



Summary

This powerful exploration of John 20 confronts us with a profound question: why were Jesus' disciples so slow to believe in His resurrection despite witnessing miracles, hearing His promises, and seeing three resurrections firsthand? We journey through the empty tomb discovery, where Mary Magdalene becomes the first witness to the risen Christ—a detail that elevates the role of women in ways revolutionary for that culture. The passage reveals how the disciples' Jewish expectations of an earthly kingdom blinded them to the prophecies of a suffering Messiah found in Isaiah and the Psalms. Thomas's skepticism becomes our mirror, showing how we too can waste precious days in unnecessary unbelief when testimony surrounds us. The breakthrough moment comes when Jesus breathes on His disciples and says 'receive the Holy Spirit'—the moment of their true spiritual birth. This isn't just ancient history; it's a direct challenge to each of us. Just as the Israelites had to actually apply the blood of the Passover lamb to their doorposts to be saved, knowing about Jesus isn't enough. We must apply His blood to our lives through faith. The resurrection on the Feast of Firstfruits wasn't coincidental—it was the fulfillment of a divine pattern established centuries before, revealing that every detail of God's plan points to our redemption through Christ.





Points

Title: The Resurrection and the Call to Believe: Applying the Blood of Christ

Sermon Summary:

This sermon explores the resurrection account from John 20, emphasizing the disciples' initial unbelief despite Jesus' repeated predictions of His rising on the third day. The pastor draws powerful parallels between the Old Testament Passover and Christ as our Passover Lamb, highlighting how the first three Hebrew feasts (Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits) prophetically represent Christ's crucifixion, the believer's sanctification, and His resurrection. The central message is that knowing about salvation intellectually is insufficient—one must personally "apply the blood" of Christ by placing faith in Him. Through Thomas's story, we see the cost of delayed belief and Jesus' gentle encouragement to "not be unbelieving, but believing." The sermon concludes with an urgent appeal that today is the day of salvation, emphasizing that eternal life requires being born again through personal faith in the resurrected Christ.

Key Points:

- Despite witnessing three resurrections and hearing Jesus predict His own resurrection multiple times, the disciples were slow to believe when it actually happened
- Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus cast seven demons, was the first witness to the resurrected Christ, demonstrating that biblical Christianity elevates rather than demeans women
- The arrangement of burial cloths in the tomb indicated Jesus' body had not been disturbed but had simply passed through them, evidencing supernatural resurrection
- The disciples' Jewish indoctrination about Messiah as an earthly conquering king blinded them to Isaiah 50-53 and Psalm 22's prophecies of a suffering servant
- The three Hebrew feasts (Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits) were divinely designed to foreshadow Christ's death, the believer's sanctification, and His resurrection
- Jesus breathed on the disciples saying "receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22), which is when they were truly born again
- Thomas's eight-day delay in believing cost him unnecessary days of agony and misery in unbelief
- Just as Israelites had to actually apply the Passover lamb's blood to their doorposts to be saved, knowing about Jesus is insufficient—one must personally apply His blood by faith
- The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin when we walk in the light and confess our sins
- Belief must move from intellectual knowledge to personal application and relationship with Christ

Scripture Reference:

- John 20:1-31 (primary focus)
- John 2:18-22 (Jesus predicting His resurrection)
- Matthew 12:40 (three days and nights prophecy)
- Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19 (Jesus predicting His death and resurrection)
- Luke 24:1-11 (women at the tomb)



- Matthew 28:1-15 (resurrection account and guard's bribery)
- Mark 16:9-14 (post-resurrection appearances)
- 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 (Christ as firstfruits)
- Exodus 12 (Passover instructions)
- 1 John 1:5-10 (walking in the light, cleansing by blood)
- Revelation 1:4-8 (washed from sins in His blood)
- Isaiah 50-53 (suffering servant prophecies)
- Psalm 22 (Messianic suffering psalm)
- Leviticus 23 (Hebrew feast calendar)

Stories:

- Mary Magdalene's encounter with the risen Jesus at the tomb, where she initially mistakes Him for the gardener until He speaks her name
- Peter and John racing to the tomb after Mary's report, with John arriving first but Peter entering first
- The temple guard fleeing in fear after an angel rolled away the stone, then being bribed by chief priests to lie about the disciples stealing Jesus' body
- Thomas's absence during Jesus' first appearance and his skeptical demand for physical proof, followed by his encounter with Jesus eight days later
- The two disciples on the Emmaus road who saw Jesus but weren't believed by the others
- The disciples cowering in fear behind locked doors when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst
- The mother of James and John requesting positions of honor for her sons in Jesus' kingdom while He was on His way to be crucified
- The disciples disputing among themselves about who would be greatest even during the Last Supper
- The Old Testament Passover narrative where Israelite families had to apply lamb's blood to their doorposts to be spared from the death angel





Scripture

Scripture References from the Sermon

Explicitly Mentioned References

Old Testament

- **Exodus 12** - Passover instructions and applying the blood
- **Psalm 16:10** - "He must rise again from the dead"
- **Psalm 22** - Prophecy of the crucifixion (written 1,000 years before Christ)
- **Isaiah 50-53** - Prophecies of the suffering servant (written 740 years before Christ)
- **Leviticus 23** - The Hebrew ceremonial calendar and feasts

New Testament

John's Gospel:

- **John 2:18-21** - Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up
- **John 6:67-69** - Peter's confession: "Only you have the words of eternal life"
- **John 11** - The resurrection of Lazarus
- **John 14:6** - "I am the way, the truth, and the life"
- **John 19** - Jesus' crucifixion
- **John 20:1** - Mary Magdalene at the tomb (primary text)
- **John 20:1-10** - Peter and John at the empty tomb
- **John 20:11-18** - Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene
- **John 20:19-23** - Jesus appears to the disciples, breathes on them
- **John 20:24-29** - Thomas's doubt and confession
- **John 20:30-31** - Purpose statement: "These are written that you may believe"

Matthew's Gospel:

- **Matthew 12:38-40** - Sign of Jonah, three days and three nights
- **Matthew 16:13-19** - Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi
- **Matthew 16:21** - Jesus predicts His death and resurrection
- **Matthew 16:21-23** - Peter's rebuke: "No, Lord, this shall not happen"
- **Matthew 17:22-23** - Second prediction of death and resurrection
- **Matthew 20:17-19** - Third prediction of death and resurrection
- **Matthew 20:20-28** - Mother of Zebedee's sons requests positions of honor
- **Matthew 27:62-66** - Guard posted at the tomb
- **Matthew 28:1-4** - The resurrection, angel rolls away the stone
- **Matthew 28:9** - Women touch Jesus' feet and worship
- **Matthew 28:11-15** - Guards bribed to spread false story



****Luke's Gospel:****

- ****Luke 7:11-17**** - Raising of the widow's son at Nain
- ****Luke 8:40-56**** - Raising of Jairus' daughter
- ****Luke 22:24**** - Dispute about who is the greatest (during Last Supper)
- ****Luke 24:1-11**** - Women at the tomb, "Why seek the living among the dead?"
- ****Luke 24:10**** - Names of the women: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary mother of James

****Mark's Gospel:****

- ****Mark 16:9-20**** - Post-resurrection appearances (defended as authentic)
- ****Mark 16:9-11**** - Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene
- ****Mark 16:12-13**** - Appearance to two disciples (Emmaus road)
- ****Mark 16:14**** - Jesus rebukes the eleven for unbelief

****Other New Testament:****

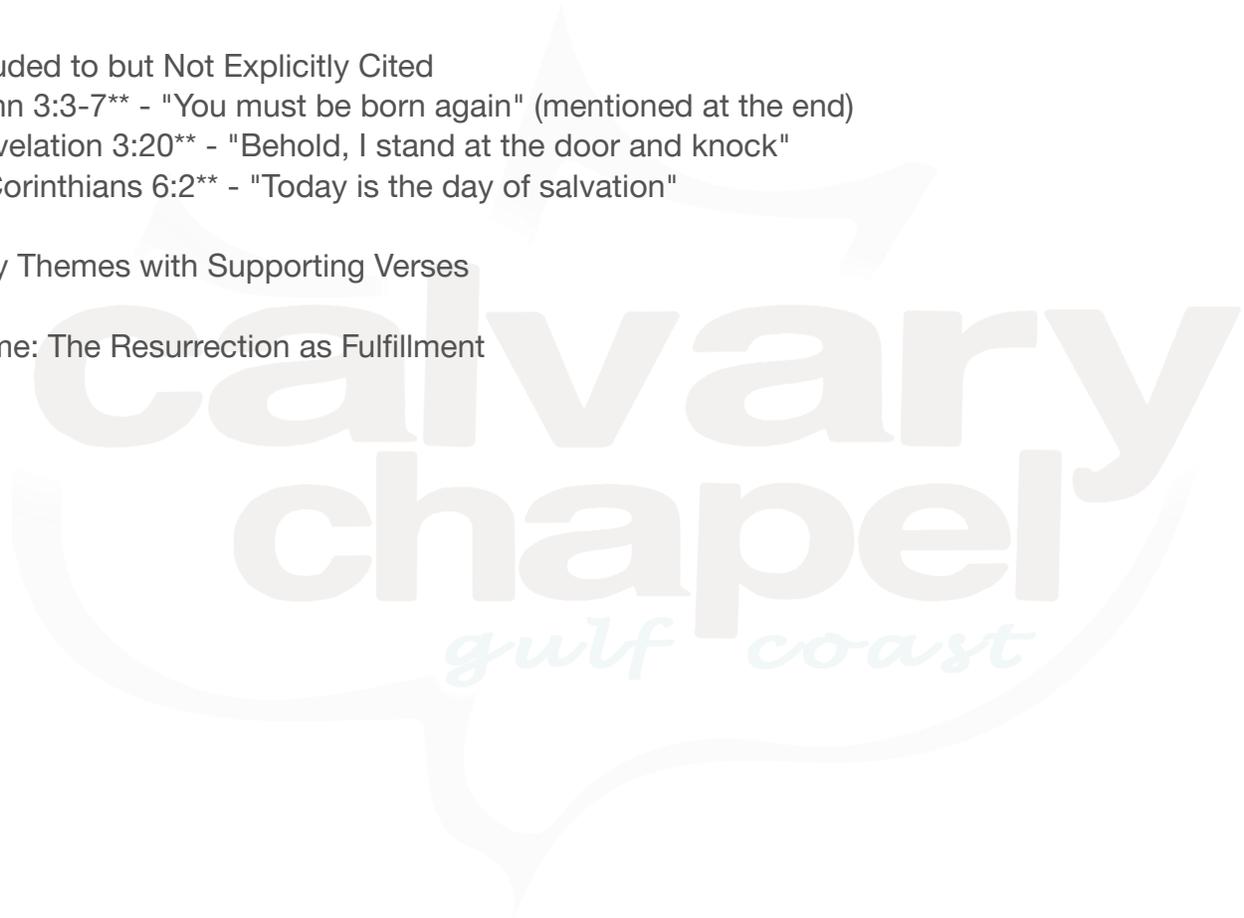
- ****1 Corinthians 12:3**** - "No one calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit"
- ****1 Corinthians 15:20-23**** - Christ the firstfruits of the resurrection
- ****1 John 1:5-10**** - Walking in the light, cleansing by Jesus' blood
- ****Revelation 1:4-8**** - "Washed us from our sins in his own blood"

Alluded to but Not Explicitly Cited

- ****John 3:3-7**** - "You must be born again" (mentioned at the end)
- ****Revelation 3:20**** - "Behold, I stand at the door and knock"
- ****2 Corinthians 6:2**** - "Today is the day of salvation"

Key Themes with Supporting Verses

****Theme: The Resurrection as Fulfillment**





Quotes

Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.

Christ is our Passover lamb. He has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ has gone in the world, women have equal status with men.

It's only where biblical Christianity has traveled that women have equal status with men.

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.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

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.

You can know everything about what the Bible declares, but unless you've applied the blood, the death angel does not pass over.

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Discussion Questions

Why do you think Jesus' own disciples, who had witnessed three resurrections and heard Jesus promise His own resurrection multiple times, were still so slow to believe He had risen?

Mary Magdalene continued to call Jesus 'Lord' even when she believed Him to be dead. What does this reveal about the lasting impact of Christ's work in a person's life?

How does Jesus appearing first to Mary Magdalene, a woman whose testimony would not have been accepted in court, demonstrate the countercultural nature of the gospel and its elevation of those society deems insignificant?

Thomas demanded physical proof before believing, yet Jesus still met him in his doubt. What does this teach us about how God responds to our honest questions and struggles with faith?

The sermon emphasizes that knowing theology about the Passover wasn't enough—the blood had to be applied. How do we sometimes fall into the trap of knowing about Jesus without truly applying His sacrifice to our lives?

What might it look like in practical terms to live as though Jesus could 'pop in' on us at any moment, knowing that He truly does see everything we do?

The disciples' Jewish indoctrination caused them to overlook prophecies about a suffering Messiah in favor of expecting an earthly kingdom. What modern expectations or cultural beliefs might blind us to what Scripture actually teaches?

Thomas spent eight unnecessary days in the agony of unbelief because he refused to trust the testimony of his closest friends. How does our refusal to believe God's Word or the testimony of other believers prolong our own suffering?

John wrote his Gospel so that people 'may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name.' If you were to write your own testimony with one clear purpose, what would it be?

The sermon states we are 'only one breath away, only one heartbeat away from your eternal destiny.' How should the urgency of this reality change the way we live today and share the gospel with others?



Small Group Guide: The Resurrection and Applying the Blood

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by asking God to open hearts and minds to understand the significance of Christ's resurrection and what it means to apply His blood to our lives.

Icebreaker Question

If you could have been present for one moment in the resurrection account (Mary at the tomb, Peter and John running to see, Jesus appearing to the disciples, etc.), which would you choose and why?

Key Scripture References

- John 20:1-31
 - Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19
 - Luke 24:1-12
 - 1 Corinthians 15:20-23
 - 1 John 1:5-9
 - Revelation 1:4-8
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Summary of Main Points

1. **Jesus repeatedly promised His resurrection**, yet His disciples were slow to believe
 2. **Mary Magdalene was the first witness** to the risen Christ—significant in a culture where women couldn't testify in court
 3. **The disciples' unbelief** cost them days of unnecessary agony and fear
 4. **Jesus appeared to prove His resurrection** and breathed the Holy Spirit into His disciples
 5. **Thomas's skepticism** was met with grace and an invitation to believe
 6. **The Passover imagery** points to Christ as our sacrificial lamb whose blood must be applied
 7. **Belief requires action**—knowing about salvation isn't enough; we must apply the blood
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Discussion Questions



Understanding the Text

1. **Why do you think the disciples were so slow to believe Jesus had risen, even after He told them multiple times it would happen?** What does this reveal about human nature and faith?
2. **The sermon emphasized that Mary Magdalene was the first witness to the risen Christ. Why is this significant?** What does this tell us about how Jesus values women?
3. **Read John 20:8-9: "Then the other disciple...went in also and saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the scripture that he must rise again from the dead." What exactly did John believe at this point?** How does belief grow?

Personal Reflection

4. **Thomas spent eight unnecessary days in "agony and misery of unbelief." Have you ever experienced a period where doubt or unbelief kept you from peace?** What finally brought you to belief or resolution?
5. **Jesus said to Thomas (and to us): "Do not be unbelieving, but believing" (John 20:27). What areas of your life is Jesus speaking this word to you today?**
6. **The pastor emphasized the difference between knowing about the Passover and actually applying the blood. How would you explain the difference between knowing about Jesus and applying His blood to your life?**

Application and Action

7. **First John 1:7 says "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." What does it practically look like to "apply the blood" in daily life?** How is this different from just intellectual belief?
8. **The disciples were transformed from fearful, doubting followers into bold witnesses after encountering the risen Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit. What transformation have you experienced since believing in Christ?** What transformation are you still waiting for?
9. **Jesus appeared to His disciples over 40 days, sometimes suddenly. The pastor asked: "If you knew Jesus could pop in on you suddenly, how would that affect your lifestyle?" How would you answer that question?**



Key Takeaways

- ✓ **The resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith**—without it, Christianity crumbles
- ✓ **Jesus proves Himself patient with doubters**—He met Thomas where he was and invites us to believe
- ✓ **Knowing about salvation is not the same as receiving salvation**—we must personally apply Christ's blood to our lives
- ✓ **Biblical Christianity elevates women**—wherever the Gospel goes, women gain equal status
- ✓ **The Old Testament feasts point to Christ**—Passover (crucifixion), Unleavened Bread (sanctification), First Fruits (resurrection)
- ✓ **Unbelief costs us peace and joy**—Thomas suffered unnecessarily for eight days
- ✓ **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe"** (John 20:29)—that's us!

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to put into practice this week:

1. **For those who have applied the blood:** Share your testimony with someone who doesn't know Christ. Tell them specifically about the moment you moved from knowing about Jesus to personally trusting Him.
2. **For those still examining:** Like Thomas, bring your honest doubts to Jesus. He can handle them. Write out your questions and commit to seeking answers through Scripture, prayer, and conversation with mature believers.
3. **Daily reminder:** Set a reminder on your phone that says "Jesus could return today" or "Do not be unbelieving, but believing." Let it prompt you to examine how you're living.
4. **Study the Passover:** Read Exodus 12 and compare it with the crucifixion accounts. List all the parallels you find between the Passover lamb and Jesus, our Passover Lamb.



5. **Confession and cleansing:** Take 1 John 1:9 seriously this week. Each day, confess specific sins to God and thank Him that the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all unrighteousness.
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Closing Reflection

The pastor ended with this urgent plea: "You're only one breath away, only one heartbeat away from your eternal destiny. And the reality is...we get to choose."

- Have you applied the blood of Jesus to your life by placing your faith in Him?
 - If yes, when was the last time you thanked God for this incredible gift?
 - If no, what is keeping you from doing so today?
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Closing Prayer

Pray together as a group:

- Thank God for the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - Ask for faith to believe what we have not physically seen
 - Pray for anyone in the group still examining the claims of Christ
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to help each person apply what they've learned
 - Pray for opportunities to share the hope of the resurrection with others this week
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For Next Week

Read John 21 in preparation for next week's study. Consider: How does Jesus restore Peter? What does this teach us about grace and second chances?

"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." - John 20:31



Daily Devotional

5-Day Devotional: The Resurrection Reality

Day 1: When Faith Meets Evidence

Reading: John 20:1-10

Devotional: Mary Magdalene ran to the tomb expecting death but discovered absence. Peter and John saw the empty grave clothes and believed. Sometimes our faith journey requires us to see for ourselves what God has done. Like these first witnesses, we may approach spiritual truth with skepticism or confusion. Yet God graciously meets us where we are. The carefully folded burial cloths testified to something supernatural—Jesus didn't frantically escape; He sovereignly rose. Today, examine what evidence of Christ's work exists in your own life. What "empty tombs" has He left in your story? Don't let unbelief rob you of eight more days of joy, as it did Thomas. Choose to believe the testimony before you.

Day 2: The Voice That Changes Everything

Reading: John 20:11-18

Devotional: Mary didn't recognize Jesus until He spoke her name. In that single word—"Mary"—everything changed. Grief transformed to joy, despair to hope, death to life. Jesus still calls each of us by name. He knows your story, your seven demons, your deepest pain. Mary clung to Him desperately, not wanting to let go. Jesus gently redirected her—there was work to do, a message to carry. Resurrection faith isn't meant to be hoarded but shared. Who in your life needs to hear that Jesus is alive? Like Mary, you've encountered the risen Christ. Don't keep silent about what you've witnessed. Your testimony, though questioned by some, may be exactly what someone needs to believe.

Day 3: Applying the Blood

Reading: Exodus 12:1-13; 1 John 1:5-9

Devotional: Knowledge about the Passover wasn't enough—Israelite families had to apply the blood to be saved. Similarly, knowing about Jesus intellectually doesn't save us; we must personally apply His blood to our lives. The death angel didn't pass over based on theological understanding but on obedient faith. Today, many know the gospel story yet remain spiritually dead because they've never applied Christ's sacrifice personally. Confession and faith activate the cleansing power of Jesus' blood. If you've been living in the doorway of belief without stepping through, today is your day. Don't wait another moment in spiritual slavery. Apply the blood through genuine repentance and



faith. The difference between knowing about salvation and experiencing it is the difference between death and life.

Day 4: Blessed Are Those Who Believe

Reading: John 20:24-29; 1 Peter 1:3-9

Devotional: Thomas demanded physical proof, and Jesus graciously provided it. Yet He pronounced a special blessing on those who believe without seeing—that's us. We live in the tension of faith, trusting in a resurrection we didn't witness with physical eyes. Peter calls this "inexpressible and glorious joy" even though we haven't seen Christ. Thomas's eight days of unnecessary anguish remind us that delayed faith costs us peace, joy, and fellowship. What conditions are you placing on your belief? What evidence are you demanding before you'll fully surrender? Jesus invites you today: "Do not be unbelieving, but believing." Faith isn't blind—it's based on reliable testimony and the Spirit's inner witness. Choose belief today and receive the blessing reserved for those who trust without seeing.

Day 5: Life in His Name

Reading: John 20:30-31; Revelation 1:4-8

Devotional: John carefully selected specific signs and teachings with one purpose: that you may believe and have life in Jesus' name. Everything in Scripture points to this central truth—Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing in Him grants eternal life. The risen Christ who washed us in His blood has made us kings and priests. This isn't abstract theology; it's your identity and destiny. Today, evaluate your response to this message. Have you truly believed? Have you received the Holy Spirit as the disciples did when Jesus breathed on them? Or are you still standing outside the tomb, knowing the facts but not experiencing the life? The invitation stands: believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be, apply His blood to your life, and step into the resurrection reality that changes everything.

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