

The Gospel of John

Chapter 20:19-31

January 25, 1998

- **The Gospel of John Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
- Chapter 2 The Lord of the Wedding Feast; Zeal for the purity of the temple
- Chapter 3 Spiritual Birth, Belief and Salvation vs. Unbelief and Condemnation
- Chapter 4 The Ministry in Samaria, The Harvest, The Faith of the Nobleman
- Chapter 5 Paralytic man healed on the Sabbath, Unity of The Father and Son
- Chapter 6 The Bread of Life
- Chapter 7 The public debates about Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles
- Chapter 8 Public debates: Woman caught in adultery; The Son makes you free; Abraham's true children
- Chapter 9 Jesus heals a man born blind.
- Chapter 10 Jesus is the Door and the True Shepherd
- Chapter 11 Our Lord is the Resurrection and the Life
- Chapter 12 Jesus Anointed and Worshipped as King, God softens some and hardens some, Public ministry ends
- Chapter 13 Jesus Loves His Disciples, Judas Betrays The Master
- Chapter 14 The Way, The Truth and The Life
- Chapter 15 Jesus is the True Vine
- Chapter 16 The Spirit will guide into all truth
- Chapter 17 The Glory of God, and the Unity and Perseverance of Believers
- Chapter 18 The Arrest of Jesus and the Denial of Peter
- Chapter 19 The Trial Before Pilate; Crucifixion and Burial of Our Lord
- Chapter 20 Evidences of the Resurrection

- **Review and Introduction**

Up to this point, the disciples have seen that the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb, but Jesus had not appeared to them except for Mary Magdalene. All of the events of chapter 20 occur on Sunday the day of His resurrection.

- **Exposition of John 20:19-31**

19 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."

- It was common for them to be gathered on the first day of week but we are uncertain as to why they were currently gathered. It is very likely that they were hiding for fear of the Jews and Romans who were likely to blame them for stealing the body. Although this would have been quite impossible with a contingent of soldiers guarding the tomb, still they perhaps felt that they would be accused regardless.
- The fact that John specifically mentions the fact that the doors were shut may be significant. First it may be included to demonstrate that their gathering was done in fear. Secondly, it may be included to further declare the miraculous appearance of Christ.
- It difficult to know whether John is trying to convey that Jesus walked through doors that were shut or whether he walked through an open door that was not opened by human hands. While we know that Jesus had a physical body, we are not exactly sure of its limitations. It seems plausible to believe that Jesus' body had the ability to pass through closed doors; that somehow His resurrected body was more "real" than the doors or walls.
- The term, "Peace be with you" literally means, "May you live well and prosperous!"

20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

- It is interesting that Jesus' body still showed the signs of His crucifixion. It is likely that the wounds were healed but still made evident to help in bringing about belief in the disciples.
- Having been received by them through belief, here Jesus greets them again and gives them a charge. It is here that the disciples become the Apostles. This initiation of them creates the office of teacher which was given as a gift to the Church by Christ. It also marks a significant change for the church by signifying the end of the physical teaching ministry of Christ and initiates His vicarious teaching ministry through these lowly men. This change in function and position was orchestrated by the Father and conveyed through the Son. Remember they (like us) were sent to declare a message of a completed work. They were not sent to make atonement, they were sent to declare the present and completed atonement.

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, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

- This is a rather difficult and curious passage but I think it can be simply understood to be a prophetic display of the actual coming of the Spirit upon the disciples recorded in Acts. It was only a short time later that Jesus would ascend and send the Holy Spirit in a mighty and powerful manner. Here though, it appears that the Spirit is not imparted but rather promised.
- Much discussion can be found on the significance of the manner in which this prophecy is displayed. It is possible that the simplest meaning is that Christ is giving a picture of a wind coming upon them by His command. Clearly that is what happens immediately following His ascension. There may be further significance though. This breathing upon them could represent a new understanding of the original breathing of life into man in Genesis. Clearly many connections may be made in that even in this Gospel we are taught that Christ is the Life and in Him all things were created. Therefore, we could be seeing a fuller fulfillment of the Genesis picture where here Christ makes us new creatures and grants us eternal life. Although this is clearly plausible, we have no divine teaching on it so we cannot dogmatically declare it to be so.
- The Apostles were not given the authority to forgive sins but rather were given the authority to proclaim Christ's forgiveness of the sins. Ours is a proclamation of what the Father has done through the Son. The sins are not ours to forgive but we declare Christ's forgiveness.

24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

- A week later on the following Sunday, the Apostles are gathered together but this time including Thomas. It is quite instructive to see that Thomas still did not have the full understanding of the resurrection. He claims that he cannot believe unless he has proof for his eyes and hands. However, even though he had such proof, had it been limited to that, in time, the proof would have failed. It is only by the grace of God that we are kept in faith. Miraculous events were never sufficient to keep us in faith apart from the perseverance granted by God. That is why it is a more blessed thing to believe without the proof for the eyes.

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. NKJV

- As we have discussed many times in our study of this book, the objective of John is to record those things which give indisputable proofs of the Sonship and Deity of Christ and to encourage faith unto eternal life.