

I Have Seen the Lord!

The Testimony of the Resurrection

Resurrection Sunday April 5, 2015

John 20

- 1 Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb.
- 2 So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."
- 3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.
- 4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;
- 5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*; but he did not go in.
- 6 And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*,
- 7 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.
- 8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.
- 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.
- 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.
- 11 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;
- 12 and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.
- 13 And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."
- 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus.
- 15 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."

16 Jesus said to her, "**Mary!**" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "**Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'**"

18 Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and *that* He had said these things to her.

19 So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**"

20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

21 So Jesus said to them again, "**Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**"

22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**

23 "**If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained.**"

24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "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."

26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "**Peace be with you.**"

27 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.**"

28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus said to him, "**Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.**"

30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

To the Glory of God

Now when the Lord graciously saved me- almost 44 years ago, back in 1971- the arguments about The Resurrection were more prominent and they more intense than they are today. Back in the early 1970's- there was widespread consensus among believers and non-believers alike- especially here in America that deciding about that Biblical Claim that Jesus literally and physically and bodily rose from the dead by the Glory of the Father really mattered.

Back then- you took a stand either way- you either eagerly believed in the Resurrection or, you eagerly and categorically rejected it. And if you *did* believe in the Resurrection- you also generally believed the rest of the Bible and you called yourself a Christian. And if you *rejected* the Resurrection- then generally speaking- you relegated the rest of the Bible to be nonsense as well- and you were intentionally and proudly *not* a Christian.

But a strange thing has happened in our day. Today that question- that debate- that issue- *Did Jesus really rise from the dead literally and physically and bodily?* —is not nearly as prominent, and not nearly as intense as it once was because, at one level, people feel that the Resurrection of a Man from the dead 2,000 years ago way across the ocean really doesn't matter to them, because, after all, different people believe in different things, and maybe it happened, and maybe it didn't, and if it did, and that helps some people to get along in life- then fine; but it really doesn't make much difference to me and it really doesn't affect me and my life all that much. And so many people today really think that they can call themselves a "Christian" and they can join a Church, and they think they can be in good standing with God, and either be unsure about the Resurrection of Jesus or outright reject it. And sadly there is very little within many of those religious organizations that would ever do anything to challenge these people about that- even though the Bible categorically teaches that if you do not believe in the Resurrection- you cannot be saved.

You see, in our modern American Culture- where everything today is "relative"- objective, propositional, and absolute Truth is no longer

considered to be vital anymore. Far too many people have elevated "personal opinion" to be as valuable as "Truth". And at the same time- we have *lowered* and *devalued* Divine Absolute Truth to be nothing more important than personal opinion.

It is common today to hear people say, *"Well, that's just your opinion"*, when presented with clear Biblical Truth that they either don't like or don't want to hear. Or when confronted with things that they really don't want to accept- they will quickly say, *"Well, that's just your opinion."* And it is common today for people to honestly believe that what they "believe" and what they "trust in" and what they "accept" is "Truth"- as long as they are sincere about it or as long as they really believe in it- even if what they believe or trust in *contradicts* Absolute Truth.

Many very sincere people say, *"God knows my heart"*, which is really just a catch all phrase that seeks to justify whatever they are doing and since they honestly believe that they really are "nice" people deep down- it really doesn't matter if they accept the Biblical claim that God physically and literally raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead on the 3rd day.

Many take the attitude that *"I may or may not call myself a Christian, and if the Resurrection seems helpful to me, then I may believe it, and if it doesn't- then I won't. But whether I do or I don't- that doesn't affect my relationship to God and that doesn't affect where I am going to spend eternity."*

But is that true? Does it matter as far as our eternity is concerned whether or not Jesus rose from the dead?

Now behind those two different kinds of unbelief- the kind from 40 years ago and the kind from today- is a completely different set of assumptions. For example, back when I was first saved- the assumption among unbelievers then was that there was a Body of fixed, closed, natural Laws that made the world understandable and scientifically manageable, and these Laws simply did not allow the Truth of the claim that Someone had risen from the dead to live forever to be believed by intelligent thinking people.

And that was a commonly held assumption back then- that the modern world with its scientific understanding of natural laws does not allow for Resurrections. So, unbelief back then was often rooted in that

kind of smug self-righteousness disguised as intelligence or scientific analysis- when, in fact, it was simply just blind, ignorant, disbelief.

But today- in 2015- that is *not* the most common working assumption that we face. Today the assumption is *not* that there are natural laws *outside* of me- that forbid my acceptance of The Resurrection of Jesus, but rather- the assumption that we face today is that there is a *personal* law *inside* of me that says: "*I don't have to accept anything in my life that I don't find personally helpful or personally relevant.*" Or you could state this modern assumption another way by saying that many people today actually believe that: "*Truth for me is not objective or propositional- it isn't Divine or Absolute- but truth is simply whatever I find personally attractive and helpful.*"

And with that new assumption in place, and with that new subjective and suppositional "inner law" in place- it really doesn't matter whether Jesus rose from the dead or not, because, whether He did or didn't is irrelevant. Their only issue is: "*Do I care? Do I find that idea helpful? Do I feel that it helps me flourish as a human being?*"

And if it seems like the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead on the third day *doesn't*- then they will view the Resurrection the same way they view UFOs and possible life in some distant galaxy or some special effects in a movie- I really don't need to bother with it. And their false, pseudo-humility will also say, "*But if it helps somebody else to believe or to trust in the Resurrection of Jesus- then by all means- that's just peachy keen- but don't you dare try to press that nonsense on me.*"

And that is increasingly becoming the attitude of more and more people here in America- especially those younger than 40. In fact- some of you sitting here today many actually think that way- without even knowing that's the way you think. You have simply absorbed this carnal logic from the general culture because that way of thinking is now woven into most television shows and most advertising and most movies and is taught in modern educational curricula from the Public School system.

So what I am attempting to do this morning is confront this issue head on- and honestly examine how we as human beings sift through the new indoctrination that is coming at us every day from all these various sources. And my hope is that when I put The Resurrection of Jesus Christ before you today- not simply as a religious belief- but as an

historical fact- and not something that is nice and sweet- but something that is vitally important if you desire to spend eternity in Heaven- that you will not so easily buy into the bombardment of pagan and humanistic and just flat out wrong information concerning this Issue. So this sermon is about what *really* matters to you- not just what your own heart *says* matters to you. It is about Absolute Truth and your relation to that Truth.

Now I am going to look at our text from **John 20** in a moment- but let me begin this discussion with a sermon that the Apostle Paul preached to philosophy lovers on Mars Hill in Athens about 20 years after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And this sermon was recorded for us by the same Dr. Luke that we are studying his Gospel Account and is found in **The Acts 17**- so please go there with me.

Now this sermon that Paul preached begins in verse 22 but I want you to read with me the conclusion of this sermon that begins down in verse 30 that says:

30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,

31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."

33 So Paul went out of their midst.

34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

So first of all, notice in verses 30&31- in great contrast to what many in the modern Church teach- the Apostle Paul clearly says here that God doesn't *ask* anybody to repent, He doesn't *request* anyone to repent, He doesn't *plead* with anyone to repent, He doesn't *beg* for anyone to repent. No, the Bible says here that God Almighty- the Maker of Heaven and Earth- the Creator and Owner of the Universe and all that is in it- *declares* to men that all people everywhere should repent. And the Greek word that was translated here into English as "declares" means: *to order or to command*. So you see, there was a time that the world at large did not know God because God dealt exclusively

with the Jew- and verse 30 says that God “winked at” that or He “overlooked” that ignorance. But now that Jesus has come, now that Jesus has lived a perfectly sinless life, now that Jesus had fulfilled the Promise of the Messiah, now that Jesus has died on the Cross, and now that Jesus has physically and bodily and literally risen from the dead- now God no longer overlooks the general ignorance of the world at large toward God- but now God *declares*, He *commands*, He *demands*, God *expects*, God *requires*- *He commands* that *all people everywhere* repent. God *expects* all men everywhere to reject their sins and reject their paganism, and reject their idolatries, and reject their blasphemies and reject their lying and reject their stealing and reject their murder and reject their dishonoring of parents and reject their covetousness and reject their abandonment of worship and reject their sinful behavior and turn from it all, and love and serve the living God- now look at verse 31- precisely because God Almighty has fixed a day on which He will judge the entire world- both Jew and Gentile- in His Righteous Might by the one single Man Whom God has chosen and appointed- namely Jesus Christ- and of this absolute Fact- God Almighty has given His Own Personal assurance- by raising Jesus Christ from the dead.

So we have to understand that the main Purpose of the Resurrection of Jesus is that by this Event happening- the Owner and the Creator of the Universe has placed His Own Personal “Seal of Approval” on all that Jesus said and did in His earthly Ministry, and God the Father has given all Mankind an unchangeable Divine Assurance that He is going to judge the entire unbelieving and sinful world by raising Jesus from the dead.

Now verse 32 begins to tell us that at this point in his sermon- Paul’s listeners just cut him off and they mocked him because of the patently ridiculous claim that Jesus was physically raised from the dead. And that in itself is a very significant fact of history because it shows us that the amazing spread of Christianity in the early years of the Church did *not* happen among backward, superstitious, and gullible people who didn’t think and who were not educated and who just blindly believed and followed whatever was being taught and who thought miraculous resurrections were normal.

But please notice carefully what Paul said at the end of verse 30:

... God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,

God calls the whole world to repent, because we have all sinned against Him. In other words- Paul is saying that regardless of your level of education or your financial wellbeing or your political clout or the degree of your cultural experience- regardless of anything that Science has discovered or *thinks* that it has discovered- there is one single thing that is the great equalizer of all men- that we are in fact- all sinners. That in spite of overwhelming evidence- we have not treasured or valued God above all things. And because of that- we are all guilty of being *de facto* idolaters.

And you can dress sin up to try to make it more acceptable to society even as you can put a tuxedo on a pig and train it to sit at the table to eat with knife and fork. But sooner or later- no matter how hard you try to cover it up- we will manifest our depravity in some way- and we will lust and we will hate and we will blaspheme and we will sin against a holy God. And we will do that- no matter how nice the tuxedo looks and no matter how nice the table cloth is- the pig will revert back to what he really is- and he will go outside and he will wallow in the mud.

And pigs act like that- because underneath all the training- they are pigs. And fallen and depraved human beings sin- because underneath all of our tuxedos of education and wealth and sophistication- we are sinners by nature, and we are conceived in sin and we are wicked to our core and there is none who are righteous and there is none who does good, and there is none who in their own power and volition seeks after God. And the very best summary statement of the frightening and the insulting and yet the very true condition of unsaved and fallen Man was written 5,000 years ago- under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by Moses when he said in **Genesis 6:5-**

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And no amount of education can alter that fact- we cannot educate our way out of sin. And so all of the sociology experiments that say that in order to reduce crime, and in order to make "bad" people to be "good", we just need to give them more money and more opportunity and more information- they have all been unmitigated disasters- precisely because we cannot educate our way out of sin.

And we cannot spend our way out of sin- no amount of money can make a sinner to be clean. All that money does is insulate you to some extent about the earthly penalties of sin and the public scorn of sin. A rich drunk falls on the floor at home and nobody but his family sees him, while a poor drunk falls in the ditch and everybody sees him- but they're both drunks.

And no amount of technological breakthroughs can eliminate sin, and no amount of Governmental exercise over our lives can eliminate sin, and there isn't any pill you can take or surgery that you can have that medical science provides that will alter the human soul and make a sinner to be godly. And no amount of so-called "human free" will or the implementation of self-control or discipline can remove sin from us. And contrary to what many in the modern Church teaches- we can't sing or praise our way out of sin either.

No, the Bible is crystal clear about this, dear friends- we must *repent* our way out of sin. We must humble ourselves under the mighty Hand of God and endure the insult of the reality of our sin and freely admit that we are vile sinners who are hopelessly sold under sin and who are incapable of not sinning and that we are in need of a Savior. And we must be graciously *granted* the ability to come to the place where we fully understand and agree that we deserve nothing more than the eternal Wrath and Damnation of a holy and righteous God for those sins.

And in that helpless and totally dependent state- we must beg God for a Mercy that we do not deserve, and we must trust in the finished Work of our Lord Jesus Christ- Who unlike us- did indeed love and serve God perfectly, flawlessly, and sinlessly, and Who carried out His Father's Will perfectly.

And the Promise of Scripture is if you have been chosen from before the foundation of the world, and if you have been given eyes to see and ears to hear and an heart to believe, and if you have been granted the ability to understand this and see your sins, and if you have been granted the gift of saving faith and have been granted both the will and the power to repent and to trust in Jesus- then Jesus Christ will open wide His Arms- no matter how vile you have been- no matter how many sins you have committed- and His perfect Blood will wash all of those sins away- all of them- those sins you have done in the past and those sins you are engaged in right now and those sins your will commit

at some point in the future- and Jesus' spotless Righteousness will be imputed or credited to you, and you will not only be forgiven- but you will be saved to the utter most and you will spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven! And what I am telling you this morning is that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's guarantee for all this.

And so this repentance that God commands and expects from all men everywhere is very, very urgent because God is going to judge the world- not based on the arbitrary standard of human relationships- but by the Standard of something called "Perfect Righteousness".

Now very quickly, let me get into this with you. There are two ways in which Judgment is rendered:

1. Human Relationships
2. Perfect Righteousness

When somebody bases judgment on human relationships- they go about it like this. *"I may not be as 'good' as some people- but I'm not as 'bad' as other people. And so I fit in somewhere in between the two extremes and so I'm okay."* And many people take great comfort in this kind of Judgment that is based on Other Human Relationships- which is why this form of "judgment" is so popular with lost people. It never brings them to a place of repentance.

But God doesn't judge people like that. God always judges people based on a Standard called Perfect Righteousness- where God judges all people as to where they stand with Him. In other words- it doesn't make any difference with God if you aren't as "bad" as some other really, really "bad" people. God wants to know how you measure up to Him.

You see, God is not just a little bit Righteous- God is not just an elevated Man as Mormonism wrongly teaches- no, God is *perfectly* Righteous. And God is not perfectly Righteous Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays-no, God is perfectly Righteous all the time. So God is *perfectly* Righteous and God is *continuously* Righteous.

And everybody who goes to Heaven has to be just as perfectly Righteous and just as continuously as Righteous as God Himself is. And they have to be as perfectly Righteous and as continuously Righteous as God Himself in thought, word, and deed- 24 hours every day and 7 days every week- or they cannot go to Heaven.

Well, that puts us in a real bad place- doesn't it? Therefore, if you ever sin- just one time- if you break even one single Commandment of God- even for just one millisecond- you are no longer perfectly Righteous and you are no longer continuously Righteous, and no matter how "good" you or other people may think you are- you are, in fact, nothing more than a transgressor of the Law and a sinner in need of both Forgiveness and Righteousness.

And so all the world is guilty before God because all the world has sinned before God and come short of this Standard of Perfect and Continuous Righteousness.

And because that is true- God has commanded all men everywhere to repent and trust in the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ because Jesus alone lived a perfectly sinless life and was and is perfectly and continuously Righteous. And those who are so blessed to be granted repentance will be saved or rescued from God's coming Wrath and those who refuse to repent will be judged.

And God is going to do all of this by one Man- Jesus Christ. Jesus will either be the gracious Savior or the frightening Judge of every human someday. Every human being will stand before the living God- man- Jesus Christ. And none of our excuses will work in that Court. We will all be found guilty unless we have trusted Christ as our Savior and surrendered to His Authority and treasure and value Him above all else.

Now this Sermon from the Apostle Paul doesn't sit very well in modern America- but we need to know that it didn't sit very well back then either. This message flies full force- with love- into the face of the contemporary assumption that even if Christ did rise from the dead- *"it really doesn't matter to me because I have my I-phone and I have my friends and I have my own life and I'm happy with what I have- and I really don't find any of this very helpful anyway."*

But Paul counters that by saying: *This will absolutely matter to you whether you find it helpful or not-* because God's Judgment of the world by Jesus Christ is not like possible life in another galaxy or some cool special effects from another video game. No, this Judgment is like eternal death- and it *is* coming. And, therefore- saying that it doesn't concern you is like closing your eyes and saying there is no such thing as light because it's dark behind your eyelids.

Now the last thing Paul says in his sermon in Athens at the end of verse 31 is this:

... having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

In other words- of this coming Judgment- God has furnished proof (or given assurance, or warrant, or given evidence) to all the universe. How? **By raising Him (Jesus) from the dead.**

In other words, the literal and physical and bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is designed by God to be a global Warrant or a universal Assurance or an Indictment that Repentance is absolutely necessary for being rescued from eternal Damnation.

But just how does the Resurrection do that when three days have gone by or three thousand years have gone by? And the answer is that God *always* intended for the Resurrection to be known and believed through human witnesses. Now this doesn't in any way rule out the work of His Holy Spirit in Sovereignly opening our eyes. But it is *always* through human witnesses.

Now there were no tape recordings back then- no video cameras and no photographs. So when the Resurrection occurred- God saw to it that there were eye-witnesses. And Jesus appeared to many different witnesses in enough different settings that they were fully convinced of the reality of the Resurrection, and could tell others and then write it down for us to read later on. So when Paul says at the end of verse 31,

... He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

... what he meant was that the testimony of those who physically saw Jesus rise from the dead will spread through the whole world and be a valid warrant for faith and trust and a valid assurance that this really happened.

And here's the way *another* eyewitness of the Resurrection besides Paul puts it. The Apostle Peter- in a sermon preached about 8 or 10 years after the Resurrection of Jesus- said this in **The Acts 10:38- 41**:

38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and *how* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

39 "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.

40 "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible,

41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

In other words- it was never God's intentional Design for the risen Christ to be seen by everyone- not even in the day when it happened. And not today- as much as we might wish we could! God's intentional Design is found in **The Acts 1:3** that says:

To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of forty days* and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

So it was God's Design that Jesus appeared repeatedly and with many proofs to a *limited* group of people- whose job it was then- to bear witness of what they saw and heard in what they said and what they wrote so that everyone who hears or reads this witness today will be able know and be assured of all that God provides for the world about the Resurrection of His Son. And that's the way God designed for us to know.

And that's exactly what we have in our text back **John 20**— the Apostle John's own personal eyewitness account of the Resurrection appearances of Jesus. And that's what we have in **Matthew 28**—Levi's own personal eyewitness account, and that is what we have in **Luke 24**— not Luke's own personal eyewitness account- but Dr. Luke's very careful recording based on years on interviews with the people who did see and who did hear- including John the Baptist's parents, and even the mother and foster father of Jesus Christ, and that is exactly what we have in **Mark 16**- John Mark's own echo of the Apostle Peter's eyewitness testimony- as well as his own as a young man living in Jerusalem at that time, and that is exactly what we have in the other writings of the New Testament.

Now on either side of **John 20**- we have this same claim. For example- turn with me to **John 19:35**. Right in the middle of Jesus' Crucifixion, the Apostle John breaks off his narrative and says,

And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.

In other words- John is saying, I'm not telling you what somebody else told me- this isn't some story that I am simply repeating here- no, I actually saw this and I am writing this down so that you will have an accurate record of the Life and the Death and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ so that you may believe and be saved.

And this is what Paul meant back on Mars Hill. The world can now trust in what happened in those last hours of Jesus' Life because there were many, many eye witnesses, and they give testimony and there are ways to test the accuracy of the testimony of witnesses.

Or look ahead to **John 21:24**:

This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

And the point of this verse is that a physical eyewitness of the Resurrection is writing this account. So this is not hearsay. And John's testimony can be checked out with others in the New Testament. So let's let John witness to us this morning. And you judge for yourselves if these things are so.

Now let's look again at **John 20:1-2**:

**1 Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb.
2 So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."**

Now there are many things I could talk about here such as The Resurrection occurred early on the "first day of the week", which is Sunday Morning and not on the Sabbath- but suffice it to say that Mary did not believe that the Resurrection had even happened. She just *assumed* that Jesus' Body had been moved.

And I want you to again notice that this is another proof of how slow the disciples- including the women- were to personally believe that Jesus had been raised. These were not easily excitable or naïve or superstitious or gullible people- they clearly had their own doubts here. So it is fine to doubt, it is fine to wonder- that isn't what is wrong or sinful.

But there are answers to our doubts and there are solutions to our wonderings that are clearly provided for us in Scripture. So as you wonder or doubt- don't stop there- but *solve* the problems and *answer* the questions and *relieve* yourself of those doubts by reading and trusting what the eye witnesses say.

Now look again at verses 3-11:

- 3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.**
- 4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;**
- 5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*; but he did not go in.**
- 6 And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*,**
- 7 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.**
- 8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.**
- 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.**
- 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.**
- 11 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;**

Now just what does John want us to learn about the Resurrection from this passage? Two things- at least.

1. Jesus was Raised Bodily and Physically- Not Spiritually and Mystically

First, John wants us to believe that Jesus has risen from the dead physically, bodily; tangibly and not spiritually or mystically. Some people back then as well as today are perfectly willing to talk about the Resurrection- but only as a mystical symbol of Jesus' ongoing influence in the world to make us all better people. And that is certainly *not* John's point here. There was no physical Body in the Tomb that morning. That is what John is saying here. Jesus Christ literally and physically and, in reality, died by Crucifixion, and He laid in the grave for three days and now He has received life from God in a supernatural miracle and He has bodily and physically risen from the dead in the very same Body in which He died. *That* is what John is saying here.

In fact, one of the most striking and stubborn historical facts about all this is that the enemies of Jesus and of Christianity in those first days and weeks and months in Jerusalem could not produce the Body. And that would have ended the whole thing right then and there. Christianity would have been over before it started if they had simply produced Jesus' dead Body. But there was no dead body to find precisely because Jesus was bodily raised.

2. Like the Body That Died—But Not Exactly

Second, this Body of Jesus that was raised was not exactly like the Body that died- even though it was like the Body that died. Now I'm not talking out of both sides of my mouth here- just let me explain.

There is both *continuity* and *discontinuity* at work here about Jesus' physical Body. And this is very important because The Resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament is viewed as the firstfruits of the harvest of the Resurrection of all true believers. As Paul put it in **1Corinthians 15:23**:

... Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

The point of John giving us the details of the linen cloths that were lying there- even mentioning the cloth that was around Jesus' Face was *separate* from the other garment that covered His Body- was to show how *this* Resurrection was completely *different* from Lazarus' resurrection.

Recall from **John 11** that Jesus miraculously and supernaturally raised Lazarus after he had been dead four days. And in **John 11:44** it says,

The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

So we see that other people had to help Lazarus out of his linen cloths and face covering. And that's because even after he was raised- Lazarus still had a sinful, mortal body that would die again. But after His Resurrection- Jesus no longer had a mortal body and after this one death- Jesus will never die again.

Romans 6:9

knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

So at this point- Jesus' Body is now different from all other human beings. And He simply passed through those grave cloths the same way He passed through doors in **John 20:19** and **26**. So Jesus' Body was different.

But it was also just the same. So even though He entered the locked room like no ordinary human can- in **John 20:27** Jesus said to doubting 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.

So even though Jesus was no longer bound by time and space, and could appear and disappear at will after His Resurrection- He still- at the same time- also had a very tangible and physical body that could be recognized and touched. So even in His Resurrection- Jesus was still the God/Man- fully God and fully Man. And in **Luke 24:43**- Dr. Luke tells us that Jesus ate fish and a honey comb after He had risen.

Now if you think that all this is simply "gee whiz facts" that doesn't really matter- please remember, those who are in Christ- that is, those who truly believe on Him and who trust in Him and who belong to Him, and who receive Forgiveness and Salvation from Him- those

people will be also raised with Him. And Paul says in **Philippians 3:21** that Jesus will

... transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

And this is not a UFO or special effects in a movie or irrelevant life on another galaxy. No, this is what will happen when God judges the world by one Man- Jesus Christ.

So if you belong to Jesus by faith in Him- you will receive a new body that is fashioned like the Body of His Glory- which will be equipped with no more human limitations. And that means that our new bodies will be suited to see God in the fullness of His Glory without being destroyed and will be able to enjoy God and enter forever into the new heavens and the new earth where we will spend eternity admiring God in all that He is and all that He has done. And *this* world that we love and enjoy so much- compared to *that* world- will be like a candle compared to the sun.

So here's the real issue: *Do you see?* In **John 20:8** it says,

So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb (that's John) then also entered, and he saw and believed.

What did he see? What did he believe? Jesus wasn't there- there was just some old grave cloths that He left behind. But that was enough- when John saw the undeniable evidence that Jesus was alive- he believed.

Now compare this to Mary in verse 18. She has met Jesus in the garden and spoken to Him. And she returns to the disciples and says,

“I have seen the Lord!”

So now we are like John in the tomb. There is evidence- and either we see that evidence and we believe or we don't. So the issue is: *Do you see? Do you believe?*

Now let me close with an analogy. Your doorbell rings this afternoon and one of your friends asks to talk to you. He comes and

says, *"I have some really bad news. Your brother is dead."* And you say, shaking your head, *"I just don't believe it. I just saw him this morning and he was fine. I just don't believe it. It can't be."* And your friend says, *"We went to the store together, and as we were leaving- this car went out of control and jumped the curb, and hit your brother and I knelt over him and I waited for the medical examiner. I was there. I saw it. And he really is gone."*

And you say, softly, *"I see."* Now what do you mean when you say, *"I see"*? You mean that the eyewitness of your friend has now become a tool for you to believe something that you did not personally witness. And the reality of what happened in that window has become plain to you. But you were not there. You did *not actually* see it yourself (the way that Mary saw), but still you say—and it is right to say—with all your heart, *"I see."*

I will say to you that God has brought you here this morning for this Message and for this Passage and for the Truth about the Resurrection of Jesus. And my prayer for you, as we close is that you will be able by God's Grace to say, *"I see."*

Now there is one main difference between Jesus and my illustration: And that is that Jesus is alive. It is as though another messenger crashes through the door while you are crying and says, *"Your brother is alive. I just talked to him."* And that is exactly what Mary said, *"I have seen the Lord."* So do you see? Do you believe?

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.