

Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² Then 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 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. ⁴ So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. ⁵ And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying *there*; yet he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, ⁷ and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. ⁹ For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. ¹¹ But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³ Then 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 Now 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?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, 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, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and *to* My God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her. ¹⁹ Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace *be* with you.” ²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to 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, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained.” ²⁴ Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” ²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and yet have believed.” ³⁰ And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Introduction

The resurrection appearance of Jesus is the sign that closes this section of John’s gospel.

It is linked with the resurrection of Lazarus in chapter 11.

From chapter 12-19 the major theme of John’s gospel has been eternal life.

This has been achieved by the death of Jesus.

As a result of the death of Jesus a number of things have been achieved.

1. Judgment will come upon the people who are in rebellion against Jesus.
Satan will be driven out and all kinds of people will be drawn to Jesus.

(John 12:31-32)

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself."

2. Jesus will be enabled to prepare a place for His people in Heaven.

(John 14:v. 1-3)

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ^{1b} ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

3. The death of Jesus will enable people here on this earth to know the Father.

(John 17:v. 3)

³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

4. The death of Jesus will enable the "washing" of His people. After this the Holy Spirit will be sent from the Father to His people in order to bring them eternal life.

(John 14:v. 15-21)

¹⁵ "If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. ²⁰ At that day you will know that I *am* in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. ²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

5. The Holy Spirit will remind the Apostles of everything that Jesus has said to them, so that their message will both be accurate and sufficient for the bringing of eternal life to others.

(John 14: v.25-26)

²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. ²⁶ 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 things that I said to you.

There will be no need of any future revelation.

In Chapter 20 we have much more than just the end of the story about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

We have a challenge to the reader and to us the hearers, to come to a decision about Jesus. Jesus really did achieve all that He promised to achieve. Now it is time to make up our minds about Jesus.

John says to us today, through his gospel that all the blessings promised in the gospel are available to those who will listen and believe. (John 20: v.30-31)

We now come to the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus as told by John.

1. Peter – v. 1-10

We already know that Peter denied Jesus 3 times because of his FEAR of the Jews.

We now see that his FEAR changed to COURAGE as he became an eye witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

v. 6-7.

⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, ⁷ and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.

There is something in v. 7 that is very important, I mentioned it last year and I will mention it again. The headscarf or handkerchief that was around the head of Jesus was folded separately by itself in another place. Why?

There was a Jewish custom in place at that time and still observed by some Jewish people today that if you disapproved of a particular place where you were eating then you folded your napkin in a certain way to signal to your friends that you don't like this place and it's time to go.

Jesus left behind a sign to His disciples that He really had been raised from the dead.

The sign is not obvious to us, because we do not practice Jewish customs but it was a great encouragement to Peter to be released from his fear and to be embraced with courage.

If we know and love Jesus as our own personal Savior, we too do not need to fear our own death. The Bible promises that one day those who die believing in Jesus will in fact be raised from the dead.

(1 Corinthians 15: v. 19-23 in the N.L.T.)

¹⁹ And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. ²⁰ But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. ²¹ So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. ²² Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. ²³ But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

We may not all get personal encouragements from Jesus as to our own resurrection, but it is enough to believe what the Bible says.

Several years ago I visited a dying man. He had 3 daughters. One of his daughters was not a Christian. The other two were believers. He was very deaf and wore a hearing aid. However the nurse did not allow him to wear his hearing aid as he would soon die. When I called to visit him for the last time before he died his daughter called me out into the corridor outside the room and explained to me that although her father was completely deaf and did not have any hearing aids, she was talking to him normally and he was responding to her questions from quite a distance. She said to me "This is a miracle", my reply was that God had allowed this to happen so that you might have some quality time with your father before he dies. I encouraged her to believe in Jesus through the witness of her father.

Next we come to a personal resurrection appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene.

2. Mary Magdalene.— v. 11-18.

Mary was very upset with the death of Jesus. Who was Mary Magdalene?

Luke 8:v. 2 tells us that she had been healed of "evil spirits".

Jesus had cast out 7 demons from this lady. Her attachment to Jesus was one of gratitude.

In v.11 we are told that she stood outside the tomb weeping, the Angels spoke to her and she was still weeping.

Then when Jesus spoke to her and she was still weeping. Mary nearly missed out on a resurrection appearance through being overcome with grief.

However as soon as Jesus spoke a personal word to Mary she recognized His voice right away.

Mary's tears turned to JOY and she was very excited about seeing Jesus after His resurrection.

What is significant in the passage is contained in v. 17.

Mary was told by Jesus to go and pass on the message to the Apostles that He is returning to His Father.

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

In v. 18 we are told that Mary passed on the message to the disciples.

The full significance of the message can only be understood in the light of reading the whole of John's gospel.

What we need to notice here is the new relationship that Jesus points out to both Mary and the disciples. "Your Father..... And Your God" points to the new relationship that now exists.

If this was the only account of the resurrection, then there would be sufficient evidence from what

Jesus said to convict the Apostles that everything that Jesus had said in the Upper Room was now accomplished.

Jesus was who He said He was and He did everything He said He would do.

When we read the Bible it is important that we notice the detail. Every verse that God has allowed to be placed in the Bible is there for a purpose.

Sometimes things we read get the attention of our heart, we need to meditate and ponder over them so that our souls will fully benefit from what God wants to teach us.

3. The Apostles meet the resurrected Jesus – v. 19-23

We are told by John in v. 20 that Jesus showed his hands and His side to the disciples. He did this to remind the disciples of the events of the cross. The risen Lord Jesus is the same person as the crucified Christ.

There are two main themes in these verses. The first is Assurance and the second is Commission.

a) Assurance - When Jesus greets the disciples with the words “Peace be with you” and by breathing on them, Jesus reminds the disciples of all that His death had achieved for them. Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The wrath of God had taken the punishment of their sin and the Holy Spirit could now be imparted to them.

Although the greeting “Peace be with you” is an every- day Jewish greeting, by repeating it Jesus reminds His disciples of PEACE in a world that hates Jesus and that will hate them.

Through His death and resurrection Jesus has obtained forgiveness for His disciples, He has overcome the world and secured their place in Heaven. As the disciples remain in Jesus, they will now experience the PEACE that He promised them, with His Holy Spirit dwelling in them. In v. 22 it is important that we realize that the breathing on the Holy Spirit upon the disciples is not the same as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2.

In Genesis Chapter 2 when God breathed life into the first man, the same Hebrew word is used there as John uses in v. 22. The breath of God in Genesis Chapter 2 meant physical life and the breath of Jesus in the “New Creation” meant spiritual life.

The Apostles would receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit later, but Jesus was now giving them a taster of what was to come.

b) Commission - Verse 23 has been a challenge over the years to many Christians. If it is **WRONGLY** interpreted it would make out that the Apostles had the power to forgive sins. We know from the Bible that this is **NOT** the case. Only Jesus has the right to forgive sins. (Mark 2: v. 7)

A very able Greek scholar by the name of Dr. Julius Mantey gives us a correct understanding of the Greek text here.

Greek Text “Whosoever sins you forgive, shall have already been forgiven them, and whoever sins you do not forgive (retain) shall have not already been forgiven them.

So the disciples would provide for “Forgiveness” on the basis of the Gospel message.

The disciples would proclaim forgiveness on people receiving the message of the gospel.

So the disciple’s job was to proclaim the Gospel and if people received it they would be forgiven, but if they rejected the Gospel then their sins would remain.

We now come to the final resurrection appearance in v. 24-29.

4. Resurrection appearance to Thomas – v. 24-29.

The response of Thomas in v. 28 is the climax of the Gospel.

²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

Thomas now believed in Jesus as Lord and God.

It also provides a model response for the reader to follow. We too need to believe in Jesus as Lord and God.

Initially Thomas refuses to believe the witness of the Apostles.

²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

However later Thomas's doubt turned to believing.

Why was Thomas not with the other disciples when they met on the evening of the resurrection day?

Was he so disappointed that he didn't want to be with His friends?

This may have been the case, but it shouldn't be the case with us.

When we are discouraged and defeated, we need our friends all the more. Sadly solitude feeds discouragement and makes it worse.

We must make sure that we are always in Church when we are discouraged and never try to avoid people. We are called to support one another at our difficult times.

Thomas missed out when Jesus appeared to the disciples, he had to wait at least 8 days before he saw Jesus.

Thomas is a good warning to all of us not to miss meeting with God's people on the Lord's Day. (Hebrews 10: v. 22-25)

²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

When we stay at home and don't come to Church we really do miss out on the blessing of being with God's people, hearing God's word, worshipping with God's people.

Jesus was not hard on Thomas because from the scriptures we discover that Thomas was a courageous man,

(John 11: v. 16)

¹⁶ Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

Thomas was also a spiritually minded man who wanted to know the truth,

(John 14: v. 4-6)

⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know." ⁵ Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Thomas's words help us to understand the difference between doubt and unbelief.

DOUBT says "I can't believe because there are too many problems. UNBELIEF says "I will not believe unless you give me the evidence that I ask for."

In the Greek text, there is a double negative, "I positively will not believe"

Jesus had heard Thomas's words, nobody needed to tell Him.

Jesus was very gracious to stoop down to the level of Thomas. He provided the evidence that Thomas had asked for. (v. 27)

It is encouraging for us that Jesus took a personal interest in one of His doubting followers.

Jesus wanted to strengthen Thomas and allow him to take an active part in the blessings that were to follow in the coming days.

Unbelief really does rob us of blessings from God.

It may sound intelligent and intellectual to question God's word and not to believe everything in the Bible, but that action is usually an indication of a "HARD HEART"

We need to remind ourselves that EVERYBODY lives by "FAITH".

The difference is the "OBJECT" of that faith.

Christians put their "FAITH" in God and His "WORD", while Non-Christians put their faith in

themselves.

Q. Who are you going to put your "FAITH" in today? God and His word, the Bible or in "YOURSELF?"

In v. 30-31 John summarizes his whole gospel. John says that the whole purpose of writing the gospel was that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we may have life in His name.

There are really two parts to this summary.

Firstly in order to have "New Life" you need to believe in Jesus as the Bible teaches about Him.

Secondly you need to continue to listen to the words of Jesus so that your faith may grow and that you may persevere in your Christian faith.

Application

1. John provides us with sufficient well documented evidence to show us that Jesus was raised from the dead and that it was a physical resurrection, in actual bodily form.
This means that one day, if we believe in Jesus, we too will have a physical bodily resurrection. It won't be like the body we have now, it will be perfect in every way.
The important thing is that this body will not see death, or any decay, it was not be subject to sin or sickness.
2. We can be assured that God's plan to rescue mankind from God's wrath because of our sin has been accomplished.
There is nothing more that has to be done by anybody to ensure God's forgiveness. God Himself has accepted the death of His only Son as payment for our sin. We only need to believe and to receive His forgiveness. This is wonderful news because it removes the "Religion" from Christianity. It is about a relationship based upon what Jesus has done and does not depend upon any works on our behalf.
Religion is about what you "DO", Christianity is believing in what has been "DONE"

I urge you today to believe in what JESUS HAD DONE.