

John saw the linen clothes and believed, and he is embarrassed to admit that he had to see even just the linen clothes to believe. For there is so much reason to believe, he writes, not seeing any actual evidence at all, but just going by God's holy Word and the perfection always of all God's works, especially also with Jesus, the Saviour of sinners.

Today none of us can see the risen Saviour, or even those linen clothes that were left behind in the tomb. But we have the whole Word of God, and from it, can there be any doubt that Jesus lives? Do you believe Jesus arose from the dead? And if you believe that fact, are you also then trusting in Jesus Christ as your only Saviour and Lord? Can it be that someone really believes Jesus arose from the dead but doesn't trust and obey Jesus as his or her Saviour and Lord? Oh, you have to admit that has to be the greatest foolishness and wickedness, to recognize Jesus arose from the dead as triumphant, almighty, ruling Saviour of sinners but not to look to Him or follow Him as your Saviour and Lord. To live and die despising Jesus, the living Saviour, means to reject the gracious almighty King of kings Who alone can save you and to Whom we must all one day give an account. The living Saviour calls even now yet, 'Be reconciled to God through Me while it is still the day of grace, and harden not your hearts through the deceitfulness of sin!'

John concludes chapter 20 of his gospel with those inviting words of verses 30&31: *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name."*

Do you know and believe this grand gospel message of Jesus' resurrection from the dead? John was one of those who believed in Jesus, the resurrected Saviour, even before he actually saw Him, and John wrote of his experience, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, that as we read God's Word, we may know and believe in Jesus the Saviour and trust and obey Him. Paul writes in Romans 10:9, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."* Jesus lives! That is the message of Easter. There is no doubt about it. He lives, sinners triumphantly and eternally to save....will you be one of His disciples too? Amen.

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



EASTER MESSAGE

Today is Easter Sunday, the day we especially remember that Jesus Who was crucified, dead, and buried, arose from the dead three days after, just as He had said He would. Jesus is alive! The Saviour lives! Today we remember this glorious gospel truth. Jesus lives. Hallelujah!

Think of how many times it must have been said on the first Easter Sunday, "Did you hear the news? Jesus is alive! He lives! He has risen from the dead as He said." It is always fascinating to recall something of the events of that first Easter Sunday. The day Jesus arose, He made no less than five appearances, proving His resurrection from the dead.

In this Easter message, I invite you to consider with me the story of the one disciple who really believed Jesus arose from the dead before he actually saw the resurrected Saviour. There is one disciple who believed Jesus arose from the dead before he saw the risen Saviour. You know who that was? It was John, who writes about himself as "that other disciple". John, in humbleness of heart, wouldn't mention his own name, but if you check all the references, it is very clear that he is the one who is that other disciple, the one who was not only especially close to Jesus, but a very dear friend of Peter too. Peter and John are often mentioned together as disciples of Jesus. Let us listen to John's story of his Easter awakening and then notice especially what John himself writes about his experience, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in John 20:1-10.

Our true gospel story begins with John being with Peter somewhere, most likely at either of their homes on that Sunday morning when things looked all so dark and hopeless for them. Suddenly they get the message from Mary Magdalene who came running to their place to tell the news that *'the Lord's body had been taken away and no one knows where they have laid Him.'* Mary Magdalene was in a panic. She just saw the stone rolled away from the tomb door when she went there earlier with some other women, and she jumped to her own conclusions about what happened, and ran to Peter and John to tell them the disturbing news. And what do Peter and John do? What does John 20:4 tell us? They drop everything and run together to the sepulcher to see for themselves what had happened. You will agree with me, it is not too often that you see adults really running. It is natural to see children running here and there, but if adults are running (not just jogging but running), usually it's because there is some emergency of sorts, or just such exciting news. In this case, what do you think made Peter

and John run so? Oh, was it not that their hearts were bursting with grief about all that happened with Jesus? And what was this now that further happened to Jesus? Couldn't His enemies leave alone Jesus' dead body even? Or was there something else happening here? What was going on? They MUST find out for themselves! See them run, Peter and John. I wonder if you and I could keep up with them as they ran to find out what was going on.

The text tells us the one disciple ran faster than the other and got to the gravesite in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea before the other. Who was the faster runner? It was John. We are told when John comes to the tomb, he stoops to look into it and he notices something in the grave. He sees the linen clothes lying there. John doesn't go in the tomb though; he waits outside for Peter to come. We don't really know why John waited. He definitely had a more timid character than Peter. Whatever the reason, it seems John didn't have to wait long, for Peter soon came after him, and as typical of Peter's character, he went right into the tomb and he too noticed the linen clothes that were left there. The verb in verse 6 about Peter seeing those linen clothes is a verb stronger than John's just glancing at those linen clothes in verse 5. Peter looked at the linen clothes with an observing eye, and he couldn't help but take notice of the fact that the part of the linen that had been wrapped around Jesus' head was lying neatly and separately from the rest. It struck Peter the way those linen clothes were still there and wrapped together and placed apart as they were.

After Peter goes in, John does too, and when he sees those linen clothes more closely, *he believed*. He believed what? Well, that Jesus arose from the dead in truth. We say that because again the verb in verse 8 about John seeing is different from both the glancing at the linen clothes in verse 5 and the looking with interest at the linen clothes that Peter did in verse 6. The verb in verse 8 about John seeing the linen clothes is a verb that means to see and understand, to see and grasp the significance of something. When John, was inside the tomb and saw the linen clothes not only being still in the tomb but lying there neatly and almost as if undisturbed in their original wrappings, as they had been tightly rolled up around Jesus' dead body with a separate wrapping also for the head, then that moved John to recognize several things. On the one hand, those grave clothes left behind made clear that no one could have stolen Jesus' body, for then they would not have left behind the linen clothes, and certainly not in the condition they were in. On the other hand, with those linen clothes still there, and left so folded and undisturbed as it were, could there be any other conclusion but that Jesus miraculously arose from the dead?

As one commentator put it: "John saw and believed, that is: he came to a logical conclusion, an irresistible one, drawn from the evidence before him." John reasons, 'If friends had removed the body, would they not have taken the clothes with it, still covering the honoured corpse? If

enemies had removed the body, first stripping it, would they have been so careful to dispose the clothes and napkin in the orderly manner in which John now saw them?' No, everything pointed to careful deliberation and design, and the apostle could draw only one conclusion. Christ must have arisen from the dead! Jesus had left the grave-clothes as a sign. He had majestically risen indeed!

John saw and believed. From the text we learn he was the one disciple that believed Jesus had risen from the dead before he saw the resurrected Saviour. It is very striking, however, that John doesn't promote himself as the only disciple who believed in Jesus' resurrection before actually seeing the exalted Saviour. Rather, as verse 9 brings out, John admonishes himself and the other disciples for their slowness to believe. John is, as it were, almost embarrassed to admit that he was dependent on seeing some signs, some concrete evidence, before believing in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The way he writes in verse 9 suggests he felt, 'we disciples of Jesus, only from the Scriptures alone, should have just believed this glorious truth about our Saviour and His salvation, that He would rise from the dead. We should have known it without seeing any signs or having to see Jesus Himself.' Listen to the text, "*and he saw and believed....for as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.*" What comes across here is that John was ashamed that he had understood so little really of just the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Jesus the Saviour, never mind even all the teaching of Jesus Himself over the three years he and the disciples had been with their Master.

The fact is even just the Old Testament makes clear Jesus had to rise from the dead as triumphant Saviour of sinners, and the New Testament grandly proclaims in most certain terms Jesus surely did rise from the dead, even as He said He would! What further proofs of Jesus' resurrection also John and the disciples were given, as the gospels clearly show us. That same day even John would be given to actually see the risen Saviour when He met with the disciples in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, His fifth appearance of that first Easter Sunday. We have to say about the Word of God how very gracious the Lord is that He gave the disciples all kinds of actual evidence and infallible proofs that He truly did arise from the dead. This too the Saviour did for the generations following, that from the gospel message itself, without seeing Him, we might still believe. What reasons for confidence in the Christian gospel as the true and only gospel for mankind. How sad and foolish that people refuse to believe the Christian gospel about the risen and ever living Saviour and have come up instead with their own religions, the leaders of which in every case are dead in their graves. Only the Christian faith has an empty tomb and a living Leader and Saviour Who is out to save and is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.