there by the cross watching it. Yet He’s still her Lord.

*And when she had thus said, she turned herself back (20:14),*

That’s interesting to me. When you’re looking for the Lord, even angels won’t do. I imagine if you look in a sepulcher and see a couple of angels and they start talking to you, man, you’d be so excited and you’re angels, wow! But they might be wonderful but they’re no substitute for the Lord. And so she turned from them,

*and she saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus (20:14).*

Again it’s very early in the morning. You can see figures but they’re not necessarily recognizable, especially if your eyes are filled with tears and the prism of the tears is blurring your vision.

*Jesus said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Who are you looking for? She, supposing him to be the gardener, said unto him, Sir, if you have borne him from here, if you’ll just tell me where you’ve laid him, I will take him away (20:15).*

That’s a pretty strong statement for a little gal. I believe that Jesus was a good size man. Here she is saying, just tell me where you’ve taken Him, I’ll carry Him away. The strength of love. I’m sure she could have because of the strength of love. But I think that at that suggestion, Jesus probably saw some humor in

it. And

*And He said, Mary. She turned herself to Him and said, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus said unto her, Touch me not; for I have not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and to your Father; and to my God, and your God (20:16,17).*

There's a couple of different interpretations here. There is a difficulty here to be sure because Matthew's gospel tells us that as the other ladies were going from the sepulcher, Jesus met them and they held Him by the feet and worshipped Him. When Jesus appeared to the disciples, He said, "Behold my hands, my side. Handle me. touch me, see if it isn't Me" (Luke 24:39). And yet He is saying to Mary, Touch me not.

The word here in Greek is in the present imperative which could be translated, "Don't cling to me." What Jesus is possibly saying is, Don't cling to Me, Mary, but go and tell the disciples that I'm risen. It's my feeling that when she saw Him, she probably got a death hold grip around His neck. And sort of, You got away from me once but you're never going to get away from me again. I'll never let You go again. In her excitement, in her thrill, I believe that she really just grabbed Him, clung to Him. And He said to her, Don't cling to Me, Mary, but just go and tell my brethren and tell to them that I'm ascending to the Father, your Father, to My God and your God.

Another possibility is that He was going to and did ascend to the Father immediately upon the resurrection to present the blood of the sacrifice but that's a little difficult because it would have been a very quick trip.

*Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her (20:18).*

Thus it is interesting that the first one commissioned to share the glorious gospel of the resurrection was a woman. And God had chosen Mary Magdalene to be the first one to share the good news.

Later on, a short while later, Jesus appeared to the other ladies. They held His feet and worshipped Him. And later on in that afternoon, He appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. That evening He appeared again to the disciples here in Jerusalem. The other disciples made mention of the fact that some of the women said that He was risen but they made mention of that in an unbelieving way. They didn't really believe the story of the women.

*That same day at evening (20:19),*

Remember it was at evening that He left the two disciples in Emmaus. As they had come to Emmaus, they said, Abide with us because the evening is drawing on. So He went into the house and He sat down with them. And you remember He broke bread, and as He broke bread they suddenly realized it's Jesus. Probably they saw the nailprints in His hands. And they recognized it was Jesus and immediately He disappeared (Luke 24:13-31).

*Now this first day of the week, the same day at evening, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled because of the fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side (20:19,20).*

And as the other gospels said, He said, Handle Me, see if it isn't Me.

*Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord (20:20).*

They have now more than just the testimony of the women. Actually Jesus appeared to Peter sometime during that day but now they have seen Him for themselves.

*Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and He said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit (20:21,22):*

I believe that it was at this time that they received the second of the threefold relationship of the believer with the Spirit. Jesus had said in the fourteenth chapter concerning the Spirit that was going to come, "I will pray the Father, He'll give you another Comforter; even the Spirit of truth; that He may abide with you forever; whom the world cannot see, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but you know Him; because He dwells with you [para], He shall be in you" (John 14:16,17). He shall be in you. So when Jesus said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit," I believe that they experienced at that point the indwelling of the Holy

Spirit and at that point were probably born again by the Spirit.

Jesus had said to Peter earlier, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Satan's asked for you, he wants to sift you like wheat: I've been praying for you: when you're converted, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31,32). So I believe that at this point the Spirit began to indwell them. A born again, born of the Spirit experience. It was imperative that Jesus go away because the Spirit could not come, He said, until He had gone away. This third relationship where they would then be empowered. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes and here the third preposition, upon you, "epi". When He comes upon you, you will be empowered to witness, to be my witnesses. And so "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit."

I don't think that Jesus could breath on you and say that without something happening. And I believe that it was at that point that they did receive the indwelling, "He shall be in you," and they received the indwelling of the Spirit.

Then this difficult statement,

*Whose soever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins you retain, they are retained (20:23).*

Does that mean that I have the power to forgive someone their sins? Or I have the power to retain their sins?

When they had let that man with the palsy down in the presence of Jesus as He was teaching in the house; you remember they removed the roof and let the guy down, and Jesus said unto him, Thy sins are forgiven thee. And the Pharisees that were there immediately were rankled because they said, That's blasphemy. Who can forgive sins but God? And the truth of the matter, no one can forgive sins but God. And so Jesus, to prove that He had the power to forgive sins, said, What is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise and take up your bed and walk? And so that you might know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, He turned to the man, He said, Take up your bed and walk. And the man took up his bed and walked (Mark 2:4-12). But the whole premise was only God can forgive sins.

When David was praying in the fifty-first psalm concerning his sin, he said, "Against Thee, and Thee only, have I sinned, and done this great evil in Thy sight. Have mercy on me, O God, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. For against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned" (Psalm 51:1,4). Sin is against God and thus only God can forgive sins.

Then what is Jesus saying, what does He mean when He said, Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained. When I meet a person who has been hassled by Satan because he has sought to convince them that they are still guilty before God, and I ask them if they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and they answer in the affirmative; do you believe that He died for your sins? Yes. Do you believe He rose again? Yes. Do you believe it with all your heart? Yes. Have you asked Jesus to forgive you your sins and be the Lord of your life? Yes. Well then I say unto them, Then your sins are forgiven. I speak to them a word of faith. Upon the basis of their confession that Jesus is the Lord and their belief that God has raised Him from the dead, I declare to them, Your sins are forgiven. Not that I have forgiven them but I'm just declaring to them what God's word has to say. There are lot of sensitive souls who just need that kind of assurance of just someone saying to them, God has forgiven your sins. They just can't quite accept the scripture. If a person is stubborn in his resistance to Jesus Christ, if he refuses to acknowledge Jesus as Saviour or Lord, if he says that he doesn't want anything to do with Jesus, then I say to him, Well, you, if you continue will die in your sins. You see, I couldn't say to someone of that nature, Your sins are forgiven anyhow. But I can declare to them what God's word has to say and I can speak to them God's truth. Your sins are remitted, or your sins are retained. But it all is dependent upon if you have confessed your sin, we know that He's faithful and just to forgive you and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. So I can say to them on the authority of God's word, Your sins are forgiven.

Now we read concerning Thomas,

*Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus (20:24),*

The word "Didymus" means "twin," whether he had a twin brother or sister we really don't know.

*he was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the*

*Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe (20:24,25).*

His was a confession of unbelief. Until I can see it for myself. Thomas is a very practical sort, he's sort of a melancholy. But he's a very practical sort. When Jesus was down at the Jordan river and got the news that Lazarus was sick and He stayed around the Jordan for a couple of days and then said, Let's go on up to Lazarus. They started talking a little bit about it and Jesus said, He is sleeping. One of them said, That's good sign, if he's sleeping, he probably getting better. Jesus said, No, he died. And I'm glad for your sake that I wasn't there. And now let's go on up that I might awaken him from his sleep. And the disciples said, Lord, the last time You were there they tried to kill You. But Jesus was going so Thomas said, Okay, let's go and die with Him. He was at least willing to put his life on the line. If you go, Lord, I'm going with you. He was willing to put his life on the line.

Later Jesus said to His disciples that He was going away to prepare a place for them. That where He was there they might be also. And He said, If I go I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also. And where I'm going, you know, and the way, you know. Here's old straight Thomas, the other disciples were going, Yeah, yeah. But Thomas said, Hey Lord, we don't know where You're going. And how can we know the way? So here he is again, I don't believe it. I won't believe it until I can see for myself.

We talked this morning about the cost of unbelief. It cost him seven days. We read here eight days so it was actually the eighth day because it was the following Sunday that Jesus appeared and Thomas was present. But he went through the eight days of misery. Unbelief can make you miserable. It can leave you in the pit. Here the other disciples are all rejoicing, they're excited, they're thrilled, they're happy. They're just, Oh yes! And here's Thomas going around, It's over, man. Unbelief. It keeps you in the depth of despair when you should be rejoicing. God has done a work. You should be rejoicing. But unbelief will keep you in that despondent state even though God has already worked.

*And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas was with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and He stood in the midst of them, and He said [the same thing He said earlier], Peace be unto you. Then He said to Thomas, Reach hither your finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: don't be faithless, but believing (20:26,27).*

This is interesting to me. I believe that Jesus was for forty days in which He appeared to them in different places, on different occasions, in different ways, I believe that He was during this forty days suddenly appearing, disappearing, appearing, disappearing, I believe that He was wanting to get them accustomed to the fact that He was there with them even though they didn't see Him. He had said, "Lo, I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). "Where two or three are gathered together, there I am in the midst" (Matthew 18:20). He taught that He would be present with them. But He was seeking to get them used to the fact that He was present with them even though they didn't see Him. So when He appeared on the second Sunday and Thomas was there, and immediately He just said, Peace be unto you. Thomas, go ahead, put your finger in the spot there. Put your hand in my side. Where was Jesus when Thomas was saying, Unless I can do that I won't believe? He was right there and He heard it. He heard his expressions of unbelief and doubt.

I think that it is extremely important for us to develop the consciousness of the presence of Jesus, though we don't see Him. I believe that Jesus is here tonight. Two or three of us are gathered together. He's here with us tonight. I believe that. I do believe that when we come into the consciousness that Jesus is here, Jesus is with me, that that is probably one of the greatest incentives to holy living that we'll ever have. The Lord is here. I think that that is the greatest thing to inspire faith. You say if I could just see Him. That's what Thomas was saying. I need to see.

*So Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God (20:28).*

Here again is one of those places where Jesus is called God. In the first chapter of the gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him" (John 1:1-3). So John calls Him God in the beginning of the book. Here at the end of the book, and I really believe that the book ends right here in chapter twenty. I

think that chapter twenty-one is sort of an appendix to the book.

John decides to add this one extra story. And probably because of a false rumor that had become quite prevalent in the church that Jesus was going to return before John died. I think that John wrote this last chapter to sort of put to rest that rumor that Jesus was returning before John had died.

Here he says, "My Lord and my God." In Hebrews chapter one, as the author of the book of Hebrews is introducing to them the person of Jesus Christ, "Who in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as He by inheritance hath obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son? And again, when He bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him. And of the angels He said, Who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever." The Father or God is speaking to the Son and calling Him God. "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Hebrews 1:2-8).

If God calls Him God, that's good enough for me. May not be good enough for the Jehovah Witnesses but I'll buy it. "My Lord and my God."

*Jesus said unto him, Thomas, because You have seen me, You have believed: but blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed (20:29).*

Peter later writing his epistle said, "Whom having not seen, you love; and though you do not yet see him, yet you rejoice with the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). The old Missouri adage is, Show me. Seeing is believing. But Jesus said, "If you can believe, you will see." Believing is seeing. If you can believe, you will see the glory of God.

Now John tells us that,

*Many other signs Jesus did in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book (20:30):*

Jesus did a lot of other things. In the next chapter he'll say, If all of the things that Jesus did were recorded, all of the things were written about Him which could be written, he said, all of the libraries in the world could not hold the books. So John is admitting that he has, first of all, been selective. He didn't record everything Jesus did. Out of the many, many, many things that Jesus did, John was selective and he chose certain things, certain signs. And as you go through the Gospel of John, there are seven signs that John brings out of what Jesus did. He did a lot of others but these seven John chose. And he chose them with a purpose.

The purpose of his writing this Gospel was to convince people that Jesus is the Messiah in order that they might believe that He is the Messiah and thus have life, the life of Christ, life through Him. So in Isaiah 55 we read, "As the rain cometh down from heaven, and returns not thither, but it waters the earth, to give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So is My word that goeth forth out of My mouth [saith the Lord]: it shall not return unto Me void, but shall accomplish the purposes for which I have sent it" (Isaiah 55:10,11). What is the purpose of the gospel of John?

*these things are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah; and by believing have life through His name (20:31).*

It is always wise to encourage a person to read the gospel of John who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ. If you can just get them to read, challenge them. Get them to read the gospel of John. Because God said, "My word will not return to Me void. It will accomplish the purposes for which I have sent it." And if this Gospel was sent to cause a person to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, that by believing that they might have life through His Name, then it's a great book to get people to read.

It's tragic that so many people have such completely biased prejudice against Jesus without ever knowing Him or really knowing about Him except from enemies of Jesus. All they know is what they've heard others say and they begin to parrot what others have said. Like when Pilate said, Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus said, You ask this of yourself, or are you just parroting what you've heard others say (John

18:33,34)? And there are a lot of people whose unbelief is based upon negative things that they've heard about Jesus but they've never read as much as the gospel of John. It is really wrong to have an opinion on something before you really examine the facts. And it is foolish to have an opinion on an issue that is important as your eternal salvation without truly giving an honest examination of the facts.

To develop a prejudice against Jesus is sheer folly unless you have personally examined the facts and then have made up your mind. I cannot respect a person's judgment who has already prejudged a situation before he has been able to examine all of the facts. Like I've often said, if I see a person sit down at a meal and immediately take the salt shaker and start salting all of his food without first tasting it, I don't respect his judgment. He's already prejudged it's not salty enough. But how do you know that the cook didn't drop a lot of salt and tried to get it out and could not get and it's so salty it's going to just bite you when you eat it. And here you are salting it down before you ever try it. But there are people who have prejudged Jesus Christ, the Bible, the gospel of Jesus Christ without ever having personally thoroughly examined it.

If you have personally thoroughly examined it and you say, Well, I still don't believe it, then I say, I respect your right to have an opinion. But if you have an opinion without really looking at the evidence, then I don't respect that at all. I don't respect your opinion. And so it's good to get people to read the gospel of John. If that's all of the Bible they ever read, that's important and that's probably the most important book for an unbeliever to read. They're always interested in the beast and the horns and everything else and they turn to the book of Revelations, then they say, You can't understand the Bible.

But read the gospel of John. Encourage them to read the gospel of John. Read it and then let's discuss it. And the entrance of the word so often just brings light. God's word will not return void. And so John does write with a definite, slanted view and with a definite purpose in mind, convincing people that Jesus is the Messiah that by their believing that, they can have eternal life through His name.

Thank You Father for the record that You have given to us and that You have left for us. Thank You for Your word which has become a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path. May we walk in its light. Lord, we ask that our hearts will ever be open, that You might teach us, Lord, wondrous things out of Your word. Ever open to the work of the Holy Spirit that You want to accomplish in our lives. And that work of the Spirit that You want to accomplish through our lives. May we become instruments, Lord, through which You can accomplish Your will. And Father, help us we pray to become so keenly aware of Your presence that no matter where we are, in what circumstances or situations, we'll realize that You are with us. You are there beside us. And thus Lord, may we never do anything that we would not want to do right in plain sight of You. Lord, help us to remember You're there next time we're tempted to blow up over a situation. Next time we start to react or respond in our flesh, Lord, just remind us You're there. Tap us on the shoulder, Lord. Let us know Your presence so that we will not do those things that would offend You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.