

The Not Quite Empty Tomb

John 19:31-20:31

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Josh McDowell has written an excellent book called, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. In his book, he said, “The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever fostered upon the minds of men or it is the most fantastic fact of history.” I love that statement. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is either the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever fostered on the minds of men or it is the greatest fact of history. Obviously, I believe, it’s the greatest fact of history.

You know, there are a lot of different theological topics and themes that often when I come to preach on them, and I’m studying and meditating on them, they just absolutely overwhelm me. I feel like that image of the little boy at the seaside with his little bucket trying to capture the Pacific Ocean. It can’t be done. When I come to the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, like the incarnation, the crucifixion, and so with the resurrection, we are overwhelmed at the depth and the richness and all of the implications that are there. I think too often we fail that we only preach the resurrection at Easter time, and it becomes kind of a once-a-year thing. We a lot of times have are mind on Easter eggs and chocolate Easter bunnies and, How do I eat the chocolate bunny? Do I start at the ears? Do I start at the tail? We’re not really thinking about the resurrection. I think it’s so important that when we come to church that we study all Scripture, and an important part of the Scripture is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Take note of this: All four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—record the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, when all the gospels record one event, it’s an indication that the Holy Spirit wants us to listen to what It’s teaching. Now, we get historical narrative tonight. There are no didactic teaching sections. It’s a story. It’s a narrative. But in this story, in this narrative, the theological implications are amazing. The Bible says if Christ be not risen from the dead, that we’re still in our sins and we have no hope of forgiveness or eternal life. We got one of the I AM statements in our study of John 11 where Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die,” so Jesus is personified that resurrection and the life.

The question that I want to approach in our text tonight is: How do we know Jesus actually rose from the dead? What are the evidences? What are the implications and the evidences of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Well, the first evidence may not sound like an evidence, but it is. It’s at the end of the chapter in John 19:31-42, that Jesus actually died. If you’re taking notes tonight, I’m going to give you a lot of information you’re going to want to write down. Jesus actually died, you might add, and was buried. Look at John 19 with me beginning in verse 31. It says, “The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,)” most likely that reference to that sabbath being a “high day” is that it wasn’t just your typical weekly Shabbat or sabbath but was the annual Passover. That Passover, that weekend, was actually on that

sabbath day, so it was a very high and holy day. It was a “high” sabbath.

Continuing in verse 31, So they, “...besought Pilate,” or begged Pilate, “that their legs might be broken,” of those on the cross, “and that they might be taken away. 32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. 35 And he that saw it,” John says in verse 35, “bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. 36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.” Jesus has been on the cross for six hours, and we saw at verse 30 that He cried His last words, “Tetelestai,” or “It is finished,” and He bowed His head and dismissed His Spirit. The King James says He, “gave up the ghost.” So, Jesus, actually conquering sin and death, He died and He will rise from the dead; but when He died, He finished the work the Father gave Him to do, “It is done, it is finished,” so we enter in by faith to that finished work of Jesus Christ.

Now, Jesus has died. But the Jews, in their religious scruples and their hypocrisy, don’t want these criminals, including Jesus the Son of God, hanging on their crosses to defile their sabbath day. I’m a traditionalist. I believe that Jesus died on Friday. There’s a lot of people that try to argue for Jesus dying on Wednesday so that you have Him in the grave for three days and three nights. I don’t think that’s necessary to have the three days and three nights. I think Jesus was crucified on Friday, and that sabbath started at sundown on Friday, so they didn’t want these bodies hanging on these crosses to defile their sabbath. They had no problem with crucifying an innocent Man, the Son of God, but they don’t want their religious feast to be desecrated by these criminals hanging on the cross, so they beg Pilate to break the legs of those on the cross. Now, they broke the legs of the two thieves who were still alive, “But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.”

Medical experts indicate that this is a sign that He died. Some say He died of a broken heart, and I think that is true, but we make too much out of that. The Scriptures don’t really say that; but medically speaking, the blood, unmingled with water, separate, would indicate that Jesus did indeed die or expire. John’s focus and emphasis is that He actually died. That’s the deal, and the reason is because you can’t have a resurrection...let me make this as clear as I can. The resurrection was a physical, bodily resurrection. He didn’t resurrect in the Spirit, He didn’t resurrect spiritually, He resurrected physically. If you’re going to have a physical resurrection, you have to have a physical death. We have to establish that He physically died, and Jesus is clearly dead. These soldiers thrust the spear into His side.

Only John records this episode. All four gospels record the resurrection, but only John records the situation of the breaking of their legs. John makes it clear that what He said, verse 35, was true. John was an eyewitness. He was there at the cross, and he bare record and says, verse 35, that he wrote these things, “...that ye might believe.” We’re going to see at the end of John

20, that that's the theme of John's gospel, he's writing for us to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Verse 36, "For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken." That's taken from Exodus 12:46, and the situation there was that actually when a priest would examine a lamb that would be used for sacrifice, of which the lamb was a type, Jesus is what's called an antitype. The type is the Old Testament picture, and Jesus is the fulfillment, which is the opposite or antitype. The lamb that was slain by the priest had to be without blemish and without spot. Without blemish means it could not inherit any defects and it could not acquire any defects. If the lamb was born perfect but fell down a cliff and broke its leg, it couldn't be used. It had to be a perfect sacrifice because it pictured Jesus Christ the Lamb of God. That's how that Scripture is fulfilled from Exodus 12:46. But then another Scripture had to be fulfilled, verse 37, "...They shall look on him whom they pierced." John throws in these two prophecies of Messiah from the Old Testament that were fulfilled in Jesus dying of His own accord, He was dead before the other two thieves, His legs were not broken, and that He was pierced.

The piercing is a fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10. We hear that verse quite often because it happens when Jesus Christ comes back in His Second Coming and the Jewish people will look on Him whom they have pierced, so had the Roman soldiers broken His legs, that Scripture would not have been fulfilled. Isn't it amazing how God sees to it that every facet of His prophetic Word is fulfilled? Not, "...one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass...till all be fulfilled." God sits sovereign in the heavens, and even in the death of His own Son, He allowed these wicked men to thrust the spear into His side to crucify the Son of God. But when He comes back, the Jewish people...and we studied the 144,000 last Sunday in Revelation 7, who will be saved and God's purpose and plan for Israel and so forth. When Jesus returns in Revelation 19, in power and glory in the Second Coming, they will actually see Him and say, "What are the meanings of these wounds in Your hands?" And He'll say, "These are the wounds which I received in the house of My friends," and they'll wail and weep because they realize that they've rejected their own Messiah. How tragic that is for them, so it's the fulfillment of Scripture in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is not only dead, but to emphasize this point even further, from verses 38-42, He is actually buried. Now, notice verse 38, "And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. 39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. 40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury," that was the way they would bury, but they did this in a hurry because the sabbath was approaching at sundown. Verse 41, "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. 42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."

Both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were what was called Sanhedrin. They were part of the high Jewish court that actually sentenced Jesus to death. Most likely, they did not consent to this sentencing, but they were part of that Sanhedrin high court. They are now risking their lives and their whole careers as Sanhedrin by coming out publicly, and it mentions the fact that Joseph of Arimathea was a secret disciple. My question is: Are you maybe a secret disciple? Are you a Christian but no one knows but you? Do you keep it secret or do you let people know? Do you want to hide the idea that you're a follower of Christ? I don't think that we should be secret disciples. But finally he's emboldened and comes forth and gives Jesus his sepulchre or his tomb, and there was a garden by Calvary there where He was buried.

There are different ideas about where this is in the holy land today. The first and the oldest tradition is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the other is just outside the wall of Jerusalem. It's called Gordon's Calvary, where most Protestant groups go and believe that this is where Jesus was buried, but we can't be one hundred percent sure that we're visiting the grave where Jesus was buried. I hate to spoil your trips to Israel because you take your pictures in front of the empty tomb. You go in there, and it is moving and exciting and a blessing, but we can't be sure beyond any doubt that Jesus was there. What we can be sure of is that wherever He was buried, the tomb was emptied. Amen? Someone said that Jesus just borrowed the tomb from Joseph because He only needed it for the weekend. I love that. "Hey, can they bury Me in your grave? I only need it for three days and three nights, and then I'll move out and you can have it back," but He made His grave with the rich.

Now, just a little footnote, normally when someone died as a criminal on the cross, like he would in Jesus' case in the other thieves, they would take their bodies and discard them in a rubbish heap. The rubbish heap was actually on the southeast corner of the mountain of Jerusalem down in the valley known as Hinnom. That valley had trash and rubbish, no different than our trash heaps today, burning with fire. It was continually smoldering and burning, so this was the Valley of Hinnom. Now, had that happened, it would have been detrimental in determining Jesus rose from the dead. He would have been cremated in the Valley of Hinnom, and we would not have been able to see the tomb empty for the evidence of the resurrection. By the way, we get our word Gehenna, which is a word used translated hell in our New Testament, from that valley known as the Valley of Hinnom (we get the word Gehenna or hell). It was a reminder of what hell would be like, a place of fire and burning, where they would throw the dead bodies, but not Jesus.

Even though Jesus was not rich, His body was laid in the tomb provided for by Joseph of Arimathea. Nicodemus got involved as well. Remember he came to Jesus back in John 3 at night? (We call it Nic at night, he came to Jesus at night.) He was the one Jesus said, "You must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God." Evidently, Nicodemus became a believer in Jesus and was born again. This was a fulfillment, by the way, at the end of John 19, of Isaiah 53:9. It says, "And he made his grave with the...rich." Jesus, as I said, was poor. He would have been thrown in the Valley of Hinnom but the prophet spoke of the Messiah who would make His grave with the rich, so again, God's prophetic Word being fulfilled.

Before we leave this section, Jesus actually died and Jesus was actually buried. Earlier, they came to Pilate and said that they wanted to bury Jesus and that they should seal the tomb, and Pilate took notice that He was dead already and sent the soldier to investigate and make sure. Over and over and over in the Bible, the Scriptures make it very clear for a purpose that Jesus Christ actually died. The reason I say that is because one of the theories, and I'm going to give you several tonight in each section, for explaining away or the denying of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is what's called the swoon theory. Believe me or not, this is not a joke. People actually believe this. It just shows you that when people reject the truth, the foolish lengths that they'll go to to try to explain away what they just don't want to believe.

Here's the swoon theory in a nutshell: Jesus didn't actually die, that from the exposure to the sun, the loss of blood, the whipping, the beating, the buffeting, the spear poked in His side, that He actually just passed out. When I say, "swoon," it means that He just fainted, He just passed out; so when they took Him down off the cross and wrapped Him in His grave cloths and put one hundred pounds of ointment, wrapped Him from head to foot...and they would wrap from the feet up to the head, and the head would be wrapped separately. It looked like a mummy, what we would call a mummy, that it didn't kill Him, that He was still alive but just passed out, and that they then buried Him in the tomb. Then, they rolled the stone in front of that tomb, that stone would have weighed at least two tons, and sealed the tomb. They put Roman guards in front of that tomb and somehow, other than killing Him inside the tomb, it revived Him; and Jesus didn't rise from the dead, He just woke up, wiggled out of His garments and grave clothes, and somehow was able to manhandle that tombstone and roll it to the side. Or, maybe He was still in His grave clothes and He bounced out, I don't know, and overtook the Roman guards, hopped down to the home where the disciples were hiding, somehow broke through the door and said, "I'm risen from the dead," and they all believed that He'd risen from the dead. Then, they went out and preached the gospel, died martyrs' deaths, the church was born, and here we are today; but Jesus really isn't the Son of God, He really didn't rise from the dead, He just swooned.

Well, first of all, nothing in the record is consistent with any of that thought, so you have to deny the historical narrative from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, to do that kind of finagling, and the idea that Jesus could convince His cringing, fearful, freaking out disciples that He had risen from the dead when actually He'd just been in a swoon is utterly absurd. They would have known that. They would have gone out and preached a gospel they knew wasn't true and voluntarily, willingly died martyrs' deaths for something that they knew to be a lie, so I don't believe that Jesus just swooned. I believe, as the Scriptures say, that Jesus actually died. Write down 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 where Paul gives us the elements of the gospel that Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Paul says something very interesting there, he says, "...that he was buried," why does he say that? Because that is another phrase or term to say He died.

If you're telling someone, "Yeah, so and so was buried this past Saturday," what are you implying? They're dead. If you said, "Someone was buried last Saturday," and they said, "Oh, did they die?" "No, they just thought they'd bury them." It's like, "Duh!" When Paul says that

Jesus died for our sins, Jesus was buried, it actually means He actually died. Then it says that He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures, so it's all fulfillment of God's Word. I don't believe the swoon theory, and it hasn't really held water as long as it has been around.

The second evidence that Jesus rose from the dead is that Jesus actually rose from the dead and the tomb was empty. You might write down, John 19:31-42, dead and buried; and in John 20:1-10, is that He was risen and the tomb was empty. Let's read John 20. It says, "The first day of the week," which is what we know to be Sunday, "cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. 2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved," that is a reference to John, the writer of the gospel. Isn't it interesting that when he talked about himself in his own gospel, he's the one that Jesus loved. I'm going to have to ask John about that when we get to heaven. She "saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we," that is, because there were other women involved in this journey, but they're not mentioned by John. There's no contradiction, it's just that he doesn't add them as the other gospels. It says, "and we know not where they have laid him."

Mary was probably first in the group of women to get to the tomb. In a minute I'm going to give you, and I'm going to have to do it rapid fire, chronological order of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ. The first person to get to the tomb Easter Sunday morning was Mary Magdalene out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons. He who is forgiven much, loves much, right? She couldn't wait. She wanted to go...and the women were going down there early in the morning to finish the hurried job of burying Jesus. They had to do it quickly. They didn't do it as thoroughly and as good as they wanted, so bless their dear hearts, they went down out of love to finish the job. Remember as they were walking, they even said among themselves, "Who's going to roll away the stone?" They just dismissed it, "Well, I don't know. We'll figure it out when we get there." It's funny. The men would be back there charting it out, figuring it out, and drawing diagrams. They'd spend a few hours kind of charting it all out and go, "Well, it can't be done." The women just say, "Well, we're just going to do it." What's frustrating is that it was taken care of when they got there. How typical that is! They just say, "Let's just get it done," and the men are all, "It can't be done. We can't do that," and they just go do it. I just think that's pretty cool.

When they get there, the stone is already rolled away, but Mary ran ahead and got there first. There were a couple different Marys in the group, but she was the first one there. She freaked out and ran back. No doubt, after that, the other women came when they would see the angels in the tomb as well. She tells Peter and then comes back again after Peter and John come to the tomb. They then leave, and she stays and encounters Jesus. I know it gets a little bit difficult to follow, but I'll give it to you in order in just a minute.

Mary comes to the tomb. The stone is rolled away. She goes to Peter. Peter and John, "therefore went forth...and came to the sepulchre. 4 So they ran both together," John and Peter after Mary's testimony. She didn't say, "He's risen," they just said they've taken the body, He's not there. "...and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. 5 And he

stooping down, and looking in, saw," the word "saw" in the Greek indicates just a quick glance, "the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in." John gets there first. He outruns Peter. He's a faster runner. He had tennis shoes on, I guess. "Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre," and a different Greek word is used, "seeth the linen clothes lie," the word "seeth" means to look at intently or to study carefully. "And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. 8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre," that's John, "and he saw, and believed. 9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home."

This, again, is a record recorded only by John, the fast runner. Again, I'm going to ask John when I get to heaven, "Why did you put that in there? Did you want everyone to know that you could run faster than Peter?" Most likely he did that because he wanted us to understand that he got there first, peeks down looking into the sepulchre, it was a cave, and then Peter comes along afterwards. If I were making a movie of this, Peter would be out of breath. He wasn't in as good a shape as John, so he's huffing and puffing. Peter goes by John, goes in, sees the grave clothes and the head napkin lying by itself, and then John goes in. When he goes in, he believes. Peter is there, looks in, but John goes in and studies them again and finally comes to faith or belief.

Now, here's the point that I want to make, John 20:1-10, the tomb was empty. There were angels in there, there were the grave clothes in there, but Jesus Christ had risen and was not there. I love Mark's?? (Luke?) gospel. The angel actually said to the women who came just after Mary, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen," just like He said He would. They should've been standing around with concession stands and bleachers and popcorn and whistles and horns to cheer and blow. They should've been waiting for the resurrection. Jesus, every time He said He was going to be crucified, guess what else He told them? He told them, "I will rise again from the dead." All they heard was, "You're going to be crucified," and never really understood that He would rise from the dead. Every time Jesus mentions His death, He also mentions His resurrection. You can't separate the two. As we're going to see tonight, if you take the resurrection out of the life of Christ, you have no salvation, you have no divine Christ, you have no Christianity. You want to kill Christianity? Just prove that Jesus is still lying in a grave somewhere in Israel and Christianity is dead. Jesus actually died and then the grave was actually empty.

Now, you have to explain the empty tomb, so here's another theory that the critics have. They say, "Well, the women and the disciples all got the wrong tomb." It's called the wrong tomb theory. Yes, they buried Him on Friday afternoon, but they went down early in the morning and somehow got turned and twisted around and just found the wrong tomb. They thought it was Jesus' tomb, so they ran back and told them that Jesus wasn't there. They got the wrong tomb. It's called the wrong tomb theory. Well, if it was the wrong tomb, then when the angels were in the tomb and the women showed up and the angels spoke to them, and we're going to see in just a few verses the angel spoke to Mary, then the angels got the wrong tomb as well. Can you imagine Gabriel in there with Michael, "Gee, Michael, you sure this is the place?" "I don't know.

My GPS says this is right.” If it was the wrong tomb, would the disciples want to preach that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead? Why would not the Jews or the Romans go to the right tomb, roll away the stone, take out the body of Jesus, put it in an oxcart, parade it down Main Street, Jerusalem, and kill Christianity? Why wouldn’t they show the body? They were actually arresting and punishing Christians for preaching the resurrection, all they had to do was show the right tomb and the body still dead and it would have killed Christianity. I don’t think so.

If you bury someone that you love on Friday and go back on Sunday, do you forget where you laid them? I don’t think so. Some of you have buried loved ones and you can go right to that grave. You know right where it is. You have no problem finding it; so I don’t believe they went to the wrong tomb, I don’t believe the angels had the wrong tomb, and the authorities could have found the right tomb and exposed this silly theory.

Here’s another theory before we leave this section; that is, that thieves stole the body. This is what the Bible says they said, “Oh, the disciples came by night and stole the body.” Now, I don’t have time to develop all of these false theories of the resurrection, but the thieves stole the body is, again, ludicrous. It has no warrant in the text. My question: Who stole the body? The disciples were afraid. They were hiding. They didn’t believe He was going to rise from the dead. If they did steal the body, how did they get by the Roman guards? How did they break the Roman seal? If they did steal the body, they knew Jesus didn’t rise from the dead and concocted the story of the resurrection, said, “Let’s start this thing called Christianity,” and then went out and preached He rose from the dead knowing it was a lie and were martyred, tortured, and put to death for what they knew was a lie. Now, a lot of people have died for what they believed was a truth, but no one but a fool would die for what they knew to be a lie, so it makes no sense that they would concoct this story and then go out and preach.

It wasn’t until Jesus appeared to them convincingly in His resurrection appearances that finally they believed. The first unbelievers of the resurrection were the disciples, the believers, not the nonbelievers. It was the Jews who actually said, “This deceiver said He’ll rise from the dead, so we gotta make that tomb really secure and put Roman guards by it lest the last mistake is worse than the first. We gotta make sure He doesn’t do this,” so I don’t believe that thieves stole the body. You say, “Well, the Romans stole the body.” Why would the Romans steal the body? If the Romans wanted to squelch Christianity, they could have just exposed the body. “Well, the Jews stole the body.” Why would the Jews steal the body? Again, they could’ve shown the body wasn’t alive, and they would kill Christianity. There’s no motive for anyone stealing the body, the idea that thieves stole the body.

Jesus died, Jesus rose, the empty tomb, and then thirdly, Jesus was actually seen, John 20:11-31. It’s a long section, but we’ll move through it quite quickly so we can wrap this up. Now, there are three post-resurrection appearances to the end of John 20. They are first to Mary Magdalene, verse 11-18; then to the disciples, minus Thomas and obviously Judas; and then there was the appearance to Thomas, verses 24-29. Let’s look at them beginning in verse 11, He appeared to Mary Magdalene. “But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping,” or sobbing. She loved Jesus. Her heart was broken that He was gone and now His body has

been taken. She doesn't yet really even believe or think in terms of Him having risen from the dead, so she was weeping. The word "weep" there means to weep loud and audibly. "...and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, 12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." She was so emotional and so upset, her eyes so filled with tears, that she didn't really recognize them as being angelic beings. There are times that angels do appear and are not shining white and glowing and could appear as human, so she didn't detect them as angels.

Verse 13, "And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord," I love the term she uses, "my Lord," not, the Lord, but He is my Lord, "and I know not where they have laid him. 14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?" the angels asked that and Jesus asks that, "whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni," which is another form or way of saying rabbi, which means master or teacher, "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples," she's the first messenger of the resurrection, "that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her."

Mary, weeping at the grave, and the angel said, "Why are you weeping?" She said, "Someone has taken Him away and I don't know where they've taken Him, and if you'd just tell me, I'll go get Him." Little Mary is going to carry Jesus and take care of His body. Then, she turns around, sees Jesus, but didn't know it's Jesus. She thinks it's a gardener. It's not a problem that she didn't recognize Jesus. It's early. It could still be kind of dusk and not that light. Her eyes are filled with tears.

Remember when Jesus appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus? They walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, their eyes were holden (King James English). Their eyes were kind of blocked from seeing who He was. They didn't know it was Jesus. They're walking along, talking with Jesus about Jesus. Jesus asked them, "Why are you guys all bummed out?" They said, "Haven't you heard about Jesus?" They ask Jesus, "Haven't you heard about Jesus?" He said, "No, what about Him?" "Oh, man, this Jesus of Nazareth, we thought He was the Messiah, and He went and got crucified. We had hopes in Him, but it's all gone." Jesus said, "Oh, ye simple ones to believe all the words the prophets have spoken," and He started with Moses showing all the times that the Messiah must suffer and die. He gave them that long Bible study, and when they got to Emmaus they said, "Did not our hearts burn within us as He spoke to us in the way?" You know, if Jesus is giving you a Bible study after His resurrection, you're going to get heartburn for sure. The Scriptures burned in their hearts.

It's no big deal that Mary didn't understand that it was Jesus and thought He was a gardener. Then, Jesus says her name, "Mary." Now, here's the theory, and I think it's a good one. There

are all these different Marys but Jesus no doubt had a specific way and fluctuation in His voice to say each Mary in a different way. He probably said her name, "Mary," in just the way that she knew, That's my Lord! She recognized the way He said it, and I love that Jesus knows our name. Amen? He knows your name. He calls your name. Then, Mary turned, and the reason Jesus said, "Touch me not," this freaks some people out. Why would He say, "Don't touch me?" In the Greek it's actually, "Don't cling to Me. Don't grab hold of Me." I believe that Mary actually dove for Him and tackled Him, put her arms around Him, and squeezed Him with a death grip. She's probably holding onto His legs or His feet, and Jesus is saying, "Mary, Mary don't cling to Me."

Sometimes we think of it as only being an issue that Jesus in His, "I am not yet ascended to my Father..and your Father; and to my God, and your God," that Jesus can't ascend back into heaven because Mary is hanging onto Him, you know. It's like, "Whoa, let go Mary." That's not a problem. If Jesus in His glorified body can appear and disappear and pass through doors, He could've just passed through Mary's arms. More likely thought is that Mary thought He is here to set up the Kingdom, that this is the Second Coming. She didn't realize that would be postponed for now over two thousand years. She was so excited that Jesus had risen, "You are the Messiah, You are the Savior. You're the King of Israel. You're going to set up Your Throne of David and reign," and she was grabbing Him. Jesus wanted to convey to her, "Mary, you're going to have a different relationship with Me now. I'm not going to be here physically presently with you," but remember He had promised in the upper room that He would send the Comforter, the parakletos, the Holy Spirit to comfort them. He says, "Don't hang onto Me. Don't fasten to Me. Don't cling to Me. I'm going to go away. I'm going to ascend back to My Father, and you will have a different relationship with Me," so the theme of Mary's post-resurrection appearance is love, if you're taking notes. She was motivated by love to see Jesus, and He appeared to Mary.

The second appearance is that of the disciples, at least ten of them, minus Judas and the disciple Thomas, beginning in verse 19. "Then the same day," which is Sunday, "at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear," so these are the big brave men, the disciples, all freaking out and afraid. They're all fearful "of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." What an absolute mind blower! I wish I had some way to paint this picture. They're all freaking out, Poof! Jesus is standing there, "Peace be unto you." They're all like, "RAHHHHH!" They just freaked out. "And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." Again, Jesus showed them His scarred hands, His side, and they rejoiced that it was Him. They saw the Lord.

Verse 21, "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Jesus is commissioning them. This is John's record of the Great Commission—they would go into all the world and preach the gospel. It's interesting, "I'm sending you into the world, remember My scars. If the world hates Me, it's going to hate you. If they rejected Me, they're going to reject you." Verse 22, "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost," Spirit, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are

remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

I know I’m covering a lot of text, and hang onto your seatbelts, we’ll get there in just a moment and it won’t take this long. There’s a lot of stuff we could delve more deeply into, but I think it’s important to get the big picture. Jesus shows them His hands, His feet, they rejoice, and they’re glad. This is a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. He’s showing them, “It’s Me. It’s My same body.” Now, Jesus came out of the tomb in a glorified body, but His glorified body was a metamorphosis of His previous earthly human body that He had. They’re tied together. When we rise from the dead, even as Christ did in the resurrection, it will be you, new and improved. Which is pretty good, right? I need a new and improved me. I need a new body, an eternal body, one that will have no sickness, no weakness, and no sin. It was Jesus but in a new and improved body—same scars, it was Him. He’s proving that to them, “I am the Lord. I am the same Jesus you knew that was crucified on the cross,” and they were glad.

Now, Jesus breathed on them after commissioning them. They’re going to go into all the world and preach the gospel, so they’re going to need the power of the Holy Spirit. I don’t want to get bogged down in doctrine on the Holy Spirit, but what does it mean when He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit?” It means simply what it says—they were to receive the Holy Spirit. I believe that at this point and in this time these disciples were regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The same thing happens to you the moment you are born again—you are made new in Christ, and you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Well, what about the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came and filled them? That was an experience where they would be filled and baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ and form the church. At this point, they’re saved. They’ve already believed in Jesus, but now they’re regenerated, and the Holy Spirit moves inside of them and lives in them permanently as He does all believers. He breathed on them. It’s interesting. Nuach? is the concept of the Holy Spirit being breath, so He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

What about verse 23, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” Basically, it’s teaching that when you share the gospel with somebody and they believe in Jesus Christ, you can actually tell them, “Your sins are forgiven.” When you share the gospel with somebody and they reject Jesus Christ, you can proclaim to them, “You are not forgiven.” You reject Christ, you’re not forgiven; you accept Christ, you are forgiven. This is by no means giving them the power to remit sins or to forgive sins. It is absolutely solidly taught in Scripture that only God can forgive sins, right? Only God can forgive sins, so not even these apostles, nor can a priest, forgive sins. Only God can forgive sins. So, you confess your sins to God, He forgives you, but we as Christians can proclaim that if you repent and believe in Jesus, your sins can be forgiven. That’s basically all that Jesus is telling them at this point.

Here’s our last resurrection appearance. It’s one of my favorites. It’s Thomas. Thomas is often called the doubter. Verse 42, “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus,” which means twin, he had a twin brother, “was not with them when Jesus came.” You’re going to see what happens when you miss church on Sunday or Wednesday. You miss a real blessing. Thomas

wasn't in fellowship that night and missed Jesus showing up. It says, "The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. 26 And after eight days," this would actually be next Sunday night. We might think of it as seven days, but if it's after sundown, it would actually begin Monday, that Sabbath would be over. So, "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."

I believe, like earlier, the doors were shut and Jesus just appears in the room. He doesn't knock or ring the doorbell. They don't have to open the door to let Him in. By the way, let me back up for a minute. When the tombstone was rolled away, it wasn't rolled away so Jesus could get out, it was rolled away so the women and the disciples could get in. Jesus wasn't dancing around inside, "Let Me out. Let Me out. Let Me out." He passed through the stone walls. Jesus shows up in the room, "...the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27 Then saith he to Thomas," and if I were rewriting this I would like, "Thomas," I'd put in parenthesis, "You are so busted." "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Actually, He said, "Be not unbelieving, but believing."

Verse 28, "And Thomas answered and said unto him," don't miss this, "My Lord and my God." Thomas calls Him, "My Lord," all capital letters, that's Yahweh or Jehovah, "and My God." "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The disciples are all together having a great time. Jesus is risen from the dead. Thomas shows up. "Hey, Thomas! Guess what? You should've been at church last night it was amazing. Jesus showed up." "Ahh, I don't believe that. You guys are crazy. That can't happen. Jesus didn't...I'm not going to believe unless I see Him myself." Now, there's nothing wrong with this. Thomas wanted to be convinced. He should have believed His Word, but he said, "I want to see the evidence."

A week later, they're together again and Jesus shows up. What does He do? He turns directly to Thomas. Now, the fact that He turns to Thomas and says, "Stop being unbelieving but believing," He heard the conversation a week earlier, even though they didn't know He was in the room. What does that tell us? Jesus is listening to every conversation we have at home. He's with us when we're alone in the car, we're not alone. He's with us everywhere we're at.

I don't know. I picture Jesus kind of pointing at Thomas, "Thomas, you come here." Thomas is going, "Oh, no." He said, "Thomas, don't be unbelieving, be believing. Look at My hands and My feet. Reach hither your hand and thrust it into my side. Be believing." Now, I'm convinced that Thomas, and it doesn't make it clear in the story, didn't strut over there and say, "Okay, I'll just check You out." He didn't start examining Jesus. I believe Thomas fell immediately to his knees. I picture Thomas falling to his knees and saying, "My Lord and my God." Just make a note here that Thomas calls Jesus Lord and God, and Jesus doesn't correct him. Jesus doesn't say, "Thomas, that's blasphemy. I'm just a Man like any other man. Thomas, that's

wrong for you to call Me Lord.” He allowed Thomas to call Him his Lord and his God. This is a direct reference in the Bible that Jesus Christ is our Lord God. Whenever you show this verse to Jehovah’s Witnesses they freak out and don’t know what to say. One of their answers is that Thomas was just so shocked to see Jesus he just said, “Oh my God!” No, I don’t think so. Jesus would have rebuked Thomas for that, but he said in worship, “You are my Lord and my God.” How glorious that is!

Let me give you the last false theory of the resurrection. It’s not a swoon or the wrong tomb. It’s not thieves who stole the body. Fourthly, it’s not a hallucination. They didn’t hallucinate. They weren’t drinking Kool Aid that made them see things that they shouldn’t see. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:6 that Jesus was seen by over five hundred people at once. How do you get five hundred people to hallucinate at the same time and see the same thing? You get five hundred witnesses in a courtroom that say they saw someone commit a crime, you’re in big trouble. Jesus was actually seen, and they knew it was Jesus. They did not hallucinate. Also, Paul was converted on the road to Damascus in Acts 9, and then we today are also converted when we come to faith and believe in Jesus Christ. How true that is, so it’s not a hallucination by any means.

The conclusion of the main body of John’s gospel, and we’ll spring off this next week, verse 30, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written,” John is telling us, this is the theme of John’s gospel of why he wrote his book, “these are written,” these signs, these miracles pointing to His deity, “that ye might believe,” that’s the theme of John’s gospel, “that Jesus is the Christ,” the Messiah, “the Son of God; and that believing,” as a result of your believing in Jesus being the Son of God, “ye might have life through his name.” All the way through our series in John, and we’re just a couple weeks away from wrapping it up, Jesus has been performing miracles. Those are the signs that John is referencing, “I showed you these miracles, they all pointed to His deity, and the response for you is to believe in Jesus. If you believe in Jesus, you’ll have life through His name.”

Let me just mention something that is of interest to me. I don’t know if it will be to you. It might go right over your head, and you might not understand it. There’s a big rift between two theological groups in Christianity. The two groups are those that are Calvinistic and those that are Arminianists, those that are reformed theologians and those that are not. In the area of reformed theology or Calvinism, they teach that regeneration comes before faith—that you must be born again in order to believe in Jesus Christ. That’s the root foundation of their doctrine, the emphasis on the sovereignty of God, which I’m fine with. I want to point out in this passage that John says, “But these are written, that ye might believe,” that’s faith, “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” and then what happens as a result of that, “that,” or in order that, “ye might have life through his name.” I believe the other order is what the Bible is teaching—that you believe in Jesus Christ, you put your faith in Jesus Christ, and as a result of your faith, God regenerates you. God saves you by His grace, but it’s through faith. Now, faith is not a merit or a work, it’s a gift of God, salvation is, lest any man should boast. You must believe, and that’s the theme of John’s gospel, in order to be regenerated or saved.

I'm going to save my list of the post-resurrection appearances for next Wednesday because when we get to John 21, there's another post-resurrection appearance where Jesus appears at the Sea of Galilee with His disciples cooking fish and calls them to come and have breakfast and reveals Himself. I'll go into all that next week, and hopefully that'll bring you back.

I can't conclude, I can't close, without going down this list. I'm going to be as rapid fire as I can, but I'm going to give you seven benefits or blessings, the list is not exhaustive, of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you're taking notes, you can actually write one word in each statement, if you want to, if it will help you. First of all write the word "proves." First of all, the resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that He is the Son of God. Now, there are some that might say, "It doesn't really prove, but it's consistent with the doctrine of His deity." I think it does both—it's consistent with and proves His deity. Write down Romans 1:4 where it says He's, "declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead."

Secondly, it means that we can be pardoned of our sins, so write down the word "pardon." It means that we can be forgiven, 1 Corinthians 15:17; that is, "And if Christ be not raised...ye are yet in your sins," we are still in our sins. There's no hope of forgiveness.

Thirdly, the resurrection of Jesus Christ means that I can have His power. Write down the word "power" over sin. Romans 6 tells us that we died with Christ, we're risen with Christ, so we need to reckon it to be so and yield our lives to Him. We can have the power of the Spirit.

Fourthly, it means that we have His presence. Jesus rose from the dead, so He's with us. Matthew 28:20, "...lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," His presence.

Fifth, write down the word "purpose." It means that we have purpose and meaning in life, 1 Corinthians 15:19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." If Jesus didn't rise from the dead and we only have hope in this world, then we're all miserable. There's purpose in life because of the resurrection.

Sixth, it means His pattern, 1 Corinthians 15:20, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept," or died. Jesus' resurrection is a pattern of our future resurrection. It's a prototype. We will be resurrected again as well from the dead. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first," so there's our resurrection.

Seventhly, and lastly, we have His punishment. Now, if you're a believer, you won't be punished for your sin. If you're an unbeliever, the Bible says in Acts 17:31, Paul was preaching on Mars Hill and said that God, "...hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world...by that man whom...he hath raised...from the dead." Do you know that the resurrection of Jesus Christ means that every single human being will be resurrected from the dead? Even unbelievers. They will be resurrected to judgment. This is why Paul said in Philippians 2, "...every knee should bow...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the

Father,” but it’s for their condemnation not for their salvation. The resurrection of Jesus Christ means that even unbelievers are going to stand before the Great White Throne and will be judged for their sin and be condemned for all eternity. Let’s pray.