

John 20:1-31

"Believe"

The cross of J.C. was the single most consequential death in the history of humanity. In the 12th Ch of the gospel of Jn, the Lord spoke of the cross in an interesting & unique way. He said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."¹ This term, "Lifted up", It wasn't a reference to being lifted up in praise, in worship or adoration. It's a reference to being lifted up on the cross to die for the sins of the world. In fact, John straight tells us, "This He said, signifying by what death He would die."²

So, we understand, we don't just one day determine w/in ourselves to come to Jesus. It begins by Jesus *drawing us*, that's His part. & The way He draws us is through His death & resurrection. It was through the cross that God eliminated the sin dilemma, thereby drawing mankind to Himself. (Making a way for mankind to come to *know Him & be reconciled to Him*). *He draws & we decide.*

But it begins w/Jesus, being "lifted up" on the cross that we might look *to Him & find salvation in Him*... If you go back *even earlier* in the book of John, to Ch 3, you'll find Jesus speaking to Nicodemus. Nicodemus, (one of the teachers of Israel) recognized, realized that though he was very "religious" there was still something missing in his life. **He wasn't sure (seemingly) that he was right with God or even saved by God...** So he went to talk to Jesus about it. & He started him-hawing around, "Listen, we know You are a Teacher come from God, no one can do the things You do unless God is w/him." & Jesus (being a "heart of the matter" kind of guy) looked *at him, said to him*, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."³ He's all, "Wait, how can that happen? I'm an old man, how can I be born again?" & Jesus essentially told him, "You're looking at things *physically*, I'm speaking *spiritually*. I'm not talking about being born of the flesh (that's already done) you've got to be born *again* of the Spirit.

* & As Jesus continues to teach him, He says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."⁴ Now, when you & I hear that we think, "What on earth was He talking about? ... Moses lifted up a serpent? What does that have to do w/Jesus?" Listen, in the *volume of the book*, it all points *to speaks of & revolves around J.C.*

When you go back into the book of Numbers, you find a situation taking place.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 12:32]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 12:32-33]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 3:3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 3:14-15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

During the Exodus the people began to gripe and complain against God & against Moses. Things weren't going like they thought they *should* or thought they *would* when they followed Moses. So they were discouraged, disillusioned & began to gripe about it. (Things don't change much do they? People will often do that when they follow Jesus).

So God judged the people by sending venomous vipers throughout the camp & as they bit the people it caused this burning, fiery sensation & the people were dying from the venom. & So, they came to Moses, "We've sinned in speaking against you & the Lord, please pray for us that God might remove the serpents from us!" So Moses did. & The Lord said to Moses, **"Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.' So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived."**⁵

& Jesus was telling Nicodemus, that just like the children of Israel, all of humanity has been bitten by the fiery, venomous serpent of sin (& they're dying). & Even as Moses lifted that bronze (brass) serpent up on the pole, He would be lifted up on the cross. & As the Israelites believed (by faith) that if they would look to that pole & see their sins judged (bronze is the metal of judgment in scripture) they would live. Even so, if people will look to the cross & believe that their sins have been judged & paid for in full by J.C. they will be saved (delivered from the venom of sin/death & given new life). *

& This is one of the fascinating things about scripture. How God has chosen to give to us what we refer to as a "progressive revelation" concerning His plan of salvation & how His only begotten & beloved Son, J.C. would lay down His life & shed His blood for the sins of the world. We find the plan *foreshadowed*, then we find it *foretold*, then we find it *fulfilled*.

*Someone was questioning me the other day (online) about the reliability of the word of God. Ladies & Gentlemen. It's 66 different books, written by approximately 40 different human instruments, over a period of over 1500 yrs. Men who were shepherds, prophets, priests, kings, a military general, a cupbearer, fishermen, a physician, & a tentmaker. The authors span 3 different continents, 3 different languages, most of whom (obviously being separated by centuries) didn't even know each other. Yet there is absolute continuity & perfect infallible harmony through it all. I defy you to find one other source like that on the face of the earth! It doesn't exist!

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Nu 21:8-9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

On top of that God proves the reliability of His word through the *more sure* word of prophecy. The fact that He has spoken of what will happen before it happens & if it ever misses you can *dismiss* it all. Yet the Bible is filled prophecies, in the upwards of 2,000, none of which has ever missed. What's my point? We can rely on Scripture. It's the inspired, infallible, inerrant word of God. Which is why Paul told Timothy, **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."**⁶ – *

By the time we arrive at Jn Ch 20. Jesus has been interrogated, tried (found innocent) yet crucified just the same. He was examined by the chief priests & the scribes to no avail (only false witness could be summoned against Him), Pilate repeated at least 3xs, "I find no fault in Him." So that the record would state there was zero fault or flaw in the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

You see, when you go back into your O.T. you discover that when it came to the lamb (or the bull) that would be sacrificed as a burnt offering, it had to be carefully, thoroughly examined to ensure the fact that there was no wrinkle, no blemish, no fault anywhere to be found. The *perfect* would pay the price for the *perverted*, the *pure* for the *impure*, the *flawless* for the *faulty*... **If you brought a burnt offering to the Lord. You would bring it of your own free will. You would place your hand on the head of the bull & then it would be accepted on your behalf. The picture was that of your sins being placed upon the sacrifice & then the bull's blood would be shed, he would be slain on your behalf, thereby making atonement for you.** It was a *foreshadowing* of the work of J.C. on our behalf... When we come to Isaiah 53, it's *foretold*, **"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."**⁷ Then of course, it was *fulfilled* upon the cross. **"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."**⁸ *

*& This was the purpose of His coming. This was what was summed up in that final cry of victory from the cross (19:30), **"It is finished!"**⁹ Jesus had accomplished & fulfilled the sum total of the purpose of His coming... Think about all the things you want to accomplish w/your life...

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Ti 3:16-17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 53:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Co 5:21]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 19:30]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Our list of life accomplishments often includes things like, “Man I’d really like to jump out of a plane! I’d really like to go white water rafting, visit Niagara Falls or travel to Greece... Those weren’t the kind of things Jesus set out to accomplish w/His life.

It was about coming as God in human flesh, setting aside the independent use of His Deity to live as a Man among men. It was to overcome the temptation of the devil, to fulfill the law, every foreshadow, every prophecy ever uttered concerning His 1st coming. It was to render perfect obedience to the Father. To stand in the gap on our behalf as the perfect sacrifice & substitute for mankind paying the penalty of death demanded by sin. It was to satisfy God’s Holy justice & righteous wrath *against* sin & make a way for you & I to find peace w/God & be reconciled to God... “It is finished!”*

After He made His final cry, He bowed His head & “gave up” His spirit. No one took His life, He willingly laid it down. Jesus said, *“I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”*¹⁰ – Friday has happened, Saturday has happened... it’s Sunday morning & though the sun (that lights the world) hasn’t risen, the SON (who Himself is the Light of the world) already has!

Vs 1

Couple of quick observations for you. It’s semi-common knowledge but not everyone knows, so I’ll say it. The 1st day of the week is *Sunday*. Some people are of the misconception that Sunday is the Sabbath day. It’s not. Saturday is the Sabbath day; Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday morning. *This is why the church gathers on Sunday morning. The church (on the Day of Pentecost) was born on a Sunday. In Acts Ch 20 we read that the disciples came together to break bread on the 1st day of the week... So, if you’ve ever wondered why the church meets on Sunday, now you know.*

Having said that I need to say this. There’s no explicit command for when we need to gather. We could gather & worship collectively/corporately *any* day of the week w/no foul or flag on the field (scripturally speaking).

I should also say that Sunday is not that new *Sabbath Day* for the church. Jesus is our Sabbath; we rest from our works in Him. Christ is the end of the law for all who believe. When He said, “It is finished” that’s what He meant. There is no work we can do that will commend us to God. Ours is to believe on the Lord J.C. & trust in *His work* on our behalf.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 10:17-18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

There is no ritual Sabbath for the church... The 2nd thing I like to point out is that when she got there, the stone had been rolled away. Let's not suppose that the stone was rolled away so that Jesus could get *out*. It was rolled away so that eyewitnesses (a.k.a. the disciples & the women who went early that morning) could get *in* & see that the body of Jesus was gone! Jesus rose *bodily* from the dead! Now, at this point she's not *suspecting* resurrection. She thinks that perhaps the soldiers Pilate set to guard the tomb have moved His body. She doesn't even look inside. She just immediately turns about-face & hightails it back John's place to tell him & Peter what she's seen.

Vs 2

*All throughout his gospel record, this is how John identifies himself. As, "the disciple, whom Jesus loved". Evidently, he felt like Jesus loved him a little more than He loved anyone else ☺. & I love that because it's one of the qualities so endearing about our Lord. Because I'm pretty sure that He loves *me* a little bit more than He loves any of you! ☺ Just as you're fairly certain that He loves *you* a little more than He loves *me*. ☺ The truth is, He loves us each fully, individually & unlike any other could. So we all feel as though we're a little special to the Lord, because we are *all* special *to* Him & fully loved *by* Him.*

Vs 3-10

You can see this in your mind's eye, can't you? They hear what Mary frantically & panicking is saying, Peter tears out of the house immediately, & John follows right behind. But even though Peter got the jump on John, John wants us to know that he beat Peter to the tomb! ☺ & When he got there, he just leaned down to *look* in, but he didn't *go* in... What he saw mesmerized him. It sort of held him there in awe... he's doing math, he's adding things up. He looks inside (& in a modern vernacular says, "hold on, let me cook...")

Because what he saw, stunned him, it shocked him. It wasn't that there wasn't a body there. It's that the *graveclothes* were still there. & Not in some disheveled manner all strewn about the tomb as though it had been robbed or disturbed in any way. But they were lying there. What we need to understand is that for a person to get out, or for someone to take the body out, these wrappings would've been in all kinds of disorder. (Think of taking a body out of mummy type wrappings). These cloths were still lying there, there was just no body in them. It was as if a body had just passed right through them...

John is trying to figure out how this could've happened... About that time, Peter comes blowing right passed him, he barrels into the tomb & saw the same thing. But he also noticed the cloth that was wrapped around Jesus' face, folded neatly & set to the side!

Again, no would-be thief or Roman soldier is going to take the time to fold this material & set it neatly, distinctly, deliberately in its own place... It's a peculiar scene to say the least... Then John, snaps to, comes inside w/Peter & the lights came on, "He is risen!" John was the 1st person to believe in the resurrection of J.C. *It all started coming to light for him.*

Vs 9 says, "For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." Isn't that interesting? It just goes to show how we (as humanity) can get stuck w/tunnel vision & have this, "Don't confuse me w/the facts, my mind is made up" kind of mentality. The Jews were all about a Messiah that would rule & reign & break the bondage of their oppressors. They weren't wrong in that; Jesus *will do* that. At His 2nd coming. But they just couldn't allow the scriptures that involved His suffering, His death & resurrection sink in. Ps 22, *"I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;"*¹¹ Isaiah 53:8, (He was cut off from the land of the living, they made His grave w/the wicked, but w/the rich at His death). Messiah had to die! Yet in Vs 10 of Isaiah 53 it said that He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in His hand. How can that happen if He's cut off & in the grave? Only 1 way, resurrection.

When Jesus began His ministry, He went into the temple (Jn 2). & Seeing merchants selling sacrifices for profit, He made a whip of cords, drove them out & overturned the tables of the moneychangers... & the disciples remembered the scripture, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up" (Ps 69)... The religious leaders began to interrogate Him, "By what authority do You do these things! What sign will You show us?" He said, "*Destroy this temple & in 3 days I will raise it up.*" They were all, "It's taken us 46 yrs to build this temple! You're going to raise it up in 3 days!?" But He was speaking of the temple of His *body*, His resurrection from the dead. His disciples didn't understand that.

On another occasion the scribes & Pharisees said, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." Jesus told them that a wicked & adulterous generation seeks after a sign & no sign would be given except for the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was 3 days & 3 nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be 3 days & 3 nights in the heart of the earth... The supreme sign that Jesus is in fact that Messiah is His resurrection from the dead.

¹¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 22:14-16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& That is the heart of the message of the gospel. Read the book of Acts, virtually every message the apostles preached was a message of the resurrection of J.C. from the dead! ... But the disciples didn't realize or recognize those scriptures until *after* He'd risen. They weren't there waiting for Him to rise on the 3rd day. They were dejected, disheartened, disappointed & depressed... However *now*... John is buzzing, Peter is bewildered & they return to John's home.

In Vs 11-18 we discover that Mary stayed behind & she was the 1st person that Jesus appeared to after His resurrection. However, she didn't recognize Him initially (be it because it was still dark, perhaps He looked different after the brutal beating He'd endured). But the take home is this, whether or not *you* recognize it, Jesus is present w/you in resurrection power.

*In Vs 19-21 Jesus appears to His disciples. And we love the fact that the 1st words He spoke to them was, "Peace be w/you." – Each of them had *failed* the Lord, *fled* from the Lord, *forsaken* the Lord. We might've expected Jesus to issue a stern rebuke, admonish them for their absence of loyalty & lack of faith! **There was none of that. In fact, He said it twice, "Peace be w/you." Listen, maybe you've blown it, you've not been loyal to the Lord & coming here today you anticipate a hearty rebuke from the Lord. There's none of that. God loves you, speaks peace to you & desires to reconcile you to Himself. We have peace w/God through our Lord J.C. ***

Now, it was a wonderful meeting that Jesus had w/His disciples, but one was missing. Thomas wasn't there when He appeared. Look at Vs 24.

Vs 24-29

Ok. Because of Vs 25, Thomas gets the bad wrap, "Doubting Thomas". I'm not sure that's fair. Truth be told, not one of the disciples were at the tomb early Sunday morning because they believed. Peter denied Jesus 3xs, we don't call him, "Denying Peter" 😊. Perhaps "pragmatic" Thomas. Maybe Thomas the "realist". 😊

But again, when Jesus makes Himself known to him, does He rebuke Him? Not really. He meets him where he's at. Ministers to his need, "Come here Thomas, put your finger in the print of the nails in My hands, My feet, put your hand in the wound in My side... don't be unbelieving, but believing." What a word for you & me today. "Don't be unbelieving, but believing."

Now there is an application here. Thomas wasn't assembled w/the disciples on that Sunday, so he missed an encounter w/Jesus that would've changed his life...

Jesus met w/him for certain, but he went another week w/questions, uncertainty, struggles & anxieties that he didn't need to. Let's not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We want to be present when the Lord moves in the assembly!

Thomas looks at Him, says to Him, "My Lord & my God!" Quick question; did Jesus say, "Whoa Thomas! Don't be addressing Me as God! I'm not God! I'm just a good Teacher, perhaps a prophet maybe, but definitely not God!" He didn't say that did He? He received the title & encouraged Thomas to believe it. Why? Because Jesus *is* God. Look at Vs 29.

Vs 29

That opportunity has been give to you & me. The evidence is there historically. It's documented through eye-witness testimony. But you haven't seen Jesus bodily. (Btw, I might add you've never seen George Washington bodily either. Or Genghis Kahn, or Napoleon or Alexander the Great. Yet you believe they were here, & the testimony of eyewitness accounts you hold as credible. However, there's no *blessing* involved in believing in them). To believe on the Lord J.C. yields the blessing of forgiveness of sin & the free gift of everlasting life... **Close**

Vs 30-31

***John had a reason for which he wrote his eyewitness account. That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, (the Savior of the world), the Son of God. Because in believing you have life in His name... It's the power of the gospel, to revive the faith of the believer & awaken the faith of the unbeliever.**

The resurrection of J.C. proves that Jesus is everything He said He was & has accomplished everything He set to accomplish. He was delivered up for our transgressions & raised up for our justification. Believe on the Lord J.C. – be strengthened, be set free, & be saved... *

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your great Love! Your grace, Your mercy, Your forgiveness, Your faithfulness. Today we celebrate that Your Son has conquered the grave & broken the chains of sin & death. Be glorified in our lives.

You've heard the gospel. The good news that God loves you, that Christ has died for our sins, was buried & rose again the 3rd day according to the scriptures. Now you have decision to make. Accept it or reject it. Believe & receive the forgiveness of sins or harden your heart against the love of God for you. Let me encourage you, *implore* you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. By grace through faith in the Lord J.C.