

20:20 Vision ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning

Week 17 (April 23-29, 2017)

We will continue to study passages pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus in this week's devotions.
(Reprinted and updated from week 18, 2014)

Sunday, April 23 (read John 20:24-25)

So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it." (John 20:25)

The Apostle Thomas has honest doubts about the resurrection of his dear friend, Jesus. By nature, he is a man who struggles when it comes to trusting in childlike faith, preferring instead to believe by sight and touch. For that reason, he misses the first Sunday night service (v. 19-24) and can only **hear** about the appearance of Jesus. After you have missed a service, perhaps you have been told, "We really experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit today! You should have been there!" If so, didn't it make you feel defensive? You can certainly understand Doubting Thomas' reaction to this report. Jesus understands that Thomas is skeptical by nature, so He gives him a second chance the following Sunday night. We will look at that in tomorrow's devotion.

Monday, April 24 (read John 20:26-31)

Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Aren't you glad you serve the God of second chances? Can you recall times in your life when He would have been justified in bringing judgment instead of offering **mercy** and **grace**? In today's text, Jesus makes another appearance through the locked doors and speaks "peace" to His fearful disciples (v. 26). At this point, He addresses Doubting Thomas and says, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (v. 27). I doubt if Thomas takes a step toward Jesus; instead, I believe he drops to his knees and exclaims, "My Lord and my God!" Most Christians are quick to call Jesus their Lord, but many are hesitant to call Him their God, reserving that title for the Father. You can know for certain that Jesus is indeed God in the flesh (see John 1:14; Hebrews 1:3). Maybe you are thinking, "If I saw what Thomas saw, I would believe too," but do not miss v. 29. You are blessed even more if you trust Him by faith alone! (Heb. 11:1)

Tuesday, April 25 (read 1 Corinthians 15:1-2)

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. (1 Corinthians 15:1)

Paul is writing this letter to professing Christians. He calls them **brothers** and acknowledges the fact that they have **received** and **taken a stand** for the gospel (v. 1). It's verse 2 that makes for interesting doctrinal conversation. If you had only those two verses in your Bible, I could certainly understand if you come to the conclusion that your salvation depends on your **performance** and not on His **promise** alone. I readily admit that I bred insecurity within my flock in my earlier days by an incorrect view of this verse. One day while I was on my knees before God, He clearly said to my heart, "I want you to preach my promises, not your performance." I soon fell in love with John 3:16, 5:24, 10:27-30, 11:25-26 & 14:1-6, just to mention a few. The bottom line is this: those who truly give their lives to the Lord will always endure to the end because "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). The same cannot be said for those who merely join the church without a transformation of the heart.

Wednesday, April 26 (read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures . . . (1 Corinthians 15:3)

I have had a few people ask me to consolidate the entire 66 books of the Bible into the **most important** point. I don't have to think about that too long because Paul has already done it for me. The death, burial and resurrection of our Lord stand at the forefront of the Christian message as long as we know that He died for **our sins** to pay the high price that God's holiness requires (v. 3-5). He is not giving his opinion on the subject; he is merely following the teachings of **Scripture**. I am amazed and saddened by the number of professing Christians who seldom, if ever, read the Bible for themselves. They do not even bring one to church to follow the preacher while he reads from it. If you are one of those people and are put on trial for being a Bible-believing Christian, what evidence is there to convict you?

Thursday, April 27 (reread 1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

. . . and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, . . . (1 Cor. 15:5-6a)

Paul brings his eyewitnesses to the stand (v. 5-8). Peter was among the Twelve, minus Judas and Thomas, who saw Him on the evening of the day He was resurrected (John 20:19-23), and Thomas saw Him the following Sunday night (John 20:24-29). The appearance to more than five hundred at once is not specifically recorded in another Scripture, but it must have been when His disciples met Him in Galilee and received the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). Paul met Him on the road to Damascus where he was heading to persecute the Church (Acts 9:1-9). Can you tell the world when and where you met Jesus? Can you join these people in being a witness to the resurrection of the Lord?

Friday, April 28 (read 1 Corinthians 15:12-20)

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. (1 Corinthians 15:19)

Be sure you read the entire text for today to see what difference it would make if Christ had **not** risen from the dead. My preaching and your faith would be useless (v. 14). All of us who testify of His resurrection would be liars (v. 15), we would all still be lost in our sins (v. 17), and those loved ones who have gone on before us would be lost for eternity. We love the **present** benefits of living for Jesus, but Scripture declares that, "If only for **this life** we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (v. 19, emphasis mine). This is because persecutions are coming to true Christians who live by the standards of the Bible. The great news is this: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (v. 20). He has risen! He is alive! "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (v. 55)

Saturday, April 29 (read 1 Corinthians 15:21-26)

"Because I live, you also will live." (John 14:19b)

When Adam and Eve sinned, the whole world came under the law of sin and death, "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). We are all under the same curse, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). That is the meaning of v. 21-22 in today's reading text that says, "death came through a man" (Adam). The good news is this: After Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on Calvary, His resurrection defeated death forever. He was not the first to come back from the dead (see Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56 & John 11:38-44), but He was the first to come back in His new resurrected body and then ascend into Heaven. The three people that Jesus raised to life were doomed to face death again. At the end of time, our Lord will destroy death forever (v. 23-26) and we will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The message of the season is this: Because He lives, you will live also!