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# Have You Believed?

## JOHN 20:19-31

### Introduction

1. The Sunday of Jesus' resurrection was a busy day.
2. As you may remember from our last study, the women had gone to the tomb with the intentions of finishing what Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had rushed to do prior to sundown on the day of our Lord's crucifixion.
3. According to John, upon the discovery of the empty tomb, Mary was the first to return and report to the disciples that someone had stolen Jesus' body.
4. This prompted Peter and John's running to the tomb to see for themselves.
5. They looked inside, but saw only the grave cloths, no body. This prompted their belief in His resurrection.
6. Mary Magdalene, who returned behind them, looked inside shortly after their leaving.
  - a. She saw two angels in white, one at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus' body had lain.
  - b. Outside the tomb, she encountered a man she supposed to be the gardener and asked him to tell her where he had moved Jesus' body.
  - c. When he called her by name, she immediately knew it was Jesus.
  - d. After He spoke with her, she went back and told the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."
7. Later that day, according to Luke, Jesus joined Cleopas and his traveling companion on their way to the village of Emmaus (Luke 24:13).
  - a. Like Mary, they did not recognize Him as He spoke with them and "explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke

24:27).

- b. It was only when He “reclined at the table with them . . . took the bread, blessed it, broke it and began giving it to them that “their eyes were opened and they recognized Him” (Luke 24:30-31).
  - c. Then He suddenly vanished from their sight.
8. Sometime, between His appearance to Mary and later to the two disciples, Jesus appeared to Peter (Luke 24:36).
  9. Now, it is evening and the disciples are gathered together in a room with the doors locked:
    - a. The authorities had seen to it that their leader was executed.
    - b. The disciples were afraid that a similar fate may befall them.
  10. It is to this group of fearful men that Jesus appears, not once but twice in the period of eight days.
  11. As we look at John’s account of these appearances, let’s ask ourselves,
    - a. “What are the important facts which Jesus wants us to take from these appearances?”
    - b. “What purpose do they serve in relation to our own faith?”

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## **I. Jesus’ Appearance To The Apostles**

### **A. CONVINCING PROOF OF HIS RESURRECTION (JOHN 20:19-20)**

1. Of the remaining eleven disciples which Jesus had chosen, only ten are present in the room.
2. For whatever reason, Thomas is absent on this occasion.

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3. While John is silent, Luke tells us that these men “were startled and frightened and thought they were seeing a spirit” (Luke 24:37, NASB95).

4. It may be to calm their fears that Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19).

5. This greeting may have also called to their minds two things which Jesus had said to them in the upper room on the eve of His crucifixion:

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” **(John 14:27, NASB95)**

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”” **(John 16:33, NASB95)**

6. It was at this point that Jesus proceeded to show them the scars from the nails and the spear (Luke also adds “His feet,” 24:39 ).

7. This serves two purposes:

a. First, it reassures them that this is no ghost.

1) Luke even adds that Jesus asked them, “Have you anything here to eat?” (Luke 24:41).

2) “They gave Him a piece of broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them” (Luke 24:42-43).

b. Second, it confirmed Him to be the same person they had seen on the cross.

8. Upon realizing that it was truly Him, they rejoiced (v.20b), thus fulfilling something else Jesus had said on the eve of His crucifixion (John 16:20, 22).

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“Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.” (John 16:20, NASB95)

“Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.” (John 16:22, NASB95)

**Slide 5****B. JESUS' COMMISSION AND TWO DIFFICULT STATEMENTS (VV. 21-23)**

1. For a second time, Jesus repeats His greeting — “Peace be with you” (v. 21a), and then gives them John’s version of the Great Commission — “as the Father sent Me, I also send you” (v. 21b).
  - a. Jesus makes His mission the *model* for our mission.
  - b. We, as disciples of our Lord, must define our task in terms of our understanding of Jesus’ task.
  - c. Our mission must not be restricted to evangelism, but seek to imitate Christ in all He did.
  - d. “We are to be both salt (a preservative function) and light (a revelatory function).” (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel of John*)
2. It was at this point that according to John, Jesus said two things to the ten:
  - a. “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22, NASB95).
    - 1) We are not to understand this as Jesus’ actual imparting of the Holy Spirit to His disciples, but as symbolic of what was to come.
    - 2) To do so, is to leave Thomas out since he was absent (v. 24).
    - 3) Also, it made little difference in the lives of the disciples because they are still meeting behind those same locked doors one week later (v. 26), apparently because they are still afraid of the Jewish authorities (v. 19).
    - 4) On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus had also told the disciples “if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7).

- 4) In Acts 2:17, following the pouring out of the Spirit upon the disciples there in Jerusalem on Pentecost, Peter pointed to it as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy concerning “the last days”.

“‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams;’” (Acts 2:17, NASB95)

- 5) Later, at the council in Jerusalem, Peter points back to this outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost as “the beginning” of the church (Acts 11:15).

- b. “If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained” (John 20:23, NASB95).

- 1) This verse along with two others, Matthew 16:19; 18:18, have created a bit of controversy over the years.

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”” (**Matthew 16:19, NASB95**)

“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (**Matthew 18:18, NASB95**)

- 2) Over the years these verses have been used by some to teach that Jesus committed to certain officials in the church the power of absolution — the authority to declare the sins of certain persons forgiven and the sins of certain others retained.
- 3) Down through history these individuals have tended to locate such power supremely in the papacy and secondarily in the bishops as the successors of the apostles.

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- 4) Each of the primary verbs in these passages are in the passive voice in the Greek text. This implies that it is God who is acting:
  - a) “their sins have been forgiven them . . . have been retained” (John 20:23, NASB95).
  - b) “shall have been bound in heaven . . . shall have been loosed in heaven.” (**Matthew 16:19**)
  - c) “shall have been bound in heaven . . . shall have been loosed in heaven.” (**Matthew 18:18, NASB95**)
- 5) Here in John’s gospel, Jesus’ reference is to the forgiving of sins, or the withholding of that forgiveness.
- 6) “Though this sounds stern and harsh, it is simply the result of the preaching of the gospel, which either brings men to repent as they hear the ready and costly forgiveness of God, or leaves them unresponsive to the offer of forgiveness which is the gospel, and so they are left in their sins.” (J. Marsh, *The Gospel of St. John* (Penguin, 1968))

**Slide 7****C. THOMAS’ UNWILLINGNESS TO BELIEVE (vv. 24-25)**

1. As I shared with you earlier, for whatever reason Thomas was not present on this occasion.
2. For the second time (John 11:16), John provides us another name by which Thomas is known.
  - a. “Didymus” a name which means “the twin.”
  - b. Apparently, Thomas had a twin sibling.
3. When he finally arrives, the other apostles tried again and again (*elegon* — imperfect tense which indicates their continual activity) to convince him of Jesus’ resurrection — “We have seen the Lord!” (v. 25).

4. Thomas, however, remains unconvinced, and demands “concrete evidence that the person whom he knew had been killed in a specific fashion had indeed been raised from the dead” (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel of John*).
5. Thomas was a common-sense disciple who knew how a person’s imagination could play tricks.
6. So it was that he said, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” (John 20:25, NASB95)

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## II. Jesus’ Second Appearance To The Apostles

### A. THOMAS IS PRESENT

1. This second appearance occurs eight days later, the following Sunday.
2. The doors to the room are still locked.
3. Thomas is present with them.
4. Jesus miraculously entered the room “and stood in their midst” (v. 26).
5. Again, He greets them, “Peace be with you.”

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### B. JESUS’ INVITATION TO THOMAS

“Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.”” (John 20:27, NASB95)

1. By taking up Thomas’ challenge in this way, Jesus proved, not only that He hears his disciples even when He is not physically present, but also that He removes all possible grounds for unbelief, even the most unreasonable.
2. John does not tell us whether or not Thomas accepted Jesus’ challenge and touched the marks of the wounds in Jesus’ hands and side.

3. What we are able to deduce is that the sight itself was more than sufficient.

**Slide 10****C. THOMAS' CONFESSION AND JESUS' RESPONSE**

“Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”” (John 20:28–29, NASB95)

1. “My Lord and my God!”
  - a. No one has previously addressed Jesus in this way — It marks a leap of faith.
  - b. At the point Thomas realized that Jesus had risen from the dead, he also understood what that implied.
  - c. Mere men do not rise from the dead in this way.
  - d. This man was more than a rabbi, a prophet, the king of Israel, the Messiah.
  - e. This man is truly Lord and God.
2. “Because you have seen Me, have you believed?” (v. 29a)
  - a. Time and again, during His ministry, the scribes and Pharisees sought a sign from Jesus so that they might believe.
  - b. Jesus now asked Thomas if he truly believed because of what he had seen.
3. “Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.” (v. 29b)
  - a. Jesus foresees a time when people will not have the tangible evidence which the disciples and Thomas have been afforded.
  - b. Once He has ascended back to His Father, all those who believe will do so without the benefits of having seen the resurrected Lord.
  - c. This is just as true today as it was for those who first believed after Jesus' ascension.

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- d. Peter would later write, “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:8–9, NASB95)

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## II. John’s Conclusion

### A. JOHN DID NOT WRITE ALL HE KNEW ABOUT JESUS

1. There were other signs (miracles) which Jesus performed.
2. These signs, as well as those not included, were “performed in the presence of the disciples.”
3. John selected these signs for a purpose.

### B. HIS PURPOSE IN INCLUDING THE THINGS HE DID

1. “That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (v. 31a).
  - a. “Jesus is the Christ” (i.e. the Messiah, the long expected One)
  - b. He is “the Son of God”
    - 1) Nathanael — “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel” (John 1:49).
    - 2) Martha — “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world” (John 11:27).
2. “That believing you may have life in His name” (v. 31b).
  - a. “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.” (John 1:4).

- b. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).
- c. “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.” (John 11:25).
- d. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

### **Conclusion**

1. Do you believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be?
2. Do you believe that true life is found only in Him?
3. Your eternal destiny depends upon your response to these questions.
4. There is no other life of any value but that life which is found in Him.
5. Tonight, are you willing to set aside all that keeps you from following Him and profess Him as your Lord and your God?