

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #76

John 20:19-31

Years ago some preacher came up with an interesting idea of preaching on the seven last words of Jesus Christ or more accurately the seven last statements of Jesus Christ before He died. So just about every Easter in some churches on Good Friday a bunch of churches get together and the seven last statements are taught by various ministers in a five to seven minute sermonette: 1) Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing; 2) Woman, behold your son; 3) Today you will be with Me in Paradise; 4) I am thirsty; 5) My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me; 6) Father into Your hands I commit My spirit; 7) It is finished.

The problem, as I see and as some others have seen it such as James Montgomery Boice, is that these really weren't the last words of Jesus Christ on earth. In fact, as Dr. Boice said, "To say that these sentences were the last words of Christ is to ... say that there was no resurrection." (*The Gospel of John*, Vol. 5, p. 1588).

Let us remember when we come to this Gospel of John that the material John writes is given about Jesus Christ so that we may believe in Jesus Christ, the God/man Savior, so we may have life. So the data that John puts in this gospel is designed to generate faith.

What is so interesting when it comes to the resurrection of Jesus Christ is that much of the data he presents is data about a bunch of doubters, who didn't initially believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Never is that more evident than when you come to this text. The primary thrust of these verses is on how the disciples of Jesus Christ came to believe that He was actually alive and risen from the dead. The main point here is this:

**ALL THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST CAME TO BELIEVE AND TESTIFY OF THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD AND THAT THEY HAD ACTUALLY SEEN HIM, TOUCHED HIM AND TALKED TO HIM AND THEN THEY COMMUNICATED THAT HE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN TAKE AWAY YOUR SIN.**

These are guys who initially do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, as you will see, they had locked themselves in a room in no way believing that Jesus had been raised from the dead and yet every one of them in about a seven week span would end up boldly declaring even in foreign languages that Jesus was alive from the dead (Acts 2:11).

Now this section may be broken down nicely into two main discipleship categories:

**DISCIPLESHIP CATEGORY #1** – Jesus appears to ten disciples without Thomas in the Upper Room. **20:19-25**

According to **verse 19**, it was the first evening of the Resurrection, which means it was Sunday night. May I say that if you miss Sunday night services you can miss powerful blessings of God. What was about to happen to these discouraged disciples happened on a Sunday night.

The disciples were certainly not a group of rejoicing believers, who were celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ even though Mary Magdalene had reported this to them (20:18). In fact, hours later, they were hiding out in a room with the doors shut and locked because they were afraid of the Jews. The last thing they ever expected was that a resurrected Jesus Christ would show up in this room. What they were fearful of is that Jewish authorities would try to barge into this room and perhaps kill them.

Most Bible scholars agree that these disciples are meeting in the Upper Room where they had previously been with Jesus. It was a special place to them. According to Acts 1:13, this room apparently became somewhat of a known gathering spot and hideout for these disciples.

Now according to Luke's account, Jesus had appeared to two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus and when He had left them, those two immediately made the seven or eight mile walk back to Jerusalem to where these eleven were staying (Luke 24:33-35). They obviously knocked on the door and went in and told the disciples that Jesus had truly risen.

While they were actually telling them this, Jesus shows up in the middle of the room (Luke 24:36). There is no knocking at the door. There is no opening of the door. He just shows up. According to Dr. Luke, the disciples were startled and frightened and thought they were seeing some kind of spirit being (Luke 24:37).

**The point I want you to get is that initially when Jesus Christ shows up in this room and these disciples are actually looking at Him, they do not believe it is the resurrected Christ.**

By virtue of the fact that Christ's body passes through walls and doors, we know that a resurrected body is not subject to the limitations that our present body has, but we also know that there was some continuity and form to His body because, as you will see, He shows them His hands and side, and even according to Luke, His feet and actually lets them touch Him (Luke 24:39-40).

Now by what Christ says, there are at least three postresurrection realities that He reveals:

**Reality #1 - My sacrifice has given you My salvation . 20:19-20**

The first thing Jesus says to His disciples in **verse 19** is, "Peace *to or for* you" (εἰρήνη ὑμῖν). This is amazing grace right here because in view of the fact that they didn't believe He was alive, instead of saying "peace to you" He could have said, "You have big problems in your faith."

In fact, this is the first time He has seen them all together since they all fled (Matthew 26:56). This was a very important appearance, for it showed that even though they had failed Christ, He still wanted a relationship with them and He held no animosity against them.

This peace statement is actually much more than just saying, "I hope everything is good and peaceful." **What Jesus is actually saying here is that My cross work has just given you peace with God forever.**

God was actually standing in this room and just His presence showed these disciples that now they were in a peaceful relationship with God. Jesus' presence and peace pronouncement actually says, I am God and I am standing in this room in a peaceful relationship with you because of what I just went through.

This is why **verse 20** is so critical. When He said this, He showed them both His hands and side. He is saying, look, My sacrifice has just given you everlasting life and you are now at peace with God. In other words, **these wounds you are looking at prove to you that now you have "peace with God."** The response of the disciples is they rejoiced for they were now seeing and believing that this was the Lord, Who saved them from their sin.

### **Reality #2 - My sacrifice has given you My service . 20:21**

Jesus says to these disciples, not only do you have peace with God, but you have peace of God like I had that enables you to serve God. I am sending you out to represent Me and My Father. My sacrificial work on that cross has made this possible for you. This would mean that they would be sent with His authority to preach and teach and do miraculous things (Matt. 28:16-20).

It was the job of the disciples and it is our job as individuals and as a church to "invade the world" with the truth of God pertaining to Jesus Christ. **Our job is not to retreat from the world, but to attack it with the truth of God.** We are God's representatives. This is why at this church we are on six radio stations, we are in the newspaper, we send out evangelistic cards and we are on the internet. This church is doing exactly what Jesus wants His church to do, invading this world with the truth of God. His sacrifice on that cross makes this all possible.

### **Reality #3 - My sacrifice has given you My Spirit . 20:22-23**

These are the very verses used by the Roman Catholic Church to teach that there is a special anointing of God on their priests, specifically in giving them the power to forgive or absolve sin. However, on close examination of the context, it will be seen that this is not at all what this text is teaching.

**God's Spirit had been with these disciples, but now it would be on them temporarily until it was in them permanently.** Jesus gave them a special, partial Spirit enablement for ministry, which would be completely realized at Pentecost some 50 days later. **This is a special pre-Pentecost Spirit enabling that Jesus specifically gave to these disciples . This was a very special apostolic provision that would enable and empower these disciples to do God's work.** This breathing of the Spirit on them is not a breathing of the Spirit on us. In our Age of Grace, any who believe receive the Holy Spirit at that very moment (I Corinthians 12:13).

**Now one of the major benefits of the cross work of Jesus Christ is the forgiveness of sins.** Even the prophet Isaiah predicted this very thing (Isaiah 53:5). This assignment of witnessing was the assignment Christ gave to these disciples (Acts 1:8) and a key message that they were to proclaim was that through Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection, people's sins could be forgiven (**Luke 24:46-49**).

**You cannot interpret what is stated in verse 23 apart from its context. It is not that the disciples have the power to forgive sin, they have the Spirit's power to proclaim the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ that will cause any who believe on Christ to have their sins forgiven (Acts 13:38-39).** These disciples don't have the nail prints in their hands and feet or the scar in their side; Jesus does. It is their job to tell others about the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ that can take away the sin of anyone.

The enablement they actually have is a Spirit empowered assistance in the proclamation of the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, which left scars on His hands and feet and in His side. The enabling power to accomplish God's will is the Holy Spirit they had just received and the Holy Spirit's job will be to help them communicate the truth, that His sacrifice can forgive any sin of anyone.

You and I have the same privilege and same enablement that the disciples got here. Plus we have the complete written Word of God. We can tell any person that if they will believe on Jesus Christ, they will be saved from all of their sins. His sacrifice on that cross makes this possible. This had been some meeting. Jesus shows up and lets them touch Him; then He breathed on them the Holy Spirit and then commissions them to do a work for Him.

Now according to **verses 24-25**, when all of this was happening Thomas was not in the room. Dr. Warren Wiersbe said this needs to be a good lesson to all of God's people. If you miss meeting with God's people at church on the Lord's Day, you will miss meeting with God and miss many wonderful blessings that truly will strengthen your faith (*Be Transformed*, p. 136). Thomas missed meeting with Jesus Christ because he wasn't there.

But when he finally got to the room, the other disciples, who were initially not believers in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, told him everything that happened. The imperfect verb tense of the word "were saying" (**v. 25**) indicates that these disciples were continually saying these things to Thomas. This was not a onetime statement; they were all telling him continually that they had seen the Lord.

Now you would think when you come into a room and all those there are continually telling you what just happened, that there would be absolutely no problem believing it. But Thomas did not believe them and he said unless I see the imprint of the nails in His hands and the imprint of where the spear went into His side and until I can actually touch these areas myself, "I will not believe" (**v. 25**). In Greek, John records a double negative (οὐ μὴ), which means I will not believe and there is nothing you can do or say that will change my unbelief. So in all reality Thomas is implying that these disciples are all lying to him.

So to this point - we have had Mary Magdalene who didn't believe in the resurrection but now does. We have had Peter and John who didn't believe in the resurrection but now do. We have two disciples on the road to Emmaus who didn't believe in the resurrection but now do. We have ten disciples locked in a room who didn't believe in the resurrection but now do. Now we have Thomas. He doesn't believe it either.

John is sure funny how he goes about recording things for belief; he lists a bunch of people who don't believe. What John is actually doing is tracing the disciples' development of faith, which concludes with this final disciple, Thomas.

**DISCIPLESHIP CATEGORY #2** – Jesus appears to eleven disciples with Thomas in the Upper Room. **20:26-28**

Eight days after this, the disciples once again were locked up in the Upper Room on Sunday evening and this time Thomas was at the meeting. Obviously the doors were shut and Jesus shows up again in the same way and says the same thing, “Peace *to or for* you” (εἰρήνη ὑμῶν).

Jesus does not go into any discussion with them like before, but He looks at Thomas and tells him to take his hand and with his fingers see the nail prints and put his hand in His side. He tells Thomas to stop being a nonbeliever and start believing in Him as the resurrected Savior.

This is amazing sovereign grace. Jesus Personally comes to Thomas a nonbeliever by his own will and choice and by the time this episode is over, Thomas is a believer uttering one of the great Biblical statements pertaining to Jesus Christ.

The response of Thomas in **verse 28** is critical, for at this moment Thomas finally said to Jesus Christ, “My Lord and my God!” Actually in Greek the phrase is, “The Lord of me and the God of me” (ο κύριος μου και ο θεος μου). Now remember, this is coming from a man who had been very skeptical. This statement is coming from a man who didn’t initially believe.

Now carefully observe **verse 29**, the pronoun “him” is addressed singularly to Thomas and Jesus said that it wasn’t touching Christ that produced the faith in Thomas, it was seeing Christ that produced the faith. Jesus specifically pronounced a special blessing on those who would believe without physically seeing Him. People like you and me.

Now at this point, John interjects that Jesus did many signs in the presence of these disciples that he did not write down, but what he did write down was written so that people would believe in Jesus Christ and have life. John has presented enough factual data to cause any to believe. John believed that the written Scriptures offer enough information to produce faith in anyone. In fact, **Thomas’ deity statement here is the last deity statement John makes about Jesus Christ in this Gospel.**

It is not necessary to physically see Jesus Christ in order to believe in Him as your Savior. John has presented enough evidence for us to know that Jesus Christ is God and He is the only living Savior Who can save us from our sins. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves this and if you believe this truth, you are, just as Jesus said, “blessed.”