

“THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST”

INTRODUCTION: The resurrection is the climax of the Gospel...

1. The good news is not complete without an empty tomb:

a. *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.* (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

a. **Paul Beasley-Murray:** *The Message of the Resurrection: BST; p. 17.*

The resurrection is the climax of the Christian gospel. Indeed, without the resurrection there would be no Gospel.

b. **Michael Ramsey:** Past Archbishop of Canterbury:

The Gospel without the Resurrection is not merely a Gospel without its final chapter; it is not a Gospel at all.

c. **George Carey:** Past Archbishop of Canterbury:

The fact is that without the resurrection of Jesus there would be no Christianity, no church, and certainly no millennium celebrations.

d. Paul says this very thing in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

e. **Eugene Peterson:** *The Message:* a paraphrase of First Corinthians 15:14-19.

If there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors...and if Christ wasn't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever...If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot.

2. Here is **Good News!** *“But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:20)*

- a. *“firstfruits”*: The offerings before the Lord of the first of livestock born; the first wine, oil, and grain; the first born of a family.
- b. *Ceremonially offered to God in thanksgiving.* The *firstborn child* was “redeemed” with money and sacrifices.
- c. But also a part of *Passover and Pentecost*
- d. **Merrill F. Unger**: *Unger's Bible Dictionary*; p. 368.

In general, firstfruits included those in the raw state (as grain and fruit); those prepared for use as food (wine, oil, flour, and dough), including even wool. (2) The firstling sheaf at the Passover presented by the congregation before the commencement of the grain harvest. (3) The firstling loaf at Pentecost when the harvest was completed. Two of these loaves, made of the new flour (wheat) and leavened, like the sheaf above mentioned, were waved before the Lord.

- e. *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD. And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. (Lev. 23:9-14)*

"You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the LORD. And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. (Leviticus 23:15-20)

- f. These *two loaves* represent those people of the resurrection.
 - i. First loaf: Jesus Christ at Easter resurrection
 - ii. Second loaf: the Redeemed at the great resurrection

- iii. *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

- g. **Merrill F. Unger:** *Unger's Bible Dictionary*; p. 362.

This feast is typical of resurrection, first of Christ, then of "them that are Christ's at His coming." When the priest on the day of Christ's resurrection waved the sheaf of first fruits in the temple, it was before a rent veil and was but an antiquated form, for the substance had come and the shadow had passed away. Joseph's empty tomb proclaimed that the great first fruit sheaf had been reaped and waved in the heavenly temple. This feast has been completely fulfilled in Christ.

3. The resurrection is the **cornerstone** of the Christian Faith.
- a. Wages of sin have been paid in full (*death*).
 - b. New Life = Eternal Life is now graciously given to those who trust in Christ (*resurrection*)
 - c. Reconciled to and Redeemed by God through the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - d. *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* (Romans 5:10-11)
4. The apostles and the four Evangelists record the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its significance to the Christian faith.
- a. In fact, the apostolic message (Gospel) is the preaching of Christ crucified and *resurrected*.
 - b. Paul makes this abundantly clear: Trial before the Sanhedrin
Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial." (Acts 23:6)
 - c. His hearing before Governor Felix
But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: 'It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.'" (Acts 24:14-21)

d. His defense before King Agrippa and Princess Bernice

"Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:19-23)

5. **Paul Beasley-Murray:** *The Message of the Resurrection: BST: pp. 19, 20, 21.*

At a very early stage I set out to make a list of those Scripture passages where the message of the resurrection was to the fore. The list proved far greater than could finally be encompassed in this book. I hope, will become clear: the message of the resurrection permeates every stratum of the New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus is its key message. The resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of our faith. Christianity is above all a religion of resurrection. The church is called primarily to be the community of the resurrection.

6. When we collate Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we find that Jesus appeared to a number of people...

- a. On Easter Sunday: Mary Magdala, other women who went to the tomb, Peter alone, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, all the disciples except Thomas.
- b. Later he will appear to hundreds of people prior to His ascension into heaven (40 days).
- c. Eleven post-resurrection appearances of Christ to over 500 people!

...that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (1 Corinthians 15:4-8)

7. **F. LaGard Smith:** *The Daily Bible in Chronological Order; p. 1477.*

The importance of Jesus' death is surpassed only by the good news of his resurrection! Jesus has prophesied that he will live again, and therefore his credibility is in jeopardy if he is now unable to demonstrate power over his own death. That very claim, and its obvious implications, has already prompted the Jewish leaders to demand a Roman guard at the tomb. The events which follow are nothing short of marvelous. They not only confirm Jesus' credibility but also provide for believers the assurance of life after death.

8. John records three of these appearances in John 20:1-31...

9. **John Charles Ryle:** *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John; vol.3; p. 389.*

The whole of saving Christianity hinges on the two facts, that Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. Of all the four evangelists, none supplies such deeply interesting evidence of the resurrection, as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

I. THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION (John 20:1-10)

- b. *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. (John 20:1-10)*
1. "Now, on the first day of the week..."; i.e., Sunday
- a. The reason the "Christian Sabbath" is not on Saturday but Sunday.
- b. *As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in His Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, He has particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week: and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath (WCF 21-7)*
- c. **Note well:** Those "sects" that do not celebrate the Lord's Day on Sunday are disobedient to the apostolic precept, dismissive of the church's witness over two millennia, and disrespectful of the resurrection of Christ.
- d. This is **not** a matter of personal preference **or** different interpretations! This is a matter of *revelation!*
- e. The New Testament revelation **clearly** moves the Sabbath Day to the Lord's Day:
Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of the week..." (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
- f. *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. (Acts 20:7)*
- g. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. (Revelation 1:10)*
- h. Just as the Law has been fulfilled in Christ (Gospel), so the Old Testament Sabbath has been moved to the New Testament Lord's Day.
2. John focuses on *Mary Magdalene*, but in fact, *Mary Magdalene* came to the tomb with several other women.

- a. The Four Gospels mention: *Mary Magdalene (Magdala)*; *Mary, the mother of Jesus and Joses (Joseph)*; *Salome* (who may have been the mother of James and John); *Joanna* (the wife of Herod's Steward, Chuza); *Mary, the wife of Cleophas*; and perhaps some others.
 - b. Some had been at the cross of Christ...

...but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (John 19:25)
 - c. All had been early disciples of Jesus, and some were his family members.
3. These ladies left in a group for three reasons:
- a. First, safety in travel, esp. when they left for the tomb while it was still dark (Luke 24:1)
 - b. "early dawn" = "while it was still dark" (NIV)
 - c. 4th watch of the night: between 3:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.
 - d. By the time they arrive at the tomb (c. 6:00 a.m., sunrise), Jesus is already gone.
 - e. Second, needed help in rolling away the stone. Could they do so by themselves?

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" (Mark 16:1-3)
 - f. Third, it would take more than one or two women to unwrap, move, anoint/embalm, re-wrap and replace the dead weight of a dead man.
 - g. **Note:** *Because of the rush to keep the Sabbath holy, the disciples had not had time to properly prepare Jesus' body for burial (a hasty burial).*

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:40-42)
4. Here is what appears to have happened...
- a. This group of faithful and courageous women arrives at Christ's tomb only to find...
 - i. The guards were gone.
 - ii. The tomb was open (stone rolled away).
 - iii. The tomb empty – no dead body.
 - b. *Mary Magdalene* immediately runs off to tell Peter about the robbed grave, and after she does, the angels appear to the rest of the group and proclaim to them the Easter News: "*Christ has risen. He is not here!*"
 - c. They set off in 2 or 3 directions to tell the other disciples about the angel's message –
 - i. *Mary Magdalene* is already off to get Peter and John...
 - ii. One group heads for the other apostles...

- iii. Some, who'd not seen the angel (who must have come to the tomb later), ran off to tell about the empty grave to still other disciples.
 - d. Pandemonium reigns! Fear...shock...sorrow... a sense of "what else could they do to dishonor our Lord?"
 - e. Peter and John go back with Mary to investigate her report.
 - i. John is younger (teenager) and outruns Peter. Stops outside the tomb.
 - ii. Peter came later but boldly (typical Peter) goes into the tomb.
 - f. Peter and John leave, presumably to tell the other 9 apostles.
 - g. After Peter and John leave, *Mary Magdalene* breaks down and sobs. Jesus then appears to her to comfort her.
 - h. Later (?) Jesus appears to Peter – alone. (1 Corinthians 15)
 - i. Jesus then meets the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, sometime near dusk/dinner.
 - j. As evening sets in, Jesus materializes in the Upper Room with the small band of disciples. It is then that He imparts to them the indwelling Spirit.
 - k. *This is the chronology of Easter Sunday (John 20).*
 - l. Thomas, absent from the Easter evening appearance, gets a chance to see Jesus alive and well, 8 days later as Jesus appears to the disciples a second time.
5. **The key point is not the chronology nor is it the correlation of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The key to John's account is this:**
- a. *...for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. (John 20:9-10)*
 - b. Why not? Because the Spirit was not yet given to them!
 - c. *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 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. (John 7:38-39)*
 - d. The "promise of the Father" ...
 - "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. (John 16:12-13)*
6. **My friends**, we can present all the Biblical and Theological evidence we can muster and still people will *not* (1) believe in the resurrection or (2) understand its significance, or (3) see how it fulfills the Old Testament Scriptures' prophecies and foreshadowing's, until the Holy Spirit opens their minds!
- c. *Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed,*

in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

- d. *Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:7-18)*
7. **Illustration:** In the Fall of 1972, I was eating dinner at a Chinese Restaurant, under the “EL,” in South Chicago, with two friends of mine:
- a. **Dan Bauer** and **Stanley Urbanck** – priests who were getting PhD’s from the University of Chicago.
 - b. I was a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, stationed in Chicago.
 - c. Over supper, I said to them, “*Even if Jesus did not rise from the dead, wouldn’t we still be Christians?*”
 - d. **Dan Bauer** looked at me and said, “*No way! If Jesus did not rise from the dead, this whole thing is a sham!*”
 - e. I was a Catholic, had studied in seminary and believed “about” Jesus – but I still did not truly grasp the *reality of the resurrection!*
8. *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (Romans 5:9-10)*
- If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15:19)*

II. THE REASON FOR THE RESURRECTION (John 20:11-18)

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to

them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her. (John 20:11-18)

1. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had earlier cast 7 demons. She was one of His most devoted disciples.
2. Jesus could have met with her in a group or tended to more kingdom strategic matters, but He chose to stop and comfort her – by name: “Mary!”
 - a. She recognized His voice.
 - b. She remembered how He used her name.
 - c. **Bruce Milne:** *The Message of John: BST*; p. 292.

Then comes the moment of recognition, and it is beautifully told. Jesus says to her, ‘Mary’ (16). One word which remade her world and transformed her life for ever after, and the word was her own name! This is a memorable confirmation of the personal nature of our Lord’s dealings with his people.

3. But...in this tender moment, Jesus says something that seems cold and even insensitive to Mary:
 - a. *Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 20:17)*
 - b. **D. A. Carson:** *“This verse belongs to a handful of the most difficult passages in the New Testament.” (pp. 641-642)*
 - c. What does Jesus mean? The verb John uses in verse 17 is *hapto*: to touch, to cling to, and to hold on to.
 - i. *Touch me not (KJV)*
 - ii. *Do not hold on to me (NASB)*
 - iii. *Stop clinging to me (NIV) (ESV)*
 - d. There are 4 main interpretations of what Jesus means
 - i. “Don't try to hold Me back from going to heaven.”
 - ii. “Let go of Me, and go tell the others I'm alive.”
 - iii. “It is inappropriate for you to touch Me in My glorified state as when I was alive before.”
 - e. The fourth solution is best: *“You don't have to cling to Me. I haven't ascended (yet) to My Father. We still have time to spend together before I leave.”*
4. **D. A. Carson:** *Gospel According to John: Pillar NTC*; p. 644.

The thought, then, might be paraphrased this way: ‘Stop touching me (or, Stop holding on to me), for (gar) I have not yet ascended to my Father – i.e., I am not yet in the ascended state, so you do not have to hang on to me as if I were about to disappear permanently. This is a time for joy and sharing the good news, not for clutching me as if I were some jealously guarded private dream-

come-true. Stop clinging to me, but (de) go and tell my disciples that I am in process of ascending to my Father and your Father.'

5. So...Jesus lets Thomas “touch” him but prohibits Mary from “clinging” to him –
 - a. Not because he likes men better than women...
 - b. Not because Jesus is not the “touchy-feely” kind of guy...
 - c. But because Mary needed to go tell Thomas and the other apostles that Jesus was coming to see them...
 - d. *But would soon ascend to the Father in heaven!*
6. *"I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." (John 16:25-28)*
7. That day of plain-speaking had come: *"I am Jesus. I am alive. I have risen. I am ascending to the Father in heaven."*
8. Here are the three reasons for the resurrection – and Christ’s appearances to so many of His disciples:
 - a. To encourage these eyewitnesses that Christ rose from the dead – *the Gospel message.*
 - b. To go back to His Father in glory – the great love of His life.
 - c. To “ascend” to a higher place of glory: No longer the Suffering Servant but now the “Lord of Glory.”
 - d. *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)*
 - e. **The Creed:** *“He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.”*

III. THE REASSURANCE OF THE RESURRECTION (John 20:19-23)

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, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when

they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." (John 20:19-23)

2. Later, that evening, after appearing to Mary, Peter and the Emmaus Road disciples (and perhaps others), Jesus went back to the *Upper Room* to visit, face to face with His 11 best friends (apostles), His family, and the inner circle of early disciples.
3. Jesus merely “walks” through closed doors. He came and stood in the middle of them and gave them the usual Hebrew greeting: “*Shalom*”... “Peace (be with you).”
4. Their fear (v. 19) turns to gladness (v. 20), but no doubt an awkward one at first: “*Do we touch Him or not? Is He real or a vision? Do we kiss Him or fall down to worship Him? Is this real or a dream?*”
5. So Jesus showed them His wounded hands and His pierced side, as if to say, “*Look! Touch! Find out for yourself! It is really I who is alive among you!*”
6. Jesus was concerned to give these apostles the definitive **reassurance** they needed to preach the Gospel. So He did.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. (1 John 1:1-4)

7. You may ask, “*Wouldn’t it be easier for us if Jesus appeared to every one of His elect and said, ‘Go ahead, touch My wounds! That will make you believe in Me!’?*”
8. Answer: Yes. It certainly would. But Jesus has left the task of conversion, faith and assurance to someone else: *The Holy Spirit...the third person of the Godhead.*

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:21-22)

9. Some people, like **Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** believes that this was the moment that Peter and the others were converted.
 - a. Is this John’s version of Pentecost?
 - b. Did Jesus say this on Easter but not really give the Spirit until Pentecost – 50 days later?
 - c. Were they *sprinkled* with a partial gift of the Spirit and later received an *outpouring* (*effusion*) of the Spirit on Pentecost?
 - d. Is this just a “tease” to the promised Spirit of Pentecost?
 - e. Is this a parable enacting out what would truly come on Pentecost, 7 weeks later?
 - f. *All these are possible, and there is no real consensus on what Jesus meant.*

10. Listen again to John...

- a. *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 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. (John 7:37-39)*
- b. The key: **The Holy Spirit is given after Jesus is "glorified"**
- c. When was this glorification of Jesus? It came in two phases:
 - i. Resurrection (Easter)
 - ii. Ascension (Ascension Day)

11. Here is my *humble opinion (guess)*, by no means the definitive answer.

- a. Jesus breathes on the apostles and gives them the *indwelling* of the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit's **presence**.
- b. This Spirit begins to help them understand what Jesus will teach them about the Kingdom of God for the next 40 days.
 - i. *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:12-15)*
 - ii. *In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1-3)*
- c. Then Jesus *poured out* the Spirit on the apostles on Pentecost Sunday.
 - i. 50 days after Easter
 - ii. 10 days after the Ascension
 - iii. *A baptism in the Spirit's **power***
 - iv. *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)*

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

12. That is what happens to us:

- a. Conversion: *given the Spirit's indwelling presence*
- b. Unction for ministry: *granted the Spirit's enabling power*

13. Jesus rose and gave us the assurance of the Spirit's presence and power before He returned to the Father.

- a. *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 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 in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (John 14:16-18)*
- b. *These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:25-26)*
- c. *But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. (John 15:26-27)*
- d. *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (John 16:7-11)*
- e. *I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. (John 16:12-13)*
- f. **Note well** John 14:16-17
- g. *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 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 in you. (John 14:16-17)*
- h. He will be *with* you (**Power**)
- i. He will be *in* you (**Presence**)

14. The glorified Resurrected Christ and the indwelling Spirit; the glorified Ascended Christ and the Power of the Spirit.

IV. THE RESPONSE TO THE RESURRECTION (John 20:24-29)

- a. *Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 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."*
- b. *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." 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." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:24-29)*

1. One apostle was missing: Thomas

- a. Unfairly called *Doubting Thomas*
- b. Rather: "definitive Thomas: He may not always be right but He's never in doubt.
- c. A *courageous* follower of Jesus...John 11:16

And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:39-42)

After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:11-16)

2. **John Charles Ryle:** *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John*; vol. 3; p. 462.

Two things must, in fairness, be remembered, which form some slight extenuation of Thomas's unbelief. For one thing it does not appear that any one of our Lord's apostles ever understood, up to the time of our Lord's crucifixion, that He was really going to be crucified, buried, and rise again. Simple as these great facts appear to us now, it is perfectly certain that they formed no part of the creed of the apostles, so long as our Lord was with them. This may seem astonishing, but it is true. For another thing we must remember, that Thomas, like all Jews, had a firm belief in the reality of spirits and ghosts, and the possibility of their appearing. These things are worth considering. I do not for a moment excuse or defend Thomas. I only remind those who condemn him wholesale, and can find no words strong enough to use about his unbelief, that it was not quite so easy for a pious Jew, brought up and trained as Thomas had been, to receive at once the resurrection of our Lord as a proved thing, as it may appear at first sight to an English mind.

- 3. Thomas was greatly **disillusioned** at Jesus' death. His hopes were crushed. So Jesus appears to him and gives him the same opportunity for assurance as the other 10 apostles...

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." 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." (John 20:26-27)

4. Thomas' response is legendary: *"My Lord and my God!"*
5. **Note: Thomas is the first person in the Bible to confess to Jesus, face to face, "You are my God!"**
6. And it was the resurrection that enabled him to do so!
7. That is the only acceptable **response** to the resurrection of Jesus Christ: *"My Lord and my God"*
 - a. *My Lord* whom I will follow and serve!
 - b. *My God* whom I will worship and adore!
8. And Jesus reminds us that Thomas' response should be our response –
 - a. Not because we see and touch Jesus
 - b. But because of the witness of the apostles...
 - c. ...and the work of the Spirit in our hearts.
 - d. *Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29)*
 - e. *This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. (John 21:24)*

CONCLUSION: And we have ample evidence to believe as Thomas and the apostles believed...

1. *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 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. (John 20:30-31)*
2. Miracles, signs, wonders, even a resurrection – all to give eyewitness evidence of Jesus Christ – *Lord and God.*
3. If Jesus came back and we all touched Him, would that make us and others believe? **Not hardly!**
4. *And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:27-31)*
5. No. it takes the word of the *Gospel* and the work of the *Spirit* to cause a man or woman to believe in the Resurrected and living Christ.
6. And the Word and that Spirit you have with you tonight...

But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:8-13)

7. Do you believe in the resurrected Christ, "My Lord and my God"?