

THE LORD JESUS LIVES!

BY DR. JERRY VINES

By the Book™ A Chapter by
Chapter Bible Study Series
from Jerry Vines Ministries
2295 Towne Lake Parkway
Suite 116 #249
Woodstock, GA 30189

Let's Begin

Though the Jewish leaders had heard it, they really didn't believe it. Though the disciples had been told it, they were not expecting it. And, though the devil knew it, he could not begin to stop it. What is the "it" to which we refer? The empty tomb! The missing body! Jesus is alive!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is Heaven's final stamp of approval for the birth, life, and death of the Only Begotten Son of God. Had the tomb contained the body of Jesus on the Sunday morning when the women arrived at its entrance, there would be no such thing as the church, Christianity, salvation or a sacrifice for sin. The Apostle Paul was so sure of this that he staked everything on this truth: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain... And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins... If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:14-19).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ stands as God's validation that He loves us and provides deliverance from our trespasses and sins. We come to this study with excitement and joy. For through the resurrection of Jesus, we who trust in Him are gloriously promised that we will be raised the same as He! As we move through chapter 20, let's follow the outline provided:

- I. The Lord Jesus is Forever Alive (vv. 1-18)**
- II. The Lord Jesus is Fully Available (vv. 19-23)**
- III. The Lord Jesus is Final Assurance (vv. 24-29)**

I. The Lord Jesus is Forever Alive (vv. 1-18)

Before we head to the tomb on Sunday, let's backtrack a bit to Friday. The onlookers watched as Jesus' body slowly bled out. The Apostle John stood close with Mary, the mother of Jesus, attempting to comfort her while grappling with his own internal confusion. The Lord's eyes, glassed over from physical meltdown within, managed to make out his mother standing next to John, the one whom He loved so dearly. It would not be long before He expired. He knew His time was short, yet managed to utter His parting words of love for her: "Woman, behold thy son" (19:26). His eyes drifting slowly over to John, in volume only little above a whisper, He said "Behold thy mother" (19:27).

Jesus could speak no further. His strength was failing. Not much longer could He hoist Himself up, opening His chest cavity in order to breathe. The clock kept ticking.

Reflection Connection

Why do you suppose Jesus said "Behold thy son"? Why are these considered words of compassion to Mary? What do you think it meant to John?

Only a few minutes later, Jesus managed to whisper two words: "I thirst" (19:28). A man offered but a few drops on a sponge, Jesus' mouth was moistened enough to utter His victorious triumph of praise to His Father, "It is finished" (19:30). Upon that, John records that Jesus breathed his last. The guards came, breaking the legs of the other cross victims but when they came to Jesus, He was already dead. Both water and blood flowed from Jesus' side as one of the guards pierced Him with his sword (19:31-33).

With Pilate's permission, Joseph and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus from the cross and quickly anointed it with a few spices, hurrying since the Sabbath imminently approached (19:38-42). After laying His



Reflection Connection

Many skeptics suggest that since the followers of Jesus so wanted His prophecy to come true about rising from the dead that they psychologically fabricated the resurrection of Jesus. In other words, in their minds, it really happened. How does the women's concern as they approached the tomb negate such a theory? Explain.

Reflection Connection

As you ponder the resurrection of Jesus, what comfort do you have? Be specific. How do you think it could comfort others? Explain.

body in the tomb, they rolled the stone in place and hurried along as the Sabbath began.

On Sunday morning several women headed to the tomb to finish preparing Jesus' body for burial (v. 1). The women hadn't a clue what they were about to discover. In fact, Mark tells us plainly what was on their mind: "And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" (Mark 16:3). Finding an empty tomb was not on their radar screen!

Let's observe the several facts as we consider the resurrection of Jesus.

Fact # 1: A convincing fact. We noted above that the women weren't expecting Jesus to be alive. (v. 1; Mark 16:3). Once there, and seeing the stone removed, the women quickly scattered, Mary Magdalene finding Peter and John to tell them the news (v. 2). Mark records the disciples' initial skepticism about Jesus' being alive (16:11). Only when they saw the linen cloths themselves did they believe (vv. 6-8).

Sometimes we get the mistaken idea that the first century age was little more than a superstitious era when people believed all kinds of things with little evidence. Yet, we find Jesus' closest disciples would not believe apart from seeing with their own eyes. Only personal experience could convince them. We are really no more sophisticated today. Any intellectual ability I may have cannot convince you. However, when you have an encounter with the living Savior, you will believe! And, once you are convinced, nothing else will ever be the same.

Fact # 2: A conquering fact. Each of the disciples of Jesus had different personalities. For example, Peter was self-willed, domineering, and constantly failing. John, on the other hand, had a short fuse, was quite moody, and a little shy. Mary Magdalene was possessed by seven demons. In fact, any single one of us, left to ourselves, will inevitably make a miserable failure out of life. The resurrection conquered death and if death can be conquered, what possible obstacle could overcome your life?

Fact # 3: A comforting fact. Look at Mary sitting at the garden, weeping (v. 13). Her heart is hurting and broken. The risen, living Savior knows how to comfort: "Jesus saith unto her, 'Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, 'Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus saith unto her, 'Mary.' She turned herself, and saith unto him, 'Rabboni; which is to say, Master'" (vv. 15-16). We live in a troubled, broken world which no man or government or religion can repair. Only a resurrected Lord will comfort!

II. The Lord Jesus is Fully Available (vv. 19-23)

On the same day Jesus showed Himself to Mary, He appeared to the assembled disciples. John records: "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, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, 'Peace be unto you'" (v. 19). This is an amazing scene. Several of the disciples had already seen Jesus. One would expect them to be out in the streets shouting to the top of their lungs. Instead, we see a frightened little church behind locked doors.



Reflection Connection

What frightens you most about the day in which we live? Why? How does the resurrection of Jesus address your fear?

Reflection Connection

Name some ways you are an ambassador for Jesus Christ in your community. Be prepared to discuss this with the group. Plan some ways your group can be ambassadors together for Christ in your neighborhood.

If we are honest, we'd have to admit that there is much that frightens us today. The economy seems never stable. Banks fail, factories close, and so many people lose their jobs. On top of all this, the church is changing, culture is embracing what commentators call a *post-modern* worldview. The world stimulates a frightening state of affairs.

In the midst of this fear, however, the resurrected Lord appears! He is available to us all. And there are four key ways His availability is manifest through His resurrection.

First, let's note the presence we need. When Jesus appeared, He offered them peace (v. 19). Then the disciples responded: "And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD" (v. 20). The tomb was empty. They had seen it. Others who hadn't seen the tomb had heard the news from those who had. But since Jesus hadn't appeared specifically to them, He was not real to them. For far too many people, Jesus is a name in a song, a man in a Bible, a figure in history. However, it isn't enough to know history. You must know Jesus by personal experience. That is the presence we so desperately need today.

Jesus' presence will dispel our fear (1 John 4:18), bestow on us peace (James 4:1), and produce gladness in our hearts (v. 20).

Second, observe the privilege we have. The Lord spoke openly to them: "Then said Jesus to them again, 'Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you'" (v. 21). It was the Father who sent the Lord; therefore, Jesus represented Him. But notice, it is Jesus who sends us; therefore, we represent Him. We are to so live and speak that others see Jesus in us. Paul said we are "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20). We represent Him. We go in His name.

Third, let's note the power we possess. Our own strength is insufficient to the task. The disciples were frozen in fear behind locked doors. It's only through the resurrection power of Jesus that disciples are able to go: "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost'" (v. 22). We are anemic spiritually. We have no real power on our own. Especially for the task God calls us to do, we need the living power of Jesus Christ. It takes the breath of Jesus to do the work of Jesus. His breathing on the disciples was symbolic of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (cp. Acts 2:1-4).

Finally, let's observe the proclamation we make. Jesus says: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (v. 23). We must be very cautious with this verse. Some have mistakenly understood that the church can actually forgive sin. No human being, however, can remit another human being's sin. That is a God-sized job! (cp. Mark 2:7). While we cannot forgive sin, we know a Savior who can. His name is Jesus! In other words, we are to *proclaim the forgiveness of sins*.

In the midst of fear, Jesus is available to us all.



III. The Lord Jesus is Final Assurance (vv. 24-29)

When Jesus shows up in our world of fear, doubt and anxiety, He has a way of changing things. The resurrection of Jesus Christ give to us nothing less than a settled, calm assurance. That's what happened when Jesus appeared in the locked room where the disciples were assembled (vv. 19-23). That was the second appearance John records (cp. vv. 15-17). In the first, Mary's grief was relieved and hope was restored; here, the disciples' fear was erased, and their assurance established.

Reflection Connection

Consider this for a moment: Every time you miss church, you miss Jesus. If that became the maxim of how you lived your life, would your lifestyle change? How so? How do other members in the group respond to this maxim?

One particular detail we quickly see is that the band of disciples was incomplete. Someone was absent: "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came" (v. 24). Imagine it! The resurrected Son of God shows up and Thomas missed Him! However, before we so easily blame Thomas, consider our own practice for a moment. How many times do we miss the assembly of God's people? Recall Jesus said that "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

Note Thomas' response when the disciples excitedly told him about their visitor: "The other disciples therefore said unto him, 'We have seen the LORD.' But he said unto them, 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe'" (v.25). This is not the first time we see Thomas with a gloomy attitude. For example, when Jesus was ready to go to Bethany after Lazarus died, Thomas blurted out that they should go "that we may die with him" (11:16).

Also, recall that it was Thomas who told Jesus none of them had a clue where He was taking them, indicating a subtle skepticism about their purpose (14:5). So, it is not unlike Thomas to be a little negative. In fact, Thomas has been nicknamed through history as "Doubting Thomas."

Before we consider how doubt is remedied and assurance finally established, let's consider two initial questions.

Reflection Connection

How has doubt affected your walk with God? Be very candid with yourself. Are there areas in your life where doubt has a stronghold?

The first question is, what are the reasons for doubt? We will mention only three. The attack of Satan is one reason doubt exists. From the opening glimpse we get in the Garden of Eden, the sly serpent (Satan) was busily casting doubt. To Eve's naïve answer he said, "Yea hath God said..." (Gen. 3:1). There is no greater tool the enemy uses against us than doubt. Doubt is what drove Thomas' bold declaration that unless he saw "the print of the nails" and placed his finger into the print; and unless he "thrust my hand into his side," he would not believe. Doubt kept faith stone cold in Thomas' heart and somewhere we may safely assume, Satan had a hand in it.

Another reason for doubt is the *accumulation* of circumstances. The arrest, betrayal, trial and death of Jesus played a heavy toll on the disciples' emotional and physical frame of reference. Understandably, Thomas thought that when Jesus died, every hope he had died with Him. Perhaps you may be experiencing tremendous pressure now because of unemployment or something else. Maybe even on top of that, your health is deteriorating. Doubt finds a foot to stick in your door during these times.

A third reason for doubt is *absence* from the other disciples. Instead of coming together with the disciples, Thomas chose to go it alone. He chose *isolation* by



Reflection Connection

Do you think it is possible for an entire church to doubt? How can you assure that you will not be one who hinders the ministry of the church by doubting? Ask the pastor to lead a time of discussion on the church possessing faith and the church doubting.

Golden Greek Nugget

When Mary understood Jesus was not the gardener (v. 15), she turned to Him in utter amazement and fell before His feet. Jesus instructed her to “Touch me not” (v. 17). The word Jesus used means “to grip,” or “to take hold of.” Evidently, it was as if Mary was desperately clinging to Him. In fact, one translation is “Stop clinging to me.” The point Jesus was making pertained to clinging to His flesh. He already told them He was departing. Soon the Holy Spirit would be poured out. Hence, they were to cling to Him spiritually, rather than cling any longer in the flesh.

himself over *inspiration* with others. There is good reason the Bible teaches “forsake not the assembling of yourselves together” (Heb. 10:25).

The second question we consider is this: *What are the results of doubt?* Doubt’s presence has its price tag. If we live by doubt, it will cost us. One thing it costs is our *happiness*. Thomas spent an entire week in the darkness of doubt (v. 26). While others were rejoicing in seeing Jesus, Thomas was resisting in believing Jesus. Another thing doubt brings is a loss of *helpfulness*. During that entire week, Thomas had nothing whatsoever to say or contribute to Kingdom life. His life was frozen from any effectiveness for the Lord. Finally, Thomas had to pay the high price of losing *holiness*. The Apostle tells us, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6). Doubt robbed Thomas’ life of happiness, helpfulness, and holiness.

Now, we come to the most significant question: *What is the remedy for doubt?* This is just another way of asking, how can assurance finally be established in my life? First, assurance is established and doubt destroyed by the *witness of other disciples*. They said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” Even with doubt as strong as it was, those words could not be drowned out by doubt’s shouts! Others are a blessing to us, loving us, sustaining us, and exhorting us (Gal. 6:1).

Second, assurance is established and doubt destroyed by the *words of Jesus Himself*: “Then saith he to Thomas, ‘Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing’” (v. 27). Jesus words were very revealing to Thomas. He knew what he said and how he felt. The Lord knows our every thought. Jesus still accepted Thomas and encouraged him to believe. Consequently doubt was completely pushed out of his life.

Third, assurance is established and doubt destroyed by the *wounds of Jesus’ suffering*. Jesus offered his hands and side for Thomas to examine. Immediately doubt dissolved to a thin liquid and drained completely away. Thomas humbly said, “My LORD and my God” (v. 28). The best way to remove your doubts is to look at Calvary’s wounds and remember what they meant on your behalf.

Wrap Up

The resurrection of Jesus Christ establishes our faith like nothing else can. His life is our life. And with His resurrection life, we know He is available day in and day out. He’s always with us wherever we go. What a comfort to every child of God! The assurance we have from Christ’s resurrection dispels every doubt from our mind, settling us into an unshakable hope that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so shall we be too!

