

Exalting Jesus Christ

"The Resurrection – Part 5"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. If you had lived in the days of Jesus and had been one of His disciples, how would you have reacted upon hearing that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead?
 - A. You would think the followers of Jesus would be running through the streets of Jerusalem shouting the good news!
 1. Surely the disciples would be overjoyed – thrilled beyond belief.
 2. No doubt they would shout this great news from the rooftops of the city, and rush to the surrounding villages to spread the news there as well.
 - B. But that's not the way it happen. In fact, the Bible tells us the reaction of the Lord's disciples was just the opposite.
 1. They were shocked . . . stunned . . . surprised.
 - a. Some were completely caught off guard – not expecting to hear such earth-shaking news.
 - b. Others sat in total disbelief – they thought the bearers of this news were either lying or badly mistaken.

- c. And then there was one disciple who was in total denial – flat out refusing to believe Jesus had been bodily resurrected from the dead until someone could show him irrefutable evidence.
- II. This morning, in our series of lessons, "Exalting Jesus Christ," we're going to take a final look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in "The Resurrection Part 5."
 - A. In particular, I want us to take a closer look at the various reactions to the Lord's resurrection.
 - 1. So, let's open our Bibles to the 20th chapter of the gospel of John, and travel back in time to that first day of the week when the Lord's disciples first learned the tomb of Jesus was empty.

BODY:

- I. According to the gospel of John, Mary Magdalene is the first to arrive at the tomb that Sunday morning.
 - A. Mary's initial reaction is fear and great dread.
 - 1. **John 20:1-2** – *Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and*

said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

2. Finding the tomb empty, Mary immediately assumes the body of Jesus has been stolen.
- B. But, after she told the disciples about the disappearance of the body, Mary retraces her steps and returns to the empty tomb, deeply distressed and confused.
1. **John 20:11-13** – *But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."*
 - a. Maybe it's because she's still in shock over the disappearance of the body, or maybe it's because her sight was blurred by tears, but Mary didn't seem recognize that the two persons to whom she was speaking were angels.
 - b. And of course, the last person she expected to see walking around was the risen Lord. So it's no surprise she didn't recognize Him either.

2. **John 20:14-15** – *Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."*
 - a. Confused, and desperate to find the body of Jesus, Mary turns to see a man standing nearby.
 - b. John tells us she was weeping. But more than simply crying, Mary was sobbing uncontrollably.
 - c. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary, the word Jesus and the angels used when asking why she was "weeping" is a Greek word "used of 'any loud expression of grief,' especially in mourning for the dead."
 - d. Strong says the word means "to sob" or "to wail aloud."
 - e. No wonder Mary didn't recognize Jesus. It's doubtful she could see much of anything through blinding tears.

3. **John 20:16** – *Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).*
 - a. We're not told how Mary suddenly realized she's speaking to Jesus.

- b. We're told in the gospels that Mary Magdalene was one of the women who constantly ministered to Jesus from His Galilean ministry to His final days in Jerusalem.
 - c. She was also among the group of women who watched over the tomb of Jesus while His body was being prepared for burial.
 - d. Maybe she recognized His voice – especially since she had no doubt heard her name fall from the Lord's lips on many occasions.
4. Although it's not explicitly stated, the verses that follow seem to suggest Mary immediately throws her arms around Jesus and hugs Him with all her strength.
- a. But Jesus interrupts this tender moment by giving her an errand to run.
5. **John 20:17-18** – *Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.*

- C. In a way, Mary is so typical of those persons who are fragile, highly emotional, anxious to cling, easily worried and easily hurt, and highly vulnerable.
1. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus described the Mary's of this world.
 - a. **Mark 4:16-17** – *"These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble."*
- D. So, what should we do for the Mary's among us?
1. The apostle Paul has a lot to say about how we should care for those who are fragile and weak.
 - a. **Acts 20:35** – *". . . you must support the weak"*
 - b. **Romans 15:1** – *. . . bear with the scruples [the weaknesses] of the weak.*
 - c. **1 Thessalonians 5:14** – *. . . uphold [help] the weak, be patient with all.*

2. If we don't "support," "bear with," and "uphold" the weak among us there is a good chance they will fall away when trouble and difficult times come along.
 3. And if that happens – if they fall away because we didn't help them in the ways Paul describes – you and I will share the blame for allowing that fragile, vulnerable, precious soul to be lost.
- II. What about Peter and John?
- A. Unlike the other disciples, Peter and John literally ran to the tomb of Jesus to see for themselves if the body of Jesus was missing.
 1. **John 20:3-10** – *Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture,*

that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

2. When Peter and John investigated the tomb, they came to a completely different conclusion than Mary.
 - a. We've already talked about the significance of what they saw inside the tomb, so we won't go over all that again.
 - b. But what we find here are two men who saw the evidence of the resurrection and immediately believed without actually seeing the resurrected Jesus.
 - (1). John's belief is specifically mentioned, while Peter's belief is implied by having seen the same evidence at the same time.
 - c. Even though they had not connected the Old Testament prophecies to what they were seeing, there was no way to ignore the evidence.
 - d. Of course, Jesus would later appear to Peter and John along with all the other disciples, but not before these two disciples were convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead.
 - e. And so, convinced and convicted by the evidence they saw, these two disciples returned to their homes.

- B. Peter and John are typical of those who are open and receptive to the truth – all they need is to simply see the evidence.
1. People like Peter and John are not as numerous as we prefer, but they are out there.
 2. Once they are shown the truth, they will immediately accept it and remain committed to it for the rest of their lives.
- C. So, what is our responsibility to the Peter's and John's of this world?

Let's let Peter tell us.

1. **1 Peter 3:15** – *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. . .*
2. It begins with having a heart in which the Lord God is "sanctified."
But what does that mean?
3. The word "sanctify" in this verse means:
 - a. A heart that has been cleansed, consecrated, and made pure and holy.
 - b. A heart that is free from the guilt of sin, and abstains from that which is wicked, sinful and profane.
 - c. And, a heart that is not only dedicated exclusively to the Lord God, but where God finds acceptance.

4. And once we have a heart dedicated to God, we will not only have a burning desire to share the gospel of Christ with others, but we will be spiritually mature and knowledgeable enough to defend the truth against error.
 5. So, why aren't more members of the Lord's church capable of teaching the lost and defending the faith?
 - a. Sadly, the answer is Biblical ignorance and unsanctified hearts.
 - b. I can assure you that Biblical ignorance thrives in hearts that are not sanctified – in hearts that are not consecrated, not pure and holy, and in hearts that are not dedicated to God.
 - c. How are we ever going to convince others to give their hearts to Christ, when we've robbed Him of our own heart?
- III. Now let's take a look at the rest of the disciples. What was their reaction?
- A. Hours after Mary Magdalene brought news of the empty tomb, we find the Lord's disciples hiding behind locked doors.
 1. **John 20:19-23** – *Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut [literally "shut up tight"] 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."

- a. Afraid to investigate the empty tomb on their own, these disciples actually hid themselves from the world outside.
 - b. Rather than rejoice over news that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead, these frightened, terrified men locked themselves in, and shut the world out.
2. Luke tells us they were even terrified when the Lord appeared to them, thinking perhaps they had seen a ghost.
- a. **Luke 24:36-37** – *Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." 37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.*
 - b. To convince them He had been bodily resurrected from the dead, Jesus showed them the wounds He suffered from being

crucified – and when that still wasn't enough, He asked for something to eat.

- B. These disciples best typify those who are fearful and afraid of seeing the truth, and when they do finally see it, they are slow to accept it.
 - 1. There are probably many reasons why these disciples were afraid of seeing the truth about the resurrection of Christ.
 - a. No doubt they were afraid of becoming the next targets of the enemies of Jesus.
 - b. Perhaps they also feared the day when they would have to come out of hiding and confront the enemies of Jesus with the proof that He truly is the Son of God.
 - 2. And, like these disciples, it's not uncommon to find people who are also afraid and slow to accept the truth.
 - a. Some are afraid to admit the church to which they now belong is not the Lord's church.
 - b. They're afraid to admit they've been following and believing false denominational doctrine all these years.
 - c. Perhaps they're also afraid of facing family and friends who won't be very receptive to their new-found faith.
 - 3. Fear of change and fear of the unknown can be powerful forces at work in the hearts of those we're trying to reach with the gospel.

C. So, what should we do to help them overcome these fears?

1. I think the best way to help others overcome their fears is for us to be totally and completely convinced in our own hearts and minds that this truly is the Lord's one and only church, and that we teach and practice the truth like no one else.
2. If we're not fully and completely convinced that this is the Lord's one true church – if we believe one church is as good as another, and that good people from all churches are going to go to heaven – then it's time for us to go back to the fundamentals of New Testament Christianity and lay that foundation of faith once again.
3. We will never be able to convince others they need to change if we're not totally convinced they need what we have.
4. Ask yourself how successful the apostles would have been if they had been unsure about the things they taught.
5. How successful would they have been if they had vacillated over whether or not they really were preaching the truth of the gospel?

IV. Finally, let's take a look at one of the best known, and yet least mentioned, disciple of the Lord – Thomas.

A. The first time the Lord appeared to His disciples, Thomas was absent.

1. **John 20:24-25** – *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."*
 2. Thomas is mentioned only two other times in the Bible – both in the gospel of John (**John 11:16; 14:5**).
 - a. And everyone knows he's the one from whom we get the expression "Doubting Thomas."
 - b. I think you can see why!
 3. However, I don't think Thomas deserves all the criticism he's received over the centuries.
 - a. Perhaps Thomas felt if he was going to risk his life to preach a resurrected Jesus, he would first need empirical evidence.
 - b. Simply accepting the testimony of those who claimed they saw Jesus wasn't enough for Thomas.
 - c. He demanded indisputable, irrefutable, un-impeachable, empirical evidence.
- B. Thomas is typical of those who may be somewhat stubborn when it comes to accepting the truth.

1. But when they're given credible evidence to *support the truth*, and they come to *believe the truth* and *obey the truth*, they are the kind of people who will live every day of their lives *by the truth*, and become some of the most dedicated advocates *of the truth*.
 2. **John 20:26-29** – *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."*
 3. Do you see the radical change in Thomas after he was given the empirical evidence he demanded?
 - a. Thomas not only acknowledged Jesus as "my Lord!" but also as "my God!"
 - b. When he saw that Jesus had been bodily resurrected from the dead, Thomas knew without any doubt whatsoever that Jesus was the Son of God – God the Son wrapped in human flesh.
- C. What can we do for stubborn, empirical-evidence-seeking skeptics like Thomas?

1. The answer is simple:
 - a. Give them the evidence they seek – reason with them from the Scriptures and show them the evidence that proves Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
2. Do you know one of the reasons why Paul was so successful in leading others to Christ?
3. The book of Acts is filled with passages that say Paul "reasoned" with people from the Scriptures, and we can do the same.
 - a. If we know our Bibles as well as Paul knew the Old Testament Scriptures; and if we use the intellect God gave us to logically and reasonably present the truth, no one will be able to refute us.
 - b. They may reject us, but they will never refute us – they will never walk away having won the argument or the debate.
 - c. When you *have* the truth, and *know* the truth, and can effectively *present* the truth, you're invincible against error.
 - d. You will defeat error every single time.

CONCLUSION:

- I. In closing, I want to briefly talk about one last group of people mentioned in John chapter 20.

- A. I want us to see what Jesus had to say about you and me.
1. Immediately after Jesus said, *"Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed,"* the Lord added, *"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* (**John 20:29**)
 - a. Jesus is speaking about you and me there – *"those who have not seen and yet have believed."*
 2. Then John concludes: **John 20:30-31** – *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.*
- B. Why are we so special in the eyes of God?
1. The reason is because we believe in Jesus, even though we've never seen Him.
 2. **1 Peter 1:6-9** – *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing,*

you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.

3. Even though none of us have seen Jesus, that doesn't mean we have no reason to believe in Him.
 4. Our faith in Jesus Christ is based on the testimony of the inspired writers of the New Testament.
 - a. According to John, the things that are written in his gospel are written to produce faith in Jesus Christ, and through that faith, we can have eternal life.
 - b. According to Peter, we can rejoice with inexpressible joy because we love Jesus Christ and believe in Him, even though we have never seen Him.
 - c. And according to Jesus, that makes us blessed in a very special way: **John 20:29** – "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*"
- II. Throughout this series of lessons we've examined all the empirical evidence that proves the deity of Jesus Christ – evidence proving He is truly the Son of God because of His resurrection from the dead.
- A. The faith of Christians is not based on wishful thinking, or merely hoping Jesus is the Son of God.

1. Faith must be based on factual, irrefutable empirical evidence.
 2. Like the apostle Paul, we need to be able to say: ". . .for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." **(2 Timothy 1:12)**
- B. Do you have that kind of faith?
1. Is your faith strong enough to sacrifice everything to become a Christian – to sacrifice everything to become a member of the Lord's church.
 2. I want you to have that kind of faith.
 - a. I want you to have a faith that will lead you to surrender your life to Jesus Christ, and that will encourage you to "*be faithful until death.*" **(Revelation 2:10)**
 - b. I want you to have a faith that will keep you through every heartache, every disappointment, every setback, so that you will "*be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*" **(1 Corinthians 15:58)**
 - c. And finally, I want you to have a faith that will support and sustain you through life, so that when you come to the end of your life, you will be able to say with Paul, "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*" 8

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

3. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, you can begin building on that foundation of faith by coming to Christ in obedience to the gospel, and by being baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins.
4. And if you're a child of God whose faith has been torn and tattered by the enemy, Satan, then you can start today to rebuild that faith by coming back to the Lord, confessing your sins, and being cleansed once again by the blood of Jesus Christ.