

John 20 • The Resurrection of Jesus

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Let's open our Bibles to John chapter 20. We're boy, getting really close here to finishing up our study of the Gospel of John, which is the completion of our third pass through the Bible. And on Wednesday nights, we are already starting our fourth pass through the Bible.

If you need a Bible to follow along, the guys anticipated me and they're already roaming around. Just get their attention and they will get a Bible to you so that you can follow along with our study here in John chapter 20. This is stuff I like to talk about because we're dealing with the resurrection here today so let's begin with prayer, shall we?

Father, as we dig into the scriptures here in John chapter 20, we pray for your Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts, to speak to us Lord, at the deepest level and to fill us with grace and understanding.

We love you, we thank you for the good news that we see in this chapter and we ask you to fill our hearts. We ask it in Jesus name, amen.

It begins in chapter 20 by saying, *“Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.” (ESV)*

We're actually told in Mark's account why Mary came to the tomb and we're also told that she wasn't alone. Let me show you this on the screen from Mark 16:1, it says,

Mark 16:1 (ESV)

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, (that's why they came) so that they might go and anoint him.

You see, the job of anointing the body of Jesus had been done quite hurriedly on Friday evening because at sundown, of course, the Sabbath began and no one

was to do any work at that point. And so with the Sabbath beginning, they could only do a kind of a quick job and they wanted to just come back and finish the thing. So right away, right away as this chapter begins, you know what the people were expecting. They were expecting to get to the tomb there on Sunday morning and find a corpse, that was their expectation.

The whole resurrection thing is out of sight really at this particular point so they're coming to complete this task. The women see that the stone covering the mouth of the tomb has been rolled away and in verse 2, we're told, *“So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, (and that's John's way of referring to himself) and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.””*

Now she doesn't say, she doesn't know who took Jesus out of the tomb, she assumed someone did and honestly that was stuff that happened back then. Do you know that grave robbers was a real problem in these early centuries and in fact, grave robbing got to be so troublesome, problematic, that one of the Caesars, Caesar Claudius, as a matter of fact, made grave robbing a capital crime. Even moving the stone, even if you didn't get into the tomb and take anything, and by the way, they did take bodies.

But even if you just were caught moving the stone, you could be put to death based on this sort of a deal. So it was an issue and this was probably Mary's biggest fear, I would imagine. I doubt she would have thought that the Jewish religious leaders would have come to steal the body of Jesus.

I mean, why? What's the point? They wanted there to be a body, because Jesus had made claims about a resurrection and they're not about to come and take the body and fuel that fire. They want to know that there's a dead body that stays in that tomb so the religious leaders had absolutely no motivation to take the body of Jesus.

So you're probably thinking at this point, Mary's greatest fear is the grave robbers somehow struck this tomb and so forth. Anyway, so she runs and tells Peter and John.

So it says in verse 3, *“So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴ Both of them were running together, but the other disciple (and again, that's John referring to himself) outran Peter and reached the tomb first.”* It is quite possible that John was younger than Peter or, I don't know, maybe Peter ate too much fish and bread, I don't know, had a little weight

or something, I don't know. But whatever the reason was, John got there before Peter.

“⁵ And stooping to look in, he (John) saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.” Now that's not surprising. If you were raised a Jew, you would have had to, you would have thought twice before entering a tomb. You would have thought twice before even going into a graveyard because you would have been taught from your earliest days that, that was a place of uncleanness.

And going into a tomb, even more so, with the potential that maybe Mary overlooked or over spoke the thing, and the body of Jesus was in fact still there, John would not have wanted to go into the tomb. Because with a dead body, he probably would have been made unclean, so, his initial response is to hold back. Now, Peter, he's another case altogether.

Verse 6 says, *“Then Simon Peter came, (in and completely in keeping with his personality, he just dove right through) following him, and (he) went (right) into the tomb.* (and you'll notice here that John gives us a description of what was seen. It says that) *He saw the linen cloths lying there,”*

And this is really the burial cloths that they would have wrapped the body in. And he tells us in verse 7, *“and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, (because they wrapped to the head) not lying with the linen cloths but (in fact) folded up in a place by itself.”*

And it is interesting that John would go into this kind of detail as it relates to the linens that were wrapped around the body and the head of Jesus. But it's important to remember that with all of the ointments and spices that they would have applied to the body, and we were told last time, that Joseph of Arimathea brought somewhere between 75 and 100 pounds.

Isn't that incredible? And they still thought there was more to do. But if all of that would have been used, you have to know that ointment dries on the linen cloths, and it creates a kind of cocoon, for lack of a better word. And yet Peter and John, when they enter into the tomb, they see these grave clothes looking very different with the cloth that had been lying around, placed around the Lord's head, all neatly folded and put in a place by itself.

In other words, what John is describing or what he's saying to you and me in this passage is that there are no signs of any violent removal of the body, it all looks very neat and very orderly. I mean a grave robber is not going to gently

unwrap the head of the deceased person and fold it up and set it aside very nicely, that's just not going to happen.

If a grave robber came in and they were going to take the body, they probably wouldn't even unwrap the thing, but if they did, it would just be a very rapid, violent sort of a da, da, da and carrying the body off or whatever the case might be. That's not what the men see, they see the grave clothes. It's kind of like Jesus had just simply taken them off and gently set them aside.

This was not what they expected to see and says in verse 8, *“Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw (and then he says this) and believed;”*

We'll talk about that in a second, but he goes on to say, as it relates to that, *“⁹for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.”*

So you say, well, then what did he believe? If they didn't fully understand yet, the whole dynamic of the resurrection and all of the implications that went along with it, then what, when John says he looked in there and he believed, what did he believe? Well, he believed that Jesus had risen, but he didn't have a clue why it had to happen and that's the point. Neither of these men, nor Mary, or any of the other women that happened to be there knew the full or had a full understanding of what was going on or why it had to go on, why it was absolutely necessary.

Now, it's not even explained right here. The fact is, we have to wait until you start going through the apostle Paul's letter in 1 Corinthians. He's the one who goes through and explains the importance of the resurrection. We won't take time to read any of it, but for those of you taking notes, you might want to dig in later today, perhaps, or this week into 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, because that's where Paul really outlines the importance of the resurrection. Now the disciples didn't have that understanding at this particular point in the game.

Verse 10, *“Then the disciples went back to their homes.”* But not Mary, verse 11 tells us that, *“...(she) stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb.”* I guess she wanted one more look or something.

And again, like the others, Mary, she didn't understand the meaning of, or the purpose of the resurrection. And all she knew was that the tomb was empty and that her heart was broken because the body of Jesus was missing.

But it tells us in verse 12 that when she looked into the tomb, “...*she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and (the other) one at the feet.* (and) ¹³ *They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” (and) She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”*”

Now, I don't know, I read through this and I think, first thing I would, out of my mouth would have been, I don't know and why are you there? But when a person is distraught and full of sorrow and fear for what might have happened to the body of her Lord, she doesn't really even know..., she's not really hitting on all cylinders here.

“*Having said this, (verse 14, it says) she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.*” Again, probably eyes filled with tears, whatever. “¹⁵ *Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”*”

And then in probably one of the most beautiful, tender things that we read in this entire gospel, “¹⁶ *Jesus said to her, (just one word and that's all it took) “Mary.” (He just said her name, Mary, and) She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).*”

So, obviously at this point, once she realizes that it's Jesus, she reaches out and grabs Him like there's no tomorrow and she's not going to let go. Because what we read in verse 17 is, “*Jesus said to her, (saying to Mary) “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”*”

All right, let's pause here at the end of verse 17 for just a moment. Again, this is a very highly tender moment where Jesus appears first to Mary, isn't that lovely? The first appearance to this woman who loved Him so much, who is standing there crying at the empty tomb, so distressed, she barely notices there are two angels in the tomb where Jesus's body had laid and so forth. And then there's this emotional crescendo when she realizes who Jesus is and cries out saying, Teacher, and it's a lovely scene.

But there's also some challenging parts to it because we have to address these enigmatic statements that Jesus makes to Mary such as, “*Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.*”

These statements in the Bible have been the cause of a great deal of speculation over the centuries. People wanted to know exactly what Jesus meant and why and so forth. And part of the confusion, I have to be honest with you, is because of a fairly unfortunate rendering of these words in the King James Bible.

Because if you remember reading this in the King James, or maybe even have a King James, on your lap, you're going to see that, rather than what the ESV says, "*Do not cling to me,*" the King James says, "*Touch me not.*" And that has led to a great deal of speculation by some people who wanted to know what this was all about.

And they speculated that Jesus didn't want Mary to touch Him because He had not yet gone before the Father and to touch Him with sinful hands would defile Him and somehow be a hindrance to Him ascending into the presence of His Father. And that's an unfortunate conclusion, frankly, because the Greek tense, the word that is translated either, touch or cling, is a verb in the Greek and the tense of that verb is better translated, don't keep on touching me or don't keep on clinging to me.

And the tense tells us that she had already touched Him, so if there was a problem of defilement, the damage was already done. I don't believe Jesus was in the slightest concerned about being defiled by Mary. So what was He saying to Mary and why would Jesus not want Mary Magdalene to touch Him?

Well, we asked that question, especially in light of some other references in the Bible, such as Matthew's account of the resurrection narrative tells us that Jesus meant Mary Magdalene and another Mary. And He said nothing to them when the Bible tells us that they took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.

Matthew records nothing of any sort of a statement or rebuke of those women related to touching Him. The reason that Jesus gave in this passage here in John for Mary not continuing to hold on to Him is simply, "*I have not yet ascended to the Father.*"

So we wonder, what did Jesus mean here by saying, He had not yet ascended to the Father and why was that even a reason for Mary Magdalene not to cling to Him? I don't know, I really don't, you know what? Nobody else does either. I have studied this out, I have looked at the other Gospel passages and I have read, I don't know how many commentaries, and most of them begin with the word, perhaps, as they begin to kind of try to explain what was going on here.

Perhaps, and I know when I start seeing that word beginning a commentary, they don't know and they're just guessing. You know, we understand so little of the realm of the Spirit. We understand so little and that's probably the biggest reason why these sorts of statements are very difficult to unravel.

At face value, if you're going to just take it at face value, it sounds very much like Jesus is saying that He has not yet appeared before the presence of the Father post resurrection and so forth, but honestly, we don't know. We really don't know and because we don't know the answer to the first part, we are equally at a loss to explain why He told Mary not to cling to Him.

But what we know for sure is that Jesus gave Mary an immediate task to perform and that was, she was to go and inform the disciples that He had risen and that she had seen Him and that's exactly what she did. But Matthew tells us that Jesus gave Mary an additional message. Let me show you this on the screen from Matthew 28:10. Jesus said,

Matthew 28:10 (ESV)

“Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

Now there's going to be some interim appearances way before Galilee but that is another message that Mary was told to pass along. Look at verse 18 with me in your Bible. *“Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.”*” And now I believe we come to what is really the climax of this chapter and that is the appearance of Jesus to the disciples right there in Jerusalem that very evening.

Because we're told in verse 19, and this is the time stamp, *“On the evening of that day, (so we're still on Resurrection Day, alright, on the evening of that day) the first day of the week, (that's Sunday, right) the doors being locked where the disciples were (and then we're told why the doors were locked, they were afraid) for fear of the Jews, (suddenly) Jesus came and stood among them and (whenever you walk into a room, when the door is locked, it's a good thing to start off by saying) said to them, “Peace be with you.”*” Because the people in there are going to freak out.

Because you got in the room without the door being opened and so forth, so that's always a good thing to do. So Jesus suddenly appears to the disciples, even though the door is locked and closed and you can imagine the reaction. John really doesn't give it to us, but Luke does. Let me show you this on the screen. Luke 24 says,

Luke 24:37 (ESV)

...they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

...they were startled and frightened (as you can well imagine) and thought they saw a spirit.

What does that tell you? They're still not connecting with the resurrection, are they? They went to the tomb expecting to find a corpse, even when Jesus appears to them, they're still going, aaaah!, a spirit.

We know from one of the other Gospels that, well, even here in John, it says that, “²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. (so there's this physical, this part of Jesus showing Himself to them and it says) Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.””

Now this is very important here, I want you to really see this. “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 withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.””

Now I want you to pause there. What we have just read here in this chapter is the very first impartation of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of indwelling and regeneration. By the way, regeneration is a biblical word, to regenerate is to make alive. It's, I mean, a crude illustration would be taking a dead car battery and filling it with the proper fluids and putting it on a charger and getting it back up to the place where it's going to work again and that's what the Holy Spirit came to do.

This is the moment when the believers were born again, okay? They were born again at this moment. We've mentioned it before that prior to this moment, no one had ever received the Holy Spirit to indwell them or to live within them.

In the Old Testament, people did not receive the Holy Spirit to indwell. The Holy Spirit came upon in the Old Testament, He actually comes upon in the New as well, we'll get into that later.

So the Holy Spirit could be taken away under the old covenant. That's why David, in his famous prayer after committing adultery with Bathsheba said, take not your Holy Spirit from me, because he knew that it was a very real possibility. (Psalm 51:11) The Spirit was removed from people at times.

Saul, the first king of Israel was a man upon whom the Spirit came and empowered him to do great things but later, when he got weird, the Spirit was removed from Saul. So this happened in the Old Testament.

The Spirit is not withdrawn in the New Testament because the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable we are told. So this is a completely different dynamic relationship that the believer has to God through His Holy Spirit.

And notice how it is imparted in this very first picture that we're given here in John 20. It says, Jesus breathed on them and a beautiful picture of salvation being imparted through the indwelling presence of the Spirit being made alive.

What did Jesus say to Nicodemus way back in John chapter 3? He said, to enter the kingdom of heaven a man must be born again, right? And Nicodemus thought He was talking about a physical rebirth, he says, how's that even possible? He says, it's not, I'm not talking about a physical rebirth, I'm talking about a spiritual rebirth.

The Spirit must cause this born again process to take place and it happens when we put our faith in what Jesus did for us on the cross. We receive the Holy Spirit and we are born again, we're born anew, all right. But what is the significance of this breathing? Well, it points back to Genesis when man was made a living being. The Bible says that God created the man out of the elements of the earth and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living being.

But sin came into the picture and man spiritually died and he needed to be reborn and that needed or required a second breathing by the Lord. And I want you to know without a shadow of a doubt that when you came to faith in Jesus Christ, you too were breathed upon and you received the Holy Spirit and you were born again.

This is exactly what Jesus foretold would take place back in John chapter 14 when He spoke of the coming of the Spirit to go in them. Let me show you this on the screen. From John 14, Jesus talking here, He says,

John 14:16-17 (ESV)

*...I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells **with** you and will be **in** you.*

You'll notice that I highlighted for you the two very important prepositions in the last part of that passage. Jesus said, the Holy Spirit is now **with** you and there's coming a time here very soon when He will be **in** you.

Notice those different prepositions and this is now the fulfillment of what Jesus promised. He breathed on them and said, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*" And that's why the apostle Paul refers to our physical bodies as temples. Let me show you this on the screen, 1 Corinthians chapter 6,

1 Corinthians 6:19 (ESV)

...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

...do you not know (Paul writes) that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (where is the Spirit?) within you, whom you have from God?

There you go, you are a temple, isn't that cool? You are a temple of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit lives within you. Hey, that begins to give us a whole different perspective on our bodies and what we do with them. How we treat them, failing as they are with the passage of time, they are still the temple of the Holy Spirit.

We are temples of the Holy Spirit, He lives within us, it's a beautiful thing. Problem is it causes confusion in some people's hearts and minds when they read what we just read here in John chapter 20 about the coming of the Spirit. And then people keep reading in their Bibles and they get to the Book of Acts, which by the way, is the next book we're going to go in on Sunday morning.

And they get to the Book of Acts and they hear Jesus saying to the disciples in Acts chapter 1, guys, don't leave Jerusalem, but stay here until the gift of my Father comes. And we find out in Acts chapter 2 that, that's the Holy Spirit and that confuses people because you see that happened on Pentecost which is 50 days in the future than where we are right here in John chapter 20.

And that causes people to say, wait a minute, what happened in John chapter 20 if Jesus says at Pentecost, the Spirit is going to come and fall upon you, what happened here? And it gets very confusing for some people. Well, we're going to get into it when we get into Acts chapter 1 and chapter 2. What we're going to find out is that the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was for a completely different reason, it wasn't for salvation. Jesus didn't say it was for salvation. In Acts chapter 1, He said, and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes **on** you, not **in**, **on**. Again, you got to pay attention to prepositions because if

you don't, you're going to get confused and believe me, even Bible scholars get confused about this.

I remember the very first time, I've told you guys this before. I remember the very first time I bought a study Bible, I thought, wow, study notes right here in the Bible, how cool is that? So I'm reading through my Bible and of course, I would look at the study notes from time to time. I had an NIV study Bible at the time and I was reading John chapter 20, the very passage we're studying here, where Jesus breathes on them and says, receive the Holy Spirit.

I looked down at the study notes and guess what I read? It said, thus anticipating the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, what? In other words, the commentator didn't believe that anything happened in John chapter 20 when Jesus breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit, he said that was anticipatory, what?

Aren't you paying attention? This all fits when you understand the purpose and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes in Acts chapter 2 to empower, not to regenerate, they're already born again. They were born again resurrection night when Jesus breathed on them, but they needed to be empowered and so do you and I. And we're going to talk about that when we get into Acts chapter 1 and 2, we're going to talk a lot about the Holy Spirit in fact. Because I don't know if you're aware of how many times the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Book of Acts, far more than any other book.

And so we're going to talk a lot about the Holy Spirit. We're going to talk a lot about the power of the Holy Spirit and why that power is necessary. But we're not going to diminish what happens here in John chapter 20, we're not going to gloss over it, we're going to realize this is when they were born again.

And by the way, when you receive the Holy Spirit for empowering, it's not like you receive more of the Holy Spirit or like you had less of the Holy Spirit before. You can't think of the Holy Spirit that way. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives for different reasons, there are different purposes connected to His work in our lives.

And when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, the first and primary work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to regenerate, okay? That you might be born again. But He longs also to do a work in each of us that we might be spiritually equipped and empowered to do the work that He's called us to do in this world, right? So there you go. Now, as we finish through this chapter, we're going to deal with an issue here of unbelief related to the person of Thomas.

Verse 24, it says, *“Now Thomas, one of the twelve, (who was) called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.”* Meaning the first time, we don't know why. Apparently he didn't get the memo that they had a meeting that night.

So verse 25 says, *“²⁵ So the other disciples told him, (and of course they did, they said) “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, (and I want you to hear what Thomas says) “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.””*

By the way, in the Greek, that's emphatic, alright. And I look at the words of Thomas here and I think to myself, I can probably relate a little bit. From the standpoint that the death of Jesus was so traumatic, it was so overwhelming in terms of its reality and the difficulty of it that those kinds of things don't fade very easily just because somebody waltzes around into your life and goes, oh, by the way, He's alive again.

He came out of the tomb, He's doing great, we saw Him, we talked with Him. Yeah, right. I mean, the mind just doesn't want to go there and you'll notice that Thomas gives conditions for believing. He says, unless I see and unless I feel. So he's putting that above everything else, unless I see and unless I feel, I will not, *“I will never believe.”*

We call Thomas, a doubting Thomas, if you've heard that term before. He's kind of a doubting Thomas, it comes right from this passage. But you know what? This really isn't doubt, this is unbelief, okay. Doubt is, oh, I'm not really sure. That's not what Thomas is saying here. He's saying no, unless I see and feel, I will never believe. This is a stubborn refusal to accept and believe that's what's going on here, so this is way more than just doubt, okay. And by the way, doubt is something that every believer deals with at certain and different times in their Christian life.

So, if you've struggled with your own aspect of doubt from time to time, don't beat yourself up and feel like you're the worst Christian ever known to mankind, because it does happen. But that's not what's going on here, this is unbelief, and you're going to see that Jesus refers to it as what it is here in just a bit as well.

But whatever issues that Thomas dealt with related to unbelief and doubt, he was not alone, you guys do know that, right? Thomas, we kind of put Thomas in this category over here, the guy who had a hard time coming to terms with the

reality of faith, but he was not the only one. Let me show you a passage from Matthew 28 once again. It says,

Matthew 28:16-17 (ESV)

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, (but look at this) but some doubted.

You kind of look at that and you might kind of go, why did Matthew tell us that? Well, because it happened and because doubt is a real thing from time to time. It's a real thing and honestly, I'm glad Matthew threw a comment like that in because that's reality

If somebody was writing the Bible to just draw you into a fallacy or whatever, they wouldn't say things like, and some doubted, because that could possibly put a seed of doubt in your mind. Well, if some of the guys who were right there doubted, wow, maybe I'm justified in my doubt or something like that.

But isn't it interesting that the biblical writers didn't have any problem telling you the absolute truth that some of the people struggled to come to faith and to really, truly trust that this was all real and legit. I don't know about you, I like that, I do, it injects the truth of what's really kind of going on.

Because you guys, faith is not a perfect thing. I've walked with the Lord long enough and I'm sure many of you have too, you realize faith is not a perfect thing. It is a very imperfect thing and we will categorize faith in some places. Have you ever noticed that? People sometimes think of, well, I'm having a hard time with my faith, or my faith is strong.

I don't know about you, but my faith is very scattered. It's almost kind of like it's schizo, seriously. I'll have faith, and I've talked to other people that are like this too. If I say to them, do you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and you're going to heaven? Oh, absolutely, 100%, no problem.

I mean, there's just no doubt in their mind. I am a born again Christian, child of God, no doubt, I've never even questioned it for a second. Do you think God's going to take care of your daily needs? No, I doubt it, I've heard it. I have heard

it and it is a reality. I believe that Jesus died on the cross and will save me, but I have absolutely zero faith that he can restore my marriage.

I believe Jesus died on the cross for me and I'm going to heaven and I know that, but I have absolutely no faith that He can heal my body. You see, we can compartmentalize our faith. We can have very strong faith in one area and extremely weak faith in another. So faith is not a perfect thing, it is a very imperfect, very challenging sort of a thing. And we're all, hopefully, growing in our faith, but we are growing sometimes in different areas, different compartments, so just understand that.

Well, anyway, here's what happens with this whole struggle. It says, *"²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, (that important phrase) 'Peace be with you.' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, (don't you love this? He goes right to Thomas and He says) 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. (and I want you to see what Jesus says to Thomas) Do not disbelieve, ...'"* That's a really good translation, *"Do not disbelieve,"* that's unbelief.

"²⁷ ...Do not disbelieve, but believe." The New King James says, *"Do not be unbelieving,"* and that's actually good too. And Thomas responds here in verse 28 by saying, *"... 'My Lord and my God!'"* And yes, that is a declaration of His deity, the deity of Jesus, no question about it.

But what Jesus goes on to tell Thomas is something we all need to hear. *"²⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'"* That's an important thing for all of us to really take hold of.

You've probably heard the statement, seeing is believing. Well, Jesus pronounces a blessing, a blessing on those who have not seen and yet believe. And you might be thinking to yourself, well, now wait just a minute here, Paul isn't that the definition of blind faith? Believing without seeing?

No it's not and here's the reason why. When we put our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins, we are putting our faith in so much more than what you can see with your eyes, so much more. That's one of the reasons Paul says what he says in Romans chapter 10, let me show you. You know this.

Romans 10:9 (ESV)

...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Lovely verse, but guess what? I wasn't there to see the empty tomb, were you? No, we were a couple of thousand years too late, we didn't get to walk by the tomb and see the stone rolled away. We didn't get to peer inside and see the grave clothes lying to one side. We didn't get to even be there when Jesus showed up that evening in a locked room with the door closed and suddenly was among them. We didn't get to talk to angels and yet we believe that God raised Him from the dead, just as Paul said, *"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

Yet we believe and the reason that I believe is because I trust the eyewitness testimonies that are given to us in the Bible. I've studied them for a lot of years and I trust them, and I trust the Bible. I trust that the Bible is God's Word and because I believe, God came and did something further in my life that Paul talks about in Romans chapter 8, let me show you.

Romans 8:16 (ESV)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

You'll notice that it doesn't say there that, God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we can be children of God. This is not a witness that comes to us before faith, this is the weird part about it.

Once you put your faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, then the Spirit comes and bears witness with your spirit that you are a child of God and it's a beautiful thing.

And the chapter then concludes with John saying in verse 30, *"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;"* He clearly is telling us that there was way more that happened that is not written down, but he said, *"³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."*

So you see, John was cognizantly aware of the fact that his eyewitness testimony was going to have an impact on people and that's why he wrote this down. And that's the beauty of you and me being able to read these passages in

the Bible and study them out and look at the integrity and the honesty and the sincerity with which they're written. And we can say to ourselves, I believe this, I believe this.

You know, there are lots of other things. There's lots of other reasons that we put our faith in the Lord and there's elements of the Bible. Man, I get this question all the time, how do I know the Bible is true? And how do I know that I can trust in the veracity and legitimacy of the biblical text and so forth?

I did a study on that actually, a number of years ago, you'll find it on our YouTube channel, they're called Truth Topics. In fact, you can find it on our website too. And I go through an entire study on how you can know, why you can know, how you can know that the Bible is reliable. And I would encourage you to get on our website, ccontario.com and just check that out, under [Topical Series](#). And you know, there's some important information there that goes through a lot. I don't have time to go through it all this morning, but there's a lot of reasons you guys.

In fact, it is unreasonable to reject the truth of the Bible, it is unreasonable. When you really look at all of the reasons for faith, it is unreasonable to reject it in the end. And in the end, the reason people reject it isn't because of a lack of evidence, it's just they just don't want to believe it. It's that same stubborn refusal like, like we saw in Thomas that said I'm going to..., here's my conditions for me believing and so forth.

But anyway, so, wow, one more chapter left in John. So let's go ahead and stand and we'll close in prayer. If you need some prayer this morning, we'll have some folks up front here that would love to pray with you, lift up your needs to the Lord, just agree in prayer.

So, Father, we want to be people of faith. We want to be people of faith, not doubt, but faith but we know that our faith isn't perfect and you're doing a work in every one of us to draw us closer and strengthen us in faith every day. And I pray, Lord God, that we would just really cooperate with that work of your Spirit to make us people of faith who stand even when doubts arise, even when skepticism comes our way from others, that we would stand.

Thank you, Lord, for the empty tomb and for all that it means for us because our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ rose from the grave, the promise of new life is given to us.

And I pray my Father, God, for anybody here this morning who has not yet accepted that finished work of Jesus that they would do it even now as I'm closing in prayer. And just in the quiet of their own heart say, Jesus, I believe, I believe you died for me, I confess my sin and I pray that you'd forgive me and come and live in my heart and change my life.

Thank you, Father, strengthen us to live for you each and every day. We ask this in Jesus precious and holy name and all God's people said together, amen. God bless you.