

## Introduction

There is much debate right now about voter identification. Most Americans are used to showing identification of who they are. When we fly on an airplane, we have to present a valid Passport or Driver's License. When we apply for a Driver's License, we have to bring a current license, or a birth certificate. When we check in at the doctor's office, we have to show a valid driver's license. This past week I had to go in to Northside Hospital for my two-year post-transplant check-up, where they took blood, did a bone marrow biopsy, and a skeletal survey. Before any of these tests were done, I had to go to Registration, and provide them with my driver's license to prove that I was who I said I was. There should not be much debate over showing identification when voting. What we are doing is providing evidence of who we are.

In a court of law, the lawyers present evidence to the court to prove their case. Many times, they will bring in witnesses to testify that they saw the crime happen or did not happen. This is merely evidence to prove their case.

Throughout the Gospel of John, John has provided different signs that Jesus did as evidence that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that people reading the book would believe in Jesus. In our passage today, John gives three evidences that Jesus was raised from the dead. Why is this evidence so critical? It is critical because it is part of the gospel message. In Romans 10:9-10, Paul wrote that we have to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead in order to be saved. If do not believe that He was raised from the dead, we will not be saved.

(Ro 10:9–10) “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; {10} for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he gave a concise presentation of the gospel. He said that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. The resurrection of Jesus is part of the gospel message, and like John, Paul provides evidence of His resurrection by His appearance to Peter and the twelve apostles.

(1 Co 15:3–5) “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, {4} and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, {5} and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”

It is not just a crucial part of the gospel, it is the single most important part of our faith. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Christ did not rise from the dead, his preaching was in vain, and our faith is in vain. He said that if Christ was not raised from the dead, we would be found to be false witnesses of God. Third, if Christ was not raised, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins. So, the resurrection is vitally important to Christianity. Therefore, the evidences that John provides are vitally important to all of us.

(1 Co 15:14–17) “and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. {15} Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. {16} For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; {17} and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.”

The first evidence that John provides is that of the empty tomb. Mary was the first to arrive at the empty tomb, and the first to report that the tomb was empty. The second evidence is Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene. The third evidence is Jesus' appearance to His apostles. The intent of all these evidences is to prove that Jesus rose from the dead, and for us to believe so that we can have life in His name.

### **Three Evidences that Jesus was Raised from the Dead**

1. Evidence of Empty Tomb
2. Evidence of Jesus' appearance to Mary
3. Evidence of Jesus' Appearance to the Apostles

#### **1. Evidence of Empty Tomb (Jn 20:1-10)**

On the first day of the week, which is Sunday, Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. She saw the stone already taken away from the tomb, and she ran to Simon Peter and John, who refers to himself as the "other disciple whom Jesus loved." She said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

(Jn 20:1–2) "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb. {2} So 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."

Notice that she said, "we do not know where they have laid Him." In the other gospel accounts we find that Mary, the mother of James and Salome, were also with her. Apparently, Mary Magdalene started out with these women, but had run ahead of them and arrived at the tomb while it was still dark. She saw the stone rolled away and that Jesus was not in there, and ran back to tell Peter and John. She probably passed the other Mary on her way to Peter and said, "we do not know where they have laid Him." Then, Mary must have run back and rejoined the other women and they went to the tomb.

(Mk 16:1–4) "When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. {2} Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. {3} They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" {4} Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large."

Before moving on, it is important to note a few things. First, the obvious thing is that the tomb is empty. Mary was the first one that saw that the tomb was empty. Then, the others came and saw that the tomb was empty. Second, the ladies had bought spices after the Sabbath was over, which would have been Saturday night, and at daybreak they brought spices to anoint Him. They were expecting Him to be in the tomb. They were concerned about who would roll away the stone for them. Even though He had told them that He would be raised from the dead, they were not yet believing. Third, Jesus had said that He would rise from the dead on the third day. He was buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus on Friday afternoon. Any part of Friday would be counted as a day. Jesus was in the tomb on Saturday, which was the second day. He was raised from the dead on Sunday, which is the third day. The early church met on Sundays, in celebration and remembrance of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Before moving on, I think that one other bit of information is important to note. In Matthew 27, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together with Pilate and told him that Jesus had said He was going to rise again after three days. They asked him to give orders to secure the grave so that the disciples would not steal Jesus away and say that He had risen from the dead. Pilate told them that they have a guard, and to go make the grave secure. They went to the grave with the guard and set a seal on the stone. Once the grave was sealed, it could not be opened. Mary and the others did not know that the grave was going to be sealed. Once sealed, the guards stayed there to make sure that nobody opened the grave. Once it was sealed the guards were more concerned about the seal than Jesus. If that seal was broken, the soldiers would be executed. When Mary arrived and saw the tomb opened and that Jesus was not there, the evidence of an empty grave is even more compelling evidence.

(Mt 27:62–66) “Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, {63} and said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I *am to* rise again.’ {64} Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.” {65} Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go, make it *as* secure as you know how.” {66} And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.”

Matthew also records how the stone was rolled away. He said a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. Jesus did not need the stone rolled away to be raised from the dead, or to leave the tomb. The stone was rolled away so that Mary, the other women, Peter, John, and others could see that the tomb was empty. This was the second earthquake; the first earthquake happened while Jesus was on the cross. The angel’s appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.

(Mt 28:2–4) “And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. {3} And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. {4} The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.”

Then, the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that happened. They assembled with the elders and consulted together. They gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and told them to say that the disciples came by night and stole Jesus away while we were asleep. The problem with that account is that there were normally four guards and they took turns sleeping, and made sure that none of them fell asleep, at the risk of death for neglecting their duty. Knowing this, the chief priests said if the news of it came to the governor’s ears, they would win him over and keep them out of trouble. The soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. The chief priests were not interested in truth or facts, but in maintaining power and control; they were religious hypocrites. The actions and testimony of the guards are additional evidence that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

(Mt 28:11-15) “Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. {12} And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, {13} and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ {14} And if this should come to the governor’s ears, we will win him over and keep

you out of trouble.” {15} And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, *and is to this day.*”

Now, back to our account in John, Peter and John went to the tomb, and John ran faster than Peter and arrived there earlier. John was the youngest of the apostles, and that may have contributed to him running faster. John wrote this fact twice, so it was important to him to let us know that he was a faster runner. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. When Peter arrived, he entered the tomb and saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. This is the second evidence of the empty tomb, and that Jesus had risen from the dead. And according to the Matthew’s account, the third evidence was that of the guards’ report to the chief priests.

(Jn 20:3-7) “So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. {4} The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; {5} and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*; but he did not go in. {6} And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*, {7} and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.”

After Peter entered the tomb, John also entered the tomb. He saw that Jesus was not there, that the wrappings and linen was there, but Jesus was not there, and he believed. What did he believe? He believed what Jesus had told them, that He would be raised from the dead on the third day. John said that as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own houses.

(Jn 20:8-10) “So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. {9} For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. {10} So the disciples went away again to their own homes.”

Jesus had told His disciples on several occasions that He would be raised again, but what were the Scriptures that told of His resurrection from the dead? One of the primary scriptures is Psalm 16:10, where David prophesied, “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” The body begins to break down and decay on the fourth day, so Jesus was going to be raised from the dead before the fourth day.

(Ps 16:10) “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.”

## 2. Evidence of Jesus’ Appearance to Mary (Jn 20:11-18)

The second evidence of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is His appearance to Mary. She was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb, and saw two angels in white sitting. One of them was where Jesus’ head had been lying, and the other was where His feet had been.

(Jn 20:11–12) “But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; {12} and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.”

They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” It is obvious that Mary still does not know that Jesus has risen from the dead; she still thinks that someone has taken the body and laid Him somewhere else. The Roman guards are obviously not there; they had gone back to town to talk to the chief priests. She does not know that it had been made secure.

(Jn 20:13) “And 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.”

After she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Mary thought Jesus was the gardener, and said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Then Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!”, which means Teacher. I believe that Mary was too caught up in her weeping to recognize Jesus’ voice the first time He spoke to her. When Jesus said, “Mary!”, she immediately recognized that it was Jesus. He got her attention with it, so I believe He said it loud enough to get her attention. In addition, Jesus said her name, and a gardener would not have known her name.

(Jn 20:14-16) “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?” Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” {16} Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher).”

Then Jesus told her to “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, “I ascend to My Father and Your Father, and My God and your God.” Therefore, Mary went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and she told them what He has said to her. The second evidence of Jesus’ resurrection was His appearance to Mary at the tomb.

(Jn 20:17-18) “Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’” {18} Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and *that* He had said these things to her.”

### 3. Evidence of Jesus’ Appearance to the Apostles (Jn 20:19-29)

The third evidence that John provides is Jesus’ appearance to the apostles. When it was evening on that same day, when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst. Typically, Jewish homes had either a metal or wood bar that went across the door to secure it. With the door shut, Jesus did not open the door and come in; He just went through the door or walls. The door may have been shut, but Jesus did not need a door to come in. Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you.” When He was raised from the dead, He did not need someone to unwrap Him of the linens; He passed right through them. He did not need the earthquake to roll away the stone so He could get out. Jesus’ resurrected body was able to go right through stones, walls, and doors. The apostles had to be surprised and startled by His appearance, and certainly, they were not expecting Him to show up. His greeting, “Peace be with you” was very appropriate.

(Jn 20:19) “So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace *be* with you.”

To put this in context, I think it is important to mention a couple of things that have happened prior to Jesus appearing to His apostles. We will go to Luke 24 to find these accounts.

First, Luke records that when Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James were at the tomb, two angels in dazzling clothes met them. They asked, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” The women remembered Jesus words, and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven, but these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. The eleven apostles had heard the testimony but had not believed.

(Lk 24:1–12) “But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. {2} And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, {3} but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. {4} While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; {5} and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? {6} He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, {7} saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” {8} And they remembered His words, {9} and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. {10} Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. {11} But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. {12} But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.”

Then Luke wrote about the two men on the road to Emmaus. As they were walking, they were talking about the things that had taken place. Next, Jesus approached them and began walking with them, and they did not recognize that it was Jesus. He asked them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” One of them, Cleopas, answered and said, “Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?” And then they told Jesus about Jesus. Then, they said, “But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women also had said.” Jesus answered them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Then Jesus explained the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with Moses and with all the prophets.

(Lk 24:13–27) “And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. {14} And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. {15} While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and *began* traveling with them. {16} But their eyes

were prevented from recognizing Him. {17} And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad. {18} One *of them*, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?” {19} And He said to them, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, {20} and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. {21} But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. {22} But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, {23} and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. {24} Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.” {25} And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! {26} Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” {27} Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

As they approached Emmaus, they urged Jesus to stay with them, so Jesus went in with them and reclined at the table with them. He took bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus, and He vanished from their sight. They said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” And they got up and immediately returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them. They said to them, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.” Then they gave a testimony of what had happened on the road and at supper.

(Lk 24:28–35) “And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. {29} But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is *getting* toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them. {30} When He had reclined *at the table* with them, He took the bread and blessed *it*, and breaking *it*, He *began* giving *it* to them. {31} Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. {32} They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” {33} And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, {34} saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.” {35} They *began* to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.”

So, the eleven had heard the testimony of the women, and had not believed them. They heard the testimony of the two disciples that had been on the road to Emmaus. Peter and John were the two that had gone to the tomb and found it just as the women had described, and at that moment, John believed. But, most of the disciples were not yet believing. They had locked the door shut for fear of the Jews, and were probably discussing everything that had happened and that they had heard, and were trying to make sense of all of it. Then, Jesus suddenly appears to them. In Luke’s account, they thought they were seeing a spirit, and Jesus told them to touch Him, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones. He also asked for something to eat, and they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it. He was proving to them that He was not a Spirit, but the Lord.

(Lk 24:37–43) “But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. {38} And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? {39} See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” {40} And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. {41} While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” {42} They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; {43} and He took it and ate *it* before them.”

After Jesus greeted them, He showed them both His hands and His side. When they nailed Jesus to the cross, they put the nails through His hands, so He had scars on His hands. They had pierced His side, so He had a scar on His side. Even in His resurrected body, Jesus kept the scars of the crucifixion. When the disciples saw this, they rejoiced. The disciples then believed it was Jesus, who had been raised from the dead. This was the third evidence that John mentions.

(Jn 20:20) “And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”

Then, Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” After saying that, Jesus breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.” Jesus trained the apostles, and He had sent them out to preach the gospel, and heal the sick, and to cast out demons. They had come back to Him and reported all that they had done. They had observed Jesus doing it; they had then gone out and done it themselves, and now that Jesus has died and risen from the dead, He is now sending them out again. He is sending them out in the power of the Holy Spirit, and they are to preach the forgiveness of sins, i.e., the gospel.

(Jn 20:21-23) “So Jesus said to them again, “Peace *be* with 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, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained.”

In Matthew 28 and Mark 16 we have the Great Commission given. In Matthew 28, the scene is in Galilee, which is after the account that takes place today. In Mark 16, the scene is in Jerusalem, and could be a parallel passage. Jesus reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. Then, Jesus commanded them to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation...”

(Mk 16:14–15) “Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining *at the table*; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. {15} And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Luke’s account gives a great picture of what Jesus said and did that evening. He told them about the Departure Plan that had to be fulfilled. Everything written about Jesus in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled. Then, He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He said that it was written that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Then, He told them to remain in the city (Jerusalem) until they are clothed with power from on high.” Jesus has reminded them that He

has sent them, that they are to go out in the power of the Holy Spirit, and that the gospel message of forgiveness is to be proclaimed.

(Lk 24:45–49) “Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, {46} and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, {47} and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. {48} You are witnesses of these things. {49} And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

This short commissioning of the apostles in John has been the subject of much debate. The Pentecostals believe this is the beginning of the church. They say that since Jesus had paid for the sins of men, and been raised from the dead, when He breathed on the apostles, they received the Holy Spirit, and were now true believers. The traditional view is that the disciples did not receive the Holy Spirit until Pentecost, and that is the birth of the church. In either case, we need to believe, and to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. We need to preach the gospel and forgiveness of sins to all the world. This commission is included in all four gospels.

Our passage today is about evidence of Jesus’ resurrection so that we can believe. When first Jesus appeared to the apostles, Thomas was not with them, so he did not get to see the Lord’s hands and sides, and hear everything the Lord had said. When the other ten apostles told him that they had seen the Lord, he said, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” He received the nickname, “Doubting Thomas” because of that statement.

(Jn 20:24-25) “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. {25} So the other disciples were saying to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

Eight days later, Jesus appeared to the disciples again, and stood in their midst. Again, He said, “Peace be with you.” Then He addressed Thomas, and said, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side, and do not be unbelieving, but believing.” Jesus wanted all of His apostles to believe in His resurrection. It is a key part of the gospel message, and everyone of them needed to believe it.

(Jn 20:26-27) “After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace *be* with you.” {27} Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

Thomas’ response was, “My Lord and my God!” He believed and the immediate response was an outbreak of praise and worship. When people believe, they become worshipers of God. If Jesus were not God, Jesus would have corrected Thomas and explained that He is not God, but the Son of God, but that is not what Jesus did. He and the Father are One. Jesus is in the Father, and the Father is in Jesus, and they are One.

(Jn 20:28) “Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

Then Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.” Today, Christians are those who have not seen, but have believed. We have believed the testimonies of others, and the Scriptures, and we are blessed.

(Jn 20:29) “Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed.”

### **Conclusion and Applications (Jn 20:30-31)**

Our passage today gives three evidences that Jesus was raised from the dead. First, we have the evidence of the empty tomb. Contrary to what the chief priests told the guards to say, the disciples did not steal the body away while they were sleeping. The disciples were not yet believing that Jesus would be raised from the dead, and the women had come with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. They did not know that the sepulcher had been sealed by the Romans and a guard dispatched to secure it. If someone was going to steal the body, they would have stolen the wrapped body; they would not have unwrapped the dead body and then steal it. The empty tomb was excellent evidence that Jesus had risen from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures had said.

The second evidence was Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene. She did not just see Jesus, she spoke to Him, and He spoke to her. He told her to go tell the brethren that He was going to ascend to the Father.

The third evidence was that Jesus appeared to the apostles. He appeared to the ten, and then eight days later, when Thomas was with them, He appeared to the eleven. With the doors shut, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and greeted them with peace. He reaffirmed their mission, their message, and the power to accomplish the mission. He told them not to be unbelieving, but to believe.

The purpose of all the evidences given was for people to believe that Jesus died for our sins and was raised on the third day. The resurrection is a key part of the gospel message. John ends this section with the purpose statement for the whole book of John. He wrote, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

(Jn 20:30–31) “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; {31} but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

The first application is to believe. If you have never believed in Christ and received Him into your life, I encourage you to believe. There are many evidences that Jesus fulfilled all of the Scriptures in His birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection. John wrote about these signs so that we would believe. God does not want anyone to perish. He wants all men to believe and have life. Do you believe? Would you like to receive Christ into your life? I invite you to pray with me.

“Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God, and that You came and died for our sins. I believe that You were raised from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures. I ask

You to come into my life and forgive me of my sins. I turn over my life to You this morning and confess You as my Lord and Savior. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.”

The second application is to believe all the Scriptures. All the Scriptures pertaining to Jesus were fulfilled. All the Scriptures pertaining to His birth, early life, and His ministry were fulfilled. All the Scriptures in the Departure Plan were fulfilled. His betrayal was prophesied and fulfilled. His condemnation by the chief priests was fulfilled. His mocking, scourging, and crucifixion were fulfilled. His resurrection from the dead on the third day was fulfilled. Every Scripture was fulfilled. We can always trust God to do the things that He promises to do. Read the Scriptures. Believe the Scriptures and the promises that God gives in His Scriptures. Stand on God's promises because God will always do what He said He will do. No matter what area of life, find Scriptures that address the issue, and then trust God to do the things that He says He will do.

The third application is to be committed to fulfilling the Great Commission. Jesus reiterated the call for His disciples to go out and preach the good news about the forgiveness of sins. You and I have also been mandated to preach the gospel. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and go out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then we need to be His witnesses, wherever God has placed us. In our passage John gave three evidences that Jesus was raised from the dead.

Christian apologetics is the defense of our Christian faith. Merriam Webster defines it as a systematic argumentative discourse in defense of a doctrine, or of the divine origin and authority of Christianity. The word apologetics comes from the Greek word, apologia (Strong's G 627), which means a plea or clearing of self, a defense. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter exhorts us to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, always being ready to make a defense (apologia) to everyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us, yet with gentleness and reverence. Josh McDowell is a Christian apologist, and he has written a number of books to help us defend our faith. In his book, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, he has a very lengthy defense of the resurrection of Jesus. He has far more evidences than what I have provided, but I have focused on the three evidences that John gave. The Apostle John was an evangelist and also an apologist. You and I need to be able to give evidences, like the ones that John gave, in sharing this important truth in the gospel.

(1 Pe 3:15) “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;”

Are you faithfully preaching the gospel to others? Are you sharing your testimony with others? Are you supporting the gospel work on the mission field with your finances? Are you praying to be continually filled and empowered with the Holy Spirit? Are you praying for your neighbors? Are you purposely and intentionally reaching out to the people in your life, in your neighborhood, and in your work place? Make a commitment to do your part in fulfilling the Great Commission.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, thank You for sharing Your plans in advance, and for fulfilling every Scripture that pertained to Jesus' coming and departure. Thank You for all the evidences that You gave of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead on the third day. Help us to believe Your word and to apply it in our lives. Help us to stand on Your promises and to be full of faith. Help us to do our part in

fulfilling the Great Commission, whether it is praying, testifying, financially supporting, or going out to the utmost parts of the earth. Help us to do our part. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Discussion Questions**

- Why is the resurrection of the dead so crucial to our faith?
- What is the most convincing evidence to you that Jesus was raised from the dead?
- Why did the disciples have a hard time believing that Jesus had been raised from the dead after He had told them about it on several occasions?
- Have you ever been like Thomas, and wanted to see evidence before believing something?
- What is the definition of faith? (See Hebrews 11:1.)
- Do we have a hard time believing things that are in the Word of God?
- Why did Jesus tell the disciples that He was sending them, just as the Father had sent Him?
- When Jesus breathed on the apostles and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.", was this a prophetic gesture, or did they receive the Holy Spirit at that moment? If they received the Holy Spirit at that time, why did He instruct them to stay in the city until they were clothed with the Holy Spirit?
- Jesus said that when He was with the Father again, He would send the Helper to them. Had Jesus gone back to the Father yet at this time? When did Jesus ascend to the Father?

### **Three Evidences that Jesus was Raised from the Dead**

**Introduction** (Ro 10:9–10, 1 Co 15:3–5, 14-17, Jn 20:1-31)

1. **Evidence of Empty Tomb** (Jn 20:1-10, Mk 16:1–4, Mt 27:62–66, Mt 28:2–4, 11-15, Ps 16:10)
  
2. **Evidence of Jesus’ Appearance to Mary** (Jn 20:11-18)
  
3. **Evidence of Jesus’ Appearance to the Apostles** (Jn 20:19-29, Lk 24:1–12, 13-27, 28-35, 37-43, Mk 16:14–15, Mt 28:18-20, Lk 24:45-49)

**Conclusion and Applications** (Jn 20:30-31, 1 Pe 3:15)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.