

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: After Jesus arose from death, He went into a *show-and-tell* mode! He presented proof of who He is and what He came to do; He then told His followers to go and tell the Good News to others. But, the Disciples were afraid of the Jewish leaders who had ordered Jesus' death and who now were out for them. So, they hid in a locked room so no one could get at them as they considered what they would do next. Suddenly, Jesus stood before them. He showed them His wounds to prove He was fully alive and not a ghost. The room was filled with an abundance of great joy; *the Lord is here! He is risen indeed! Halleluia!* Jesus then said *Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, now I send you to continue the work.* He then breathed into them His Successor, the preeminence and permanence of the Holy Spirit, and asked them to do to others as He has done to them: show the world the Gospel and forgive! Thomas was not there, and he could not wrap his mind around all that had happened, and therefore did not believe. This is curious since he saw Jesus raise others, like Lazarus, from the dead, but somehow he could not or would not believe. So, Jesus came back and showed Thomas His wounds; Thomas was able to, physically, see and even touch Jesus. He then believed! Jesus told him *you only believe because you saw firsthand; blessed are those who believe even though they have not seen!* Jesus did many more signs and wonders so that all might believe that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, Lord and Savior and have hope for today and life for eternity!

Contexts and Background

This passage continues on Sunday, as the "Feast of Unleavened Bread" is concluding, and through the following week. Most devout people would still be in Jerusalem, offering the perfect timing for Jesus' resurrection when He would overcome His dead body and be transformed back to life. Lazarus was also raised, but Jesus, in this context, proved His divinity (as He and we in Him would die no more) (John 10:17-18; Acts 13:30-35; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:50-54; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 7:16-24).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings

- *Disciples were together.* Matthew recorded the suicide of Judas. Only eleven men remained along with several others, the women, and Jesus' mother and family, all mourning in the upper room (Acts 1:14-23).
- *Doors locked / shut.* Meaning locked tight. In spite of this, Jesus miraculously passed through the door. Rented rooms and homes as well as businesses in the city had bolted doors, usually cast metal rings and a heavy shaft attached to the door and frame, to prevent uninvited entry and protect against thieves. In contrast, people in the country did not lock their doors (Acts 12:10; 1 Cor. 15:35-49).
- *Peace be with you!* This is a standard Jewish greeting by which respectful and devout people greeted one another, as we might say a polite "Hello" or "God bless you." There were specific rules on how to greet people according to their social status. This was also an early church greeting and a prayer for its people to be well, productive, and useful in Christ. Locked doors and fear do not give ultimate contentment; only Christ can do that (Dan. 10:19; John 14:27; Rom. 5:1; James 1:1; Rev. 22:21).
- *Hands and side.* This emphasized the fact that Jesus' resurrected body was not some kind of spirit or ghost that could pass through solid matter. It shows us that the nature of Jesus is beyond spirit and body, that He is physically and metaphysically superior to what we know in nature and science.
- *Overjoyed / glad / delight, exultation, ecstasy, rapture.* Basically means very excited for who Christ is and what He has done for us, thus giving great joy and gratitude through our commitment to God and, in context, the courage to witness. This joy means our faith and fruit will overflow from us to others around us! This joy grows in us as we mature in the faith and as we are filled with His Word. It is also the power to enjoy Him in worship and as a lifestyle that will affect all aspects of our lives as well as that of others around us in His service and glory. Because of Christ, His Word will bring us joy. (Ruth 3:2-7; Isa. 9:3; Neh. 8:10; Eccl. 2:18; Matt. 24:21-22, 30; Luke 15:7-10, 32; 17:30; John 14:16-26;

16:12-15; 17:17; Acts 28:16-30; Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Cor. 7:29; 2 Cor. 2:15-16; 4:7-12; Eph. 1:13-14; 6:16; 4:30; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 3:15-16; James 1:2; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

- *Saw the Lord.* Acts 1:4-5 tells us that the early Christians needed verification that Jesus was really alive and victorious over death, so God caused His Spirit's inaugural commission to come first upon the disciples in His holy city of Jerusalem (Acts 1-2).
- *Father has sent me.* Referring that as God sends the Son, the Son sends us. We, as Christians, are the agents and representatives of God; we embody Christ when we reach out to others for Christ (John 16:33; 20:21; 2 Cor. 2:20).
- *I am sending you.* This passage is brief statement of the "Great Commission," the marching orders for our faith and practice! Rabbis and philosophers would personally appoint their best disciples as their successors. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to be His successor in presence, power, inspiration, and empowerment to His ambassadors and representatives here on earth (Daniel 7:13-14; Matt. 4:17; 28:16-20; Luke 24:44-53; John 17:18; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 1:18-2:16; 15:1-8)!
- *Breathed on them.* This refers to the act of creation from Genesis where God breathed life into the universe and into Adam; now, Jesus sends us His empowerment that gives us power to be Christ's witnesses. The point and reason for empowerment was to serve Jesus, not to bring attention and glory to self (Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 37; Luke 24:47-49).
- *Receive the Holy Spirit.* As Christians, we receive Him, and continually have Him living within us so that we are equipped to speak for Him! Before Christ came, the Holy Spirit was not available to all, nor was He omnipresent, or "everywhere." This is not a conversion or some kind of rebirth (John 13:10; 15:3; Romans 8:9; John 3:5)! Rather, the focus was on the promise in Joel 2, which was fulfilled in Acts 2. The Holy Spirit working in us empowers us for ministry. It is never meant to draw attention to us or to put on some kind of entertainment! The Christians who came to faith in Christ after Pentecost receive the Spirit even before they accepted Christ by faith (John 3:3-6; 16; 16:13-14; 1 Cor. 12:3). The Spirit introduces us to Christ's work before we are even evangelized, so we are able and willing to believe and accept Him. In addition, it can refer to extra empowerment for ministry, not a second work of Grace. He may give to you extra gifts and power for His glory in ministry when He deems it necessary and/or when we yield ourselves to Him, and are mature enough to handle it (Num. 11; Psalm 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11; Acts 1:4-8; John 7:37-39; Acts 2:1-11; 1 Cori. 1; 14:26-33; Joel 2:28-29).
- *If you forgive... they are forgiven.* We are saved from God's judgment for our sins; we are then called to be the living illustration to others that God forgives (we cannot do this; only God forgives sins) and taught not to condemn others because God takes care of that. We are to showcase and proclaim the power and eminence of the Gospel message by the Holy Spirit's power (Matt. 5:16; 18:15-24; John 3:15-17; 10:16; 17:18; Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:16; 9:5; Col. 1:28-29).
- *Thomas.* He was also called *The Twin*. "Didymus," said he was willing to die for Jesus, yet was famous for this passage. He doubted Jesus' resurrection (Doubting Thomas), requiring empirical evidence, which he received a week later. It is thought that he traveled to India (perhaps with Bartholomew) where he was speared to death (Matt. 10:1-4; John 1:38; 11:16).
- *We have seen the Lord!* We have the great comfort that the God of the universe, our Creator and Lord, knows us, loves us, and will be with us!
- *Unless I see.* Wounds, both then and now, are shown as evidence in a court of law to prove a case against an assailant; wounds were used here to prove Jesus was not a look-alike or just recovering from His mortal wounds. He was real, recognizable, and dwelt in their midst. This is important because the Jewish *tradition* was that a dead person should look exactly the way he/she looked at death, and thus be identifiable. If Jesus' wounds were healed, He would not have been the same person in their opinion, which would have "freaked" them out even more and caused more doubt. This is not to say that Jesus' body is not healed or that our resurrected body will not be the same. Also, this shows the price he paid for our sins (Phil. 3:1-14).

- *Put your finger here; see my hands.* This shows that Jesus was not just a spirit but corporeal—with a body. Thomas did not doubt the other disciples; rather, he wanted to be sure for himself of what had happened, and thus needed tangible evidence. He needed to look at the nail prints in Jesus' hands for proof that He was not a hallucination or an aberration or a phantom or a magical trick. (If people were crucified by the spikes in the wrists because it would secure the person to the cross, why does it say *hands*? At this time, hands were considered to be from the lower forearm to the fingers.)
- *Stop doubting and believe.* Refusing to acknowledge or believe will cut one off from our Lord and the faith and love needed for living.
- *My Lord and my God!* This is a clear and powerful climax and confession of faith that Jesus is *Yahweh*, Lord God, Creator of all things, and Sovereign Lord over all. He made the universe and He gets to run it, including you and me! This also refers to Jesus being fully God, *Immanuel*, which means "God is with us" (Ex. 15:11; Isa. 6:3; Matt. 1:23; John 1:1-7 Rev. 1:6; 4:11; 19:10; 22:9).
- *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.* Jesus is patient and tender with our unbelief up to a point of no return; judgment will come one day. This is a prayer of blessing that Jesus gives through the Gospel of John for whoever reads this information and believes the apostolic testimony without seeing or knowing Jesus firsthand. We may not have the ability to see and physically touch Jesus, but we do have more than they did; we have the cradle of His precepts in His Word and the empowerment of His Holy Spirit. Jesus does not want us to seek signs, rather seek Him, and place Him first and foremost in our lives. This is also the purpose of this Book, to showcase the person and work of Christ so we may trust and obey (John 17:20; 1 Pet. 1:8-9).
- *Other miraculous signs.* Each of the Gospels only gives a snapshot of Jesus, not a complete testament. The point is not the power show or even where Jesus was going, but where our faith and trust lie, where our desire is aimed. We are all in breach of God's Law and covenant! God calls all of us to account and to face judgment. Those saved are declared innocent; those who remain in their pride are guilty (John 2:11; 6:32-58; 13:36; 14:5; 21:25).
- *Written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.* John the Gospel writer's purpose in this Book is "evangelistic" to prove that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and for us to believe and have faith and trust in His truth because He is our Lord and Savior. The call for all Christians through all time is that we know Him and make Him known by spreading the Gospel (John 1:4; 3:15-16!
- *Have life in his name.* It is God's role and work that are empowering and saving; we merely respond. Our faith is a response, not a work; we recognize Christ because He reveals Himself to us. All the blessings and wonders that we experience are in Christ and He gives us faith that we can turn into more faith by our commitment and obedience (John 3:30; Rom. 6:12; Gal. 2:20-21; Eph. 2:8-9; 5:15-17; Phil. 3:1-21; Col. 1: 3-6, 10-12, 15-29).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications

The ultimate victory has come: *Jesus is risen; He is risen indeed! Halleluiah!* Christ's agony and death are now turned into victory—our ultimate triumph! Do you fully realize what Jesus did for you? Christ took this punishment for us; our fears (as in scared to death, not fear as in reverence to Him) have been borne on the cross, while the fear and awe of our Lord and Savior helps us see what He did for us (Prov. 3:5)! Every time we sin, we incur greater guilt, and we deserve punishment (Gen. 3:1-24; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 2:1-11; 3:10-26; 5:12-19; Titus 1:15; James 1:12-15; 1 John 1:8-10). But, the incredible miracle here is that we are set free by His work on the cross, by His death and resurrection (Rom. 5:10; 6:22). We have salvation by Jesus' sacrificial death (John 19:30). How now will you live your life?

Why did Thomas doubt? Perhaps the magnitude of Jesus' resurrection was beyond comprehension; without seeing it for themselves, as Thomas asked for and received, many refused to believe. Others truly believed by faith and worshipped Him. Although we do not have physical sight of Jesus' hands and feet, we do have the Spirit who reveals the truth to us. Jesus did not fit the expectations of the people, the religious leaders, or even the disciples. A total change in worldview had to occur before He could be fully accepted. We have to be careful we do not jump to conclusions with little more

information than our feelings and a “sound bite.” Know this: our opponents will see our hypocrisy and lack of Fruit and faith (real or not) —over-compensation for a misguided theology out of the rubble of our pride or lack of explanation.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Did you like “show and tell” as a youth? If so, what did you like to show and tell about? What about now with your faith?
2. How do jumping to conclusions and/or preconceived notions interfere with faith, spiritual growth, or outreach?
3. Considering all the wondrous miracles they experienced, why were the Disciples so afraid of the Jewish leaders that they hid from them?
4. What prevents you from “wrapping your mind around” events that are hard to understand or believe?
5. Do you realize the magnitude of the incredible gift beyond measure that you have by our Lord’s work and sacrifice? How now will you live your life with this transforming information?
6. What can you do with the fact that in Christ, you have hope for today and everlasting life for eternity? How do you feel that as Christians, we are the agents and representatives of God? Why do so many of us fail at this?
7. What does it mean to be called to holiness? Consider that this involves more than just loving and trusting our Lord; it also necessitates gratitude for His grace and patience, and pursuing faith, loyalty, goodness, and love to be exhibited in us with thankfulness and submission.
8. What does Jesus teach you about not looking to yourself or to circumstances? If you do not look to Christ, how will pride compromise you? What do you need to do?
9. What can you do to prevent negative skepticism and cynicism? What happens when we give in to this? Remember, we have faith and reason! What should you do with a Truth from God that you can’t “wrap your mind around?”
10. How can you better handle disillusionment and disappointment? Life can be hard and confusing; so, how can you be better at learning from your predicaments—no matter what?
11. What does a life filled with joy and praise for Christ look like? What can you do to look to His guidance from His Word and Holy Spirit, and walk in Him?
12. What can you do to live for Christ? What would that mean and look like? How now will you live your life?