

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

Context: Jesus has just risen from the dead and appeared to the women that had gone to the tomb of Jesus. Here in the Gospel of John, Mary Magdalene had actually seen Jesus. Jesus had told her to go and tell the disciples “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

John 20:19-31

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,[c] Jesus came and stood among them 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 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending 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 withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” 24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, [d] was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” 26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” 28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

1. **V19** “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,[c] Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.””
 - a. **Locked Away.** The disciples are still in Jerusalem after the crucifixion – locked away in a room. The doors of the room are locked because they fear that

they may be arrested and killed like Jesus was, a fear that likely very reasonable.

- b. **No Evidence of Faith.** We see no evidence of any expectation, faith or assurance that Jesus has risen from the grave.
 - i. This, despite repeated prophecies made by Jesus that he was DESTINED to be killed by the leaders and raise from the grave the third day.
 - ii. Both Mark and Luke record this and Matthew records no less than three times that Jesus predicts his own death.
 - iii. The details that He gives include the place, the identity of the perpetrators, the torture beforehand and the method of death.
 - iv. He also includes during each of the three instances in Matthew the fact that He would come back to life – even better, WHEN he would come back to life, namely on the third day after His death.
 - v. **Matthew 20:17-19** “And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, 18 “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death 19 and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”
 - vi. Here we are on the third day and we see no expectation, no hope, no FAITH.
- c. **They Were Told.** They remain in unbelief in the face of the fact that they were told by multiple eyewitnesses – not only Mary Magdalene, but also the other Gospels mention the other women that saw the Lord – namely Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other Mary, and other women, and Mark also mentions Salome - that Jesus was alive – and **Luke records in 24:11** “but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”
- d. **But then he appears.** No knock on the door. Just appearing right there in the middle of them. Can you imagine the shock of believing someone to be dead, and then seeing them?
- e. He says, “peace to you.” They are cowering in the dark, and He comes to them and He says, peace to you.
- f. Are any of US cowering in the dark? Doubting the purposes of God? The times in which we find ourselves are times of isolation and perhaps to some degree uncertainty. The Spirit comes to us and gives us comfort in times like these where we are tempted to doubt because we feel so alone. **John 14:16**

says that Jesus will “..pray to the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever.” – Sometimes I find myself making the mistake of going to other things for comfort, but Let’s purpose in our hearts to go to Him for comfort. But Jesus comes through our defenses to bring us peace in our fear.

g. But what is the comfort from the standpoint of the Gospel? From the standpoint of the what Jesus has just done? **Romans 5:1-5** “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith[b] into this grace in which we stand, and we[c] rejoice[d] in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

h. Notice that His presence brings peace. They are filled with fear, then filled with Joy and the Holy Spirit. **Eph 2:14-17** “14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.”

2. **V20-21** “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 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

a. **Jesus provides proof for the doubting disciples.** They have spent the last couple of days grieving and coming to grips with the loss of their Messiah. They have been grieving and moving on.

b. **This is also proof of His atonement** and the work that He has accomplished on the cross.

c. **They believe.** After they see the proof, they begin a tentative process of belief in Jesus and His resurrection. There would at times continue to doubt-for instance Luke records in **Luke 24:41** that even after he showed them

hands and feet, they doubted, but John records here that they are beginning to believe that it is really Him.

- d. **The Commission** Jesus waits no time in informing them of the next step in redemptive history. Jesus always seems to be looking to the future and unwilling to dwell much on the past. He does not talk about the hatred of the Jews, the fickleness of the crowd, the betrayal of Judas, how horrible the crucifixion was, or where he had been the last few days. He wants to have the disciples focused on the glorious NOW. He is **COMMISSIONING THEM**. Ironic, since they are cowering in a room.
 - e. **Jesus looks at our potential** in HIM more than where we are right now, isn't that encouraging?
 - f. This turns on its head everything that the world sees as powerful – 12 men, many of them simple fisher men, and they are going to start the movement that would turn the world upside down?
3. **V22** “22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”
- a. The Holy Spirit is finally given to them, which they had WITH them, but now would be IN them. **John 14:17** “even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be[g] in you.” It would now be with them forever to give the very presence of God in them. They would never again be alone and they would be filled with love and with power. They would go on to be transformed as they demonstrated greater measures of the fruit of the Spirit – **Galatians 5:22-23** “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”
 - b. One parallel that Pastor Colin pointed out to me was that this was an un-doing of the curse of the fall of man in the garden. When Adam was created, God breathed into him the breath of life, making Adam alive Spiritually. Adam died spiritually when he ate the fruit in the garden, and now we have Jesus, having taken the curse of sin on Himself, has the power and authority to bring them back to life, Spiritually.
 - c. This changes everything. We see this pattern in scripture that everyone who sees the risen Lord is transformed, and this transformation is a Spiritual

transformation of regeneration by the work of the Christ on the cross and then applied by the Holy Spirit.

- d. This whole thing is the fulfillment of the prophecy given by Christ in **John 16:20-22** “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. 21 When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. 22 So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”
 - e. Another prophecy about the Spirit – and this demonstrates that this is by Faith in him – **John 7:38-39** “Whoever believes in me, as[a] the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified..”
4. **V23** “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”
- a. How is it that Jesus gives the ability to give or withhold forgiveness? Most seem to agree that Christ here is giving the disciples the commission to preach the Gospel with authority. Since the Gospel is the only way to be forgiven for your sins, this is a figure of speech in that they now have this authority of forgiveness within their message.
 - b. They are proclaiming a message of forgiveness. If they see someone believe this message, then they have every authority to declare that their sins are forgiven, because that is the message of the Gospel. If they see someone reject the Gospel – then they have every authority to declare that their sins have not been forgiven.
5. **V24-25** “24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, [d] was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”
- a. Now we have Thomas, the so-called “Doubting Thomas” – who has decided to go on what he has seen, rather than the testimony of others 10 other

disciples. The testimony of the women may have also been used as evidence, but Thomas is resolute in his unbelief.

- b. **They Try to Convert Thomas.** Likely much effort was made by the others to convince him, but for a whole week we see him not convinced and resolution in his unbelief.
 - i. I tend to believe that Thomas was filled with some kind of emotion to make the gruesome sounding statement he made. He could have been irritated and wearied by the repeated attempts by the disciples to convince him, so he used this phrase to get relief from their persistence. We can't just force people to believe, can we?
 - ii. However, It also could have also been the trauma of what he went through. Seeing the Lord arrested and then crucified after coming to believe that He was the Messiah, may have wrecked him. The man of faith that he once was died that day seeing Christ hanging on a cross. His faith died.
- c. Thomas was a twin, which is interesting because we do not know who his twin is, but this has to be here for a purpose. Could it be that the twin is whoever chooses unbelief, as Thomas did? Do we ever take on this role and become his twin by our unbelief? We can look at this as a warning, not to become his twin.
- d. Let's not forget the man of faith that Thomas was John 11:16 "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." He believed in Jesus was the Christ, and believed in His power, but perhaps no human soul can persist in true faith in a situation like that without the power of the Holy Spirit.
- e. I dare not judge Thomas, because if I'm honest I see myself in Him. I have to confess that in these dark times I have found at certain times a small temptation to doubt and I'm very convicted of that. It was amazing how much strength left me as I began to sink into doubt during some the of the hard times of this covid pandemic – and SO much of it was the attach of the enemy. I could see the enemy's handwriting everywhere.
 - i. You know what that did to me? It humbled me. Some may see me as some towering figure of faith, but without Him I'm nothing. I'm just a fallible human being, who will doubt. But for the grace of God, so are we all.
 - ii. The other thing that does for me is that the humility leads me to compassion for those that are doubting. I never want to turn into some

judgmental fiery preacher ready to unleash fire and brimstone on those that dare doubt the message...this makes me feel such compassion for those that I see struggling with doubt.

- iii. Think of Thomas and what he said about the hands and side – it sounds like there is such hurt in that statement, such depression, such pain, such regret and disappointment.
- iv. We have no idea what he went through that night. Where did he go? Who was he with? Did he cry himself to sleep that night? I hope those are the questions what we are really asking rather than, HOW COULD HE DOUBT. Because if that is what you are thinking, I fear for you. If there is one thing that I learned from the message about Peter denying the Lord was **don't trust yourself**, even in areas where you are strongest, even when you feel your strongest. Paul warns in **1 Cor 10:12** "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."
- v. The other thing I think about was what we Thomas's first mistake. Remember, NONE show signs of bold faith until Jesus appears and present Himself a solid person, not a ghost, and with the markings of His death – PROOF. This would have been on SUNDAY. They were gathered on Sunday? Thomas missed that gathering and so missed the blessing. I beg you, not to miss the gathering of the saints, even the virtual gathering of the Saints over the word of God shared from this website. This is the means by which God has ordained to bless His body, the church.

6. **V26-29** "26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

- a. **New Body** Note here that V26 is deliberate at making the point again that "Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them." – He does not wait to be invited, breaks past our defenses and demonstrates just a tiny bit of what His glorified body can do. **1 Cor 15:42-43** "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is

imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.”

- b. **Jesus Addresses Thomas** After Jesus appears with the doors locked, it appears that He wastes no time in directly addressing Thomas, and what he has said. Be careful what you say...because when Jesus approaches Thomas, it is obvious that Jesus has heard every word he said, and he repeats every word. Jesus knows how to reach people and there is something about this story that cuts to the heart. Jesus doesn't directly rebuke Him, but rather simply invites Thomas to perform this act of placing fingers in hands and hand inside.
- c. **Gentle Rebuke** Thomas believes and declares Jesus both Lord and God and Jesus issues what seems to be a subtle rebuke in observing that it took SEEING to believe for Thomas, but there will be those that never see the risen Lord, but THEY will believe.
- d. **We Are Blessed** The blessing is in those that believe without having to have Jesus appear and show His scars. Who would that be? Isn't that anyone who now comes to know and love the Lord? You are all so blessed to have believed.

7. **V30-31** “30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

- a. **Only 7 Signs.** It is known that John in particular has abbreviated the signs of Jesus to seven major signs. John's approach was to focus on the final weeks of Jesus's life to give a greater level of detail to the most critical events of Christ's life, namely, the atonement, rather than what the other writers already told so well.
- b. **So Many More Signs** He wants the reader here to know that there were so many more things that Jesus did, but that the things John included has a purpose and that is that you might come to BELIEVE that Jesus is both the Messiah and the Son of God. Why is that so important? So that you may have life in His name!
- c. **His heart** is that you know Him and that you may have a relationship with Him and that you may also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

d. **So do you believe it?** If so this is the power of God, and if you doubt it, it is a dark road to walk. Imagine walking a dark road when you could be walking in such light. That's the difference trusting in faith makes.