

I Have Seen the Lord!

The Testimony of the Resurrection

Church April 16, 2017; April 9, 2023

John 20

1 Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb.

2 So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.

4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;

5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*; but he did not go in.

6 And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*,

7 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.

9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

11 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;

12 and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.

13 And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you**

seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

16 Jesus said to her, "**Mary!**" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "**Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'**"

18 Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and *that* He had said these things to her.

19 So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**"

20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

21 So Jesus said to them again, "**Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**"

22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**

23 "**If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained.**"

24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "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."

26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "**Peace be with you.**"

27 Then He said to Thomas, "**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.**"

28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus said to him, "**Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and *yet* believed.**"

30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the

disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now when the Lord graciously saved me back in 1971- the Arguments about the Resurrection were more *up-front* and *prominent* and they were much more *intense* than they are today. Back in the early 1970's- there was widespread Consensus among Believers and Non-believers alike- *especially* here in America that the literal Resurrection of Jesus was the "*Line of Demarcation*".

And so, every individual saw the Need to take a Stand about this fantastic Truth. And so, people either eagerly believed in the Resurrection; or they categorically rejected it- just as eagerly. And if a person accepted the biblical Narrative about the physical Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead- they also *generally* believed the rest of the fantastic Truths that are found in the Bible. And those people proudly wore the label of "Christian" very proudly. And those people who rejected the Resurrection as either "scientifically impossible" or as simply a "circus trick" of an ancient magician- then *generally* speaking- those people also relegated the rest of the Bible to be just Myth and utter Nonsense- and they were *intentionally* and *proudly* not a "Christian".

But a strange thing has happened over the last 52 years. Today, that single Question- that single Debate- that one Issue of- "*Did Jesus literally and physically rise from the Dead?*"- is not nearly as Prominent; and not nearly as Intense as it once was. Because, at one level, people feel that the Resurrection of a Man from the Dead 2,000 years ago- way across the ocean- really doesn't have an impact on their own personal lives. I mean, we have our technologically sophisticated cell-phones; and we went to school; and we have a brain; and it all seems today to be a Discussion that has little or no relevance to the average person. Because, after all, different people believe in different things, and maybe it happened; and maybe it didn't. And if it did, and it helps some people to believe that in order to get along in this Life- then fine. But it really doesn't make much difference to me; it really doesn't affect me and my Life all that much.

And so, many people today really think that they can call themselves a "*Christian*"; and they can join a Church; and they think they can be in "*Good Standing*" with God; and either be unsure about the Resurrection of Jesus- or even outright reject it. And sadly, there is not much that many of those "*religious Organizations*" would ever do to challenge those people about that- even though

the Bible *categorically* teaches that if you do not believe in the Resurrection- you *cannot* be saved.

You see, in our modern American Culture- where everything today is “*Relative*”- Objective, Propositional, and Absolute Divine Truth is no longer important. Our Culture has elevated “*Personal Opinion*” and how someone may “feel” about an Issue- to be as valuable as “*Truth*”. And at the same time- we have *lowered* and *devalued* Divine Absolute Truth to be nothing more important than “*Personal Opinion*.” It is an odd swap.

So, it is common today to hear people say, “*Well, that’s just your Opinion*” when presented with clear Biblical Truth that they either don’t like or don’t want to hear. And it is common today for people to honestly believe that what they “believe”; and what they “trust in”; and what they “accept” is “*Truth*”- as long as they are sincere about it or agree with it- even if what they believe or trust in- isn’t even true- or *contradicts* the Absolute Truth of Scripture.

Many take the Attitude that “*I may or may not call myself a ‘Christian’. And if the Resurrection seems helpful to me, then I may believe it. But if it doesn’t- then I won’t. But whether I do or I don’t- it doesn’t affect my Life; and I can still be happy and prosperous; and I can still find Love and Comfort without believing in it!*” Far too many people today- *sadly even in Church*- think that believing in the Resurrection is nothing but “fluff”- that it may be nice- but it has no effect of their Relationship with God; and it doesn’t change where they are going to spend Eternity.

But is that true? Does it matter, as far as our Eternity is concerned, whether or not Jesus rose from the Dead? And the Answer to that Question is what I want to explore today.

Now behind those two different kinds of Unbelief- the kind from 52 years ago and the kind from today- is a completely *different* set of Assumptions. For example, back when I was first saved- the Assumption among Unbelievers then was that there was a Body of fixed, closed, “*natural Laws*” that make the World understandable and scientifically manageable. And those Laws simply *did not allow* the Truth claim that Someone had risen from the dead to be believed by intelligent and rational and thinking people.

And that was a commonly held Assumption back then- that the modern World with its scientific understanding of “*Natural Laws*” does not allow for Resurrections. So, Unbelief back then was often rooted in a kind of smug, intellectual, Self- righteousness disguised as scientific Analysis- when in fact it was simply just blind, ignorant, Disbelief- that came from Arrogance.

But today- in 2023- that is *not* the most common working Assumption that we face. Today, the Assumption is *not* that there are “*Natural Laws*” *outside* of

me- that *forbid* my Acceptance of the Resurrection of Jesus, but rather- the Assumption that we face today is that there is a “*Personal Law*” that is *inside* of me that says: “*I don’t have to accept anything in my Life that I don’t find personally Helpful or personally Relevant.*” Or you could state this modern Assumption another way by saying that many people today actually believe that: “*Truth for me is not Objective or Propositional- it isn’t Divine or Absolute- but Truth is simply whatever I find personally Attractive and Helpful.*”

And with that new Assumption in place, and with that new subjective and suppositional “*Inner Law*” in place- it really doesn’t matter whether Jesus rose from the Dead or not, because, the thinking is that whether He did or didn’t is totally *disconnected* to the Life of most people in the 21st Century and is therefore- completely Irrelevant. Their only Issue is: “*Do I care? Do I personally find that idea Helpful? Do I ‘feel’ that it helps me flourish as a human being?*”

And if it seems like the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead on the third day *doesn’t*- then they will view the Resurrection the same way they view UFOs; and possible life in some distant galaxy; or some special effects in a movie- they really don’t need to bother with it. And their false, pseudo- Humility will also say, “*But, of course, if this silly Superstition helps somebody else- then by all means- that’s just peachy keen- but don’t you dare try to impose that Nonsense on me*”.

And that is *increasingly* becoming the Attitude of more and more people here in America- *especially* those younger than 52. In fact, some of you sitting here today may actually think that way- without even *knowing* that’s the way you think. You have simply absorbed this carnal Logic from the general Culture- because that way of thinking is now woven into most television Shows; most Advertising; and most Movies;- and is taught in most Curricula from the Public School System.

So, what I am attempting to do this morning is confront this Issue head on- and honestly examine how we as human beings sift through the “*New Indoctrination*” that is coming at us every Day from all these various Sources. And my Hope is that when I put the Resurrection of Jesus Christ before you today- *not* simply as a “*Religious Belief*”- but as an historical Fact- that you will see just how important it really is. And that the Resurrection is *not* something that “*might be helpful to some people*”- but something that is *required*- if *anyone* hopes to spend Eternity in Heaven. And if I, by God’s Grace, I am successful this morning - then you will not so easily buy into the Bombardment of *pagan* and *humanistic* and just flat out *wrong* Information concerning this Issue.

So, this Sermon is about what *really* matters to you- not just what your own heart *says* matters to you. It is about Absolute Truth and your relation to that Truth.

Now I am going to look at our text from **John 20** in a moment- but let me begin this Discussion with a Sermon that the Apostle Paul preached to the Philosophy lovers on Mars Hill in Athens about 20 years after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And this Sermon was recorded for us by the same Dr. Luke that was moved on by God the Holy Spirit to write the Gospel Record that bears his name as well as the Diary of the first 30 years of the Christian Church (**the Acts**). So, please turn to **The Acts 17:30-34** with me.

Now this Sermon that Paul preached begins in verse 22 but I want you to read with me the *conclusion* of this Sermon that begins down in verse 30 that says:

30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,

31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."

33 So Paul went out of their midst.

34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

So, first of all, notice in verses 30&31- *in great contrast to what many in the modern Church teach*- the Apostle Paul clearly says here that God doesn't *ask* anyone to Repent; He doesn't *request* anyone to repent; He doesn't *plead* with anyone to repent; He doesn't *beg* for anyone to repent. We are the ones who ask and plead and beg and request. But the Bible says here that God Almighty- the Maker of Heaven and Earth- the Creator and Owner of the Universe and all that is in it...

... is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,

And the Greek word that was translated here into English as "**declaring**" means: *to order or to command*. So, you see, there was a time that the world at large did not know God because God dealt *exclusively* with the Jew. And verse 30 says that God "winked" or "**overlooked**" the "**times of Ignorance**".¹ But now that Jesus has come; now that Jesus has lived a perfectly sinless Life; now that Jesus had fulfilled the Promise of the Messiah; now that Jesus has died on the Cross; and now that Jesus has *physically* and *literally* risen from the dead- God is now dealing

¹ The Era or the Age when the Old Covenant was in force was called, the "**Times of Ignorance**" because God dealt primarily with the Jew during this Age and left the majority of the peoples of the world in Ignorance concerning God and Salvation.

with peoples “out of” every Nation, Tribe and Language- and NOT primarily with the Jew. And because God is now dealing with the peoples of the world- He no longer overlooks the general Ignorance of the world at large that they have toward God- and so, God now *declares*; He *commands*; He *demands*; God *expects*; God *requires* that *all people everywhere*- repent!

God *expects all men everywhere* to categorically *reject* their Sins; *reject* their Paganism; *reject* their Idolatries; *reject* their Blasphemies; and *reject* their lying and *reject* their stealing and *reject* their murder *reject* their Dishonoring of Parents; *reject* their Covetousness; *reject* their Abandonment and Neglect of Lord’s Day Worship; and *reject* their ungodly Behavior- and turn from it all. And God *expects* and *demands* that *all people everywhere* love and serve the living God. Now look again at verse 31-

because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

God’s Word tells us that God Almighty has fixed a Day in which He will judge the entire world- both Jew and Gentile- in His Righteous Might- by the one single Man Whom God has chosen and appointed- namely, Jesus, the Christ. And to give Divine Credibility to this Fact- God Almighty raised Jesus Christ from the Dead!

So, we have to understand that the main Purpose of the Resurrection of Jesus is that by this Event happening- the Owner and the Creator of the Universe has placed His own personal “*Seal of Approval*” on all that Jesus said and all that He did in His earthly Ministry. So, that is why God said this about Jesus in **Matthew 3:17** when John baptized Him,

This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.

Now many people just pass over this Statement by God- but we must realize that this Statement show us the amazing *Exclusivity* of the Relationship between God the Father and God the Son. For example, Jesus is God’s “**beloved**” Son- in the sense- that God the Father loves God the Son MORE than He loves anything or anyone else. God loves many things; and we should be thankful that He loves many people- but God loves Jesus with a Love that is *exclusive* between Him and His Son.

And Jesus is “**well-pleasing**” to the Father- in the sense- that NOBODY else has ever pleased the Father like the Son. Jesus pleased God- *perfectly*. And that means that all of the great heroes in Israel’s Past- like Abraham and Moses and

even King David *never* pleased the Father like the Son has. So, this is an *exclusive* “Love” and an *exclusive* “Pleasing” that no one else has ever known.

So, we are blessed with having God’s Love and we are blessed with being able to please the Lord- but ONLY as we are IN the Lord Jesus. Because other than us being in “Union” with Jesus- we do NOT please God- because on our *best day*- we are sinners- and ALL our Efforts at pleasing God are filled with Mistakes and fleshly Limitations and Failures. But because God has placed us in Union with Jesus- we may hear God say to us one day,

Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master. (Matthew 25:21)

So, God the Father has given all Mankind an *unchangeable* Divine Assurance that He is going to judge the entire unbelieving and sinful World by raising Jesus from the Dead. Now look against at the first part of verse 32:

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer...

Here, Dr. Luke tells us that at this point in his Sermon- Paul’s listeners just cut him off; and they mocked him because of the patently ridiculous Claim that Jesus was physically raised from the Dead. And that, in itself, is a very significant Fact of History because it shows us that the *breathtaking* Spread of Christianity during the early Years of the Church did NOT happen among backward; superstitious; and gullible people- who *didn’t* think; and who were *not* educated; and who were *not* cultured; and who *didn’t* understand Science; and who just *blindly* believed and followed *whatever* was being taught; and people who thought miraculous Resurrections were normal. But then notice carefully what Paul said at the end of verse 30:

... God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,

God calls the whole World to repent- even the Gentiles who had no knowledge of God at all- precisely because every human on earth has sinned against Him. In other words- Paul is saying that *regardless* of our level of Education; or our financial Wellbeing; or our political Clout; or the degree of our cultural Experience- *regardless* of anything that Science has discovered or *thinks* that it has discovered- there is one single thing that is the great “Equalizer” of all men- and that is that we are all Sinners. And that, in spite of overwhelming

Evidence- we have *not* treasured or valued God above all things. And because of that- we are all guilty of being *de facto* “Idolaters”.

Now when our children were young- Rhonda and I took them to the Smoky Mountains. And as we were driving all through that Area- we came across a place that had trained pigs. And I thought the children would like to watch pigs sit at a table; and eat with a knife and fork- with dress clothes on. So, we went- and they laughed and laughed. But one of the workers rushed in to tell the boss that a pig had gone back to the mud before they were able to take the tuxedo off. And watching that pig just have a ball wallowing in the mud with his tuxedo on- taught me a great Lesson:

You can dress Sin up in a tuxedo to try to make it look more acceptable to Society- just like you can put a tuxedo on a pig and train it to sit at the table to eat with knife and fork. But sooner or later- no matter how intelligent or sophisticated or cultured or wealthy you might be- *who you really are*- will manifest itself. And as time goes on- you will manifest your unsaved and sinful Depravity and your fallen Nature- in some way. And so, you will lust; or hate; or blaspheme; or, in some other way- you will sin against a holy God. And you will do that- no matter how nice the tuxedo looks; and no matter how nice the table cloth is- the pig will *always* revert back to what he really is- and he will go outside and he will wallow in the mud.

And pigs act like that- because underneath all the training- they are pigs. And fallen and depraved human beings- sin- because underneath all of our “tuxedos” of Education and Wealth and Culture and Sophistication- we are “Sinners” and “Rebels” by Nature. We were *conceived* in Sin; and we are Wicked to our Core.

And so, we are not Sinners because of the various Acts of Rebellion and Lawbreaking that we periodically engage in. No, we periodically engage in those Acts because in the very DNA make up of our fallen Nature- we are wicked Rebels. And so, our Problem is not necessarily “*what we do*”- but “*who we are*”. And “*who we are*” is a Sinner. The Apostle Paul said this in **Ephesians 2:3a**

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath,

Yet we CANNOT change our own Nature. And there is nothing on this earth we can use- that has the Ability to change “who we are”. And so, you cannot *educate* your way out of “who you are”. There is no Vaccine or Medicine you can take that will change “who you are”. There is no Technology or Surgery or Law or Governmental Degree that can alleviate the real Problem of “who you are”. That is why Jesus said we

MUST be born again.

And so, the modern Pied Pipers and motivational Speakers, who *masquerade* as Preachers and Teachers of the Gospel, are all wrong. You can't do something to make yourself to be a "better you". You are fallen- and you need a Savior- who has the Power to transform your Nature and change Who you are.

And that means that all of the sociological Experiments engaged in over the last 150 years that say that in order to reduce Crime and in order to make "Bad" people to be "Good" we just need to give them more Money; more Opportunity; and more Education. Yet all of those Efforts have been unmitigated Disasters- precisely because we cannot fix our Problem by altering our *external* Environment. Our Problem is who we are- NOT where we live.

So, we cannot *spend* our way out of Sin. No amount of Money can make a sinner to be clean. The Best that Money can do- is to *insulate* you- to some extent- from the Penalties or the Repercussions of our Sin and the public Scorn of Sin. For example, a rich drunk may beat his Children and fall on the floor. But he does it at home where nobody but his family sees him and his Sin stays a Secret. But a poor drunk falls in the ditch on the side of the Road and everybody sees him.

But no amount of technological Breakthroughs can eliminate Sin; no amount of Governmental Exercise over our lives can eliminate Sin; There isn't a pill you can take; or Surgery that you can have; that medical Science provides that will alter the human Soul and make a "sinner" to be "godly". And no amount of so-called "human free- will" or the implementation of things like "Self- control" or "Discipline" can remove Sin from us. Our Problem is our own Nature- Who we are.

And, for those familiar with Church- you also can't *praise* your way out of Sin either. And you can't "*speak the creative word*" or "*bind the devil*" or "*plead the Blood*" to remove yourself from God's Wrath against your Sin. No, the Bible is crystal clear about this, dear friends- we must *repent* our way out of Sin. We must humble ourselves under the mighty Hand of God; embrace the Insult of the Reality of our Sin; and freely admit that we are vile Sinners, who are hopelessly sold under Sin; and people, who cannot help BUT to Sin and a people who are in desperate NEED of a Savior and the Miracle of the New Birth.

And if God would be so kind to grant us the Desire and Ability to come to the Place where we fully understand and agree that we *deserve* nothing more than the eternal Wrath and Damnation of a holy and righteous God for our Sins. But if God would give us the Gift of "saving Faith"- then we would eagerly hate our Sin; and we would quickly repent; and we would trust in Jesus and we would be saved.

So, in that helpless and totally dependent State- we must beg God for a Mercy that we do not deserve; and we must trust in the finished Work of our Lord

Jesus Christ- Who unlike us- did indeed love and serve God *perfectly; flawlessly;* and *sinlessly;* and Who carried out His Father's Will- *perfectly!*

And the Promise of Scripture is if you have been chosen by God from before the Foundation of the world; if you have been given eyes to see, ears to hear, and an heart to believe; if you have been granted the ability to understand this and see your Sins and; and if you have been granted the gift of saving faith and have been granted both the will and the power to repent and to trust in Jesus- that Jesus Christ will open wide His Arms- no matter how vile you have been- no matter how many sins you have committed- and His perfect Blood will wash all of those sins away- all of them- those sins you have done in the past and those sins you are engaged in right now and those sins your will commit at some point in the future- and Jesus' spotless Righteousness will be imputed or credited to you and you will not only be forgiven- but you will be saved to the "uttermost"; and you will spend all of Eternity with Jesus in Heaven! And so, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's personal Guarantee of all this!

And so, the Repentance that God *commands and expects* from all people everywhere is very, very urgent- because God is going to judge the world- *not* based on the arbitrary standard of Human Comparison- but by the Standard of something called, "*Perfect Righteousness*".

Now very quickly, let me get into this with you. There are two ways in which Judgment on earth is rendered:

1. Human Comparison
2. Perfect Righteousness

When somebody bases Judgment on Human Comparison- they go about it like this. "*I may not be as 'Good' as St. Peter- but I'm not as 'Bad' as Adolf Hitler. And so, I fit in somewhere in between those two Extremes and so I'm okay.*" And many people take great Comfort in this kind of Judgment that is based on other human comparisons- which is why this form of "Judgment" is so popular with lost people because it *never* brings them to a Place of Repentance.

But God doesn't judge people like that. God always judges people based on a Standard called "*Perfect Righteousness*". God judges all people as to where they stand with- *Himself*. In other words- it doesn't make any difference with God if you aren't as "bad" as some other really, really "bad" person. God wants to know how you measure up to Him.

You see, God is not *just a little bit* Righteous- God is not just an *elevated* Man as Mormonism wrongly teaches- no, God is *perfectly* Righteous. And God is not perfectly Righteous Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays-no, God is perfectly Righteous all the time. So, God is

perfectly Righteous and God is *continually* Righteous.

And everybody who goes to Heaven has to be just as *perfectly* Righteous and just as *continuously* Righteous as God Himself. And they have to be as perfectly Righteous and as continuously Righteous as God Himself in thought, word, and deed- 24 hours every day and 7 days every week- or they cannot go to Heaven.

Well, that puts us in a real bad Place- doesn't it? Therefore, if you ever sin- just one time- if you break even one single Commandment of God- even for just one millisecond- you are no longer perfectly Righteous and you are no longer continuously Righteous and no matter how "good" you or other people may think you are- you are in fact nothing more than a transgressor of the Law and a sinner in need of both Forgiveness and Righteousness.

And so, all the world is guilty before God because all the world has sinned before God and come short of this Standard of "Perfect and Continuous Righteousness."

And because that is true- God has commanded all men everywhere to repent and trust in the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ because Jesus alone lived a perfectly sinless life and was and is perfectly and continuously Righteous. And those who are so blessed to be granted Repentance will be saved or rescued from God's coming Wrath; while those who *refuse* to repent will be judged.

And God is going to do all of this by one Man- Jesus Christ. Jesus will either be the gracious Savior or the frightening Judge of every single human. Every human being will stand before the living God-man- Jesus Christ. And none of our Excuses will work in that Court. We will all be found "Guilty" unless we have trusted Christ as our Savior and surrendered to His Authority and treasure and value Him above all else.

Now this Sermon from the Apostle Paul doesn't sit very well in modern America. But we need to know that it didn't sit very well back then either. This Message flies full force- with Love- into the Face of the contemporary Assumption that even if Christ did rise from the dead- "*It really doesn't matter to me because I have my I-phone; and I have my friends; and I have my own Life; and I'm happy with what I have- and I really don't find any of this very helpful anyway.*"

But Paul counters that by saying: *This will absolutely matter to you whether you find it helpful or not-* because God's Judgment of the world by Jesus Christ is not like possible Life in another galaxy; or some cool special effects from another video game. No, this Judgment is like Eternal Death- and it *is* coming. And therefore- saying that it doesn't concern you is like closing your eyes and saying there is no such thing as Light because it's dark behind your eyelids.

Now the last thing Paul says in his sermon in Athens at the end of verse 31 is this:

... having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

In other words- of this coming Judgment- God has furnished proof (or given assurance, or warrant, or given evidence) to all the Universe. How?

By raising Him (Jesus) from the dead.”

In other words, the literal and physical Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead is designed by God to be a global Warrant or a universal Assurance or an Indictment- that Repentance is absolutely *necessary* for being rescued from eternal Damnation.

But just how does the Resurrection do that when three days have gone by; or three thousand years have gone by? And the Answer is that God *always* intended for the Resurrection to be known and believed through human witnesses. Now this doesn't in any way rule out the Work of His Holy Spirit in sovereignly opening our eyes. But it is *always* through human witnesses.

Now there were no tape recordings back then- no video cameras; and no photographs. So, when the Resurrection occurred- God saw to it that there were eye- witnesses. And Jesus appeared to many different witnesses in enough different settings that they were fully convinced of the Reality of the Resurrection- so they could tell others and then write it down for us to read later on. So, when Paul says at the end of verse 31,

... He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

... what he meant was that the Testimony of those who physically saw Jesus rise from the Dead will spread through the whole world and be a valid Warrant for Faith and Trust and a valid Assurance that this really happened.

And here's the way *another* eyewitness of the Resurrection besides Paul puts it. The Apostle Peter- in a sermon preached about 8 or 10 years after the Resurrection of Jesus- said this in **The Acts 10:38- 41**:

38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and *how* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

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.

In other words- it was never God's intentional Design for the risen Christ to be seen by *everyone*- not even in the day when it happened. And not today- as much as we might wish we could! God's intentional Design is found in **The Acts 1:3** that says:

To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

So, it was God's Design that Jesus appeared repeatedly and with many proofs to a *limited* group of people- whose job it was then- to bear witness of what they saw and heard in what they said and what they wrote so that everyone who hears or reads this witness today will be able know and be assured of all that God provides for the world about the Resurrection of His Son. And that's the way God designed for us to know Divine Truth.

And that's *exactly* what we have in our text back **John 20**— the Apostle John's own personal eyewitness account of the Resurrection appearances of Jesus. And that's what we have in **Matthew 28**—Levi's own personal eyewitness account; and that is what we have in **Luke 24**— not Luke's own personal eyewitness account- but Dr. Luke's very careful record based on years of interviews with the people who *did* see and who *did* hear- including John the Baptist's parents and even the mother and foster father of Jesus Christ. And that is exactly what we have in **Mark 16**- John Mark's own echo of the Apostle Peter's eyewitness Testimony- as well as his own as a young man living in Jerusalem at that time; and that is exactly what we have in the other writings of the New Testament.

Now on either side of **John 20**- we have this same claim. For example- turn with me to **John 19:35**. Right in the middle of Jesus' Crucifixion, the Apostle John breaks off his narrative and says,

And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.

In other words- John is saying, "*I'm not telling you what somebody else told me- this isn't some story that I am simply repeating here- no, I actually saw this*

and I am writing this down so that you will have an accurate record of the Life and the Death and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ so that you may believe and be saved.”

And this is what Paul meant back on Mars Hill. The world can know trust in what happened in those last hours of Jesus’ Life because there were many, many eye witnesses, and they give testimony and there are ways to test the accuracy of the testimony of witnesses. Or look ahead to **John 21:24**:

This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

The point of this verse is that a physical Eyewitness of the Resurrection is writing this Account. So, this is not Hearsay. And John’s Testimony can be checked out with others in the New Testament. So, let’s let John witness to us this morning. And you judge for yourselves if these things are so. Now let’s look again at **John 20:1&2**

1 Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb.

2 So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Now there are many things I could talk about here such as the Resurrection occurred early on the “*first day of the week*” which is Sunday Morning, which is why Sunday became known as the “*Lord’s Day*” and *not* on Saturday, which was the Sabbath- but suffice it to say that Mary did not believe that the Resurrection had even happened. She just *assumed* that Jesus’ Body had been moved.

And I want you to again notice that this is another proof of how slow the disciples- including the women- were to personally believe that Jesus had been raised. These were not easily excitable or naïve or superstitious or gullible people- they clearly had their own doubts here. So, it is fine to doubt; it is fine to wonder- that isn’t what is wrong or sinful.

But there are *Answers* to our doubts and there are *Solutions* to our wonderings that are clearly provided for us in Scripture. So, as you wonder or doubt- don’t stop there- but *solve* the Problems and *answer* the Questions and *relieve* yourself of those Doubts by reading and trusting what the eye- witnesses say. Now look again at verses 3-11:

3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.

- 4** The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;
- 5** and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*; but he did not go in.
- 6** And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*,
- 7** and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.
- 8** So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.
- 9** For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.
- 10** So the disciples went away again to their own homes.
- 11** But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;

Now just what does John want us to learn about the Resurrection from this passage? Two things- at least.

1. Jesus was Raised *Bodily and Physically*- Not *Spiritually and Mystically*

First, John wants us to believe that Jesus has risen from the dead *physically, bodily, and literally*- not *spiritually* or *mystically*. Some people back then as well as today are perfectly willing to talk about the Resurrection- but only as a *mystical* Symbol of Jesus' ongoing Influence in the world to make us all "better people". And that is certainly *not* John's point here. There was no physical Body in the tomb that morning. *That* is what John is saying here. Jesus Christ *literally* and *physically* and *in- Reality* died by Crucifixion; and He literally and physically laid in the grave for three days; and now, He has literally received Life from God in a supernatural Miracle and He has bodily and physically risen from the Dead in the very same Body in which He died. *That* is what John is saying here.

In fact, one of the most striking and stubborn historical facts about all this is that the enemies of Jesus and of Christianity in those first days and weeks and months in Jerusalem could not produce the Body. And that would have ended the whole thing right then and there. Christianity would have been over before it started if they had simply produced Jesus' dead Body. But there was no dead body to find precisely because Jesus was *literally* and *physically* and *bodily* raised.

2. Like the Body That Died—But Not Exactly

Second, this Body of Jesus that was raised was not *exactly* like the Body that died- even though it was like the Body that died. Now I'm not talking out of both sides of my mouth here- just let me explain.

There is both *continuity* and a *discontinuity* at work here about Jesus' physical Body. And this is very important because the Resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament is viewed as the firstfruits of the harvest of the Resurrection of all true believers. As Paul put it in

1Corinthians 15:23:

... Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

The point of John giving us the details of the linen cloths that were lying there- even mentioning the cloth that was around Jesus' Face was *separate* from the other garment that covered His Body- was to show how *this* Resurrection was completely *different* from Lazarus' resurrection.

Recall from **John 11** that Jesus miraculously and supernaturally raised Lazarus after he had been dead four days. And in **John 11:44** it says,

The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

So, we see that *other* people had to help Lazarus out of his linen cloths and face covering. And that's because even after he was raised- Lazarus still had a sinful, mortal body that would die again. But after His Resurrection- Jesus no longer had a mortal body and after this one death- Jesus will never die again.

knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

So, at this point- Jesus' Body is now *different* from all other human beings. And He simply passed through those grave cloths the same way He passed through doors in **John 20:19** and **26**. So, Jesus' Body was different.

But it was also just the same. So even though He entered the locked room like no ordinary human can- in **John 20:27** Jesus said to doubting Thomas,

... 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.

So, even though Jesus was no longer bound by time and space and could appear and disappear at will after His Resurrection- He still- at the same time- also had a very *tangible* and *physical* body that could be recognized and touched. So even in His Resurrection- Jesus was still the God/Man- fully God and fully Man. And in **Luke 24:43**- Dr. Luke tells us that Jesus ate fish and a honey- comb after He had risen.

Now if you think that all this is simply “gee whiz facts” that doesn’t really matter- please remember, those who are in Christ- that is, those who truly believe on Him and who trust in Him and who belong to Him, and who receive Forgiveness and Salvation from Him- those people will *also* be raised with Him. And Paul says in **Philippians 3:21** that Jesus will ...

... transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

And this is not a UFO; or special effects in a movie; or irrelevant Life on another galaxy. No, this is what will happen when God judges the world by one Man- Jesus Christ.

So, if you belong to Jesus by Faith in Him- you will receive a new body that is fashioned like the Body of His Glory- which will be equipped with no more human Limitations. And that means that our new bodies will be suited to see God in the fullness of His Glory without being destroyed and will be able to enjoy God and enter forever into the new heavens and the new earth where we will spend eternity admiring God in all that He is and all that He has done. And *this* world that we love and enjoy so much- compared to *that* world- will be like a candle compared to the sun.

So, here’s the real issue: *Do you see?* In **John 20:8** it says,

So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb (that’s John) then also entered, and he saw and believed.

What did he see? What did he believe? Jesus wasn’t there- there was just some old grave cloths that He left behind. But that was enough- when John saw the undeniable Evidence that Jesus was alive- he believed.

Now compare this to Mary in verse 18: She has met Jesus in the garden and spoken to Him. And she returns to the disciples and says,

“I have seen the Lord!”

So, now we are like John in the tomb. There is Evidence- and either we see that Evidence and we believe- or we don't. So, the Issue is: *Do you see? Do you believe?*

Now let me close with an Analogy. Your doorbell rings this afternoon and one of your friends asks to talk to you. He comes and says, *“I have some really bad news. Your brother is dead.”* And you say, shaking your head, *“I just don't believe it. I just saw him this morning and he was fine. I just don't believe it. It can't be.”* And your friend says, *“We went to the store together, and as we were leaving- this car went out of control and jumped the curb, and hit your brother and I knelt over him and I waited for the medical examiner. I was there. I saw it. And he really is gone.”*

And you say, softly, *“I see.”* Now what do you mean when you say, *“I see”*? You mean that the eyewitness Testimony of your friend has now become a Tool for you to believe something that you did not personally witness. And the Reality of what happened in that window has become plain to you. But you were not there. You did *not actually* see it yourself (the way that Mary saw), but still you say—and it is right to say—with all your heart, *“I see.”*

I will say to you that God has brought you here this morning for *this* Message and for *this* Passage and for the Truth about the Resurrection of Jesus. And my Prayer for you, as we close is that you will be able by God's Grace to say, *“I see.”*

Now there is one main difference between Jesus and my illustration: And that is that Jesus is alive. It is as though another messenger crashes through the door while you are crying and says, *“Your brother is alive. I just talked to him.”* And that is exactly what Mary said, *“I have seen the Lord!”* So, *do you see? Do you believe?*

Amen. Let's pray.

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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.

