

Having revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene, early on that first Lord's Day morning, we now learn that later in that same day, our Savior attended the first NC worship service ever held. Thus, I want to consider this passage under the theme – Christ's first public appearance to His beloved and fearful people.

We will consider our theme under three main headings—When Jesus Appeared (on the evening of the first Lord's Day); Where Jesus Appeared (in the midst of His assembled people); Why Jesus Appeared (to bless, send, and equip His people).

- I. When Jesus Appeared
- II. Where Jesus Appeared
- III. Why Jesus Appeared

#### I. When Jesus Appeared

1. V19—"Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews."
2. I mentioned a few weeks ago, when we considered v1 of this chapter, the phrase "first day of the week" is highly theological.
3. John here repeats us to underscore its importance—the Holy Spirit of God, through John, wants us to get this.
4. The first day of the week, what we call Sunday, is a special and unique day, that has great significance to NC Christians.
5. The first day of the week, possess the same significance to God's NC people, as the 7<sup>th</sup> day did to God's OC people.
6. Simply put—every first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath—it's the sole holy day given by God in the NC.
7. It's to be governed or regulated by the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment—"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (that is, it's to be free from labor and filled with formal worship).
8. A.W. Pink—"On this first Christian Sabbath the disciples were assembled in separation from the world, and from this point on to the end of the NT the first day of the week is stamped with this characteristic: Sunday, not Saturday, was henceforth to be the day set apart for rest from the work and concerns of the world, and for occupation with the things of God."

#### II. Where Jesus Appeared

1. V1—"Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, Peace be with you."
2. There are two very important words in this text—"assembled" and "in the midst"—like the phrase "first day of the week" they both carry profound theological weight.
3. (1) Assembled—this word refers to a formal gathering of people, and in the NT, refers to a formal gathering of God's people for worship.
4. Acts 1:4—"And being assembled together with them" 4:31—"And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." 11:26—"So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people." 15:26—"it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord."
5. In each of these examples, the word "assembled" refers to formal gatherings of God's people, wherein significant things happen.
6. In Acts 1:4 Jesus ascended to heaven; in Acts 4:31 the Spirit came upon the church; in Acts 11:26 the disciples taught the church; in Acts 15:26 the church chose men to send to the Antioch church.
7. Thus, the disciples were not gathered to play games or merely to barbeque—they were gathered to worship God.

8. (2) In the midst—this phrase has a rich presence in the OT Scriptures—it's used of God's special presence among His people in the Tabernacle and Temple.
9. God uniquely dwelt in the midst of His people—He dwelt among His people in a way He did not dwell elsewhere.
10. Ps.2:22—"I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You"—here we find both phrases brought together.
11. "In the midst of the assembly I will praise You"—this refers to Christ following His resurrection, worshiping with His NC people.
12. Here we find our Savior praising the Father together with His NC church—Christ, by His Spirit, gathers with us.
13. Matt.18:20—"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"—that is, when they gather to conduct My business on My day.
14. In the context of Matthew 18, the business was church discipline, but what's true in this case, is true in worship.
15. Whenever the church gathers on the Lord's Day, to conduct the Lord's business, Christ, by His Spirit, is present.
16. Before I summarize these first two headings with a single exhortation, let me briefly address a final point about v19.
17. John says that our Savior "stood in the midst" of His fearful people, who were assembled behind closed doors.
18. There have been some who've suggested our Savior entered the room without opening the door—He walked through the walls.
19. Now, brethren, we have to admit, the nature of our resurrected bodies is a mystery—will they pass through physical objects?
20. Well, let me say in the first place, it's possible—but the problem is, Jesus went to great lengths to prove His body was material.
21. Verse 19 only says that Jesus appeared suddenly in the room—it doesn't have to mean, He walked through the doors.
22. Exhortation 1—Don't embrace the error that the NT speaks little about formal worship—this is a common error.
23. Some Christians have been taught this—the OT, with its physical temple, was concerned about public worship.
24. But the NT, is only concerned with Christian living—assemblies, formal meetings, a day of worship, these are OT.
25. But brethren surely, we know this is wrong—the Old and New Testaments are both concerned with public worship and Christian living.
26. The Scripture nowhere forces us to divide these—the Scripture, Old and New Testaments, wed these together.
27. The Christian life ordinarily consists of three forms of worship—(a) we worship God with our lives (in everything we do).
28. In this sense, our entire life is one of worship—whether we eat or drink, everything we do is for the glory of God.
29. (b) We worship God in our homes—that is, in private and domestic acts of worship—we read Scripture and pray.
30. (c) We worship God corporately in church—that is, we gather on the first day of the week to worship God together.

### III. Why Jesus Appeared

1. Here we come to the main point of our passage—Christ gathered with His assembled people for specific reasons (let me suggest three—to bless them, to send them, and to equip them).
2. (1) To bless them v19—"Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, Peace be with you." V21—"So Jesus said to them again, Peace to you!"

3. The first thing our Savior does is bless them—He bestows upon them the blessing of peace—He pronounces a benediction.
4. Now, let me remind you of the difference between a benediction and petition—a benediction is a pronounced fact.
5. When our Savior says—"Peace to you" He isn't merely asking that God would give them peace, He's giving them peace.
6. By "peace" is meant "calm and comfort of soul"—peace is the absence of fear, unrest, anxiety, or distress of mind.
7. Perhaps the best illustration of the nature of this peace, can be found in the gospel account of Christ calming the waves.
8. Mk.4:39—"Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm."
9. Notice "peace" is expressly defined as the presence of "great calm"—the sea was turbulent, raging, and choppy.
10. Our Savior merely spoke a word and the stormy sea was calmed—He brought peace and quiet to a turbulent sea.
11. And this is exactly what our Savior did to His disciples—their hearts were turbulent with fears and uncertainties.
12. Our Savior stood in the midst of His people and said—"Peace to you"—that is, peace and calm to every soul.
13. The disciples assembled in a room with the door closed—"for fear of the Jews"—for fear of being arrested and put to death.
14. Perhaps we could say—at this point the disciples were lacking peace and calm—they were afraid and full of anxiety.
15. Their hearts were similar to a sea tossed about by wind and wave—their hearts were void of peace, calm, and rest.
16. Furthermore, I want you to notice our Savior says the same thing twice—at the end of v19 and beginning of v21.
17. But what is important to notice is what's in between, v20—"When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord."
18. In other words—within v20 we find both the cause and result of their peace—the cause and result of gospel peace.
19. (a) The cause of peace—"When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side"—that is, He proved His identity.
20. He showed them the wounds in His hands and side—this proved who He was, and that He was raised from the dead.
21. Now, when it comes to the glorified body, there remains a lot of mystery—but there are a few things we know.
22. First, the body will be raised as the same body—that is, the same body placed in the ground will be raised from the ground.
23. Second, the body will be raised incorruptible—that is, the glorified body will never decay or die—it's everlasting.
24. Thirdly, the body will be raised gloriously—that is, the resurrected body will be honorable, powerful, and spiritual.
25. Thus, we must understand that all of these were also true of Jesus' resurrected body—He had a glorified body.
26. And yet, we also know, that His body will retain the scars in His hands, feet, and side, left by the nails and spear.
27. The book of Revelation describes Him as—"the Lamb who had been slain"—that is, the scars remain in His body.
28. Why is this? Well, I trust the reason is obvious—the scars remain as a reminder that Christ atoned for our sin.

29. I don't know this with certainty, but I suggest, that Jesus' scars will likely be the only scars that remain in heaven.
30. (b) The result of peace—"Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord"—their sorrow was turned to joy.
31. Jn.16:22—"Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you."
32. There is little doubt, that our present passage is the initial fulfilment of this promise or prophecy of our Savior.
33. (2) To send them, v21—"So Jesus said to them again, Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."
34. Our Savior is formally commissioning His disciples to go. To go into the world and preach the gospel of God.
35. V23—"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained"—obviously, this text has been abused.
36. The Roman Catholic church has used this verse to teach their false doctrine of absolution—the teaching that priests have the authority to forgive sin.
37. Regardless if you are repentant or believing, as long as you confess your sins to a priest, he has authority to forgive you.
38. The reason being—Christ has invested the office of priest with divine authority. They forgive sins in God's place.
39. Well, let us say rather simply that this is not what his passage means—nowhere in the book of Acts or Epistles, do we find saints confessing their sins privately to priests who forgive them.
40. Thus, in properly understanding this verse we must make a necessary distinction between actual and declared forgiveness.
41. By actual forgiveness is meant the actual removal of all sin and guilt, so as to render a person justified before God.
42. Lk.5:21—"Who can forgive sins but God alone"—Christ Himself can forgive sins because He Himself is God.
43. No man has authority to actually forgive sin except God alone, because, all sin is ultimately against God alone.
44. By a declared forgiveness is meant—the disciples were given authority by Christ to declare or pronounce a man forgiven.
45. This declared or pronounced forgiveness is also conditioned upon repentance and faith—if you repent and believe you will be forgiven.
46. Lk.24:46-47—"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
47. (a) They were to preach the gospel—they were sent into the world to tell everyman, that Christ died and rose again.
48. (b) They were to preach repentance and faith—in light of God's love for them in Christ, they must repent and believe.
49. (c) They were to extend and/or pronounce forgiveness—that is, they were to offer forgiveness to every believing sinner.
50. The gospel is a message about Christ and His work. The essence of the gospel is Christ, His cross, and empty tomb.
51. But, along with the gospel message, there must be the offer or promise of forgiveness if the gospel is believed.
52. And thus, the apostles had the authority to say to every person—If you repent and believe the gospel, your sins will be forgiven.
53. The preacher has the authority to say to every hearer of the gospel—If you believe you will be saved and if you refuse to believe you will be damned.
54. Now—the reason why the disciples possessed that authority is because they were sent by Jesus Christ Himself.

55. V21—"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you"—that is—I am sending you in My name and My authority.
56. The disciples were sent in Christ's name, and thus, in some real sense, they stood in the place of Christ Himself.
57. Now, while Christ is here referring to the apostles, what He says of them, is also true of all gospel ministers (preachers).
58. Every man commissioned by Christ, is sent forward with the authority to extend forgiveness to every person who hears the message.
59. Furthermore, I suggest that while our Savior refers first to the apostles, then pastors, He also includes all Christians.
60. (3) To equip them, v22—"And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit."
61. Now, the first thing I want to say about this first is this—It's obviously a preview of the coming Day of Pentecost.
62. In about 40 days, our Savior would ascend back to heaven, and from there, send the Holy Spirit upon all flesh.
63. Thus, giving the Holy Spirit through breathing on His disciples, was a symbolic act, intended to teach certain truth.
64. (a) The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son—throughout Scripture, the Spirit is described as the breath of God.
65. From eternity, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds or comes forth from, the Father and Son.
66. It's for this reason, it's proper to describe the Holy Spirit as both the breath of the Father and breath of the Son.
67. (b) The Holy Spirit is given by Christ—that is, the Son gives the Holy Spirit as the exalted and glorified GodMan.
68. The Father sends His Son into the world to purchase salvation, and Christ sends the Spirit into the world to apply.
69. (c) The Holy Spirit empowers the church—that is, the Spirit gives power to the church to fulfill its commission.
70. Acts 1:8—"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Three closing lessons,

1. Lesson 1—Christ in His redemptive glory brings peace and joy to the soul—nothing gives the soul peace like touching the wounds of Christ.
2. This is one reason we assemble together on the first day of the week—brethren, we're not that different from the disciples.
3. We gather together behind closed doors afraid—perhaps not of the Jews, but nevertheless, afraid of our enemies.
4. We gather together because we admit, left to ourselves we are weak and needy—thus, we gather hopeful of meeting with Him.
5. Brethren, in one sense things haven't changed much—for 2000 years God's people have assembled on this day to see the wounds of our Savior.
6. There's a sense in which we assemble expectant to hear our Savior say "peace to you" and show us His hands and side.
7. Our hearts are like the Sea of Galilee, tossed about with fears and anxiety, and we come to hear Him say—"Peace, be still."
8. Lesson 2—Christ never sends His people without giving needed grace—He always equips us to perform our duty.
9. Christ was sending His beloved people into a hateful and hostile world—a world filled with fierce and brutal opposition.

10. And so, every Christian, in some sense, is sent into this fearful world to fulfill the various callings on our lives.
11. Some of us are called to be husbands, wives, and parents—all of us are called to serve as lights in the darkness.
12. Thus, Christians gather on the first day of the week to be equipped for the battle, to receive power from the Spirit.
13. In short, we come to hear our Savior say—"Receive the Holy Spirit"—we come that Christ might breathe upon us.
14. Lesson 3—God in the gospel, truly offers forgiveness to all men—and thus, every sinner should believe the gospel.
15. And so, in closing, let me point out three things, that ought to encourage you to believe the gospel and find forgiveness
16. (1) Your need for forgiveness—this is the fundamental need of man—he has offended God by his sin and rebellion.
17. Forgiveness necessarily implies an offense—sinners need forgiveness because they are guilty of offending God.
18. This is what sinners need—they don't need to know how to have their best life now, or, how to make this world a better place.
19. They need to hear about their need for forgiveness—they need to know that God is deeply offended at their sin.
20. (2) God's provision for forgiveness—in Christ's bloody death, God has made a way for guilty man to be forgiven.
21. Col.1:14—"In whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins"—forgiveness is through His blood.
22. This means, sinners can be forgiven because Christ was punished in their place—God forgives us for Christ's sake.
23. (3) God's sincere offer of forgiveness—that is, God Himself, in the person of His minister, offers you a free pardon.
24. This free and full pardon is sincerely extended to all men in the gospel—God says—Come to My Son and be forgiven.
25. O listen to me poor sinner! God has commissioned me as His ambassador to convey to you a very important message.
26. It can be summarized in four words—Be reconciled to God—come and find in Christ's blood your forgiveness.