

THE GREAT COMMISSION TO THE DISCIPLES JOHN 20:19-23

Introduction

This was the first appearance of Jesus to His disciples as a group after His resurrection. What would He say and talk about? What would be the topic of conversation and the subjects covered? Whatever He chose to say would be of critical importance. It is this that John focuses upon: the subjects and the topics discussed when Jesus first appeared to the disciples.

- I. The disciples were hiding in fear (v. 19).
- II. The risen Lord, His presence was very real (vv. 19-20).
- III. The risen Lord assigned the great commission to His disciples (v. 21).
- IV. The risen Lord breathed the Holy Spirit into the disciples (vv. 22-23).

I. *John 20:19 The Fear of the Disciples*

The disciples were hiding for fear of the Jews. They were behind locked doors, probably in the upper room of the same house where Jesus had met with them just a few days earlier. They were scared and fearful of the authorities who had vented so much wrath and vengeance upon their Lord. There was the imminent danger they could be arrested and imprisoned or executed as revolutionaries just as Jesus had been.

Note that it was Sunday, the very day that Jesus had arisen, and it was night time. Luke tells us there were numerous reports that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

Remember that the doors were locked. Suddenly, unexpectedly, Jesus stood before them — right in their midst. He immediately began to discuss the three subjects with them.

JOHN 20:19 REPORTS OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

The reports would be about the empty tomb and strips of linen discovered by Peter and John (Jn. 20:6f), the appearances to Mary Magdalene (Jn. 20:14f), Peter (1 Cor. 15:4), the women (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1f), and the two walking to Emmaus (Lk. 24:1). □

II. *John 20:19-20 Real Presence of the Risen Lord*

The first subject was the risen Lord Himself. His presence was very real. His sudden appearance shook and frightened the disciples. They thought they were seeing a vision or a spirit (Lk. 24:36-37). The first thing Jesus did was to prove that it was really He. He did this by doing two things. (See *Jesus, Resurrected Body*, Jn. 21:1)

1. He used the simple day-to-day greeting that was common among Jews, "Peace be with you." Using the greeting so familiar to the disciples would help to put them at ease.
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The fact that He spoke just as He had always spoken would give them some indication that it was really He and not just a vision or a spirit.

Eph 2:13-14 *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

2. He showed them His wounds. This must have been a dramatic and touching moment, a moment that just exploded the minds of the disciples. Jesus probably moved around to each of them, allowing each one to see the wounds. This convinced the disciples. They knew for sure...
 - that they were not seeing a vision or a spirit.
 - that this was His body, the body of their wonderful Lord, the very same Jesus whom they had known before His crucifixion.

1 John 1:1-2 *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.*

1 Cor 15:50 *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

3. The effect upon the disciples was unbelievable joy and amazement (Lk. 24:41). Their spirits and attitudes were charged with joy and were transformed from the lowest point of dejection to the highest point of triumphant conviction. They now knew what Jesus meant, that He was truly...
 - the Way to God
 - the Truth of God
 - the Life of God

In Him was life — His words were *literally* true. He had meant exactly what He had said. They had just spiritualized His words, twisted them to mean what they had wanted. But now they knew.

=> When He had said that He was going to die, He meant He was going to die.

=> When He had said that He was going to arise, He meant He was going to arise.

And here He was standing before them, revealing the most glorious truth in all the universe. Man could now conquer sin and death and live forever. He had actually come “that they may have life, and have it to the fullest.” (Jn. 10:10. See Jn. 10:38.) They now saw and understood.

JOHN 20:20 SEE (EIDO)

See means more than mere sight. It is seeing with understanding. It is the very same word used by John when he *saw and believed* (Jn. 20:8). □

JOHN 21:01 THE RESURRECTED BODY OF JESUS CHRIST

“Jesus Christ appeared again.” The purpose of His appearances was to prove that Jesus was not a spirit, vision, phantom, hallucination or any other figment of man’s imagination.

He was the risen Lord — bodily. He was not someone else. His body was none other than the body of Jesus, the Carpenter from Nazareth. He had been raised from the dead — physically raised. His body was real. It differed, yes; but it was His body — perfected, no longer subject to the limitations and frailties of the physical universe and its laws. It was His body which was now transformed into a spiritual body by the power of God’s Word (see Rom. 1:3-4).

How did the Lord’s body differ since His resurrection? Some idea can be gleaned by looking both at His resurrection body and at the glorified body promised to the believer.

1. The resurrected body of the Lord was His body, but it was radically changed. It had all the appearance of His physical body, yet it was not bound by the physical world and its material substance.
 - a. It looked like the same material body, the same “flesh and bones,” not some other body. It was a body that bore the marks of the nails in His hands and feet (Jn. 20:20, 27). It was a body that appeared and looked like a body and that occupied space.
 - b. It was a body that could travel and appear any place at will or by thought, a body unhampered by space, time, or physical substance. When He appeared, it was suddenly, even behind locked doors (Lk. 24:36; Jn. 20:19).
 - c. It was a body that differed enough from the earthly body that it was not clearly recognized, not at first, not until it was closely observed.
- => Mary Magdalene thought He was the gardener (Jn. 20:15).
- => The two disciples walking toward Emmaus thought He was a traveller (Lk. 24:31).
- => The disciples who were fishing did not recognize Him standing on the seashore (Jn. 21:4).

However, after close observation, the Lord was recognized in all these instances. This probably indicates that our heavenly bodies will look like our earthly bodies, differing only in that they are perfected.

2. The resurrected and glorified body that is promised to the believer gives some additional insight into the kind of body Jesus now has. One of the most wonderful promises ever made to man is given in the words:

=> “Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21; see Mt. 13:43; Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:4; Rev. 22:5).

=> We will be “conformed to the likeness of His Son” (Rom. 8:29. See 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18.)

=> “We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 Jn. 3:2).

The body of the believer is to undergo a radical change just as the Lord’s body was radically changed. Several changes are promised the believer.

- a. The believer will receive a spiritual body.

1 Cor 15:44 *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

Note that the *spiritual body (soma)* is still a body just like the *earthly body (soma)*. The spiritual body still retains the qualities of the earthly body. The difference lies in its nature: it will no longer be a natural (soulish) body; it will be spiritual. What does this mean? In essence, the body will be perfected and glorified: no longer subject to aging, deterioration, death, decay, pain, tears, sorrow, or crying (Rev. 14:4).

=> “The body that is sown is perishable [corruptible], it is raised imperishable [incorruptible].”

=> “It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory.”

=> “It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.”

=> “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”

Note the strong, emphatic declaration: “*There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body*” (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

- b. The believer will receive a body that is *not flesh and blood*. Flesh and blood are corruptible, they age, deteriorate, die, and decay.

1 Cor 15:50 *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

Acts 13:36-37 For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

Eccl 3:20 All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.

1 Cor 15:42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable.

2 Cor 5:1-2 Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.

- c. The believer will receive a body that will be radically changed.

1 Cor 15:52-53 In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

- d. The believer will be given a body that will not need reproduction for continuing the (redeemed) human race.

Mat 22:30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. □

III. *John 20:21 The Great Commission : Witnessing*

The second subject was the great commission. Note two critical points.

1. There is one great qualification for being commissioned: receiving, possessing, and knowing the peace of Christ (See *The Source of Peace*, Jn. 14: 27). Unless a person has been reconciled to God *by Christ*, unless he has really made peace with God, he cannot represent God before the world.
2. There is the great link between the mission of Christ and the disciple. The disciple is sent on the very *same* mission as Christ.

=> God sent Christ on a specific mission.

=> Christ sends His disciple on the very same mission.

What is the mission?

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 12:47 “As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.”

John 18:37 “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

The disciple is sent forth to proclaim and bear witness to the salvation of God. The disciple is the prophet and witness of the living Lord.

=> Christ is the Way; the disciple *points* the Way.

=> Christ is the Truth; the disciple *proclaims* the Truth.

=> Christ is the Life; the disciple *shares* the Life.

3. The great words *sent* (apestalken) and *send* (pempo) are different in the Greek. The Father’s sending Christ is *apostello*, which means first of all, *a setting apart and sending forth with delegated authority*. There are only four chapters in John where Christ does not claim to have been sent. Christ’s sending the believer is *pempo*, which never means delegated authority. It always means to *dispatch under authority*.

God sent Christ and delegated all authority to Him. Christ delegates no authority to the believer. He dispatches messengers.

2 Cor 5:20-21 *We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

John 15:16 *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*

John 1:6 *There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.*

JOHN 14:27 THE SOURCE OF PEACE

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

John 14:27

Peace (eirene) means to bind together, to join, to weave together. It means that a person is bound, woven and joined together with himself and with God and others.

The Hebrew word is *shalom*. It means freedom from trouble and much more. It means experiencing the highest good, enjoying the very best, possessing all the inner good possible. It means wholeness and soundness. It means prosperity in the widest sense, especially prosperity in the spiritual sense of having a soul that blossoms and flourishes.

1. There is the peace of the world. This is a peace of escapism, of avoiding trouble, of refusing to face things, of unreality. It is a peace that is sought through pleasure, satisfaction, contentment, absence of trouble, positive thinking or denial of problems.
2. There is the peace of Christ and of God. This is, first, a *bosom peace*, a peace deep within. It is a tranquillity of mind, a composure, a peace that is calm in the face of bad circumstances and situations. It is more than feelings — even more than attitude and thought.

This is, second, the *peace of conquest* (see Jn. 16:33). It is the peace independent of conditions and environment; the peace which no sorrow, no danger, no suffering, no experience can take away.

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

This is, third, the *peace of assurance* (see Rom. 8:28). It is the peace of unquestionable confidence; the peace with a sure knowledge that one’s life is in the hands of God and that all things will work out for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Rom 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

This is, fourth, the *peace of intimacy with God* (see Phil. 4:6-7). It is the peace of the highest good. It is the peace that settles the mind, strengthens the will, and establishes the heart.

3. There is the source of peace. Peace is always born out of reconciliation. Its source is found only in the reconciliation wrought by Jesus Christ. Peace always has to do with personal relationships: a man’s relationship to himself, to God and to his fellow men. A man must be bound, woven, and joined together with himself, with God, and with his fellow man.

Eph 2:13-14 *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

Col 1:20-21 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour!*

Man secures peace in the following manner:

=> by justification

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

=> by loving God's Word

Psa 119:165 *Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.*

John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

=> by praying about everything

Phil 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

=> by being spiritually minded

Rom 8:6 *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

=> by keeping his mind upon God

Isa 26:3 *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

Phil 4:8 *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.*

=> by obeying God's commands

Isa 48:18 *If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.*

Phil 4:9 *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

The subject of peace is often divided into:

- 1) the peace *with* God, which is wrought through salvation (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14-17);
- 2) the peace of God, which is the very peace of God Himself and which points to God as the Source of peace (Lk. 7:50; Phil. 4:6-7);
- 3) the peace *from* God, which God gives to dwell in the heart of the believer as he walks day by day in the Lord (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3). □

IV. *John 20:22–23 The Holy Spirit*

The third subject was the Holy Spirit. Christ had just commissioned His disciples. He then gave them the power to carry out His orders.

1. There was the imparting or giving of the Spirit (See *Coming of the Holy Spirit*, Jn. 20: 22).
2. There was the authority (See *Authority*, Jn. 20:23). ■

JOHN 20:22 COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

John 20:22

Jesus’ breathing on the disciples was a prophetic sign of the Spirit’s coming and a spiritual quickening for the disciples. It was both a symbolic and a spiritual preparation. Jesus was showing His followers that the Spirit’s very special presence and power was to indwell both believers and the church as the temple of God. The Spirit, of course, was not to come until Christ’s ascension. (See Jn. 14:28-29; 16:7; See *Holy Spirit; Pentecost*, Acts 2:1-4.)

Note several things.

1. Christ breathed on each individual. He was symbolizing that the Holy Spirit was to indwell, live in, each believer in a very special way.

John 14:16-18 *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

John 14:21 *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Rom 8:15-17 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

1 Cor 2:12 *We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,*

2. Christ breathed on the whole group – “on them [all].” He was symbolizing that the Holy Spirit was to indwell the corporate body, the church as a whole in a very special way. This broader picture is further emphasized by Luke when he says there were others present with the apostles on this occasion (Lk. 24:33, 49). (See *Christ in You*, Jn. 14:20).

1 Cor 3:16 *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

Acts 2:4 *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. □*

ACTS 02:01–04 COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, PENTECOST

The disciples had been deliberately prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Bible the revelation of the Spirit had been step by step, that is, progressive. Prophecy shows this clearly.

1. Joel prophesied, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people...” (Joel 2:28-29).
2. John the Baptist said, “I baptize with water, but He shall baptize with [*en, in*] the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16).
3. In the early part of Jesus’ ministry, He had said that believers were to be “born again...[by] the Spirit” (Jn. 3:3- 4; see 1 Jn. 5:1).
4. During His ministry, Jesus taught that men were to receive the Holy Spirit by prayer (Lk. 11:13).
5. In the Upper Room, Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as a Person (Jn. 14:15-26), and He outlined the work of the Spirit with both unbelievers and believers (Jn. 16:7-15). Significantly, He revealed that He was praying to the Father for the Comforter to come and abide with the disciples (Jn. 14:16-17).
6. After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to His disciples in the Upper Room. There He symbolically breathed on them, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn. 20:22). But He insisted they not begin their ministry until they experienced the Spirit actually coming upon them with power (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8).

7. Right before Jesus was to ascend into heaven, He said, “John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5).
8. Then, ten days after Jesus’ ascension and after much prayer, the Holy Spirit came upon and filled the whole body of believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

There are two events of the Holy Spirit’s coming that seem to hold historical significance. These two particular events are very, very special to the church, for both Jewish and Gentile believers were clearly seen to be in God’s historical plan. Both Jew and Gentile were baptized by the Holy Spirit, that is, placed into the body of Christ, His Church.

1. At Pentecost: the disciples were “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4).
 - a. This was in fulfilment of the prophecy by Joel. The Spirit was *poured out* upon the believers (Acts 2:16).
 - b. This was in fulfilment of the prophecies by Jesus and John. The Spirit *baptized*, that is, immersed the believers with His own presence (Acts 1:5; 10:44-48; see 11:15-16, esp. 16).
2. At Cornelius’ house: the Holy Spirit “came on,” had been “poured out,” and was “received” by the Gentile believers (Acts 10:44-47).
 - a. Peter said to the Jews who came with him, “They have received the Holy Spirit *just as we have.*” (Acts 10:47).
 - b. Peter reported the event to the Jerusalem Church: “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’”(Acts 11:15-16)
 - c. Peter used the experience to support Paul before the great Jerusalem Council:

Acts 15:8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.

In all three instances the idea conveyed is that of an event just like *their own* experience. It is as though Peter pointed to a Gentile Pentecost or at least an extension of Pentecost in Acts 2 to include the Gentiles.

Note two other facts:

1. At Pentecost, the account uses the word *filled*, not *baptized*.
2. At Cornelius’ house, the account says the Holy Spirit *came on*, had been *poured out*, and *received*. But in reporting the experience to the Jerusalem Church, Peter used the word *baptized*. He said the Gentile believers were “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 11:16) “as he had come on us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15).

This clearly says that although the word *baptized* is not used in the Pentecost experience, the disciples were baptized or immersed with the Spirit's presence at Pentecost. The words *filled, received, poured, baptized, and came on* are all used interchangeably to describe the Spirit's presence coming into a believer's life. (If believers would heed this, it would eliminate many of the arguments that arise over terminology.)

Other than these two events Acts records only four other times that the Holy Spirit came upon believers.

1. A little prayer band in Jerusalem was "filled" with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 4:8).
2. The Samaritans (half-Jews, half-Gentiles) "received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:15-17).
3. Paul was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17).
4. The disciples of John experienced "the Holy Spirit came on them" (Acts 19:6).

One other fact is important. Other than Pentecost and Cornelius' house, the word *baptize* is used in connection with the Holy Spirit only once in the rest of the New Testament. That one reference is 1 Cor. 12:13: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body." That is, the Holy Spirit takes all believers and baptizes or immerses, places, and positions them into the body of Christ — into the church, the universal church.

In conclusion, what does all this mean?

1. When a man grasps the gospel and believes, really believes, the Holy Spirit enters his life. He *comes upon, falls upon, pours, fills, baptizes* (immerses) Himself into the life of the believer. This is a personal *experience*. This act of the Spirit takes place in the life of the believer. The believer *experiences* the Spirit coming into his life. The believer receives the Spirit *experientially*.
2. When a man grasps the gospel and believes, really believes, the Holy Spirit takes him and *baptizes* or immerses, and places him into the body of Christ, which is God's Church. The believer does not feel or experience this act. It is an act of God that takes place in heaven. The believer is *counted* as a child of God. He is *counted* as a member of the body, of the church. This is a *position*, not an experience, which the believer feels. It happens once-for-all. The believer is adopted as a child of God — irrevocably. It is an eternal *position*, an eternal sonship (Gal. 4:5-6). The believer becomes a member of God's Church — positionally (1 Cor. 12:13).
3. After a man is saved, he is to be filled and to keep on being "filled with the Spirit" — day by day (Eph. 5:18; see Jn. 14:21, the word "manifest"). The early believers were continually filled (Acts 4:8, 31). □

JOHN 14:20 CHRIST IN YOU

*“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” **John 14:20***

This is the first time the glorious truth of *Christ in you* is revealed to the disciples. The full understanding of the indwelling Christ was given and explained by Paul (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 3:6; Col. 1:26-27; see Jn. 14:17-18, 20, 23; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:11-12; 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14; 1 Jn. 2:27; Eze. 36:27).

John 14:20 *“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

John 17:23 *“I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*

Rom 8:9 *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

Eph 3:17 *So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love.*

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Col 1:27 *To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

1 John 3:24 *Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*

Rev 3:20 *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. □*

JOHN 20:23 AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS

*“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” **John 20:23***

This is a disputed passage. There are two things we can know for sure about its meaning.

=> No man can forgive another man's sins.

=> Believers *can proclaim* that a man's sins are forgiven *if he receives Christ* (Jn. 1:12). Believers can also proclaim that a man's sins are not forgiven if he does not receive Christ.

There is only one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5-6). No other man has ever been worthy to give His life as a ransom for others. No other ransom has ever been acceptable to God. Christ Jesus alone is worthy and acceptable to die as a ransom for someone else. He alone is the Perfect Man. Therefore...

- only Christ can forgive and judge sins.

John 5:22 *“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.”*

John 5:27 *“And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”*

John 12:48 *“There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.”*

John 16:8 *“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”*

- only representatives of Christ (believers) can say that a man is forgiven by Christ or not forgiven by Christ.

John 16:8 *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

Mat 18:18 *“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

John 20:23 *“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”* □

JOHN 20:20 PROPHECIES OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The disciples finally understood that Jesus had meant exactly what He was saying. When He had said that He was going to die and arise from the dead, they had spiritualized His words. But Jesus had meant exactly what He was saying: He was to literally die and arise from the dead and, by such, He was to usher in the Kingdom of God. Of course, this was far more meaningful than the earthly kingdom they had desired. It was the most glorious news in all the world, for man could now live beyond a few short years in an earthly kingdom; man could live in the very presence of God forever. Sin, death, and hell were now conquered.

Jesus constantly shared His death and resurrection. This fact is often overlooked. The predictions in just the Gospel of John are given here.

1. The prophecies concerning His death alone.

John 10:11, 15 *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.”*

John 12:27, 31-33 *“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.*

John 13:33, 36 *“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. Simon Peter asked him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus replied, ‘Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.’”*

John 15:12-14 *My command is this: “Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.”*

John 16:5-7 *“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”*

John 16:28 *“I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”*

John 17:11, 13 *“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.”*

2. The prophecies concerning the resurrection alone.

John 6:62 *“What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before.”*

John 8:14 *Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going.”*

John 11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

3. The prophecies concerning both His death and resurrection.

John 7:33-36 *Jesus said, “I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.” The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What did he mean when he said, ‘You will look for me, but you will not find me,’ and ‘Where I am, you cannot come’?”*

John 7:37-39 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

John 8:21-29 *Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.” This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come?’” But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

“Who are you?” they asked. “Just what I have been claiming all along,” Jesus replied. “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.” They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”

John 10:17-18 *“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”*

John 12:23-24 *Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”*

John 14:2-3 *“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare*

a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

John 13:31-32 *When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.”*

John 14:19-20 *“Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

John 14:28-30 *“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me.”*

John 16:16-22 *“In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” Some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father’?” They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.” Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’? I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.” □*

THE GREAT CONVICTION: THOMAS' CONFESSION JOHN 20: 24-29

Introduction

This is an excellent study on conviction and confession. It is the great conviction and confession of Thomas.

- I. Thomas' frustrated, reactionary spirit (vv. 24-25).
- II. Thomas' false picture of Jesus (vv. 25-26).
- III. Thomas' critical confrontation and confession: Jesus appeared, and He challenged and convicted him (vv. 26-28).
- IV. Thomas' great lesson for all men: the person who believes without seeing will be far more blessed than those who demand proof (v. 29).

John 20:24-29 Another Outline

Conviction — its signs, results or reactions.

- I. A frustrated reactionary spirit (v. 24).
- II. A false picture of Jesus (v. 25).
- III. A persistent doubt (v. 26).
- IV. A critical confrontation (v. 27).
- V. A strong confession (v. 28).
- VI. A great lesson for the church (v. 29).

I. John 20:24-25 Cause of Unbelief in Thomas

Thomas' frustrated, reactionary spirit. Thomas had not been with the disciples when Jesus first appeared to them. Like so many today, he staunchly refused to believe that Jesus had actually risen from the dead. The disciples *testified* and *bore witness* to the glorious truth. The Greek means they "kept on telling him," but Thomas became stiff-necked and obstinate in his unbelief. He even argued against their testimony, and he argued with deep intensity. He was deeply aggravated and frustrated, feeling great disappointment and guilt. The depth of his aggravation and guilt is seen in his repulsive shout, "Unless I see...put my finger ..[and] put my hand into his side, I will not believe it" (Jn. 20:25).

What was it that frustrated Thomas so much and caused him to sense such intense guilt and react the way he did? Evidently...

- Thomas *had forsaken* the Lord, and that was enough to frustrate any man's spirit.
-

- Thomas had also *withdrawn* from the disciples; consequently he was *not present* when the Lord first appeared (Jn. 20:24). He missed another opportunity to be identified with Christ.

Of course, this caused Thomas to become aggravated with guilt all over again. He became critical of the body of believers. It was his own fault, but as human nature so often reacts, he blamed others through his aggravated spirit. He argued against their experience with the resurrected Lord. Having taken all he could bear, in utter frustration he shouted out, “Unless I see...put my finger...[and] put my hand into his side, I will not believe it” (Jn. 20:25). It was eight days more before the Lord ever appeared to Thomas (Jn. 20:26). What a loss he experienced!

Thought 1. Persistent doubt always delays the blessings.

Thought 2. Guilt, frustration, disappointment, and exclusion often result in a...

- haughty spirit
- reaction
- denial of facts
- fierce outburst

1 John 3:20 *Whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.*

Mark 4:40 *He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*

Luke 24:25 *He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”*

Heb 10:38 *“But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”*

Rev 2:4 *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.*

Prov 14:14 *The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good man rewarded for his.*

II. **John 20: 25–26** *Misconceptions about Jesus Christ*

Thomas' false picture of Jesus. Thomas had always thought in terms of an earthly Messiah or Saviour who would make things better upon this earth and in this life. He had become a follower of Jesus thinking that an earthly kingdom was to be set up and that he was to be a leader in that kingdom. He saw Jesus as the promised Messiah who was to be the Son of David, that is, to come from David's roots. (See *Christ, King of Israel*, Jn. 1:49.) He refused to see beyond the human and physical things of this world. Therefore, he could see Jesus only as the man who was nailed to the cross and had a spear thrust into His side and was now dead. (See Jn. 13:1-17; Lk. 22:24-30.)

Thought 1. False pictures of Jesus lead to unbelief. Jesus is more than...

- a great teacher
- a great prophet
- a great man
- a great founder of a religion

He is even more than the greatest man who ever lived. All such beliefs — no matter how highly they esteem Jesus — are false beliefs, for they see Jesus only as a man. They see Him as one of the greatest men who ever lived, but they still see Him only as a man.

Thought 2. Men prefer to see Jesus only as a man because it brings Him down to their level. It makes Him less than Lord. They believe it means...

- that man is not totally depraved, not wicked through and through; that man is not so bad that Jesus had to sacrifice His life for them.
- that man can do what Jesus did, the best he can, and God will accept him.
- that man does not have to follow Jesus in every little detail and teaching. Why? Because as man, they believe that Jesus was not absolutely perfect. He was wrong in some things. Where? Each person has to decide the best he can where Jesus was right and wrong. Then that person must do the best he can to follow Jesus where Jesus was right. Men believe it is doing the best they can that God accepts. (Note how this allows each man to *form* God in his own mind and after his own likeness. Man can make God as he wishes God to be. Man can do what he wishes and then say that it was allowed by God.)

Mat 16:13-14 *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”*

Mark 6:3 *“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.*

Rom 1:21-23 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

Rom 1:25 *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.*

JOHN 01:49 JESUS CHRIST, KING OF ISRAEL

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." John 01:49

Jesus was declared to be the Messianic King. God had given to David and his seed (the Messiah) the promise of eternal government (2 Sam. 7:12; Psa. 39:3f; 132:11).

Note how often Jesus was called the son of David. (Mt. 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; Acts 2:29-36; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 22:16.) It was the common title and popular concept of the Messiah. Generation after generation of Jews had ached and looked for the promised deliverer of Israel. The people expected Him to be a great general who would deliver and restore the nation to its greatness. In fact, they expected Him to make the nation the centre of universal rule. He would, under God, conquer the world and centre the glory and majesty of God Himself in Jerusalem; and from His throne, the throne of David, He would execute *the Messianic fire of judgment* upon the nations and peoples of the world. □

III. *John 20:26–28 The Confession*

Thomas' critical confrontation and conviction. Jesus appeared and challenged and convicted Thomas.

1. Note the confrontation. The doors were again shut and locked (Jn. 20:19). Suddenly, unexpectedly, without notice, Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples. Again He eased their shock by giving the normal greeting: "Peace be with you." But then note what He did: He turned immediately to confront Thomas.
 - a. Jesus revealed that He knew all about Thomas' unbelief and demands. He used the very same words that Thomas had demanded: "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (v. 27).

Thought 1. Jesus knows every man's heart: his despair, doubts, fears, hope, love. He knows where and when to strike at a man's heart. However, note a crucial factor: Thomas was where Jesus could reach him. He was in the presence of believers listening to their testimony. He had not shut them out despite his questions.

John 2:25 *He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.*

1 Cor 3:20 *And again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."*

1 Sam 2:3 *"Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed."*

Jer 17:10 *"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."*

Dan 2:22 *He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.*

- b. Jesus warned and called for belief. Thomas had been walking down a dangerous road. The disciples had testified to him time and again, but he had refused time and again to accept their testimony.

=> *Stop doubting* (me ginou apistos): stop becoming an unbeliever. You are running the risk of *becoming faithless* and unbelieving, beyond the point of believing. You have carried your unbelief too far. It is now time to stop the foolishness. The others have been repeatedly testifying the truth to you. Stop the stiff-necked, obstinate unbelief. You are in danger.

John 3:18 *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

John 8:24 *“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

Heb 2:3 *How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.*

Heb 3:12 *See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.*

Jude 1:5 *Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.*

=> Believe (See *Saving Faith*, Jn. 2:24).

John 3:15 *“That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”*

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.”*

John 12:46 *“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”*

John 20:31 *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Rom 10:9 *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Thought 1. To doubt is to be Christless, “separate from Christ ... without hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

2. The strong confession. This is one of the great confessions in Scripture. Most likely dropping to his knees, Thomas exclaimed, “My Lord and My God!” He now knew five great things.
 - a. That Jesus is truly the risen Lord. All that Jesus had said was true.

The disciples finally understood that Jesus had meant exactly what He was saying. When He had said that He was going to die and arise from the dead, they had spiritualized His words. But Jesus had meant exactly what He was saying: He was to literally die and arise from the dead and, by such, He was to usher in the Kingdom of God. Of course, this was far more meaningful than the earthly kingdom they had desired. It was the most glorious news in all the world, for man could now live beyond a few short years in an earthly kingdom; man could live in the very presence of God forever. Sin, death and hell were now conquered. Jesus constantly shared His death and resurrection. This fact is often overlooked.

Acts 2:36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Rom 1:4 And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 Cor 1:9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

1 Cor 8:6 Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

- b. That Jesus is both Lord and God, the Sovereign majesty of the universe. Christ is eternal. (Jn. 1:1-2).

Christ was *preexistent*. This means He was there before creation. He has always existed. “In the beginning [en archei]” does not mean *from* the beginning. Jesus Christ was already there. He did not *become*; He was not created; He never had a beginning. He “was with God in the beginning” (Jn. 17:5; 8:58).

Christ was *coexistent*. He was and is face-to-face with God forever. The word *with* (pros) has the idea of both *being with* and *acting toward*. Jesus Christ (the Word) was

both with God and acting with God. He was “with God”: by God’s side, acting, living, and moving in the closest of relationships. Christ had the ideal and perfect relationship *with* God the Father. Their life together — their relationship, communion, fellowship, and connection — was a perfect eternal bond. This is exactly what is said: “*He was with God in the beginning*” (Jn.1:2).

Col 2:9-10 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.*

1 Tim 3:16 *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

Heb 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

- c. That Jesus is the One who has come to truly reveal God, that He is the Mediator between God and man. The way to God is through Jesus Christ Himself (Jn. 14:6). This is a critical verse, for Jesus said that no man could reach God unless he approached God through Jesus Himself. Jesus made three phenomenal claims.
1. I am the Way
 2. I am the Truth
 3. I am the Life

Jesus claims that He is from above (Jn. 3:31). Jesus came *out of* (ek) the spiritual world into the physical world, out of the heavenly dimension of being into the earthly dimension of being. Jesus came out of...

- the incorruptible and imperishable world into the corruptible and perishable world.
- the glorious world into the dishonorable world.
- the powerful world into the weak world.
- the spiritual world into the natural world. (1 Cor. 15:42-44.)

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

1 Tim 2:5 *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Heb 8:6 *But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.*

Heb 9:15 *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

Heb 9:24 *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

1 John 2:1 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

- d. That Jesus accepts no half-way commitments. Jesus expected to be his Lord and his God: “My Lord and My God.” Therefore, he must personally bow and worship Jesus as his Lord and his God.

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Rom 14:9 *For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.*

Col 1:18 *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

Rev 5:12 *In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!”*

- e. That Jesus expected an open and public confession of Him as Lord and God (Mt. 10:32; Lk. 12:8).

Mat 10:32 *“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.”*

Luke 12:8 *“I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.”*

1 John 2:23 *No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

1 John 4:15 *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.*

JOHN 02:24

SAVING FAITH: BELIEVE, COMMIT, ENTRUST

The word commit or entrust is the very same word “believe” (see Jn. 2:23). This gives an excellent picture of *saving faith*, of what *genuine faith* is — of the kind of faith that really saves a person.

1. Saving faith is not head knowledge, not just a mental conviction and intellectual assent. It is not just *believing the fact* that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. It is not just believing history, that Jesus Christ lived upon earth as the Saviour just as A J Abdul Kalam lived upon earth as the President of India. It is not just believing the words and claims of Jesus in the same way that a person would believe the words of Abdul Kalam.
2. Saving faith is believing in Jesus, *who* and *what* He is, that He is the *Saviour* and *Lord* of life. It is a man giving and turning his life over to Jesus. It is a man casting himself upon Jesus as Saviour and Lord.
3. Saving faith is commitment — the commitment of a man's total being and life to Jesus Christ. It is a man's commitment of all he *is and has* to Jesus. It gives Jesus everything; therefore, it involves all of a man's affairs. The man trusts Jesus to take care of his past (sins), his present (welfare), and his future (destiny). He entrusts his whole life, being, and possessions into Jesus' hands. He lays himself upon Jesus' keeping, confiding in Him about his daily necessities and acknowledging Him in all the ways of life. He follows Jesus in every area and in every detail of life, seeking His instructions and leaving his welfare up to Him. It is simply commitment of a man's whole being, all he is and has, to Jesus.

There are three steps involved in faith, steps that are clearly seen in this passage.

1. There is the step of *seeing* (Jn. 2:23) or *hearing* (Rom. 10:16). A man must be willing to listen to the message of Christ, the revelation of truth.
2. There is the step of *mental assent*. A man must agree that the message is true, that the facts of the case are thus and so. But this is not enough. Mere agreement does not lead to action. Many a person knows that something is true, but he does not change his behaviour to match his knowledge. For example, a man knows that eating too much harms his body, but he may continue to eat too much. He agrees to the truth and knows the truth, but he does nothing about it. A person may believe and know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and yet do nothing about it, never make a decision to follow Christ. This man still does not have faith, not the kind of faith that the Bible talks about.
3. There is the step of *commitment*. When the New Testament speaks of faith, it speaks of *commitment*, a *personal commitment to the truth*. A man hears the truth and agrees that it is true and does something about it. He commits (entrusts) and yields his life to the truth. The truth becomes a part of his very being, a part of his behaviour and life. □

IV. John 20:29 Unquestioning Belief

Thomas' great lesson for all men. What is the lesson?

=> To believe without having to see evidences and proof.

John 20:29 *Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

=> To believe because of tenderness and warmth.

Eph 2:4-5, 8-9 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.*

=> To believe because of love and care and because of the need and nature of the human heart.

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

=> To believe because of the need for morality and godly character.

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (see vv.19-21)*

=> To believe because godly witnesses say so.

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

=> To believe because of the inner witness of the heart.

Rom 2:15 *Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.*

=> To believe because of the outer witness of nature.

Rom 1:20 *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

Note that Thomas ceased being obstinate and rebellious when he saw Jesus and after Jesus had rebuked him. Thomas had been at fault; he had been doubting, and his unbelief was inexcusable. The men who had proclaimed the truth to him were not liars. Neither could they all have been deceived. Thomas had just refused to believe because he did not want to believe. He had acted intellectually superior and had been about to lose his soul.

The point is this: the person who believes without seeing demonstrates...

- a strength of character
- a tenderness and warmth of heart
- a sensitivity to the witness of the Holy Spirit
- an awareness to the order and beauty of all the world

Therefore, that person will be blessed with a very special joy, an inexpressible and glorious joy.

1 Pet 1:8 *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.*

Thought 1. When a man truly sees what Jesus has done for Him, or when a man is rebuked by the Spirit of Christ, he must cease his unbelief. He must turn to Christ, for the Lord's Spirit will not always strive and contend with men.

Gen 6:3 *Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years."*

Prov 28:14 *Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.*

Prov 29:1 *A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy. ■*