

The Gospel of John

The Resurrected Jesus Among His Disciples

John 20:19-21

INTRODUCTION:

The literal physical bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is so critical to the Christian gospel that all four gospel writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – give us an account of the resurrection and provide for us multiple evidences of its reality. The resurrection is a historical fact. He was a historical person, died an actual historical death, rose from the dead in real history in a glorified physical form. This is so critical to Christianity that the evidences are piled up by the gospel writers, and then even enhanced by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15.

As you come to the book of Acts which describes the apostles proclaiming the gospel, you find that they preached the death and resurrection of Christ. The resurrection is absolutely critical to Christianity. It means that God was satisfied with the sacrifice for sin that Christ offered. It means that He conquered death, not only for Himself, but for all of us who put our faith in Him. It is by His resurrection that we have assurance of our resurrection.

The resurrection was presented by the writers of the Old Testament in a number of ways. Jesus frequently spoke of His resurrection to His apostles. But in spite of the fact that they believed that He was the Messiah, in spite of what the Old Testament Scripture said, and in spite of what our Lord said to them that He would die and He would rise again on the third day, His followers still did not believe that He would raise from the dead. In fact, they were stubbornly resistant to the testimony that He was alive; and yet when He appeared to them, all doubt went away, and they went forth confident that Christ was alive from the dead, preaching a risen Christ.

Before they saw Him the disciples were trapped in fear and doubt. They were anything but bold. We find them in the 20th chapter of John and the text that we come to this morning locked in a room with the door barred for fear that they were going to be arrested with the possibility of execution. It was the same that had happened to their Master. They are fearful and terrified of the consequences that could fall on them. The last thing they expect is a resurrection. They do not believe in a resurrection. They do not even believe the testimony of eyewitnesses who were credible and known to them.

Why is it then that they preached the risen Christ against hatred and opposition, and eventually gave their lives as martyrs for the gospel of the resurrection? Anyone who denies the resurrection would have to come up with some other supernatural, inexplicable, massive event that transformed them from frightened and disappointed disciples into bold, fearless preachers of Jesus Christ. If it was not a resurrection what was it? No other possible miracle has ever been suggested, especially when we recognize that they preached the resurrection. There had to be an event that transformed them. They say the event

that transformed them was the resurrection, and they preached that, which is testimony to its reality.

Now let us look at our text this morning.

Stand and Read Scripture

John 20:19-21 (NASB)

¹⁹ Now when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were *together* due to fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and *said to them, “Peace *be* to 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* to you; just as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

Prayer

Allow me to revisit everything that had happened up until our passage when Jesus appeared to them. Let's go to Luke 24 in order to get the full picture. Our Lord comes out of the grave early in the morning at dawn, and Luke records for us that the women arrive at the tomb. They find the tomb is empty, the stone is rolled away, the grave clothes are lying there. They are perplexed.

Then in verse 4 it says...

Luke 24:4 (NASB)

⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men *suddenly* stood near them in gleaming clothing;

We know these are angels.

Luke 24:5-10 (NASB)

⁵ and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, “Why are you seeking the living One among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise *from the dead.*” ⁸ And they remembered His words, ⁹ and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now *these women* were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.

All credible witnesses, well-known figures, followers of Jesus, indeed, were these women. But to the apostles, “These words” – verse 11 – “appeared as nonsense, and they would not believe them.” So averse were they to the idea of a resurrection that they would not believe the most credible people in their circle of human relationships.

Luke 24:11(NASB)

¹¹ But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe the women.

We will pick up on their unbelief concerning the resurrection more next week.

Then Peter who was always spontaneous along with John ran to the tomb.

Luke 24:12 (NASB)

¹² Nevertheless, Peter got up and ran to the tomb; and when he stooped and looked in, he *saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

So the women have gone to the grave, the tomb is empty, the grave clothes are lying there. There's no explanation. The women are told by two angels He has risen. These who give the testimony are messengers from heaven. This is God's word on what happened to the Lord Jesus. The women believe, they rush to the eleven apostles, and they are met with the idea that they are speaking nonsense. In the meantime, of course, we know the Lord appeared personally to Mary Magdalene and she runs to announce that she has seen Jesus. He is not dead. He has arisen and He is ALIVE!

A little later that day we pick up the story in verse 13.

Two disciples, not apostles, but two of the followers of Jesus were on their way seven miles from Jerusalem to the town of Emmaus. They were talking to each other, walking and talking and Jesus Himself approached them" – this is the risen Christ – "and began traveling with them. Their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him."

Eventually, as you know, they say how sad they are, because the one they had hoped would be the Messiah is dead. And, finally, our Lord explains to them that this is what the Old Testament promised.

Luke 24:25-27 (NASB)

²⁵ And *then* He said to them, "You foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to come into His glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, He explained to them the things *written* about Himself in all the Scriptures.

Despite His explanation of the scriptures to them, they still do not know who He is. He approached the village with them and acted as if He was going to go further but they urged Him to stay with them because it is getting late. So He went in to stay with them. When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

So now the women have heard from the angels. Mary Magdalene has seen Him. According to Luke, Simon Peter has seen Him. And now the two on the road to Emmaus have seen Him.

Luke 24:32-35 (NASB)

³² They said to one another, "Were our hearts not burning within us when He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" ³³ And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ They *began* to relate their experiences on the road, and how He was recognized by them at the breaking of the bread.

Simon was there. He must have also tried to explain that he had seen the risen Christ. This would give validity to the testimony of the women and the eyewitness account of Mary Magdalene. And now these two have also rushed to where they were staying and declared that they have spent time with the Lord.

Luke 24:36-43 (NASB)

³⁶ Now while they were telling these things, *Jesus Himself suddenly* stood in their midst and *said to them*, “Peace *be to you.*” ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened, and thought that they were looking at a spirit. ³⁸ And He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why are doubts arising in your hearts? ³⁹ See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you *plainly* see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹ While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and astonishment, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They served Him a piece of broiled fish; ⁴³ and He took it and ate *it* in front of them.

BODY:

I. DOUBT AND FEAR.

Now let's go to John 20 and pick up the same exact scene. He has appeared to Mary, the angels have declared His resurrection to the other women, He has appeared to Simon, He has appeared to the disciples on the road; and now it is time to appear to the eleven.

John 20:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ Now when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were *together* due to fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and *said to them*, “Peace *be to you.*”

This is the first appearance of the Lord to the disciples. The disciples had each gone to their respective houses and now it was evening and they have returned to a chosen place where they were meeting for the night. Judas is gone. Only, eleven remain. This first appearance was only to ten, because Thomas was not there.

When it says the door is shut, the Greek word is actually barred or locked. We would say that they were padlocked inside. And the reason was, they were afraid of the temple police that acted on behalf of the Jews. They were the force that arrested criminals. They knew that since their Master had been executed as a criminal they could be next because of their association with Him.

In that situation the text simply says, “Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘**Peace be with you.**’” How did that happen? Well, He rearranged the molecules in His resurrected body to go right through the wall the same way He had rearranged the molecules in His resurrected body in the grave to go right through the linen wrapping.

Now I know what the skeptics say. They say, “No, that's not true. He met a janitor who had a key and let Him in.” Or somebody else suggested, “No, He found an open window and crawled through the window.” Somebody else said, “No, the truth of the matter is He was in the room before they got there and locked the door.” All ridiculous efforts to discount the resurrection.

The fact is they were locked up in a room and Jesus immediately stood in the middle of the room. He did not say, "Shame on you for your doubt." He said, "**Peace be with you.**" That would be the right thing to say, because the trauma must have been literally shocking. If those on the road to Emmaus were traumatized by His presence, imagine how these men and the other disciples who were there were traumatized when He stood in the midst of a room that was barred and locked.

The scriptures make it clear that He was not a spirit. You might think that...if He could move through walls. But to make sure you do not think that verse 20 says...

John 20:20a (NASB)

20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side.

Jesus is not a spirit. This is not a hallucination. This is an actual physical bodily resurrection. And to demonstrate that, He shows them His scars, and as we read in Luke He ate broiled fish.

Luke 24:42-43 (NASB)

42 They served Him a piece of broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it in front of them.

This is really Jesus in bodily form: a glorified body, a resurrected body, but a body nonetheless.

II. INDESCRIBABLE JOY.

John 20:20b

...The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

I cannot begin to describe what that joy would have been like. "**They rejoiced**". That is a pretty understated way to describe those men. They had earlier believed Jesus was dead and He shows up alive by coming through the wall. They were in fear and hiding out, trying to sort out all that had happened that day and instantly that fear and doubt was substituted by **indescribable joy!** They rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Then verse 21 continues...

John 20:21a (NASB)

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

He calms them down again. The first time He calmed them down because they were traumatized, now He calms them down because they are erupting in joy. Why? "Because I have something to say to you."

Luke 24:42-45 (NASB)

42 They served Him a piece of broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it in front of them.

44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things that are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

So, just as Jesus had told the two men on the road to Emmaus how He had completely fulfilled the prophecies concerning Himself, He now reiterates the same thing to the disciples who are there that night. The two men got to hear it twice! And it says that He opened their minds to understand the scriptures.

Even after spending three years with Jesus during the ministry, the disciples were remarkably confused about what was to happen. Even after the resurrection, Jesus' disciples were unclear about what had happened until Jesus explained it to them. Despite the miracles they had seen Jesus perform, they refused to believe Jesus had risen from the dead until Jesus repeatedly demonstrated it to them.

The predictions were made so that when the disciples finally got around to remembering Jesus' words, they would see in them as further confirmation that Jesus was who he claimed to be.

CONCLUSION:

It is tempting to scoff at the disciples for their weak faith and ignorance. But to do so is to miss the point: **we are no different**. Like the disciples, we do not always understand what God is doing in our lives. We read God's clear promises in the Bible, yet often succumb to stress and doubt when life gets tough. Sometimes it is not until **after** God has brought us through a trial that we are able to look back at Scripture and understand that He was with us from the beginning.

God loves us, as He loved the disciples; He wants to bring us into understanding and belief. He wants us to look back at events in our lives, then examine Scripture to see His words and promises confirmed. And while we sometimes want to roll our eyes at them, we can be grateful to Jesus' disciples for providing us an object lesson in human disbelief... and divine patience.

I want to remind you that the purpose of John in writing his gospel, every account, is that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing have eternal life in His name.

John 19:35 (NASB).

"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."**

This is John, telling us that there were many eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. If the Gospels were not true, the world would have shot their testimony down and Christianity would never have gotten off of the ground.

It was because of the proof of the resurrection that the disciples finally understood the scriptures and believed and dedicated their lives to the ministry of Jesus even when it meant that they would physically die for their efforts. They went into the world and preached that because of Christ's death and resurrection we no longer have to fear death. Lord willing, we will touch more on that next week. Our sins can be forgiven by the grace of God and we can have eternal life with our Creator for eternity.

He is Lord!