

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are  
Most Surely Believed Among Us  
An Expository Study of the Gospel According to Luke  
Chapter 24- **Luke 24:36-49**  
354- He Opened Their Minds to  
Understand the Scriptures  
Jesus Appearing After His Resurrection- Part 2

---

July 2, 2017

**Luke 24:36-49**

**36** While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "**Peace be to you.**"

**37** But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.

**38** And He said to them, "**Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?**"

**39** "**See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.**"

**40** And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

**41** While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "**Have you anything here to eat?**"

**42** They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish;

**43** and He took it and ate *it* before them.

**44** Now He said to them, "**These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**"

**45** Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

**46** and He said to them, "**Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,**

**47** and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

**48** "**You are witnesses of these things.**"

**49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."**

To the Glory of God

Christianity is the most unique religion in the history of the world. Nothing is like it. No other religion or human philosophy even comes close to the profound distinctions and the radical differences and the complete uniqueness of the religion that was founded by God Himself against all other claims made by all other religions. Biblical Christianity is based on faith. It is based on us *believing* and *trusting* that Who Jesus revealed Himself to be and what Jesus did will bring both Forgiveness and Righteousness to patently unworthy sinners.

And since *none* of us were alive when Jesus walked the earth, all we have, the only way that any of us can believe, is by trusting what God the Holy Spirit moved upon 40 men, over a 1500 year-time frame, to write down in the 66 Books of the Holy Bible.

And because that is true, biblical Christianity does *not* start with the Resurrection as the prime Doctrine. It also does *not* start with the Attributes or Characteristics of the one true and living God. Biblical Christianity starts with the Doctrine of the Scriptures, the sacred writings that everything that we believe and trust about God and Jesus and Salvation and the Resurrection is based on.

Everything we believe and teach about Who Jesus is and what Jesus did is found in the pages of the Bible, and that is why genuine, born-again Christians believe the Bible to be the Word of God. And that is why the Christian Church believes and teaches that Scripture is both the *Word of God* (Verbum Dei) and the *Voice of God* (Vox Dei) on the earth.

Christians do not believe that a church "office" or "position" (whether that is "pope" or "Pastor") affords *any* human being with the gift of "infallibility". No, Christians believe and teach that the ability to never be in error (infallibility) resides *solely* in the Scriptures. No other book, no other writing, no other manuscript is like the Bible. And Scripture describes itself this way in **2 Timothy 3:16-17**:

**16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;**

**17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

... so, four things are to be carried out by the Church using "God-breathed Scripture", and *only* Scripture:

1. All Teaching
2. All Reproof
3. All Correction
4. All Training in Righteousness

So, the Christian Church does not base any of these four things on anything other than Scripture. And that means that Christians are those people, who have been blessed by God to be able to believe and trust, and have faith and confidence in what the 66 Books of the Holy Bible teaches and says about Who Jesus is and What Jesus did. And it is that wondrous gift of faith whereby God empowers rebels to believe that brings about our Confession. Because in **Romans 10:9-10** the Scriptures declare:

**9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;**

**10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.**

Every other religion and human philosophy is based on human beings "doing" something to gain Favor with God. They all involve very elaborate rituals and ceremonies that people must carry out to make themselves worthy to inherit Eternal Life.

And so, in reality, the only *differences* between Islam and Judaism, or between Buddhism and Hinduism, or even between Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Oneness Pentecostalism, and even Roman Catholicism, are in the various details of what they teach a person has to "do" or "accomplish" in order to be right with God. But all of them, in one form or another, teach a "works-based Salvation system" that is *entirely* based on what people must do for *themselves* in order to be in right standing with God.

But biblical Christianity alone teaches that human beings cannot do *anything* to earn Favor with God. And therefore, Christianity is *not*

about what "we do for God", it is about what "God does for us", in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished Work.

Now even though the modern Church has sadly moved *away* from the objective, propositional, absolute and eternal Truth of Scripture over the last several years, and has become much more *sensual* and *mystical* and *esoteric*, the basis of Christianity has never changed. And that is because Scripture has never changed. And it is what God has revealed to us, infallibly, in the 66 Books of sacred writ that defines what Christianity is, and what the Church is, and Who Jesus is, and What Jesus did, and what Salvation is.

Who God is, Who Man is, how to organize and run the Church, and how this great and glorious and infinitely Righteous God saves unworthy rebels are all revealed to us in the pages of the Holy Bible. And so, Christianity has *already* been defined, it has *already* been established, it has *already* been set up, and will never be *re-defined* or *re-established* by mortal men.

So, we believe what God has infallibly revealed in Scripture. And that means that fallen sinners are saved, they are Forgiven and made Righteous, by believing and trusting and having faith in what God has revealed about Who Jesus is and What Jesus did in Scripture.

But how do we do that? How does a person come to believe what the Bible says about Jesus so they can be saved? What has to happen for a human being to believe "in" and believe "on" Jesus Christ? Is "believing" simply a function of our own human "will" that I can just turn on or off? Is "trusting" what God has revealed in Scripture about Jesus merely a "choice" or a "decision", as so many in the modern Church teach? May I simply *force* myself to believe that what the Bible says about Who Jesus is and What Jesus did is true, by the power of my own intellect and will-power?

Do all people already have the capacity to believe that what the Bible says about Jesus and Salvation is true? Is faith in Jesus something that is inherent in the human vessel? Do I just *release* the faith that I already have and *that* is how I believe? Is faith in Who Jesus is the result of watching a documentary or a movie about Him? Is trusting that what the Scriptures reveal about What Jesus did the result of me learning about all the archeological discoveries over the last two thousand years? How can I come to believe and trust and have

faith in what the Scriptures say about Who Jesus is and What Jesus did? Look what Luke tells us about this in verse 45:

**Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,**

Now keep in mind, Jesus did this *after* He miraculously appeared to them. In verses 36-37 Luke writes:

**36 While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you."**

**37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.**

Now the fact that Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures *after* He miraculously appeared to them tells us several very important facts:

- ✓ Supernatural manifestations (miracles, signs and wonders, gifts of the Holy Spirit) do not bring about belief.
- ✓ Believing is connected to understanding the Scriptures.
- ✓ The "opening" of our minds to the Scriptures is a sovereign Work of God, without which we will not believe.

Now Jesus was seen at least five different times the very same day that He rose:

1. By Mary Magdalene alone in the Garden (**John 20:14**)
2. By the women as they were going to tell the disciples (**Matthew 28:9**)
3. By Peter alone (cf. **Luke 24:34**)
4. By the two disciples going to Emmaus (**Luke 24:15**)
5. Here by these men

So, while at least *nine* of the remaining disciples were discussing the Resurrection with the two men who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus, Jesus just suddenly appeared to them. And I say "nine" because Judas had already killed himself, and it is very possible that neither Peter nor Thomas was present at this miraculous appearing.

Now, there is no doubt that these men were trying to put all the pieces together. There were just too many eyewitnesses to ignore. So, whatever they were discussing, and however they were understanding all that had happened was suddenly put on hold as Jesus Himself appeared in their midst. And as they beheld the risen Lord, Jesus spoke to them and said:

**Peace be to you.**

But Dr. Luke says that their response was *not* one of faith and trust:

**they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.**

Now the Greek word used over in **Matthew 14:26** for "spirit" is *phantasma*, which means a "spectre" or an "apparition", and *not* the word for the "Spirit of God". But Luke uses the word "*pneuma*" here which correctly signifies a true "spirit". And from this, we know that at this point these men thought that Jesus had appeared to them, but that it was Jesus' *spirit*, and not Jesus *physically*.

And by that we know that these men did not understand the Resurrection properly. They still didn't put together that what Jesus and the Old Testament Scriptures taught about the Resurrection was a *uniting* of an immortal soul with a physical body.

So, they were standing there looking at what they thought was a manifestation of Jesus' soul or spirit. And then, as Jesus spoke, they became very confused because they didn't know that a resurrected spirit could communicate with people. So, look at how Jesus expanded their understanding of what a genuine Resurrection was in verses 38-43:

**38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"**

**39 "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."**

**40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.**

**41 While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"**

**42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish;**

**43 and He took it and ate *it* before them.**

Now there is much to think about what Jesus is saying here. For example, He makes the connection in verse 38 to how we doubt when He said:

**Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?**

Human beings are very fragile creatures. And we doubt when faced with trouble. When things do not go as planned, when circumstances suddenly change, when what we think is correct proves not to be correct, we doubt. We doubt ourselves, we doubt God, we doubt Truth, and we doubt Scripture.

Now the word "doubt" comes from a Greek word that means: *inward reasoning; a questioning about what is true*. And the word "trouble" here means: *to take away the calmness of mind; to disturb and make restless; to trouble; to make anxious; to stir up and distress*.

So, when God either sovereignly *causes* or *allows* circumstances or situations to come to us that take away the calmness of our minds or that disturbs us or that makes us restless or anxious, or that stirs us up and distresses us, we doubt, we begin to reason within ourselves and question what is really true. And this is what the disciples were doing.

Now, at this point, if Jesus doesn't do or say something these men would go into despair. Nothing like this has ever happened before and they have no reference point. They have no words, no idea as to what to say or do next. The vague references to a Resurrection in the Old Testament are simply not enough to guide them through this. So, in His Mercy, Jesus personally intervenes and says:

**39 "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."**

**40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.**

Jesus gives these men indisputable proof that it is Him by pointing to the fact that apparitions do not have physical flesh and bones. And the fact that He shows them His Hands and Feet indicate to us that they still bore the wounds of the Crucifixion. So, by this,

Jesus was teaching them again that a true Resurrection involved a physical body.

These men saw that He had the shape, and features, and exact resemblance of their Master. So, it must be His ghost! It must be a vision! No, Jesus said:

**See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have**

*"I have Hands and Feet, and therefore, have a true Body. I can move these Hands and Feet, and therefore, have a living Body. And you can see the marks of the nails in My Hands and Feet, and therefore, it is My Own Body, the very same Body that you saw crucified, it is not a borrowed Body."*

And by doing and saying this, Jesus lays down this Principle, that a spirit does *not* have flesh and bones. A spirit is *not* compounded with tangible matter, nor is it shaped into various members, that consist of different parts, like our bodies are.

Now notice carefully that Jesus does not tell us here what a spirit *is*, but rather what a spirit *is not*. But He is bringing these men to one place, one conclusion: *"Believe that I am Jesus, Who was crucified and am now alive again!"*

So, *everything* that Jesus is doing here and *everything* He is saying is to one single end, that these men would believe. That these men would trust and not doubt. That whatever troubling is going on in their minds right now would cease so that these men will know the Truth, and based on that, that they would go out into the world and proclaim that Truth so that all of God's elect would believe. Listen to the way that Jesus prayed in **John 17:13-21**:

**13 "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.**

**14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**

**15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.**

**16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**

**17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.**



**18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.**

**19 "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.**

**20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;**

**21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.**

But this was just too much for these men to bear, and so, Luke writes this in verse 41:

**they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement**

Again, belief and trust and faith in God and in Jesus and in Scripture is much more than a human "decision" or a mere "choice" or an "act of the human will". Faith is a gift from God. The ability for anyone to believe and to trust and to have faith in God and in what God has said, and in Who Jesus is and What Jesus did, involves a sovereign Act of God. Human beings simply *cannot* rub the two sticks of our own intellect and human will power together to produce faith. Look at what the Apostle Paul taught about faith from **Ephesians 2:8-9**:

**8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;**

**9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

Now here, the Apostle teaches that Salvation is: *by* the Grace of God and it is *through* faith. And then he ends this by saying:

[Salvation is] **not as a result of works, so that no one may boast**

But look closely at the last part of verse 8:

**... and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;**

Now we know that Salvation is certainly "not of ourselves", and we also know that Salvation is surely "the gift of God". But, in context, that is *not* what the Apostle is teaching here. Paul is *expanding* on the

“faith” that Salvation is “through” by telling his readers that the faith that it takes to be saved is two things:

1. Saving faith is “not of yourself”
2. Saving faith is “the gift of God”

So, Paul is teaching here that the faith that it takes for lost sinners to be saved does not originate from inside the human being. And that means that “saving faith”, the kind of faith it takes to believe Who Jesus is and What Jesus did so that we may be forgiven and made righteous, is *not* inherent in human beings. This kind of faith is not a matter of working it up by playing music real fast or real long. It isn't a product of human “decision” or “choice”. Paul was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to say that Saving faith is not of yourself. It is external to human beings. It doesn't come from within.

And then, Paul goes on to say that Saving Faith is a gift of God. And that means that it is given based on the very same thing that everything else that God gives to us is based on, His Own sovereign Prerogative. We cannot do anything to earn this faith and we cannot ever deserve it. And God is never, under any circumstances, obligated to give it. Saving Faith is given as a free gift by God to undeserving rebels based on one single criteria, because God chose to give it. Period.

And that means that the claims of great “mountain-moving faith” by many in the modern Church are nothing more than “human boasting”, and are simply a different way that fallen rebels go about to rob God of the Glory that He alone is entitled to have. For sinful humans to brag about how much faith you have does not honor God, unless you think that you are the one who creates faith.

These men were looking at the resurrected Christ, Who was standing right there with the nail prints in His Hands and Feet, and was talking to them. And Luke tells us that it was two things that prevented them from believing; two very human attributes that worked together to hinder faith:

1. Their joy
2. Their amazement

Now we can understand their dilemma perfectly, because we also doubt in our own joy and amazement. And so, some of the “troubling” that goes on in the human mind is not always what we would consider to be bad. Here human joy at maybe really seeing their Lord again and absolute amazement at the miracle of Jesus’ Resurrection was creating doubt in their minds. It was causing them to disbelieve, to question what is true.

And this illustrates again the weakness of miracles and signs and wonders in either *creating* faith or in *sustaining* genuine faith. As powerful as what they were all looking at with their own eyes was, the net result of everything that has happened to them so far was:

**... they still could not believe *it* ...**

So, if these men are going to be the witnesses to the world of all that Jesus is and does, Jesus, Himself, is going to have to do yet more. Because, so far, what they have seen and heard is simply not enough. They are going to have to have more than the Resurrected Lord standing before them. More than hearing Him speak. More than looking at the nail prints in His Hands and Feet. In order for these men to believe, Jesus is going to have to personally do more. So, look what He did:

**41 ... He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"**

**42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish;**

**43 and He took it and ate *it* before them.**

Once again, Jesus is *proving* to these men that it was really Him, and *not* a vision or a spirit or an apparition, by literally eating food right before them. And there are a lot of things we could say about this, but evidently, this one thing stood out in the mind of the Apostle Peter because over in **The Acts 10:39-41**, he said:

**39 "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.**

**40 "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible,**

**41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.**

It was at this time that Jesus did the one thing that these men needed in order to believe:

**44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."**

**45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,**

Here we see a direct correlation between faith and the Scriptures. We see here that Jesus sovereignly opened their minds to the Scriptures. And this tells us two things:

1. Their minds were closed
2. Faith comes by understanding Scripture

If Jesus opened their minds here in verse 45, that means that from verses 36-43 their minds were closed. Now this is amazing that human beings could see and talk to a resurrected Savior and yet still be closed minded, still doubt, still not believe or trust. And this tells you that the most important factor in believing is not what your eyes see. People make statements like, "*I know what I saw.*" or "*I saw that with my own eyes*", as the *basis* of what they believe and why they believe it. And that is a terrible mistake. In fact, we really don't know what we see. Many times, we have no idea how to comprehend or how to interpret or even what to think about what our eyes see or what our ears hear or what we touch with our hands. What God says and what God does and Who God is, is far above us. God is bigger than we are, wiser than we are, and so much better than we are. 600 years before Jesus was born, the Prophet said this in **Isaiah 55:8-9**:

**8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord.**

**9 "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.**

So, God and the Ways of Gods are beyond our understanding. And that means that if any of us are ever going to understand God rightly,

God Himself must reveal Himself to us. God must come to us, precisely because we cannot go to God. God must speak to us in ways that fallen humans can understand. John Calvin said:

“For who is so devoid of intellect as not to understand that God, in so speaking, lisps with us as nurses are wont to do with little children? Such modes of expression, therefore, do not so much express what kind of a being God is, as accommodate the knowledge of him to our feebleness. In doing so, he must, of course, stoop far below his proper height.”<sup>1</sup>

So, in His Mercy, God revealed Himself to Mankind most fully in words. And that means that we cannot see the best or the highest or the clearest manifestation of God in the wonder of Creation or through astounding miracles or in amazing signs and wonders. We see God the best in a Book. His Book. God used language to show us Himself. He uses words and nouns and pronouns and adjectives and adverbs and prepositional phrases to reveal His majestic Glory. We see God in Word Pictures in the Bible. We hear God speak in a Book.

And, because God revealed Himself to us in a Book, it is in knowing and understanding that Book that produces faith, that creates trust, and that originates belief. The Apostle Paul wrote this in **Romans 10:17**:

**So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.**

Now the word “**comes**” here means: *origination or source*. And the word “**hearing**” literally means: *hearing with the physical ear*. So, the *origination* of saving faith, the *source* of believing, is people hearing the Word of Christ preached and taught, rightly and fully.

Now God could have given faith anyway He wanted to. But in His Wisdom and Power, God has chosen the full and correct preaching and teaching of the Word of Christ as the “means” or the “way” or the “method” by which people, who are dead in their trespasses and sins, may believe.

So, God uses the full and correct preaching and teaching of the Word of Christ, the heralding of the biblical Gospel the proclamation

---

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin; *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; Book 1, Chapter 13, Section 1

about the Christ to *originate* or *cause* "saving faith" in those chosen for Salvation.

And so, it was when Jesus sovereignly "opened their minds to the Scriptures" that these men, who were troubled and doubting, began to believe. The ability for these men to no longer doubt, the power of these men to believe, the source of their steadfastness and their unwavering commitment to go the world with the Gospel was in Jesus opening their minds to the Scriptures.

And it was at that point that Jesus gives to these men the one single Message they are to preach:

**46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,**

**47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.**

**48 "You are witnesses of these things.**

Now this is Luke's version of the Great Commission. This is the biblical Gospel in a nutshell. And this is the one, single Message that the Church is authorized to preach to every human being on earth. So, whatever else we might do, we *must* do this. Feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and tending to the poor are all fine and good, and they are all things we need to be about. But, *not* at the expense of preaching and teaching the biblical Gospel. That is our primary responsibility and that is our primary Command and that is what we will primarily be held accountable to.

But finally, while it is true that we cannot go to God and that God must come to us, while it is true that we cannot create or originate faith, and while it is true that we can't twist God's Arm to compel Him to act against His Will, it is also true that we must preach His Message in His Power. We must do God's Will, in God's Way. And so, here at the end of this Passage, Jesus gives these men one final Command:

**And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.**

Preaching and teaching the biblical Gospel in our own strength and power is just as rebellious and just as wrong and just as

dishonoring to God as preaching another Gospel. If souls are to be saved, and if God is to be glorified, we must be “clothed with Power from on High”.

This is the Power of the Holy Spirit to anoint us and empower us and to enable us to preach and teach the Truth, and then to obey that Truth ourselves. But it is also the power to carry out God’s Will and to proclaim God’s Word in total submission to Jesus Christ and in full dependence on Him. To preach the Truth by trusting in what we can do for ourselves or by depending on what our organizations, that we have built, can do dishonors Jesus Christ and fights against the primary Goal of God in salvation:

That God alone be glorified

We must understand that the primary Goal of God is *not* simply that lost people are saved, or that the nations of the world repent, or that the Christian Church grows in numbers and influence in the earth. Those things, in and of themselves, will become a reproach to God unless and until the end of all those things is that Jesus Christ alone is magnified and worshipped and adored and treasured.

So, the primary Goal of God in everything He does in the earth, including Salvation, is that He alone be known and adored and worshipped. And so, Evangelism exists because Worship doesn’t. We go forth into the world to preach the Gospel so that people will be saved, so that they will worship God. So, God’s Love to unworthy sinners exists so that they will be so radically transformed by what God alone does for them, that they will love God. God loves wicked rebels so that they will find the fullness of Joy and the highest degree of Satisfaction in *rejecting* the shiny trinkets of this life and *treasuring* Jesus Christ.

Remember, it doesn’t take God the Holy Spirit to empower people to build great cathedrals. It doesn’t take the anointing of the Holy Spirit to become powerful and influential in this earth. It doesn’t take being clothed with Power from on High to impact large crowds of people with a message that makes much of them and tickles their ears. Any humanly initiated religion can do that. Any man-made religious organization can do that. And, all through history, man-made religious organizations have done that.

But it takes the Power of the Holy Spirit to love Jesus, and to live to His Glory, and to decrease in your own importance. It takes the anointing of the Holy Spirit for us to depend on God. It takes an external Power that we do not have within ourselves to preach and teach the Biblical Gospel faithfully day in and day out, month in and month out, year in and year out, all the while believing and hoping and trusting and not doubting. It takes the anointing of the Holy Spirit for us to delight in God. And it takes being clothed with Power from on High to preach to God's Glory so that sinners can hear and believe and have faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ unto both Forgiveness and Righteousness so that God alone will be seen and magnified.

Now according to the Apostle John, Thomas was not present on that Sunday evening when Jesus appeared to the other disciples. And regardless of what the other men told him, Thomas categorically *refused* to believe that Jesus had risen until he saw Jesus with his own eyes, a declaration that earned him the unflattering title of "Doubting Thomas."

Now I don't believe for one second that the Holy Spirit inspired John to include this account in order to embarrass Thomas. Rather, it's recorded because God has important things to teach us about our *own* doubts, and what kind of "seeing" really brings us joy.

But, as things would go, by the end of that first day of the Resurrection, Thomas was in real bad shape. The only other member of the Twelve, besides Thomas, who had *not* seen the risen Christ was Judas Iscariot.

And as he listened to his friends excitedly describe their encounter with Jesus, Thomas was not excited at all. He was skeptical and frustrated. And he even blurted out:

### **John 20:25b**

**... Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.**

So, why did Thomas respond this way to friends he knew so well and trusted? The words he spoke tell us of the horror he actually saw. The Gospel accounts of Jesus's Death are sparse on details, so it's hard for us to feel what Thomas felt as he actually watched Jesus die. In fact, Thomas's declaration of unbelief ("unless I see in his hands the mark of



the nails”) is the only time “nails” are mentioned in the Gospels as part of Jesus’s Crucifixion. Most of what we know about Roman crucifixion comes from other sources besides the Bible.

The slaughter of Jesus outside Jerusalem had been so gruesome that it was all but humanly impossible for Thomas to imagine a Resurrection of Jesus’s Body. True, Thomas had seen Lazarus’s resurrection. But Lazarus had died of an illness, and Jesus had been there to raise him. But this time, it was Jesus Who had been torn to shreds, and it was Jesus Who had died.

So, how does a mutilated Man raise Himself? And let’s not assume too quickly that we would have responded any differently than the “doubter” had we seen what Thomas had seen.

Now, while Thomas’s doubts may have been humanly *understandable*, they were not *commendable* at all. In fact, they were *sinful*, as is all unbelief. The Apostle wrote this in **Romans 14:23b**:

**... whatever is not from faith is sin.**

Whatever is done without full hope and trust in Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior is sin. Whatever is done to rob any amount of Glory from God and take it for ourselves is sin. Whatever is done without being in full submission to God’s Will is sin. Whatever is done without being fully dependent on Jesus for both Provision and Sustenance is sin. And that is true, whether we are talking about eating food or preaching the Gospel or praying or seeking to save souls.

And notice that Jesus was not in a hurry to relieve Thomas’s doubts. He let Thomas stew in his own unbelieving words uncomfortably alone in the midst of a joyful fellowship of believers for eight awkward days. Finally, a full week after that first Sunday, Jesus appeared when Thomas was present and said:

**John 20:27**

**Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.**

... and that’s all it took, Jesus doing what Thomas needed. And Thomas’s repentance was beautiful:

**John 20:28b**

**... My Lord and my God!**

Then Jesus said something very profound that was not meant only for Thomas, but was meant for me:

**John 20:29**

**Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed.**

Thomas had been chosen by Jesus to be a unique authoritative witness of His Resurrection. And that's why Thomas was granted the gift of "seeing" Jesus with his physical eyes.

But Jesus's Rebuke is crystal clear. There were others who had *not* seen Jesus, but still believed in His Resurrection. And their believing was *more blessed* than Thomas's seeing. Why? Because those saints relied on their "eyes of faith" more than the "eyes in their heads". And Jesus said that "faith-seeing", in this Age, results in more joy than "eye-seeing". And this is why Peter, Thomas's fellow eyewitness, later wrote:

**1 Peter 1:8-9**

**8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,**

**9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**

And that means that Faith, as the Bible describes it, is not blind. *Unbelief* is blind. But Faith "sees" a Reality beyond what eyes can see, a Reality that God reveals to us which is more important, in fact, more *real*, than what we can "see" with our physical eyes. And God mercifully reveals this Reality to us through His living and active Word that lights our path.

Since the Ascension, Jesus Christ is "seen" only through the inerrant Testimony of His Prophets and Apostles, recorded in the Scriptures. And this is the blessed kind of "seeing" that enables us to "walk by faith, not by sight".

Glorious, inexpressible Joy comes, not by “seeing” Jesus now, but by “believing” in Him now. And Jesus Himself said that those who believe in Jesus in this Age are more blessed than those who have actually seen Him. And that is true because believing is “true” seeing. And it is “faith-sight”, not “eyesight”. And faith-sight results in Eternal Life.

Jesus came to open the eyes of faith. Jesus said everything He said and did everything He did so that we would believe. Because, as we have already seen several times, physical eyesight was *never* a guarantee that people really “saw” Jesus anyway. And Judas Iscariot was the greatest witness to that tragic Truth.

So, like He did for the other ten, Jesus forgave Thomas of his faith-failure and mercifully restored him. But because of Thomas’s unbelief, Jesus made him a gracious example for us of the wrong kind of “seeing”. So, if you find that your “seeing” of Jesus is impaired, Thomas teaches you not to declare:

“Unless I see... I will not believe,”

but rather say:

“I believe, Lord... help my unbelief”

Amen. Let’s pray.

© 2008-2017 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 [www.covenantofpeace.net](http://www.covenantofpeace.net)

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse study of **The Gospel According to Luke**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.