

John 20:19 – 31

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~ The next report in our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God will conclude our consideration of the Gospel of John in this second complete safari. In our previous report, we saw Mary Magdalene come to the tomb of the Lord Jesus Christ and become the first to discover it empty; and to be the first person spoken to by Jesus after His resurrection in the garden. Mary didn't recognize Jesus immediately, but it wasn't because He looked any different than He ever had - nor even though He was in a glorified body at that time. No, the reason she didn't recognize Jesus is because she didn't believe He could or would be back from the dead. Only when Jesus spoke to her and called her name did she recognize His voice.

Well, Mary went and told John and Simon Peter what she had seen - and those two ran down to the tomb and looked in. That's when we saw John say he "... saw and he believed." We're not talking about a cursory glance inside the grave. The word used for "he saw" really means "he inspected carefully" the contents of the remains lying inside the tomb. John's only reasonable conclusion was that the Lord Jesus had, in fact, returned from the dead. There was no other explanation for how Jesus could have possibly come out from inside His mummifying wrap of linen and a hundred pounds of aloe and myrrh. Impossible. The grave clothes had the shape and form as if a body were still in them, too; but there was no body within. Belief, for John, was undeniable from that point forward; but at the time in which we are studying, the other disciples were frightened and hiding in a room somewhere with the doors shut and locked....

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

~ In this passage, we see Deity speak to and touch humanity. This is where the supernatural touches the natural. The peace Jesus speaks to His disciples at this time is the peace that comes only through being justified by

faith. The only way we have peace with God is if and when Jesus speaks peace to us. Well, the disciples sure recognize Jesus in this little room. Jesus coming in through a shut and locked door scared these men half to death, too - you may be absolutely sure. So, we need to take some time to discuss the resurrection body; but we need to do it without becoming totally detoured in this report.

There is a whole lot we know about the body, but there is also a whole lot more that we don't know. What we do know is that the glorified body is not subject to the laws and physics of the material universe that you and I are familiar with in this natural body. It won't be necessary for us to have a NASA designed space suit for our space travel when we are called out of this world to meet Jesus in the air at the rapture. We aren't going to enter a rocket shuttle and blast off with hydrogen bombs propelling us upward and foreword from a launching pad to get to God when He calls our names.

I am going to make two statements now, and they sound contradictory – but they are not a contradiction; they are paradoxical statements - both are true. The change that will take place in our new bodies that we are given will be both shocking and amazing to us. At the same time, I am certain we will be shocked and amazed at how LITTLE change we really underwent. I say that because the Lord Jesus, here in His glorified body, shows the disciples the nail prints and the wound in His side from where the centurion had stabbed a spear. The similarity is eerily strange and, for the disciples, is utterly comforting. They know it's Him. I doubt OUR glorified bodies will have any scars, because the scars on Jesus are the scars He bore for us. I think Jesus has those scars now and for eternity as an evidential reminder of what He did on the cross for us. His scars remain that we might be presented without spot or blemish. So, our bodies will have a striking similarity and a striking difference, also....

20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

~ Now, I am not attempting to draw parallels that don't exist, but I strongly feel the peace we are seeing in verse twenty-one is a different peace than the peace that was mentioned before when He first appeared in the room in verse nineteen. The first mention of peace by Jesus is the peace of redemption and salvation with God the Father. Here, we are talking about the peace of those who are in the will of God and who are doing His will. So, it seems possible to have peace in one area of our lives, but not have peace in another area. We first received this peace in the invitation given in Matthew, when Jesus said, "come unto Me all who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest." That "rest" is the peace of redemption. Jesus goes on to say for us to take His yoke on and we will find peace and rest. This is what Jesus means when He says, "My peace I leave with you and My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I peace unto you." This is what Jesus prayed about in chapter seventeen at verse eighteen of this Gospel, too - where we heard Jesus say, "as Thou hast sent Me into the world; even so have I also sent them into the world." This peace comes ONLY from fellowship with our Father in Heaven and obedience to His direct will in our lives down here. Our reasonable conclusion, therefore, is that this is an altogether different type of peace. Again, I'm not interested in making distinctions that don't exist, but I am confident that Jesus isn't simply repeating Himself several times over; and that this is very important to understand....

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit:

~ We must recognize and understand the apostles are in an interval period of time between the resurrection of Christ and the Day of Pentecost. Jesus has previously instructed them to pray to receive the Holy Spirit. In Luke, Jesus told us that if we ask, we shall receive, and that if we seek, we will find. Jesus clarifies that by saying if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, then how much more shall our Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask for it. Well, the apostles never asked, friends – not one single time did any one of them pray that prayer as instructed. In the Upper Room, Jesus said He would pray to the Father and

the Father would send another comforter that would abide with them forever. Well, again, they didn't pray – only Jesus did. The world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth; they don't see Him, and they don't know Him – but WE know Him because He dwells with us, and He promises to indwell us.

At this point in our study, the disciples have been regenerated, but they had not yet been indwelled by the Spirit of God. Well, Jesus said He wasn't going to leave them as orphans, and now we see Him make good on that promise. The Day of Pentecost has not yet arrived at this time, either, which is when they will be baptized with and indwelled by the Holy Spirit and placed into the body of believers of the early church. The church will not come into existence until the Day of Pentecost. The apostles are receiving the Holy Spirit in this interval. Well, Jesus "breathing on them" occurs NOWHERE else in the entire Bible - except way back in Genesis when God breathed into Adam the spirit of life. The breath of eternal life is what we now see "breathed" into the disciples. I cannot stress enough the importance of remembering that this is happening in the interval between His resurrection, ascension and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus appears to His disciples at a time when they desperately need help the most, too, by the way. That eliminates all possibility of this being placed down on us today; we just don't happen to be in that particular time period. Today, the Holy Spirit has already come, and is in the world....

23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

~ We are examining one astounding truth after another through this section of Scripture; and this is all-important and, yet, so dangerously misunderstood by many Christians today. John Calvin, and I am paraphrasing, quoted in this connection, "... when Christ enjoins the apostles to forgive sin, He does NOT convey to them that which is peculiar to Himself. The prerogative to forgive sins belongs entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone. Christ enjoins these apostles to His Name to proclaim forgiveness – not to forgive sins in and of themselves." That is certainly apt.

You won't find any of the apostles remitting the sins of anyone else in the Book of Acts – or in any epistle. These men are instructed to do exactly what Calvin wrote and I, also, believe that's exactly what Jesus means here. They are to go out and proclaim the forgiveness of sins. Even God doesn't arbitrarily forgive sins. We only have forgiveness of sins through the shed blood of Christ on the cross. Forgiveness of sins, in the Old Testament, was based solely on the fact that Christ would come and die on the cross. The Old Testament sacrifices were like running up a credit card bill; and when Jesus died on the cross, the balance was paid in full, if you will. They looked forward to the cross in faith and, today, we look back in faith.

Only the Gospel has forgiveness in it. The ONLY – ONLY – ONLY way you and I can ever remit sins is by preaching the Gospel. That is simply dumbfounding to me, and this is what we saw in chapter fourteen as Jesus said, "greater works shall ye do...." I don't consider it a great miracle that men believed and turned to Jesus while He was here proclaiming His Word. The miracles alone that Jesus did were enough to make even the most hardened doubter believe. However, when Andrew Hunt gives out the Word of God through his lips of clay and a man turns to Christ and is born again, becoming a new creature in Christ, my friends, that is miraculous. I like to think someone has actually come to God through my preaching of the Gospel. Frankly, I'm not sure. I know the power of the Word of God first-hand; but I also know my unbelief is bigger than my belief - just like yours. Either way, that's what Jesus means when He says whosoever sins we remit they are remitted. Proclaiming the grace of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the most glorious privilege we have in this world....

24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

~ So, Jesus appears to ten of the disciples – not twelve – and not eleven. I can't help but wonder why Thomas was not there at this time. I can speculate and surmise, but I don't know. I do think Thomas, who was a doubter with a question mark where his brain should have been, and who was always casting a gloomy spirit onto every situation we see him in, just couldn't hang around these men anymore who were excited and talking

about Jesus having been raised from the dead. Thomas wasn't there because he did not believe. Thomas is forsaking the assembling of believers together....

25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

~ Thomas had all the evidence required to believe, but he has made up his mind that he will not. At least Thomas is sticking by the others – just in case Jesus appears again. Lovingly, Jesus DOES appear again bringing tidings to bid them peace. Moreover, Jesus grants all the additional evidence Thomas demanded for confirmation. Jesus doesn't want us to be left unbelieving – Jesus wants us to be believers. Well, as far as the record is concerned, Thomas didn't reach forth his hand to touch Jesus. Apparently, he didn't need that after all. Thomas is simply going to believe now. The atheist says the same thing Thomas said originally, but that's not the problem. The only reason anyone rejects Christ is because there is sin in their lives that they refuse to give up. Well, at this time, Thomas makes one of the greatest confessions in Scripture we have in verse twenty-eight....

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

~ We had another doubter at the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus named Nathaniel who fell down at Jesus feet and said the same words Thomas says here. There is a very special blessing today upon those

who decide they will believe the available evidence of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ....

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

~ The final two verses of this chapter are the key to the entire record. Many things were done that are not recorded, or this Gospel account alone would have been bigger than the rest of the Bible combined. Many multitudes of instances of blind, dumb, fevered, lame, crippled men being healed – and dead people being raised from the dead – have no record. No one in that day denied any of this because they couldn't deny what their own eyes had seen. These specific accounts were recorded for a very definite purpose; that purpose being that we might believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that, by believing, we might have eternal life through His Name. When we simply believe we are born again and become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Our Spiritual Safari has one remaining chapter to consider in our next report. It will be an epilogue that was written by John to bookend the prologue that we examined in the beginning. I am sure this final chapter was added by John quite some time after the rest of Gospel was written. We will take up this matter completely and it will add some more evidence with two notable instances: one being the account of these men going fishing, which is a wonderful lesson. The other is regarding the secret of service as the Lord Jesus speaks directly to Simon Peter. Don't miss it ~

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