

## CHRIST'S POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

April 11, 2021

Last week we celebrated Christ's resurrection, and today I want to talk about Christ's post resurrection appearances. We know He was on earth for 40 days after He rose from the dead. But why did He stay? Who did He appear to? What did He say?

- Acts 10:37-43. Jesus Christ lived, died, and was raised again from the dead. God the Father chose ahead of time who would see His Jesus. That is, God was sovereign over who saw His Son. These people who saw Jesus were ones convinced they had seen Jesus, and would be witnesses, who'd then tell and testify to others that they had seen Him and been with Him.

These people ate and drank with Him, had fellowship with Him, and He taught them. And it says in vs. 42 that *"He ordered us to preach to the people..."* And Jesus wanted His disciples to witness, to be preaching the truth of the gospel to the lost. There are three reasons why He got with people – to love and encourage them, to teach them, and to command them to carry out His work. It was related to love, truth, and purpose.

Acts 1:1-3. Jesus appeared to many of His disciples but He focused on the apostles. Now what do we learn?

- *"He presented Himself alive."* Jesus wanted them to know He was alive, that He was no longer dead. They had heard He was raised from the dead, but they had to see for themselves, they had to be witnesses. And so Jesus presented Himself, He deliberately and purposely appeared to these apostles, He wanted them to see Him and be with them.

- *"He presented Himself alive after His suffering."* Jesus had suffered and died on a cross, but now He was alive, and it was obvious to the people who saw Jesus that He had been glorified and was victorious.

- *"He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs."*

We don't know what all these proofs were, but we know there were not just a few proofs, but many, lots of them. And they were convincing proofs.

Jesus wanted to make sure these witnesses were completely and totally convinced, He wanted them to be absolutely certain that they had seen Him. And this all happened over a period of 40 days - it was not just for a few days, but for 40 days. It would be a time they would never forget for the rest of their lives.

Then we learn that Jesus spoke to them about the kingdom of God.

- Matt. 4:18, 23. Jesus was preaching about the kingdom of God when He was on the earth. And Jesus was the King, and He wanted them to know He was the King.

- In Matt. 5 Jesus is talking about how to be a member of the kingdom, and what it looks like to be a member of the kingdom. He also wanted them to know He was the Savior, the One who could save them from their sins so they could enter God's kingdom. John 3:3, 5

- Matt 6:33 - Seeking God's kingdom was to be the main occupation of His disciples, their primary purpose in life. Matt 28:19-20

When we say kingdom of God we are referring to God's rule and authority, and during the church age it's a spiritual kingdom, where God rules in our hearts, and therefore, over our lives. And during this church age God is causing His kingdom to grow.

The phrase "*the kingdom of God*" refers to God's rule, to Christ's rule over the church, and specifically, His Lordship over our lives. That is, we must see Christ as our Lord, One who is to lovingly, wisely, and sovereignly rule over every aspect of our life.

- Acts 28:23, 30-31. Here is Paul, and His primary purpose was preaching the kingdom of God, and preaching Christ, which means people were to be learning that Christ was the Savior, and the King, the One who was to be Lord over their lives.

Acts 1:4-8. The disciples were still thinking about the physical kingdom of God, but Jesus reminded them of their purpose to build the church, the spiritual kingdom of God. And after that, He would come back and build the physical kingdom of God on earth, what we call the millennial kingdom, the 1000-year reign of Christ on earth. And so Jesus told them that they were to be His witnesses all over the world, and that He would give them the Holy Spirit, and it was through the Spirit that He would be with them and empower them to do this work. Then Jesus left them, ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

Well, let's look at more of Christ's post resurrection appearances.

- John 20:11-18. This is Mary Madelene, and Jesus had cast 7 demons out of her, and saved her, and she became one of His most faithful followers, most faithful disciples.

Obviously, she knew she was forgiven, and loved by God and by Jesus, and therefore she greatly loved Jesus, and she was heartbroken that He had died and seemed to be gone.

- But here He is with her, but she doesn't know it's Him, and He sees her crying and then He reveals Himself to her. And she starts to cling to Him, and I'm sure she was holding on to Him tightly - she didn't want Him to leave. But He tells her that He's not yet going to His Father, but that He will, and that she is to go and tell this to the other disciples.

Think about this, that one of Jesus first appearances after His resurrection was to a woman and one who'd been very sinful, but then was greatly forgiven. This shows His mercy, His great love for her, which is a picture of His great love for all of us who are true believers. And as I said, it shows her love for Him, a godly love, a great love, a spiritual love, a heartfelt love.

Matt. 28:8-10. From vs. 1 we know this is referring to Mary Magdalene and this other Mary, but the other gospels tell us that two other women, Joanna and Salome, were also there. John 20 makes it clear that he met Mary Magdalene first. These women had just learned from the angel that Jesus had been raised from the dead and they had a mix of emotions, for they are both fearful and joyful. And Jesus them, and this word "*greeted*" would be like us saying "*hi*" or "*hello*" when we first meet someone.

Right away these women recognize Jesus for they take hold of His feet which means they had to have knelt down, and they worshiped Him, they loved Him, they adored Him. They worshiped Him as the Lord, and as their Savior. And Jesus tells them to go tell the disciples that He's alive and that they are to meet Him in Galilee. Again, we see Jesus' love for these women, these disciples of His, and He wanted to assure them that He was alive. He wanted them to be encouraged, to be comforted, to be at peace, to be filled with joy, and to be His witnesses.

Luke 24:13-32. Here is Cleopas and another one of Jesus' disciples, and they are on this 7-mile walk to Emmaus, and they were talking about Jesus and that He had died, and the latest news, that He was not in the tomb, that He had been raised from the dead. And then Jesus appears to them, but they didn't recognize Him. And they are pouring out their hearts to Him, and Jesus was an excellent listener. But Jesus' then gently rebukes them for not believing what His word said about Himself, that He was supposed to suffer and die. Jesus tells them that they are foolish and slow of heart to believe God's word.

And so Jesus starts teaching them from God's word, and it wasn't a quick lesson, for *"He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."* These two disciples then finish their 7-mile walk and arrive in Emmaus, and they invite Jesus to stay with them for a meal which He did, during which time Jesus reveals Himself to them. Can you imagine how surprised, how amazed, how excited, how joyful they must have been at that time? And Jesus revealed Himself to these people because He wanted to encourage them, reassure them, to show them His love, and to point them to the truth, to God's word.

Luke 24:33-35. We see that He had appeared to Peter too, and Peter was the first of the apostles to see Jesus. 1 Cor. 15:5 says, *"He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."* - Luke 24:36-43. Now Jesus appears to His disciples. He stands in their midst, the way He had done in the past. And the first thing He said was, *"Peace be to you."* And this wasn't a formal greeting, it was a loving and friendly greeting, and Jesus meant it, for He knew they were doubting, unbelieving, troubled, and confused. And Jesus' goal was to change their thinking. And He did this by doing 3 things:

1. He had them see His nail-pierced hands and feet - He told them to touch Him, which I am sure they did. He wanted them to know He wasn't a ghost, a spirit, but was a real person, in flesh and blood, that He was actually Jesus, only glorified. 1 John 1:1-4
2. Just like in the past, He had a meal with them, and I am sure they were assured and comforted by that, for it made things seem normal, like things used to be.
3. Again, He goes to God's word, which spoke about His death and resurrection, and God's OT word was authoritative. And He wanted them to learn to rely, to trust God's word, for it was the truth, and it would help them to trust Him, to have faith. But you notice, that He had to open their minds to understand God's word, just like God has to open our minds. But Thomas wasn't with them at this time.

John 20:26-31. Jesus now appears to the apostles with Thomas, who had been doubting but now he believes, and that's because he sees Jesus - and so Thomas says, "*My Lord and my God.*" And then Jesus instructs them and us, "*Blessed are they who did not see and yet believed.*" That is, Jesus wants us to learn to walk by faith, not by signs, not by feelings, but by believing and trusting God's word.

John 21. It was at the Sea of Galilee, and Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two others are out fishing and catching nothing. Then Jesus shows up and He does a miracle by allowing them to catch a large number of fish. Then they come on shore, and here's Jesus fixing a meal for them, and He already had fish for the meal. And Jesus had a lesson for Peter, the lead apostle. He asked Peter if he loved him, and Peter told Him that he did, and then Jesus told Peter that the way to love Him was by doing two things - feeding the sheep and shepherding them, that is, taking care of them.

Matt 28:16-20. Here are Jesus' disciples, and they worshiped Him, but some still doubted - they had little faith, not great faith. And Jesus goes ahead and gives them their job description, what is called the great commission, and He's instructing them, commanding them, to go and make disciples of all the nations, and He gives them that wonderful promise that He will be with them always, which is through the Holy Spirit. - 1 Cor. 15:6. Many people believe this is when Jesus appeared to 500 of His disciples at one time. Many of Jesus' disciples lived in the Galilean region and I believe Jesus wanted this large number of disciples to be there when He gave this great commission.

Luke 24:50-53. This describes Jesus' last post resurrection appearance, and He's in Judea, and specifically, He is in Bethany, a small village two miles east of Jerusalem, which is where the home of three of his closest friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, is located. Jesus lifted His hands and blessed His disciples, and this was really a pledge to them of the blessings they would receive. And while He was doing this, He ascended into heaven, and then sat down at the right hand of the Father, which is where He is still at today.

During these 40 days, Jesus did all He needed to do and wanted to do. He renewed His relationship with His disciples; He assured, encouraged, comforted, and instructed them; and He commissioned them to preach the gospel, make disciples, and build the church. And this should help us see how Jesus wants to build a relationship with us, and wants us to be encouraged, and to know that we are to then to carry out His work on earth. We are to know the love God has for us, and then we are to love and serve Him.