

Four Personal Encounters with the Resurrection: John 20:26-31

Text: John 20:26-31 "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 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. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. 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..."

Introduction: Four key resurrection witnesses

- **Mary Magdalene:**

- Mary was described in Luke as a woman with a tragic past.
- Her life was characterized by enslavement to sin and demon possession.
- She became a follower of Christ and deeply loved Him for His grace in her life.
- She was present at the cross, among the women who went to the tomb, and the first to see and claim that Christ had risen.

- **John:**

- John was a fisherman who had formerly worked with his brother James and their partners Peter and Andrew.
- He was a compassionate man and often described as the closest of Christ's disciples.
- He was present at Christ's trials on the night of His betrayal though he was known to the High Priest's family.
- He was the only one of the twelve mentioned at the cross.
- He is the first disciple who believed that Christ was risen.

- **Peter:**

- Peter was also a fisherman by trade.
- Amongst the 12, he was generally the first to speak, the most dogmatic, and quite impulsive.
- He was present at the trials but reluctant to enter or reveal his identity.
- This reluctance led to three direct confrontations over his relationship to Christ and his adamant denial each time.
- He ran with John to confirm Mary's report of an empty tomb, yet scripture was silent to how he processed what he saw.

- Though he was broken over his failure on the night of his betrayal, Christ took special care to reaffirm His calling upon Peter's life.
- **Thomas:**
 - Thomas was a plain-speaking man who looked at his situation with a practical skepticism.
 - He was honest about his assessments and demanded evidence before committing.
 - He was the last of the Twelve to affirm his faith in Christ, yet he was also the most definitive in his affirmation.

Scene 1: Simplicity: 20:1 "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark..."

- **John focused on Mary, though there were five other women also mentioned in the other gospels.**
 - Her desire was simple; she wanted to honor the Lord.
 - Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had hastily prepared His body for burial.
 - She and the other women wanted to complete the process properly.
 - There is nothing in these verses that would indicate that she or the others expected to see an empty tomb.
 - She simply wanted to properly honor the One who had radically transformed her life.
- **This is where the story began.**

Scene 2: Confusion: 20:2-9 "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him..."

- **Fact 1: Mary knew the body was gone, but assumed the worst: 20:2** "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him..."
 - **Her first impulse was not to assume Christ was alive.**
 - **It was also not to assume that the disciples had secretly stolen the body.**
 - **She offers no specific accusation.**
 - **She is simply confused.**
- **Fact 2: Peter and John also knew the body was gone but that the details did not add up: 20:5-6** "He stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself..."
 - The people with the greatest potential motive to steal the body were confused when they found an empty tomb.

- They obviously did not anticipate the resurrection, nor had they conspired to craft a fake resurrection.
- The care taken in the tomb to arrange and separate the linens made no sense.
- **Fact 3: Before this moment, they did not understand the Scriptures regarding the resurrection: 20:8-9** "Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead..."

Scene 3: Despair: 20:11-18 "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre..."

- **Fact 1: When Mary returned, Peter and John were gone and she was in despair:**
 - **Three times John emphasized her deep grief:**
 - **20:11** "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre..."
 - **20:12-13** Mary "Seeth two angels...they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him..."
 - **20:14-15** "And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 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..."
- **Fact 2: In despair, she did not recognize Him:**
 - She did not expect to see Him alive.
 - The last time she had seen Him, He was unrecognizable.
 - The trauma of those hours must have been seared into her mind.
 - His post resurrection body was identifiable, yet different in ways not directly explained in scripture.
- **Fact 3: When He spoke her name, her despair was replaced with comfort: 20:17** "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master..."
 - He knew her name and spoke it.
 - She knew His voice and was comforted by it.
 - He called His disciples His brothers for the first time.

- **Fact 4: Before this moment, He called them disciples, servants, and friends, but never brothers: 20:17** "Go to my brethren..."
 - **Hebrews 2:9-12** "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren..."
- **Fact 5: The least credible witnesses became the first to see, speak, touch, and proclaim His resurrection: 20:18** "Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her..."

Scene 4: Skepticism: 20:19-28 "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..."

- **Fact 1: That evening, the disciples were confused and afraid: 20:19** "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, came Jesus and stood in the midst..."
- **Fact 2: He went to them: 20:20** "He shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."
- **Fact 3: Thomas was not with them and refused to believe their report: 20:24-25** "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them...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..."
- **Fact 4: Eight days later Christ went to Thomas:**
 - **20:26** "After eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus..."
 - **20:27** "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..."
- **Fact 5: Though the last of the Twelve to affirm the resurrection, Thomas' testimony was the strongest: 20:28** "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God..."

Application: 20:30-31 "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..."

- **John wrote each of these very personal interactions for a very simple purpose:** He wanted to convince you to personally believe on Christ.
 - We are all sinners and separated from God by our sin.
 - We all deserve eternal judgment, and we have no way to reverse our guilt.
- **Our only hope is Christ:**
 - He went to the cross for us.
 - He took our guilt.
 - He was punished in our place.
 - He gave His life for us.
 - He conquered death when He rose from the dead.
- **He purchased the gift of eternal life:**
 - This gift is all of His grace, because we can do nothing to deserve it.
 - This gift is free to us because He paid for it.
- **This gift is available to anyone who will humbly receive it.**
 - **Nicodemus:** Religious but without a knowledge of Christ
 - **The Samaritan Woman:** Broken by sin and painful relationships
 - **Mary Magdalene:** Enslaved by sin and Satan's power
 - **Peter:** Impulsive and humiliated by failure
 - **Thomas:** Plainspeaking and in need of evidence
- **This gift is received by faith alone.**
- **What is keeping you from placing your faith in Christ today?**