

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Leader pages on pp. 120-123

THE POINT:
NEW LIFE IS POSSIBLE
WHEN WE TRUST IN
THE RISEN CHRIST.

JOHN 20:3-9, 19-23, 27-29

³ At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. ⁵ Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then, following him, Simon Peter also came. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. ⁷ The wrapping that had been on his head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself. ⁸ The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then also went in, saw, and believed. ⁹ For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead.

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¹⁹ When it was evening on that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ Having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." ²² After saying this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

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²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don't be faithless, but believe." ²⁸ Thomas responded to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ **Jesus said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."**

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Peace be with you (v. 21)–
A common Jewish greeting
(Shalom). Peace was Jesus' gift
to His followers by virtue of His
sacrificial death on the cross.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST ON US?

The idea that we could communicate without being in the same room seemed impossible—until Samuel Morse showed what a telegraph could do in 1837. The idea that those telegraph messages could be transmitted without a wire seemed impossible—until Guglielmo Marconi demonstrated wireless telegraphy in 1895. The idea that voices could be transmitted without wires seemed impossible—until Reginald Fessenden did it in 1901.

We could go on and on about how people have taken innovations to the next seemingly impossible level. Here we are today using smartphones—tiny computers—to transmit our voices and information around the world.

While we might marvel at science and the amazing things we once considered impossible, one thing remains impossible for us. We are unable to raise a dead person to life. But thanks be to God that what is impossible for us is not impossible for Him. This session will assure us that new life is possible when we trust in the risen Christ.

The Empty Tomb // John 20:3-9

John 20 is about life-changing facts: Jesus was dead. Three days later, He wasn't dead anymore. These are some of the most important facts in human history.

WHAT DETAILS DO YOU FIND PARTICULARLY COMPELLING IN THE ACCOUNT OF JESUS' RESURRECTION?

Jesus' death is rarely contested, and it's what came next that is absolutely incredible. Jesus died on Friday afternoon. On Sunday morning, a handful of women came to the tomb to finish preparing Jesus' body for burial, but much to their surprise, the tomb was open and completely empty. The other gospel writers refer to a group of women, but John focused on the words and actions of Mary Magdalene. The other gospel writers also tell us Mary ran to the disciples, but John focused on Peter and himself. Mary told them she thought Jesus' body had been stolen (John 20:1-2).



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Both Peter and John were surprised by Mary's announcement and went to the tomb to investigate. When John, the beloved disciple, entered the empty tomb, he saw and believed. Although Jesus had repeatedly told them He would rise again and pointed to Scripture, "they did not yet understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead" (v. 9). It took seeing with his own eyes for John to believe.

The empty tomb proves Jesus is alive. The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead speaks to our lives today in two ways:

- **Justification.** Jesus' resurrection means we are justified in God's eyes. "He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Rom. 4:25).
- **Eternal life.** "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you." (Rom. 8:11). Since the Father can raise Jesus from His death, He can do the same for us! And He will. The moment you believe what the empty tomb tells us—Jesus is alive—His Spirit will live, forever, inside of you.

WHAT OBSTACLES CAN KEEP PEOPLE FROM FULLY ACCEPTING THE RESURRECTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS?

Jesus' Appearance // John 20:19-23

It's true the disciples didn't fully know what to do with the reports that Jesus was alive. They saw the empty tomb, but there was still something missing. On the evening of the resurrection, they had gathered behind a locked door. For all they knew, the Jewish leaders would come for them as they had come for Jesus, but the real topic of conversation was the report of Jesus' resurrection (Luke 24:23-24).

And then, without warning, Jesus was there—inside the locked room. To calm their fears, Jesus spoke a simple but profound phrase: "Peace be with you..." (v. 19). The disciples heard His familiar voice, saw His hands and feet, and they knew—this was no imposter. The disciples knew Jesus' voice. They saw His wounds. He was physically in front of them! Jesus' very presence was definite proof that He is alive.



DIGGING DEEPER THREE DAYS

When we think of three days in our society, we typically think of a time frame of 72 hours. However, from a Jewish perspective, three days did not require covering a 72-hour span of time. Any part of a day counted as a day. According to Luke 23, Jesus was crucified and died on Friday afternoon (v. 44), which was preparation day (v. 54). Preparation day (from Thursday sundown to Friday sundown) was the last day before the Sabbath. Joseph from Arimathea asked Pilate for permission to place Jesus' body in a tomb (vv. 50-54). So Jesus died and was in the grave for a portion of the day on Friday, all day Saturday as they observed the Sabbath (v. 56), and a portion of Sunday morning (Luke 24:1).

First Peter 3:15 admonishes us to be "ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." How does this information equip you to do that?



The first thing Jesus said to His disciples was a commission: “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (v. 21). Jesus was sending them to spread the word, telling people they had seen Jesus. These apostles used their various skills to do just that. They understood that this extraordinary resurrection demanded something extraordinary of them. It was their turn to be the proof of Jesus’ resurrection to a world that was increasingly hostile toward Him.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE RESPONSIBILITY JESUS GIVES US IN THIS PASSAGE?

Belief in Christ // John 20:27-29

I’m sure more people could fill in the blank: “Oh, don’t be such a doubting _____.” Thomas is well known as the doubting disciple. But this story is different than that. Instead of seeing a “doubting Thomas,” we should see a man grieving over the loss of his friend. Here was Jesus actively seeking out Thomas so that He could remove his unbelief.

Let’s go back just a little bit. The first time we really get to know Thomas is in John 11, when Jesus was getting ready to raise Lazarus from

the dead. When Jesus told the disciples His plan, they all reminded Him that it might not be the best idea—the last time they were in the area of Judea the religious leaders tried to kill Him. Thomas likely shared their opinion, yet he was willing to follow Jesus even into a bad situation. He said, “Let’s go too so that we may die with him.” (John 11:16).

Then on the night of Jesus’ arrest, Jesus told His disciples He was going away to prepare a place for them. When Jesus said, “You know the way to where I am going” (John 14:4), the disciples sat in stunned silence. Thomas spoke up on behalf of the group. “‘Lord,’ Thomas said, ‘we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?’” (John 14:5). His question was an honest one, aimed at understanding and seeking truth. Thomas was not content to stay in the dark; he wasn’t afraid to ask questions.

These two instances paint Thomas in a particular light. He was contemplative and sensitive; he wrestled with facts and thought through the implications of what it truly meant to follow Jesus. Thomas may have had questions, but he still was wholly sold out for Jesus.

We don’t know why Thomas was not with the other disciples at the first encounter with the

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risen Jesus. Considering that Thomas was fully committed to Jesus and ready to follow Him into death, perhaps he was heartbroken and couldn't even bring himself to gather with the others. When they told him they saw Jesus, he may have thought, *Please don't get my hopes up. I will only believe it if I can put my fingers in the holes in his hands.*

A week later, Jesus provided the exact, specific proof Thomas needed to believe. The words Jesus spoke to Thomas speak to us too. "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." (v. 29).

WHAT CAN THOMAS' INTERACTIONS WITH JESUS TEACH US ABOUT HANDLING OUR DOUBTS?

We have not seen Jesus in the flesh, but He is the same Jesus who walked this earth two thousand years ago. He is yearning for us to believe in Him just as Thomas believed. When we choose to believe the truth about the resurrection, we will be blessed—both now and for eternity.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the beloved spirituals often sung to celebrate the resurrection succinctly summarizes what Jesus did in its title: "He Rose." Often the early morning sunrise services in African-American churches began with the choir processing down the aisle while singing joyfully in a call-response fashion, the words of the refrain of this spiritual: "He 'rose, He 'rose, He 'rose from the dead." The spiritual's four verses summarize the crucifixion and resurrection stories. But the refrain provides a message of hope, seen particularly in the last line: "And the Lord shall bear my spirit home." Because Christ rose from the dead, there was a special benefit to all who received Him by faith. The slaves celebrated the fact that Christ's resurrection assured them their suffering would be rewarded and could not be destroyed or taken away, not even by death or the oppression they experienced on this side of heaven.¹²

How were early morning or Easter services impactful in your personal experience?

LIVE IT

What will you do with the truth that new life is possible because Jesus is alive?

While we might marvel at amazing things once considered impossible, one thing remains impossible. A dead person cannot be raised to life again. But thanks be to God that what is impossible for us is not impossible for Him. God performed this "impossible" miracle when He raised Jesus to life. With that we are assured that new life is possible when we trust in the risen Christ.

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- **Trust.** If you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, give your life to Him now. Talk to your Bible study leader or read the inside cover of this book.
- **Prepare.** Write out your testimony of how you came to trust in Christ. As you write, take note of how Christ has given you a new life.
- **Proclaim.** Identify someone in your life who has not trusted Christ. Invite the person for coffee or lunch and have an intentional gospel conversation with him or her.

DAILY READINGS

1. “BECAUSE HE LIVES,” PART 1 // 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4,17

The resurrection of Christ is a game-changer for Christians. Paul writes to the church in Corinth, “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ... he was buried ... he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.” Because He lives, we no longer have to worry about our eternal destination if we have received salvation by faith. Because He lives, we have been delivered from sin’s grip. Because He lives, we have assurance God can raise us up from our current circumstances.

Celebrate our risen Savior and all that His resurrection means for you.

2. “BECAUSE HE LIVES,” PART 2 // JOHN 14:19

When preparing His disciples for His imminent departure, Jesus gave them this word of comfort at the end of John 14:19: “Because I live, you will live too.” This is the Scripture that inspired Bill and Gloria Gaither to write the beloved hymn, “Because He Lives.” Regardless of what is happening in the world around us—perhaps there are circumstances in the world or in your personal life that seem to be spinning out of control—Christ’s resurrection assures us God is in control. He alone has the final say. He can give life, and He can resurrect life.

Because He lives, choose to face today’s challenges with courage and hope.

3. “I HAVE A CHARGE TO KEEP” // JOHN 20:11-18

Mary Magdalene is an example of a Christ follower who wholeheartedly loved and served Jesus. She was grateful for all He had done for her, and after He delivered her from seven demons (Luke 8:1-3), she became one of His most loyal followers. Regardless of her past and her place in society, Jesus commissioned Mary to do a great work: “Don’t cling

to me...but go to my brothers and tell them.” (v. 17). She did exactly what he told her to do, and she reminds us to faithfully obey Christ’s commands.

Be sensitive to how Christ might want to use you. Like Mary Magdalene, quickly and joyfully obey.

4. “WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS” // JOHN 20:26-29

Thomas, one of Jesus’ disciples, often gets a bad rap because he was willing to ask questions. He’s often referred to as Doubting Thomas, but we must understand that asking questions is not always a sign of doubt or faithlessness. Thomas had missed the previous encounter the others had with Jesus, and when Jesus appeared to His disciples eight days after His resurrection, He knew Thomas needed reassuring (see John 20:24-25). Without scolding or embarrassing Thomas, Jesus invited Thomas to touch His nail-scarred hands and side with one purpose—to strengthen faith. He’s our Savior and our friend who is willing to meet us at our point of need.

Give your doubts and questions to Jesus, and look for Him to answer.

5. “TO GOD BE THE GLORY” // JOHN 20:19-22

On the evening of Resurrection Sunday, Jesus miraculously entered the locked room where His disciples were huddled in fear. He read the room and knew exactly what they needed to hear. Jesus said, “Peace to you” two times (see vv. 19,21), inviting them to look at crucifixion scars. A praise party erupted once they realized Jesus was alive. But Jesus had another goal for this encounter. As the Father had sent Him, Jesus was sending them on mission. There’s more. He empowered them with the Holy Spirit, who would equip them to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. We, too, are His disciples; are you on mission with Him?

Glorify Him with your praise and with your willingness to share the gospel.