

“The Resurrection”

...we have seen the Lord!

John 20: PART 2

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John 20:19-31 *Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be*

with you." 20 *When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.* 21 *So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."* 22 *And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." 26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." 30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

According to Luke's account, Jesus reminded His followers that He had told them about all of this stuff long before it ever came to be. We might be apt to fault the boys for being "asleep at the wheel," but doing so would quite likely condemn us also. For the fact is, Jesus has told **us** a lot of stuff that is yet coming in **our** future too. Are we truly believing today in the prophecies that have been made and the things that are coming in our age? Are we heeding His warnings of **our** coming events? Throughout the Bible, God tells His people to wait on Him and watch for Him. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Once again, in Luke's account of these events Jesus says in chapter 24 "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. **And you are witnesses of these things.**" Notice that Jesus doesn't herein call His apostles "debaters, attorneys, judges, or intellectuals." He calls them "witnesses." (24:46-48) Therefore, what they were being called to propagate was more than what they had been taught, but further, *what they had seen...what they had personally witnessed*. It was as a **witness** that they were to share with others! They were to testify of the events of their lives...what they had **seen**, what they had **lived out**, what they had **experienced**. If you are an engaged and participatory follower then you have indeed witnessed some marvelous things! We can be satisfied and smug in our own experiences, or we can "share the bounty" in the precious little time we have left.

In this incredible event before us, Jesus clarified for everyone there that He was "sending" them out to be His ambassadors...his "testimony." He didn't tell them *...or us*, to merely write a check and look the other way. He told us to go...*to go out there and be living witnesses of His resurrection and His life*. Writing a check is good and needed. But nothing will replace the authentic witness of an event and truth.



If we are willing, He has given us both His blessing and the promise that if we will go, that He would go with us. For the “helper” was coming: the “*comforter*,” our “*spiritual attorney*.” Jesus was, *and is*, delivering the Holy Spirit to His followers. “God in Spirit” to fill us up so that we might think like Him, act like Him, and be like Him.

Verse 22 says: “*And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’*” To the doctrinal surprise of many, the Holy Spirit was not first introduced to the believers in the book of Acts, but here late in the events of the gospel of John. Clearly Jesus brought the Spirit to them at this event. Such a “gift” was both a blessing *and a necessity*. For the ministry they were being called to would demand a power beyond their own, abilities beyond themselves. Jesus knew this. He had lived it! We need to know this. He did not call us to “suck it up and get out there.” He provided for all that we need: instruction, direction, salvation reformation, His Holy Word, and now the Holy Spirit to work His will and enable His plan to be a reality through us.

Once again, this can be a difficult text for many who hold to the understanding that the Holy Spirit did not come until Acts. Many will site such scriptures as Luke 24:49, given just before Christ’s ascension, which says, “*And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.*” Following such was the clearly manifested Spirit outpouring in Acts 2. However, we must understand that the Holy Spirit is given to meet the calling and the need of the *moment* as well as the *long view*. We know the Holy Spirit was active even in the Old Testament but on a more selective basis. Now the Spirit of God would be and is yet available for all who seek Him. Clearly, they needed the Spirit of God at this moment and for this calling. We must also therefore grasp the clear truth that the empowering of the Holy Spirit is not a onetime event, but rather an ongoing relationship and multi-event occurrence.

There is another view which also should be considered here. That is that now, *post crucifixion and post resurrection*, this is the apostles’ “salvation experience.” Thus this event would be understood as the coming of the Holy Spirit in salvation and internal presence, and that the upper room outpouring in Acts was the Holy Spirit coming in empowerment and control. The latter experience being the anointing of the power to possess and transform, not just inwardly, but outwardly in service and action. Am I suggesting a secondary experience “post salvation?” **Yes I am.** For many, the Holy Spirit came “into” us as a guarantee upon the salvation experience, but it was often later that they invited the Holy Spirit in to empower them, control them, possess them... and “baptize them” for their calling. Yet we must acknowledge that according to scripture, the Holy Spirit was indeed present for all these witnesses” on *that day*.

Jesus expresses in verse 23 yet another surprising, if not difficult, doctrine that tells us that “*If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.*” Just what was He saying here? Were the disciples given the power to forgive sins, a.k.a. the new priesthood ala Catholicism? No, the Pharisees had previously claimed “only God can forgive sins” and they were absolutely right.

But it seems the disciples could declare the *criteria* for salvation and the forgiveness of sins, and could even declare *sins forgiven upon a person’s salvation*. But they didn’t die upon the cross, nor were they resurrected! They weren’t offered up as a substitute offering, thus they didn’t have, nor **could** they have, the authority to pull off such a feat. Yet all of these issues were things they had personally witnessed and were taught concerning by Christ. They, and we, *especially in the dynamic of the corporate church*, were being called to be ambassadors. As His witnesses, His “representatives,” we don’t make the decisions, **we just deliver them**. The disciples couldn’t exonerate people of sin, but they, as ambassadors, could indeed proclaim sin to be forgiven via witness of a person’s life and living testimony. They were to be...*as we are to be*, merely the “mailmen.”

Therefore, to the one who says, “I don’t feel forgiven,” it is ours to remind him or her that, “According to the Word of God, if you open your heart to Jesus Christ and truly believe in and personally receive His work on the Cross, your sin is gone.” Conversely, to the one who says, “I don’t need Jesus Christ. I’m into meditation,”—it is our responsibility to say, “Your sin remains because only the blood of Jesus can wash it away.” The stark fact is, as a pastor I am here to speak the words of God. By doing so, such establishes a person’s redemption, or clearly establish their guilt!

As we read the textual account, we can't escape the fact that Thomas was "absent." As a pastor, it is a troubling thing when disciples miss crucial meetings. There are plenty of reasons, I know, but Satan is really good at distractions, confusion, and mixed up priorities.

Who knows where Thomas was! But I am willing to bet that wherever he was, he regretted later that he was there instead of with the community of believers that day! So many times I have been asked for counsel by someone who posed a question or issue that I just covered in a service or bible study the day before, Yet I quickly find out that that person missed that study! God will meet your needs gang, but you have to meet Him also.

Some of these same folks will say, "I worship at home. I'm not into the whole community thing." But please note that Jesus did not go to Thomas' house. He went to where the believers had gathered **together**, and Thomas was absent.

So where *was* Thomas? Maybe he was like a lot of folks, in that when they are presented with crisis and trial they hole up alone and shun fellowship. But this event, *as well as many other such cases*, present a Christ who loves His people to come together, in good times and in times of trial. When we refuse this, we run a great risk of missing out on the active appearance of Christ and the comforting of our hearts in times of trial. In truth, when we hole up alone, we only expose our pride and selfishness. Christianity was designed to be a "single" experience, but lived out, ...*manifested*, ...in a "group setting."

Now Thomas was one of those guys that are hard to convince. There are always those who demand physical manifestations of a heavenly occurrence. Now I do not think it a bad thing to be cautious, for historically there have been a lot of folks who weren't, and they found themselves donning 'holy underwear' or drinking special Kool-Aid in Texas. But we must also know that "without faith, it is impossible to please God." Somewhere along the way we will be called to believe in what we cannot see, and what we cannot not fully understand. Unless that comes, you will never be a born again Christian nor a disciple of Christ. The fact is, there simply are things we cannot comprehend on this plane of existence.

The fact is, God is bigger than all of us. He is beyond our understanding in many things. Would you really want it any other way? Personally, I want a big God that is in every way beyond me. Isaiah 55:8-9 "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,*" says the LORD. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*"

Thomas wanted **proof**. Amazingly, in an act of patient love, Jesus gives it to him. Jesus could have just given Thomas the "tough luck" routine, but He loves us so much that He often goes the extra mile for us. Even when nothing requires Him to do so!

The next time Jesus showed up, Thomas was sure to be in the meeting! Maybe the boys thumped him a little (as they should have), and said, "*You're going to be at this gathering.*" That's part of our job as brothers. To bring people to Jesus as Andrew did with His brother Peter way back at the beginning of this book. Jesus showed Thomas His nail scarred hands and the wound in His side. For all of us, this is the "moment of truth." Jesus showed Himself as fact...as reality. Would Thomas believe? Will **we** believe at that moment? Or will we only expose the fact that all of our foot dragging was just an excuse for the reality that we simply don't **want** to believe?

Thomas proved himself genuine. He acknowledged Jesus as fact. Further (and this is what it really comes down to), he acknowledged therefore Jesus **as his Lord**.

Maybe you are saying the same thing as Thomas; "*Show me the proof...show me the truth. Prove that Jesus died on a cross 2000 years ago and came back from the dead.*" I ask in return, if He does, will you step up? Or are you perpetually "on the search"? Always looking, never finding, because your eyes are shut, and so is your heart. If Jesus asks you to reach out and touch the scars...the proof of love in His hands, will you? Christ has been dealing with the likes of Thomas for 2000 years. Some respond, and some simply die like Judas.

Verse 29 tells us that Jesus told him, “*You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.*” Many of you can relate to this. You have never bumped into Jesus on the sidewalk. But you know He is there. You know because you have witnessed His miraculous hand. You have experienced His presence. You have heard His voice. You may have never touched His scars, but you know He has touched yours.

20:30-31 says... *The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.* That’s something we need to stop and realize. Jesus did a whole lot more than just what we have record of! A lot of stuff He did, no doubt, occurred because He loved one particular person, or had mercy on one singular individual.

Jesus was all about the Kingdom. His life was dedicated to it! He was not a “weekend warrior”...a Sunday follower of God. He stated in Matthew 6:33 “*...seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*” Being a servant was His full time job. Wherever He went, whatever He did, He was all about the Father. Everything was run through the sieve of bringing glory to the Kingdom of God. I wonder if we can truly claim the same?

Again we must let those words flow over us: “*...believing in him you will have **life by the power of his name.***” We have every reason to believe, historically and scripturally, that those disciples, even Thomas, came to know such a life. They had seen Jesus, and their lives expressed it every day, for the rest of their lives.

The famous educator and author Mark Hopkins once so accurately stated that: “*Unless Jesus Christ lived, and wrought miracles, and was crucified, and rose from the dead, Christianity is an imposture. Beautiful, indeed, and utterly unaccountable, but still an imposture.*” Unless these events of John chapter 20 actually occurred or what we believe and stand upon today is empty, meaningless, and powerless. Unless Jesus died and overcame death, we are lost. Now and for eternity! For “*there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:20)

Saving faith is that which has its genesis in the heart; not in the mind. But Christian faith does not stand today on blind faith. Christian faith...*and thus the cross and resurrection*, are based upon many infallible and incontrovertible facts. The mind still plays an important part in our approach to the Gospel. As always, being a Christian does not require checking your brain at the door!

The early historian Eusebius (appx 260A.D. and *not* a Christ follower), calculated and recorded that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ took place on Friday, April 7th in the year 30 A.D., which is dateable with a reasonable accuracy. He wrote the following: “*Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, accused by the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; the Prophets of God had prophesized these and countless other marvelous things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day*” (HEc. I 11,7/8).

“*And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day...*”

Indeed!