



John 20:19-31

Doubt Encounters the Resurrected Lord

DAY ONE Observation

John 1-12 record Jesus' **public ministry** to Israel. John 13-17 record Jesus' **private ministry** with His disciples. John 18-21 record Jesus' **universal ministry** to all humanity through His death and resurrection.

Thomas was a living demonstration of the power of Christ to dispel doubt. He was naturally of a pessimistic temperament as his previous utterances showed (11:16, 14:5), and his doubt seems to have been the product of his pessimism rather than lack of confidence in Jesus Himself. ...The resurrection made the difference between the skepticism of despair and the worship which brings certainty.

—Merrill Tenney

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read John 20:19-31. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Record the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

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.”

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.” 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.”

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."

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)

What stands out to you after reading this passage? Why?

When did Jesus first appear to the disciples (20:19)? _____

What was their emotional state (20:19)? _____

What were Jesus' first words to them (20:19)? _____

Write down 3-5 observations that you can make about Thomas from this passage.

What is Jesus' message to Thomas (20:27)? _____

Who does Jesus speak a blessing upon (20:29)? _____

**DAY TWO
Meditation**

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Jesus' words in John 20:30-31 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 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.

Which words, phrases, or images stand out to you? Why?

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
Interpretation

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

John recorded Jesus' signs in order to lead his readers to believe in Him as the Messiah, the Son of God. Generally, seven major signs are identified in the Gospel of John.

1. Changing water into wine at wedding in Cana (2:1-11)
2. Healing the nobleman's son at Capernaum (4:43-54)
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (5:1-9)
4. Feeding the 5000 (6:1-15)
5. Walking on water (6:16-24)
6. Healing the blind man (9:1-41)
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-45)

The ultimate sign is Jesus' own resurrection from the dead (20:1-31). This is the sign and the message that the apostles proclaimed to the world.

Read the following passage in the book of Acts and write down what the early apostles said and/or taught regarding Christ's resurrection.

Acts 2:22-24 _____

Acts 2:29-32 _____

Acts 3:13-15 _____

Acts 4:10-12 _____

Acts 4:33 _____

Acts 5:30-32 _____

Acts 13:28-30 _____

Acts 17:2-3 _____

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-19.

What are the core elements of the gospel according to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4?

Who were the witnesses to Christ's resurrection according to 1 Corinthians 15:5-8?

¹² Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶ For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

If Christ did not bodily rise from the dead, then what are the implications?

15:14a _____

15:14b _____

15:15 _____

15:17a _____

15:17b _____

15:18 _____

15:19 _____

Finish this sentence: *Because Christ did rise from the dead, now I know* _____

DAY FOUR Devotion

Read the following excerpt from J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on John*.

20:19-23. The verses we have now read contain things hard to be understood. Like all the events which followed our Lord's resurrection, there is much in the facts before us which is mysterious, and requires reverent handling.

...We should observe, for one thing, **the remarkable language with which our Lord greeted the apostles, when He first met them after His resurrection.** Twice over he addressed them with the kindly words, "Peace be unto you." ... "Peace" and not blame--"peace" and not fault-finding--"peace" and not rebuke--was the first word which this little company heard from their Master's lips, after He left the tomb.

..."Peace on earth" was the song of the heavenly host, when Christ was born. Peace and rest of soul, was the general subject that Christ continually preached for three years. Peace, and not riches, had been the great legacy which He had left with the eleven the night before His crucifixion. Surely it was in full keeping with all the tenor of our Lord's dealings, that, when He revisited His little company of disciples after His resurrection, His first word should be "Peace." It was a word that would soothe and calm their minds.

Peace, we may safely conclude, was intended by our Lord to be the key-note to the Christian ministry. That same peace which was so continually on the lips of the Master, was to be the grand subject of the teaching of His disciples. Peace between God and man through the precious blood of atonement--peace between man and man through the infusion of grace and charity--to spread such peace as this was to be the work of the Church.

...We should observe, lastly, in these verses, **the remarkable commission which our Lord conferred upon His eleven Apostles.** We are told that He said, "Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you. And after he said this, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained." It is vain to deny that the true sense of these solemn words has been for centuries a subject of controversy and dispute. It is useless perhaps to expect that the controversy will ever be closed. The utmost that we can hope to do with the passage is to supply a probable exposition.

It seems then highly probable that our Lord in this place solemnly commissioned His Apostles to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel as He had preached it. He also conferred on them the power of *declaring* with peculiar authority whose sins were forgiven, and whose sins were not forgiven. That this is precisely what the Apostles did is a simple matter of fact, which any one may verify for himself by reading the book of the Acts. When Peter proclaimed to the Jews, "Repent, and be converted,"--and when Paul declared at Antioch of Iconium--"to you is the word of this salvation sent"--"Through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified"--they were doing what this passage commissioned the Apostles to do. They were opening with authority the door of salvation, and inviting with authority all sinners to enter in by it and be saved. (Acts 3:19; 13:26-38.)

...No higher honor can be imagined than that of being Christ's ambassadors, and proclaiming in Christ's name the forgiveness of sins to a lost world.

20:24-31. ...We should mark, for one thing, in these verses, *how much Christians may lose by not regularly attending the assemblies of God's people.* Thomas was absent the first time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, and consequently Thomas missed a blessing. Of course we have no certain proof that the absence of the Apostle could not admit of explanation. Yet, at such a crisis in the lives of the eleven, it seems highly improbable that he had any good reason for not being with his brethren, and it is far more likely that in some way he was to blame. One thing, at any rate, is clear and plain. By being absent he was kept in suspense and unbelief a whole week, while all around him were rejoicing in the thought of a risen Lord. It is difficult to suppose that this would have been the case, if there had not been a fault somewhere. It is hard to avoid the suspicion that Thomas was absent when he might have been present.

...The very sermon that we needlessly miss, may contain a precious word in season for our souls. The very assembly for prayer and praise from which we stay away, may be the very gathering that would have cheered, and established, and quickened our hearts. We little know how dependent our spiritual health is on little, regular, habitual helps, and how much we suffer if we miss our medicine.

...We should mark for another thing in this verse, *how kind and merciful Christ is to dull and slow believers.* Nowhere, perhaps,

in all the four Gospels, do we find this part of our Lord's character so beautifully illustrated as in the story before our eyes. It is hard to imagine anything more tiresome and provoking than the conduct of Thomas, when even the testimony of ten faithful brethren had no effect on him, and he doggedly declared, "Except I see with my own eyes and touch with my own hands, I will not believe." But it is impossible to imagine anything more patient and compassionate, than our Lord's treatment of this weak disciple. He does not reject him, or dismiss him, or excommunicate him. He comes again at the end of a week, and apparently for the special benefit of Thomas. He deals with him according to his weakness, like a gentle nurse dealing with a froward child--"Reach here your finger, and behold my hands; reach here your hand, and thrust it into my side."

...A passage of Scripture like this, we need not doubt, was written for the special comfort of all true believers. The Holy Spirit has taken care to supply abundant evidence that Jesus is rich in patience as well as compassion, and that He bears with the infirmities of all His people. ...Our Lord has many weak children in His family, many dull pupils in His school, many raw soldiers in His army, many lame sheep in His flock. Yet He bears with them all, and casts none away. Happy is that Christian who has learned to deal likewise with his brethren. There are many in the Church, who, like Thomas, are dull and slow, but for all that, like Thomas, are real and true believers.

What stands out to you from Ryle's words? Why?

DAY FIVE
Application

Re-read John 20:19-31 and consider the truths that you have learned this week. Seek to apply the message of this passage to your daily life.

What thought or truth impacted you this week from your study of John 20:19-31? Why?

Based on the limited information we have on Thomas in the NT, he appears to be someone who was prone to pessimism and skepticism. When it comes to your own personality, do you tend to be more optimistic or pessimistic? More skeptical or more trusting? Why do you think you are this way? Personality? Upbringing? Personal experiences in your life?

What doubts have you experienced in your own faith?

How have you responded to these doubts? Have you grown in faith or become more skeptical?

The resurrection of Jesus directly confronts our doubts. We are invited to believe and trust in the Lord because He has bodily risen from the dead. The empty tomb, the eyewitness testimony of the disciples and their willingness to die for their faith, and the growth of the church despite persecution all point toward the reality of Christ's resurrection. Paul even says that the whole Christian faith rises or falls on the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12-19). The resurrection of Jesus gives us evidence for our faith, hope for the future, and confidence in the midst of doubts. Reflect on Christ's resurrection and declare with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"