

We have the story of Easter. We believe the testimony of Mary Magdalene and John that Jesus has risen from the dead! But in this scripture we find the disciples acting like things are the same as they were on Friday when Jesus died. They had almost been arrested with Jesus (remember that in the garden Jesus, in essence, said “you have who you want, now leave them alone”). The disciples remained under the fear of death at the hands of the Jews. They feared that the Jews would come to arrest them, to finish the job – after all they were the ones that had studied with Him and done missionary trips with Him these three plus years. Our scriptures say they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, so they met in secret at night, with fear, behind locked doors. Now, without warning, Jesus passed through the door! John writes that the door was locked. Jesus came and stood among them. This showed the power of His new resurrection body. He was not a ghost, because His body had substantial form and continuity with His pre-Cross body. Jesus’ first words were “Peace be with you!” This was a conventional greeting similar “shalom” or “blessings.” But the words were now impregnated with a deeper and fuller meaning. Now they understand what he meant when Jesus said in John 14:27:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

They remembered what Jesus had said about the fact that they would abandon him, but he would not leave them alone:

I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecutions. But take courage; I have conquered the world!”

Then Jesus showed the disciples the wounds in His pierced hands and side, and they were overjoyed. They had been frightened, but now Jesus’ presence and blessing changed their moods from fear and despondency!

Jesus then re-commissioned the disciples as His apostles: Jesus was sending them as His representatives in the same way that the Father had sent Jesus. The disciples were sent with Jesus’ authority to preach, teach, and do miraculous signs. For their new commission they needed spiritual power. So He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The image and wording of breathing on them reminds us of God’s creative work in making Adam when God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of Life. This post-Resurrection “breathing” was a new kind of creative work as they would soon become new creations, in less than 50 days, at Pentecost, but that’s another story.

Jesus then tells them about a part of the authority he had given them. Forgiveness of sins is one of the major benefits of Jesus’ death. Forgiveness is the essence of what Jesus did for us. Proclaiming the forgiveness of sins was the major feature of the apostolic preaching as we discover in the Book of Acts. Jesus gave the apostles (and by extension, the church) the privilege of announcing heaven’s terms on how a person can receive forgiveness. If one believes in Jesus, then a

Christian has the right to announce his forgiveness. If a person rejects Jesus' sacrifice, then a Christian can announce that that person is not forgiven.

In his Gospel, John has traced the development of unbelief, which culminated in Jesus' enemies crucifying Him. Now, John also traced the disciples' development of faith, which was now climaxed in Thomas. The disciples were affirming Jesus' resurrection to Thomas (told is in a tense which means they kept telling Thomas they had been with the risen Jesus). But Thomas is unconvinced. He wanted bodily proof of Jesus' risen state. Thomas thought they had all drunk the same bad wine that gave them all the same dream! The reappearance of Jesus a week later provided the opportunity Thomas wanted. Again . . . Jesus miraculously entered a room with locked doors. Jesus asked Thomas to touch Him and to stop doubting and believe. This was a direct challenge for a personal commitment.

Thomas' response, My Lord and My God! is the high point of the Gospel. Here was a skeptical man, confronted by the evidence of Jesus' resurrection. He announced that Jesus, the Man of Galilee, is God manifest in the flesh. So the truths in the first chapter of John were realized personally in this apostle.

Thomas now understood some things about Jesus' Resurrection:

- (a) He understood that all that talk when Jesus predicted His being raised was true
- (b) He understood that Jesus is the Son of God and was sent by God
- (c) He understood that Jesus was successful in His mission of salvation

- (d) He understood that Jesus was entitled to a position of glory
- (e) He understood that Jesus is the “Lord.”

Jesus then pronounced a blessing on all who would come to faith without the help of a visible, bodily manifestation to them. This blessing comes to all who believe on the basis of the proclaimed gospel and the evidences for its validity. Believers living today are not deprived by not seeing Him physically; instead, we are the recipients of Jesus’ special blessing: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” But this not only applies to us, but also to Old Testament saints that believed God’s promises. We are greatly blessed!

John explained his purpose in writing this Gospel, that people might contemplate and perceive the theological significance of Jesus’ miracles and “signs.” Many people today ignore, deny, or rationalize Jesus’ miracles. Even in Jesus’ day some people attributed them to God and others attributed them to Satan. But to ignore, deny, or rationalize them in Jesus’ day was impossible because the miracles were manifold and manifest. John indicated Jesus did many other miraculous signs. In fact, 35 different miracles are recorded in the four Gospels. John selected 7 for special consideration in order that people might come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, and the Son of God.¹

¹Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:343