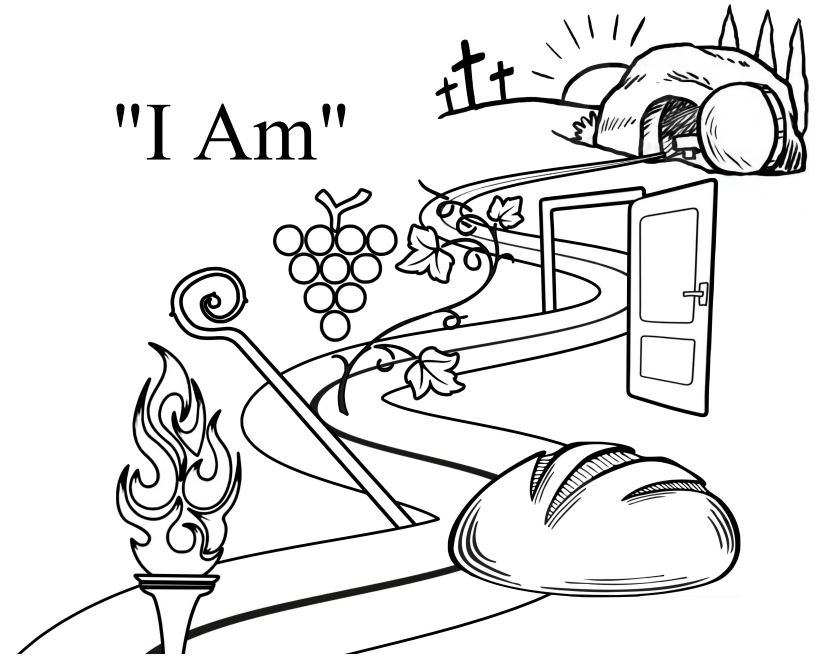


The passage alludes to the unbelief of the disciples, even AFTER Mary brought them the message that Jesus was alive. Jesus gives them the privilege of being "sent" just as he was sent, then breathes on them the Holy Spirit and that means they have the same authority as Jesus. If John is considering sin as unbelief, and the power and authority has been given them, perhaps this is a warning: If you forgive, all is well, if you do not forgive, there will be a problem. Remember, Jesus taught us to pray, "You forgive our sins as we forgive others." ... just a thought.

3. What, if any, is the difference between the disciples' unbelief in verses 19-20? Look at verses 18 and 25, what words are the same?
4. What might John be saying to his audience about the difficulty in believing the gospel without having seen Jesus? ...and disbelief is sin, might John want his readers to believe and trust in, and rely on the deity of Jesus, and the power and authority, and abundant life available to everyone who trusts?



a study of
The Gospel According to John
Summer/Fall/Winter 2025-2026
Lesson 23
John 20
"Believing is Seeing"

REVIEW:

Some things to remember concerning our study of John:

1. Who is John's audience?
2. What is one of the main things John wants you to know about Jesus?
3. What does John consider "sin?"
4. What is John's reason for writing his Gospel?

VOCABULARY:

Believe: πιστεύω (pisteuó), to commit to trust, cling to, rely on, absolutely to trust as able to aid either in obtaining or in doing something.

Apostle: ἀπόστολος (apóstolos), which literally means "one who is sent off" or "sent forth". Derived from apostéllein ("to send off"), it translates functionally as messenger, envoy, or ambassador, indicating someone commissioned with authority to represent the sender.

Ascend: ἀναβαίνω (anabainō), to go up, literally, and to move to a higher place, figuratively and metaphorically.

Touch: ἅπτομαι (háptomai), "to modify or change by touching;" "touching that influences"; touching someone in a way that alters i.e. "impact-touching."

Name: Authority

BRIEF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT:

Our aim this lesson will be to look for the message John is making in the concluding passage of his Gospel. Scholars believe John's original Gospel ended with chapter twenty, and someone else added chapter twenty-one later. We will revisit John's introduction and look at his conclusion in this lesson.

Read John 1:1-4, 12-14 and 20:30-31

1. List everything John says about Jesus in verses 1-4.
2. List everything John says about Jesus in verses 12-14 (remember *name* means *authority, sovereignty*)

3. Compare verses 30-31 (John's conclusion) with his introduction. What is John's intent with his Gospel?

Read John 20:1-9

1. Each of the four Gospels reveal different details of the resurrection. Concentrating on John's story, who is first at the tomb?
2. What was Mary's message to Peter and the other disciple?
3. What did they see in the tomb, and why might the mention of the grave clothes be an important detail. (*hint: consider the tradition of wrapping of a body with spices and linen, and recall how Lazarus exited the tomb.*)

Read John 20:10-18

1. In verses 10-16, was Mary aware that Jesus had risen? What did Mary see the second time in the tomb?
2. What are your thoughts concerning the first half of verse 17, keeping in mind the vocabulary terms: touch (or hold) and ascend.
3. What is life-changing about the second half of the verse:
 - a. Go to my brothers and say...
 - b. my father and your father, my God and your God...
4. Was Mary "sent" by Jesus' authority to preach the gospel to the men?
5. Did she obey that authority, and does that make her the first apostle of the church?

Read John 20:19-31 *It is important to keep in mind John's aim in his concluding chapter. Verses 19-31 could also have the subtitle: Sin and Belief. Keep this in mind as we read.*

1. What details did John put into verse 19 - when, where, what, who? *Imagine frightened men, in a locked room into which Jesus simply appears, and says, "Peace be with you!"*
2. Note the temporal markers: after, then, when... What is the sequence to their "believing?"

There is no scholarly consensus of the meaning of verses 22-23. Some believe this is John's story of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit - which obviously rebuffs Luke's account of Pentecost. It is also more likely that the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, because God loves to use the Jewish festivals as images of the Messiah. Secondly, unpacking the words about forgiving or retaining sin seem awkwardly out of character for John, and flies against forgiveness granted to all. So, we're not sure. However, if we look at the entire passage from the point of view that John considers all sin as "unbelief" these verses may be of interest.