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THE ULTIMATE SIGN
SEVEN SIGNS FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

It was very early on Resurrection morning that a small group of weary and saddened women left the city. It was still dark as they crossed the road to that small garden at the foot of Mt.

Moriah or Golgotha or Calvary --

- The last at cross (first to tomb)
- Outside the city of Jerusalem
- In the gloomy mists of dawn
- At the foot of that hill of execution

They came to finish the burial preparations LUKE 24 tells us. They of all people didn't expect what they found!

Message of Easter is the proclamation of resurrection - CHRIST IS RISEN -- HE IS RISEN, INDEED!

John's Gospel best captures the fullness of that morning's wonder in verses 1-29. But ...

Look at 20:30-31 for His Purpose.

John's whole Gospel is a building to a climax in chapter 20 = believe.

Note SIGNS v. 30 and the singing out of THESE in v. 31.

John built his whole Gospel as bridge with seven successive signs that transport you to the ultimate sign of chapter 20 - resurrection of Christ.

John notes the ministry of Christ in light of its impact on the hearts of those who saw these signs. What were the signs Christ performed to bring those who saw His ministry to belief?

You know them --

1. Start in John 2:1-11. Sign #1 WATER TO WINE; HE IS LORD OF CREATION
2. Go to John 4:46-54 Sign #2 HEALING NOBLEMAN'S SON FROM AFAR; HE IS ALL POWERFUL (LORD OF TIME & SPACE) Note v. 54
3. Now 5:1-15 Sign #3 THE WITHERED MAN AT BETHESDA HE IS LORD OVER SICKNESS
4. Sign #4 6:1-14 FEEDS 5000; Note v. 14 The Prophet HE IS BREAD FROM HEAVEN
5. Sign #5 6:15-25. HE IS LORD OF NATURE
6. Sign #6 Ch. 9:1-4 HEALS MAN BORN BLIND; HE IS LORD OF SIGHT v. 16 Note v. 32
7. Sign #7 Finally the last sign of His ministry, 11:1-44 RAISES LAZARUS; HE IS LORD OF LIFE

Thus in rapid succession, John builds the case of this man, Jesus:

LORD OF CREATION, WHO COMMANDS DISEASE, OPENS EYES, CONTROLS NATURE, MULTIPLIES FOOD AND DISPELS DEATH...

But the ultimate sign is Chapter 20!

Back to Chapter 20 -- it's Sunday, early, in the mist come the faithful to say farewell to dead.

They, as we, are faced with seven indisputable PROOFS -- EVIDENCE.

RESURRECTION EVIDENCE

Let's note them and concentrate on perhaps the greatest of them all - the seventh.

What were those 7 evident names of Christ's resurrection?
They are all in verses 1-15.

1. A STONE REMOVED, V. 1
2. AN EMPTY TOMB, V. 2 that was sealed and guarded
3. AN ABSENT CHRIST, V. 13
4. UNDISTURBED GRAVE CLOTHES, V. 5
5. A FACE NAPKIN BY ITSELF, V. 7
6. THE TESTIMONY OF ANGELS, V. 12
7. PERSONAL, FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS, V. 15

Let's just pause over each of them briefly --

- I. A STONE REMOVED, V. 1
 - A. Mark relates in chapter 16 - concerned - who roll away? It was very large...Matthew 18 -- angel rolled and sat!
 - B. God confirmed it was done.
 - C. Christ was alive and gone!
- II. AN EMPTY TOMB, John 20:2 Notice they were SHOCKED.
 - A. Note that they didn't expect it.
 - B. Also -- in all history no one claimed He was there.
 1. - stolen
 2. - moved
 3. - resuscitated
 4. - but not in the tomb
 - C. In fact there is an amazing absence of ANY reference to the tomb:
- III. The third indisputable proof was: AN ABSENT CHRIST, v. 2
 - A. His body was gone and they didn't have it and the Jews didn't either!
- IV. UNDISTURBED GRAVE CLOTHES, v. 5
 - A. Lying = in orderly arrangement, undisturbed.

- B. He had left them. No robber, no hoax.
 1. Note v. 5 BLEPI = GLANCED
 2. v. 6 Theorao = LOOKED
 3. v. 9 EDON = PERCEIVED AND BELIEVED
- V. A FACE NAPKIN ALONE, v. 7
 - A. He took it off and folded it.
- VI. TESTIMONY OF ANGELS, v. 12
 - A. They confirmed.
 - B. But those aren't the ultimate signs:
 1. AN EMPTY TOMB,
 2. ABSENT CHRIST,
 3. UNDISTURBED GRAVE CLOTHES,
 4. A FOLDED HEAD NAPKIN,
 5. A STONE REMOVED,
 6. AND ANGELS' WITNESS
- VII. That's nothing compared to the LAST PROOF --
 - A. We see Christ personally and face-to-face meeting His own!
 - B. John only records 3 of the 10 meetings Christ had, each so purposeful!
 - C. Resurrection Appearances of Christ - At the empty tomb outside Jerusalem, early Sunday morning (Mt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-12; John 20:1-9).
 1. EARLY SUNDAY MORNING: To Mary Magdalene out of whom He cast 7 demons, who had no role in leadership, to show His personal, loving faithfulness first! And to show the other women His gratitude for their faithfulness at the cross. (Mk. 16:9-11; Jn. 20:11-18).
 2. SUNDAY MID-DAY: To the two travelers on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24: 13-32) to stimulate personal study in the Scriptures.
 3. DURING THE DAY ON SUNDAY: To Peter in Jerusalem (Lk. 24:34; I Cor. 15:5) to

- strengthen his faith.
4. SUNDAY EVENING: to the 10 disciples in the Upper Room (Mk. 16:14; Lk. 24:36-43; Jn. 20 19-25) to commission their post-resurrection ministry .
 5. ONE WEEK LATER: to the 11 disciples in the Upper Room (Jn. 20:26-31; I Cor. 15:5) to confirm the doubting Thomas.
 6. ONE DAY AT DAYBREAK: to the seven disciples fishing on the Sea of Galilee (Jn. 21:1-23) to restore them to ministry.
 7. SOME TIME LATER: to the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-18) to send them out as disciple makers.
 8. SOME TIME LATER: to more than 500 believers (I Cor. 15:6) to verify His resurrection to them and us!
 9. SOME TIME LATER: to James (I Cor. 15:7) to confirm His brother a future great leader in the church!
 10. FORTY DAYS AFTER THE RESURRECTION: At His Ascension from the Mt. of Olives (Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8) to conclude His earthly ministry and give the marching orders for His church as they waited for Pentecost.

Some have said Christ only swooned and the cool mist revived Him. At best the idea is absurd -- Note Strauss:
 “It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulcher, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening, and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that he was a conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life: an

impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given it a loud voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship.”¹

Others say they imagined the resurrection:

“But difficulties not less insuperable present themselves when we try to think of them uniformly and without exception coming under the influence of a complete delusion. Somehow the rugged fisherman Peter and his brother Andrew, the characteristically doubting Thomas, the seasoned and not too sensitive tax gatherer, Matthew, the rather dull Philip, intensely loyal but a little slow of apprehension, do not fit easily into the conditions required for an absolutely unshakable collective hallucination. The terrors and the persecutions these men ultimately had to face and did face unflinchingly, do not admit of a halfhearted adhesion secretly honeycombed with doubt... (p. 114)

Now the peculiar thing about this phenomenon is that, not only did it spread to every single member of the party of Jesus of whom we have any trace, but they brought it to Jerusalem and carried it with inconceivable audacity into the most keenly intellectual center of Judea, against the ablest dialecticians of the day, and in the face of every impediment a brilliant and highly organized camarilla could devise. *And they won.* Within twenty years the claim of these Galilean peasants had disrupted the Jewish church and impressed itself upon every town on the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean from Caesarea to Troas. In less than fifty years it had begun to threaten the peace of the Roman Empire.”

¹ Strauss, *New Life of Jesus*, I, 412(tr).

If it wasn't a dream, and it wasn't...
If it wasn't a hoax, and it wasn't...

What changed that whole party of 16 "whom are known to have belonged to the inner circle or Christ's personal supporters:

The eleven surviving apostles.
Mary the mother of Jesus.
Mary, the wife of Cleophas.
Salome, the wife of Zebedee.
Mary Magdalene.
Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward."

What took the fleeing, fearful band like

"dynamic force consists of a habitual doubter like Thomas, a rather weak fisherman like Peter, a gentle dreamer like John, a practical tax gatherer like Matthew, a few seafaring men like Andrew and Nathanael, the inevitable women, and at most two or three others."

And made them such a dynamic force? ONE THING:

THEY SAW HIM!

V. 18, I HAVE SEEN THE LORD
V. 25, WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD
V. 28, MY LORD AND MY GOD!!

So greatest proof of all was in the FACE-TO-FACE
CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNEXPECTED.

It changed the course of history --

Soon Christ's own brother, James, believed. Then
monumentally the greatest foe, Saul, ...and on to us....

Do you see the tomb? IT'S EMPTY
Do you see the linen clothes? THEY WERE ORDERLY
Do you see the face cloth? IT WAS FOLDED
Do you see the stone? IT WAS THROWN ASIDE
Do you see the crucified one? HE IS ABSENT!

Do you see the weak and fearful? Believing and bold? The
doubting? Confessing.

He met the seekers on their own ground.

But not one skeptic, hard heart!
TODAY, DO YOU HEAR HIM??