
LIFE CHURCH
After the Resurrection
DEVOTIONAL
STEVE FORRESTER, JR.

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Introduction: After the Resurrection

For many, the story of Jesus climaxes at the cross and concludes with the empty tomb. We celebrate His victory over death with triumphant songs on the third day, then swiftly move on—as if resurrection was the end of the whole story. But what if it's just the beginning of the next great chapter?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not the final chapter of the Gospel story—it's the turning point that launches a new era of hope, mission, and transformation. In the days and weeks following the resurrection, Jesus didn't simply ascend to heaven and vanish into history. He walked, talked, taught, and transformed. He appeared to His disciples, reassured the doubting, restored the broken, and commissioned the faithful. These encounters were not random—they were intentional, personal, and powerful.

After the Resurrection invites you into those sacred moments when the risen Christ revealed Himself in unmistakable ways. We will explore each of His appearances—not merely to learn what happened, but to discover what each one means for us today. From the garden where Mary wept, to the locked room where fear held the disciples captive, to the shores of Galilee where Peter was restored, every moment pulses with divine

purpose.

This is not just a study of historical events—it's an invitation to encounter the risen Jesus for yourself. As we journey through the post-resurrection appearances, you'll find that the same Jesus who stood among the early believers still walks with us, speaks to us, and sends us into the world with resurrection power.

The story continues. Let's step into it—*After the Resurrection.*

CHAPTER ONE

FROM DOUBT TO FAITH – JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS

(Read John 20:19–29)

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
— John 20:29

The resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian faith, the moment where death was defeated and hope broke through the darkness of the grave. But that hope didn't arrive without questions. In fact, one of the most powerful aspects of the resurrection story is how Jesus met actual people, experiencing real moments of fear, grief, and doubt—and brought them into deeper faith.

This chapter begins our journey *After the Resurrection*, focusing on the personal and powerful appearances of the risen Christ. And we begin with someone whose story speaks to so

many of us—Thomas.

FEAR BEHIND LOCKED DOORS

John 20:19–23 ESV

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending 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, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

It was the evening on the Feast of First Fruits, the day that Jesus rose from the grave. The stone had been rolled away, the tomb was empty, and Mary Magdalene had encountered the risen Jesus. She had told the disciples, *"I have seen the Lord!"*—but even with that report, fear still held them captive.

So, there they were—huddled in a room, behind locked doors, afraid of what might come next. If the authorities had crucified Jesus, what would they do to His followers? Every creak in the hallway could've been a soldier's footstep. Every shadow outside the window, a possible threat.

But suddenly, without the sound of a door creaking or a knock announcing a guest, Jesus stood among them.

"Peace be with you."

Can you imagine that? Huddled in fear, there stands Jesus

bidding you peace. That statement of shalom was more than an everyday greeting. It was a pronouncement; a divine declaration designed to dissuade all their fear. Notice that Jesus didn't rebuke them for hiding. He didn't shame them for their confusion. Instead, He offered peace—and it was a peace that came through His presence. He showed them His hands and His side, and in doing so, proved that the One who stood before them was the same One who had been nailed to the cross. He was no spiritual apparition or mental delusion. He was the risen Son of God amongst them, in the flesh.

In that moment, He also brought something new: a fresh mission. He who just three days earlier breathed His last upon the cross, breathed on them a fresh wind, saying, *"Receive the Holy Spirit."* The same disciples who were once paralyzed by fear were now being sent as Holy Spirit empowered messengers of the Good News of forgiveness and hope. The resurrection wasn't just about overcoming death—it was about commissioning a new life.

THOMAS' DOUBT

John 20:24–25 ESV

24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

But Thomas missed it.

We're not told where he was that evening—perhaps out running errands, perhaps wandering alone in grief, trying to make sense of everything. Whatever the reason, he wasn't there when Jesus appeared.

When the others told him, *"We have seen the Lord!"* Thomas responded with one of the most honest statements in Scripture:

"Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

This wasn't casual skepticism. This was deep disappointment. Thomas had believed Jesus was the Messiah. He had left everything to follow Him. And then he watched that hope die on a Roman cross. His doubt wasn't just intellectual—it was gut-level. Heart-level. Honest.

Maybe you've been there. When the pain is real, when the loss cuts deep, or when the miracle feels far away—it's hard to believe. It's hard to trust the testimony of others when your own world feels like it's falling apart.

But notice something important: Thomas didn't walk away. Even in his doubt, he stayed connected. He was still with the disciples the next week. Still leaning in. Still waiting—maybe not in perfect faith, but with an open heart.

SEEING AND BELIEVING

John 20:26–29 ESV

26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas,

"Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." [28] *Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"* [29] *Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

A week later, the scene repeats itself. The disciples are again behind locked doors. And again, Jesus appears—this time with Thomas present.

Jesus goes straight to him. No lecture. No condemnation. Just understanding.

"Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

Jesus met Thomas exactly where he was. He didn't shame him for his need to see and touch. He didn't berate him for his unbelief. Instead, He honored the honest longing behind the doubt. And that moment—the moment Thomas encountered the risen Jesus face to face—produced one of the most powerful confessions in all of Scripture:

"My Lord and my God!"

Thomas didn't just acknowledge Jesus as risen. He worshiped Him as divine. His faith leapt from the floor of uncertainty to the heights of reverent awe. He didn't just believe Jesus was *alive*—he believed Jesus was *God*.

Jesus responded with a word that echoes through generations:

"Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

That blessing is for you and for me. It is for all who come

after Thomas and the disciples. It is for whosoever believes in the risen Christ through the testimony of Scripture, the working of the Holy Spirit, and the transformed lives of His people.

LIVING THE TRUTH TODAY

Thomas' journey from doubt to faith is deeply personal—and profoundly universal. Every believer will face seasons of doubt. Some doubts come from intellectual questions. Others come from heartbreak, disappointment, or the silence of God in hard moments.

But the good news of this story is that Jesus doesn't distance Himself from doubt. He draws near. He enters our locked rooms. He speaks peace to our troubled hearts. And He offers Himself—not always in visible form, but in powerful ways through His Spirit, His Word, and His people.

APPLICATION

- **Doubt is not disqualification.** God isn't afraid of your questions. What matters is what you *do* with them. Like Thomas, stay close to the community of faith. Keep showing up. Keep seeking.
- **Jesus meets us where we are.** No one has a perfect faith and thankfully that isn't needed for us to walk with Jesus. He comes to the broken, the fearful, the skeptical—and offers His peace.
- **True faith moves us to worship.** When Thomas saw Jesus, his response wasn't just belief—it was surrender.

Surrender is an act of worship. The words, *"My Lord and my God"* are the cry of every heart that has been changed by a radical encounter with the risen Christ.

- **Faith without sight is honored.** You may never see Jesus' physical scars in this life, but you can know His presence just as powerfully. He promises a special blessing for those who believe without seeing. In fact, it has been said, *believing is seeing*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever struggled with doubt in your faith journey? What was the source of your doubt?

2. How does Jesus' response to Thomas encourage you when you wrestle with questions or fears?

3. What does it mean to you to believe without seeing? How can you grow in that kind of faith?

4. Who in your life might be struggling with doubt? How can you reflect the patience and compassion of Christ toward them?

CONCLUSION: THE INVITATION STILL STANDS

Jesus is still walking into locked rooms.

He still brings peace to fearful hearts. He still responds to honest doubt with personal invitation. And He still turns skeptics into worshipers.

Thomas' story reminds us that doubt is not the opposite of faith—it's often the doorway to deeper trust. And Jesus doesn't demand perfect faith before showing up. He comes, He speaks, He invites.

Are you waiting for proof before you believe? Or are you ready to take the step Thomas eventually took—to look at the risen Jesus and say, *"My Lord and my God"*?

The journey has just begun. *After the Resurrection*, everything changes.

Let's keep walking.

CHAPTER TWO

RESTORED FOR MISSION – BREAKFAST WITH JESUS

(Read John 21:1–19)

"Feed my sheep."
— John 21:17

What happens after failure? After regret? After denying the very One you swore to follow? For Peter, those weren't hypothetical questions—they were his reality.

Just days before Jesus' crucifixion, Peter had made a bold promise: "Even if all fall away, I never will." Isn't that just like Peter? At so many times in the gospels he speaks up, speaks out, or acts in boldness. Sometimes, he was led by the Holy Spirit and other times by his human nature. But before the rooster crowed the next morning, on the night Jesus was arrested, he had denied Jesus not once, but three times.

And yet, after the resurrection, Jesus didn't discard Peter. He pursued him. He restored him. He called him—again.

Failure isn't final with Jesus. No one is outside of His grip of grace.

This chapter captures one of the most beautiful and redemptive scenes in all of Scripture: a charcoal fire, a simple breakfast, and a broken man being restored by a risen Savior.

FISHING WITHOUT SUCCESS

John 21:1–6 ESV

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. 2 *Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.* 3 *Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.*

4 *Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.* 5 *Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No."* 6 *He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.*

Sometime after the resurrection, Peter and six other disciples returned to Galilee and did something familiar—they went fishing. This wasn't just recreational; it was vocational. For many of them, fishing was their former life—their comfort

zone. Perhaps unsure of what would come next, they slipped back into what they knew.

But despite fishing all night, they caught nothing.

It's a subtle but significant detail: apart from Jesus, even the familiar can feel empty.

At dawn, a man on the shore called out, *"Friends, haven't you any fish?"* When they answered no, He told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat. They obeyed—and hauled in a miraculous catch of fish.

This wasn't the first time something like this had happened. In fact, this moment echoed their very first encounter with Jesus (Luke 5), when another miraculous catch had led Peter to leave everything and follow Him. Now, after the resurrection, Jesus was re-creating that moment—reminding them of their calling, even after their failure.

JESUS PROVIDES AND INVITES

John 21:7–14 ESV

7 That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. 8 The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come

and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 *Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.* 14 *This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.*

As soon as the net filled with fish, John recognized the man on the shore and said, ***"It is the Lord!"*** And Peter, as bold and dare I say impulsive as ever, didn't wait. He jumped into the water and swam to Jesus.

When he reached the shore, he found a charcoal fire burning with fish and bread already cooking. Jesus had prepared breakfast.

It's a striking image: the risen King of the universe, hosting a beachside meal for broken men. No fanfare. No lecture. Just presence, provision, and invitation.

"Come and have breakfast," Jesus said.

In that moment, He wasn't just filling their stomachs—He was nourishing their spirits. The fire, the food, the fellowship—it all pointed to relationship, to renewal, to restoration.

For Peter, that charcoal fire would've been especially powerful. The only other time John mentions a "charcoal fire" was in the courtyard of the high priest—where Peter denied Jesus (John 18:18). Now, in the glow of another fire, Jesus was about to reverse what had been broken.

PETER'S RESTORATION

John 21:15–19

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,
"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to
him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed
my lambs." 16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do
you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."
He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time,
"Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he
said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him,
"Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said
to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were
young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted,
but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another
will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." 19 (This he
said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after
saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

After breakfast, Jesus pulled Peter aside. The time had come—not for punishment, but for healing.

"Simon son of John, do you love?"

Three times Jesus asked.

Three times Peter answered.

And three times Jesus responded with a command:

- *Feed my lambs.*
- *Take care of my sheep.*
- *Feed my sheep.*

This was not a coincidence. Peter had denied Jesus three times, and now Jesus gave him three opportunities to reaffirm

his love. Each question peeled back the layers of shame and disappointment. And with each response, Jesus was not just forgiving Peter—He was recommissioning him.

This was grace in action. Undeserved, unearned, but undeniably real.

Peter's failure didn't disqualify him. It refined him. And now, the same man who had once denied Christ would become the shepherd of His church.

Jesus ended the conversation with the same words He used when He first called Peter: ***"Follow Me."***

Not "prove yourself." Not "earn back my trust."

Just: ***"Follow Me."***

Because grace doesn't rewind the past—it redeems it.

LIVING THE TRUTH TODAY

Peter's story is our story.

We all have moments when we return to old patterns, old comforts, or old identities—especially after seasons of disappointment. We all know what it feels like to fail God, to carry regret, to wonder if we've disqualified ourselves from His calling.

But *after the resurrection*, Jesus does what only He can do: He meets us in our shame, invites us to the fire, restores what was broken, and calls us again.

You may think your mistakes have sidelined you. You may wonder if your past disqualifies you from purpose. But the risen Jesus says otherwise. His grace not only forgives—it restores. And His calling on your life remains.

Let Jesus restore and redeem you.
It's time for breakfast with the Lord.

APPLICATION

- **Jesus restores us when we fail.** He doesn't ignore our sin, but He also doesn't let it define us. His love confronts and heals.
- **Our calling doesn't change because of past mistakes.** Like Peter, we're still called to follow. To serve. To lead. To love.
- **Love for Jesus should lead to service.** "Do you love Me?" is always followed by a mission—"Feed My sheep." Loving Jesus means caring for His people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever felt like you failed God? How did He meet you at that moment?

2. What does Jesus' conversation with Peter teach us about the nature of grace and restoration?

3. How can you practically "feed His sheep" in your home, church, or community today?

4. Why do you think Jesus chose to restore Peter in such a personal, gentle way?

CONCLUSION: GRACE IS GREATER THAN FAILURE

No failure is too big for God's grace.

Jesus didn't just save Peter—He restored him and He's still doing the same today. If you're carrying guilt, shame, or regret, hear His invitation: *"Come and have breakfast."* Draw near to the fire. Receive His provision. Listen to His voice. And when He asks, "Do you love Me?"—answer with your whole heart.

Then, rise. Step into your calling. Feed His sheep. Follow Him.

The risen Jesus is not *just* waiting for you in eternity—He's meeting you *here* and *now*, calling you forward with mercy and mission.

Let's keep walking.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS – RECOGNIZING JESUS

(Read Luke 24:13–35)

"Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him…"
— Luke 24:31

There are few moments more painful than the collision between deep hope and bitter disappointment. The two disciples walking to Emmaus knew that feeling intimately. Their footsteps echoed the ache in their hearts—step by step away from the city of crucifixion, away from what they believed would be victory, away from the One they had followed so faithfully.

And then, out of nowhere, a stranger joined their journey.

WALKING IN DISAPPOINTMENT

Luke 24:13–24 ESV

13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. 22 Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even 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 as the women had said, but him they did not see."

Emmaus was a small village, about seven miles from Jerusalem. This was not a journey of joy or routine—it was a retreat, a quiet escape. These two disciples were disillusioned, emotionally spent, and trying to make sense of everything that had just happened. The One they believed was the Messiah had been arrested, condemned, and crucified. Their dreams of re-

demption, freedom, and glory died with Him on that Roman cross.

They talked as they walked, likely replaying the events, second-guessing their understanding, wondering how everything could have gone so wrong. And in their grief, they missed the miracle standing right next to them.

While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

Their eyes didn't see what their hearts longed for. Whether through divine concealment or the fog of grief, they didn't realize that the Risen Lord Jesus was with them.

Isn't that us, sometimes?

In our deepest disappointments—when a relationship falls apart, a diagnosis comes in, or prayers seem unanswered—we may often feel abandoned. And yet, Jesus is walking right beside us.

He listens to them as they explain what had happened:

"But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."

We had hoped.

Past tense. Their hope had an expiration date. How could things have gone so wrong?

But Jesus doesn't interrupt. He doesn't lecture. He walks, listens, and gently leads them to rediscover the truth.

JESUS TEACHES THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:25–27 ESV

25 *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to be-*

lieve all that the prophets have spoken! [26] *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"* [27] *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

After hearing their sorrow, Jesus speaks—not with condemnation, but with clarity.

"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

It wasn't that the Scriptures hadn't spoken; it's that their understanding had been incomplete. Their eyes had seen Jesus but failed to perceive Him. Their ears had heard Him speak, but they didn't understand His words. They expected a triumphant king, not a suffering servant. But Jesus patiently begins to reveal the full picture.

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

Imagine that scene: the Author of Scripture walking through the story of redemption—showing how the sacrifices, the psalms, the prophecies—all pointed to the cross and the empty tomb.

Jesus reframes their expectations. He shows them that God's plan was never derailed; it was being fulfilled. The problem wasn't that Jesus had failed—it was that they had misunderstood who the Messiah really was.

And the same is true today.

If we don't let the Word of God shape our view of Jesus, culture will. We'll be caught up in idolatry. We'll fashion a savior made in our image—one who only affirms, never confronts;

who only comforts, never calls; who offers glory without suffering. In essence, we make a false god. But Jesus invites us to open the Scriptures and see Him for who He really is. The Son of God, who came to be our Lord and Savior.

EYES OPENED IN COMMUNION

Luke 24:28–35 ESV

28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, 29 but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" 33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

"Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent."

Jesus accepted the invitation.

At the table, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them.

And in that moment—**that ordinary, familiar moment**—their eyes were opened.

"And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight."

The moment of recognition came not in the journey, nor in the teaching, but in the breaking of bread in that act of communion. It was a reminder of the Last Supper, an echo of the new covenant He established.

Sometimes, it's in the simplicity of shared moments—in prayer, in worship, in communion—that we see Jesus most clearly. Not because He wasn't present before, but because something in us finally recognizes Him.

And when their eyes were opened, they realized what had been stirring within them all along:

"They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

When Jesus walks with us, even unrecognized, something burns within us—a flicker of life, a warmth of hope, a stirring of truth.

ENCOUNTERING JESUS LEADS TO ACTION

They didn't stay in Emmaus.

Even though it was late, even though they had just walked seven miles, they got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem. They had seen the risen Christ—and they couldn't keep it to themselves.

When you truly encounter Jesus, **you move**. You run back to others. You tell the story. You join the fellowship of the faithful and proclaim: We have seen the Lord!

You can't remain silent.

LIVING THE TRUTH TODAY

The road to Emmaus isn't just history—it's our journey, too.

- **We walk with disappointment:** crushed hopes, unanswered prayers, uncertain futures.
- **We long for answers:** struggling to understand what God is doing or where He is.
- **We open the Word:** letting Scripture reshape our understanding of Christ.
- **We break bread:** encountering Jesus in the sacred and the simple.
- **We run to tell:** moved by His presence, emboldened by His truth, empowered by His Spirit.

APPLICATION

- **Jesus walks with us even when we don't recognize Him.** He listens, stays near, and gently leads us toward truth.
- **Scripture is key to seeing Jesus clearly**. Let the Word inform your faith more than the world.
- **Communion is powerful.** In both the Lord's Table and everyday moments of fellowship, Jesus reveals Himself.
- **Encountering Jesus leads to mission.** When you know the risen Christ, you're compelled to share Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever experienced a time when you didn't recognize Jesus until after the fact?

2. How can you cultivate a daily awareness of Jesus' presence, especially in the ordinary?

3. What Scriptures have helped you see Jesus more clearly?

4. Who do you need to run back to and tell that Jesus is alive?

CONCLUSION: OPEN OUR EYES, LORD

This story reminds us that **faith is often born in the depths of disappointment** and grows when we welcome Jesus into our everyday moments.

You may feel like you're walking a lonely road. But you're not. The risen Christ is walking with you. Teaching. Listening. Waiting for you to invite Him in.

So today, wherever you are—whether you're walking in confusion or sitting at your own kitchen table—pray this simple prayer:

"Lord, open my eyes. I want to see You."

And when you do—when your heart begins to burn, when the Scriptures come alive, or you break bread, realize He's been with you all along.

Don't keep it to yourself.

Get up. Go. Tell someone.

Let's keep walking.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GREAT COMMISSION – OUR CALLING

(Read Matthew 28:16–20)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."
— Matthew 28:19

A MOUNTAIN MOMENT

After the resurrection, Jesus did not immediately ascend to heaven. Instead, He spent forty days appearing to His disciples and teaching them (Acts 1:3). One of the most profound and world-shaping moments happened during that time on a mountain in Galilee.

Imagine the scene. Christ's disciples—ordinary, flawed, still grappling with the shock and wonder of seeing the risen Christ—gather on a mountainside. Some worship. Some still

carry hesitation and doubt (Matthew 28:17). And then Jesus speaks.

His words aren't just a farewell. They are a commission—a mission that has echoed across generations. A call to carry the message of the resurrection to every corner of the world.

This chapter explores that sacred moment and what it means for us today.

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Matthew 28:18 ESV

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Before issuing any command, Jesus declares His divine authority.

This is not the voice of a martyr or a moral teacher. This is the King of Kings, victorious over sin, death, and the grave. His resurrection wasn't just a miracle—it was a coronation. For now our King seated at the right hand of the Father, possessing **all** authority.

And all authority means exactly that. All authority.

His words on that mountainside are the foundation of the Church's mission. We don't share Christ out of mere religious duty. We do it under **the command and covering** of the one who rules the universe.

And that authority means we can walk in **confidence,** not fear. The same Jesus who stilled storms and raised the dead says, "I have authority over everything—and I'm sending you."

THE MISSION: MAKE DISCIPLES

Matthew 28:19 ESV

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"

Here, Jesus gives His followers their life's calling. The verbs in this verse—"go," "make disciples," "baptize," and "teach"—aren't just commands. They're a **lifestyle**.

Let's explore each part:

GO

This isn't a passive call. It's not "wait for the world to come to you." It's a call to movement, to intentionality, to stepping beyond our comfort zones. Whether it's across the street or across the ocean, "go" reminds us that the gospel is never stagnant.

MAKE DISCIPLES

Jesus doesn't say, "Make converts." He says, "Make disciples." This is a long-term, relational process. It involves walking with people through questions, doubts, growth, and transformation. It's life-on-life ministry.

BAPTIZE THEM

Baptism is a sign of identity. When we baptize someone,

we're celebrating their entrance into the family of God. It's an outward sign of an inward grace—a public declaration that they belong to Jesus. In baptism we identify with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

TEACH THEM TO OBEY

Discipleship doesn't stop at conversion. It continues as we teach others to obey all that Christ commanded—not out of legalism, but love. Teaching requires patience, commitment, and example. It means helping others apply God's truth to every part of life.

The mission Jesus gives us is comprehensive. It involves **evangelism**, **baptism**, and **ongoing teaching**. It's not a church program—it's a personal calling for every follower of Jesus.

THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

Matthew 28:20 ESV

"...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus ends His commission with one of the most comforting promises in all of Scripture: ***"I am with you always."***

He knew the mission would be hard. He knew there would be persecution, opposition, and personal doubts. So He promises **His presence**.

Not just sometimes. Not just when we're doing well. **Always**—to the very end.

This promise isn't just about emotional encouragement. It's about **power**. Jesus is with us by His Spirit, empowering us to

speak boldly, love deeply, and serve selflessly.

Wherever you go—into a workplace, a classroom, a neighborhood, a conversation—He goes with you.

REAL PEOPLE, REAL PURPOSE

The Great Commission wasn't given to superheroes of the faith. It was given to **ordinary people**—many of whom had just failed Jesus days earlier.

Peter had denied Him. Thomas had doubted Him. The others had fled.

And yet, Jesus entrusts **them** with the most important mission in history.

That's grace. That's transformation. That's what the resurrection does—it doesn't just give us hope, it gives us **purpose**.

No matter your past, Jesus invites you to join Him in what He's doing in the world. He is writing your story. He will give you a voice to speak to others. Your life lived as a testimony of His grace can point others to Him.

LIVING THE COMMISSION TODAY

So how do we live this out?

- **Start with prayer.** Ask God to give you a heart for the lost and boldness to share your faith. If you ask Him to use you, don't be surprised when He does.
- **Look for opportunities.** Every conversation is a potential gospel moment. There are divine appointments ev-

ery day. Are your eyes open to see them? Is your heart ready to share?

- **Invest in someone.** Who could you begin discipling? Who needs encouragement in their walk with Christ? Consider walking alongside another on this journey of faith.
- **Join your church's mission.** You're not alone. Be part of the bigger work God is doing through your church family.

APPLICATION

- Evangelism isn't just for pastors or missionaries—it's for **every believer**.
- Discipleship is more than Sunday service attendance. It's about shaping lives through truth and love.
- Jesus didn't call us to do this alone. He walks with us, empowers us, and surrounds us with community.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does understanding Jesus' authority impact the way you view your role in the Great Commission?

2. Who is someone in your life that you could begin to disciple?

3. What obstacles keep you from sharing your faith, and how can you overcome them?

4. In what ways can you support global missions and local outreach efforts?

5. What step can you take this week to live out the Great Commission?

CONCLUSION: THE MISSION CONTINUES

Jesus didn't rise from the dead to simply inspire us—He rose to **commissio**n us. The resurrection proves that death is defeated, sin is forgiven, and hope is alive. And now He calls us to go and tell the world.

You and I have been entrusted with the only message that can truly transform lives for the Kingdom of God. You have the Holy Spirit within you. You have a purpose greater you're your own personal ambitions, comfort or success.

Will you step into the mission?

The Great Commission is not a story from the past—it's a calling for today. Jesus is alive. His authority is real. His presence is with you. And the world is waiting.

Let's keep walking.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Read Luke 24:44–49; Acts 1:4–8)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses..."
— Acts 1:8

THE POWER WE NEED FOR THE LIFE WE'RE CALLED TO LIVE

The disciples stood at a turning point in history. The tomb was empty. Jesus was alive. They had seen Him, touched Him, and even eaten with Him. Their joy was immeasurable, but so was the weight of what came next. Jesus had given them a commission—to carry the gospel into the world. But before they could go, He told them to stay.

"...he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father..." (Acts 1:4)

Wait? After all the buildup, all the glory, all the victory of the resurrection—why wait?

Because while the resurrection confirmed Christ's victory, **the mission to proclaim it required power they did not yet have**. That power would come not from their talents, intellect, or enthusiasm—but from the **Holy Spirit**, the very presence of God.

In this chapter, we'll discover how Jesus prepared His disciples for the future—not just with instructions, but with a promise: **they would not be alone**.

THE RISEN CHRIST REVEALS THE SCRIPTURES

Luke 24:44–47 ESV

44 "Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

In one of His final conversations before the ascension, Jesus gathers His disciples and connects the dots of Scripture. He shows them how **everything written in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms** ultimately pointed to Him.

He wasn't teaching them something new—He was **revealing**

what had always been there, hidden in plain sight. His death, burial, and resurrection weren't detours; they were the heart of God's redemptive story.

What they had just witnessed wasn't random, chaotic, or tragic—it was the **fulfillment of the divine plan of salvation**.

But this understanding wasn't something they reached by themselves. Luke tells us that Jesus **"opened their minds,"** showing us that spiritual understanding is a work of God. The Bible isn't just information; it's **revelation**. And without the Spirit of God, we cannot fully comprehend the things of God.

We need the Holy Spirit not only to live in power, but to **understand truth**. Our minds must be opened by Him to grasp the full weight and beauty of the gospel.

CLOTHED WITH POWER

Luke 24:49 ESV

"And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Before the disciples could go out, they had to stay in. Before they could give to others, they had to receive. Jesus tells them that what they need is not just **training** or **strategy**—but **power from on high**.

This promise—**"clothed with power"**—speaks of a complete covering, like putting on a garment. Just as clothes protect and identify us, so too would the Holy Spirit **equip** and **mark** them as Christ's witnesses.

The Spirit wouldn't just come upon them for a moment. He

would **indwell them**, **transform them**, and **send them** into the world as vessels of God's presence.

And this wasn't a new idea. Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit had always been active:

- He hovered over the waters in creation (Genesis 1:2).
- He empowered judges and kings.
- He spoke through prophets.
- But now, something new was coming—the Spirit would not just rest on people, He would live within them (see Ezekiel 36:27; Joel 2:28-29).

Christianity is not about trying harder—it's about **living empowered**. We are not simply followers of Christ in theory—we are Spirit-filled participants in His ongoing mission.

THE MISSION AND THE MEANS

Acts 1:8 ESV

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This verse serves as both a **mandate** and a **map**. Jesus lays out the mission with crystal clarity:

"You will receive power..."

The Greek word dynamis implies **miraculous ability**. This isn't just motivational fuel—it's supernatural capacity. It's the difference between a candle in the wind and a wildfire igniting

a movement.

"...when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."

The Spirit is not just a helper—He is the **Helper**. He brings boldness (Acts 4:31), wisdom (John 14:26), conviction (John 16:8), and comfort (Romans 8:26). He is God's empowering presence.

"...you will be My witnesses..."

Notice: not "you might be" or "you should try to be." No—**you will be**. This is identity language. A witness doesn't invent something new. They simply testify to what they've seen and experienced.

"...to the ends of the earth."

The gospel isn't confined to Jerusalem. It doesn't stop in Judea. It crosses ethnic, cultural, and geographical boundaries—**because the love of Jesus knows no borders**.

This mission wasn't just for the apostles—it's for **every believer**. That includes you and me.

Takeaway: The power of the Holy Spirit is not for personal comfort—it's for **public witness**. We are filled so we can be sent.

WHY WE STILL NEED THE SPIRIT TODAY

Sometimes we think the Holy Spirit was just for the early church—to jumpstart things at Pentecost. But the same Spirit who filled Peter and Paul is the **same Spirit who lives in every believer today**.

We still face opposition. We still deal with fear. We still need wisdom, boldness, discernment, compassion, and endur-

ance. And we cannot generate any of those on our own.

Consider this:

- **Do you struggle with fear?** The Spirit gives **boldness**.
- **Do you lack direction?** The Spirit gives **guidance**.
- **Do you feel spiritually dry?** The Spirit gives **life**.
- **Do you want to see God move?** The Spirit brings **revival**.

The Christian life is not a solo performance—it is a **Spirit-led symphony**. And every believer has a part to play.

The question isn't whether the Holy Spirit is available to you—the question is, **are you relying on Him?**

LIVING IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

Here are three ways we can live empowered by the Holy Spirit:

1. **Ask Daily for His Filling.** (Ephesians 5:18 says "be filled with the Spirit"—an ongoing action, not a one-time event.)
2. **Respond to His Promptings.** When the Spirit nudges you to encourage someone, speak truth, or step out in faith—say yes.
3. **Saturate Your Life with Scripture and Prayer.** The more time we spend with God, the more sensitive we become to the voice of the Spirit.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

4. Why did Jesus tell the disciples to wait before going out on mission?

5. In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit at work in your life?

6. What role does the Holy Spirit play in your understanding of Scripture?

7. What would it look like for you to live more dependently on the Spirit this week?

8. Who in your life needs to see the gospel through your Spirit-empowered witness?

CONCLUSION: THE PROMISE STILL STANDS

Jesus could have chosen any strategy to build His Church, but He chose this: **weak people empowered by the omnipotent Holy Spirit**. And that promise wasn't just for the disciples—it's for every believer, in every generation.

The resurrection gives us hope.

The Great Commission gives us purpose.

The Holy Spirit gives us **power**.

So ask yourself:

Are you walking in your own strength, or the Spirit's power?

Are you living for your plans, or God's mission?

Are you ready to receive what the Father has promised?

Because the Spirit is not only promised—**He is present**. He is ready to fill, empower, and send you.

Are you ready to ask Him?

Let's keep walking.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ASCENSION — CHRIST'S REIGN AND OUR HOPE

(Read Acts 1:9–11; Hebrews 7:25)

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."
— Acts 1:11

A MOMENT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

The risen Jesus had walked, talked, and eaten with His disciples for forty days. They had touched His scars. They had received His commission. They had heard His promise of power. And then—He was taken up.

One moment He was speaking.

The next, He was rising.

Imagine standing there: eyes lifted, hearts pounding, minds reeling. The Savior who had died and risen was now ascending—returning to His Father, not in defeat, but in divine glory.

The Ascension isn't the end of the story. It's the moment that bridges what Christ has done and what He will do next. It marks both the conclusion of His earthly ministry and the beginning of His heavenly reign.

In this final chapter, we'll see how Christ's Ascension gives us confidence in His rule, comfort in His intercession, and hope in His return.

JESUS' DEPARTURE: LIFTED UP IN GLORY

Acts 1:9–10 ESV

9 *"And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.* 10 *And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,"*

The Ascension wasn't just a dramatic exit. It was a declaration—Jesus is exalted. He didn't vanish. He ascended.

This upward movement carries deep meaning. In the Bible, "up" often symbolizes authority, reign, and nearness to God. Jesus was being lifted up not only from earth but to His throne in heaven. The cloud that enveloped Him reflects divine presence—just as the cloud led Israel in the wilderness and filled the temple in the Old Testament, now it receives Christ as He enters the heavenly Holy of Holies. He moved from the physical realm into the spiritual one.

And the disciples? They just stood there, staring into the sky.

Who wouldn't?

They were watching the King return to His throne. What began in a manger and climaxed at the cross now continued in glory. Jesus had completed the mission of redemption—and now He was taking His rightful seat.

The Ascension reminds us that Jesus is not absent—He is exalted. He reigns in power, not far away, but from heaven's throne.

THE ANGELIC MESSAGE: HE WILL COME AGAIN

Acts 1:11ESV

"...Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The disciples were still gazing upward when two men in white appeared. Angels—messengers of God—delivered a simple, stunning promise:

He will come back.

This wasn't goodbye forever. It was goodbye for now. The Jesus they loved and followed—the Jesus who walked on water, raised the dead, and defeated death—will return. Not symbolically. Not metaphorically. But physically, visibly, gloriously.

Just as the Ascension was real, His return will be real. It is the great hope of the Church, the longing of every believer, and the final chapter of the story. We live in the "already, but not

yet"—the time between redemption accomplished and redemption completed.

The return of Christ is not a myth or a metaphor—it is our ultimate hope. And that hope is meant to shape how we live today.

JESUS' ONGOING WORK: INTERCEDING FOR US

Hebrews 7:25 ESV

"Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."

The Ascension doesn't mean Jesus is passive, waiting in silence. No—He is actively working on our behalf.

Hebrews tells us that He lives to intercede. Right now, at this very moment, Jesus is praying for you. As our Great High Priest, He represents us before the Father. He pleads your case. He stands in your place. He secures your access.

When we sin, He is our advocate.

When we struggle, He is our strength.

When we doubt, He reminds the Father of His finished work on our behalf.

Jesus didn't stop being Savior when He ascended—He continues to save by applying His finished work to our daily lives.

Christ's ministry didn't end at the cross—it continues in heaven. You have a living, loving advocate who never stops interceding for you.

OUR RESPONSE: FAITHFUL UNTIL HE COMES

The angel's message wasn't just information—it was a call to action.

"Why do you stand here looking into the sky?"

In other words: Don't just stare—go share.

The same Jesus who ascended has given us a mission. Until He returns, we are to be His witnesses—living lives of holiness, hope, and courage. We live not in fear of the future, but in faithfulness today.

- We trust in His reign.
- We walk in His power.
- We wait with expectation.
- We work with urgency.

As Paul says in Titus 2:13, we are ***"waiting for our blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."***

The Ascension isn't an ending—it's an invitation. Christ reigns now—and He calls us to live for His Kingdom until He comes again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Jesus' ascension teach us about His authority and reign?

2. How does knowing that Jesus is interceding for you affect your daily life?

3. What areas of your life need to be re-centered around the hope of Christ's return?

4. How can you stay faithful and focused on God's mission while you wait for His coming?

CONCLUSION: LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF HIS RETURN

Jesus' Ascension is not the end of the gospel story—it's the beginning of our chapter in it.

He is reigning as King, interceding as High Priest,and will return as Righteous Judge and Glorious Savior.

So, what does that mean for us?

It means we live with purpose, we walk with power, and we wait with hope.

His throne is not empty.

His return is not uncertain.

His mission is not finished.

Until He comes, we remain faithful.

Let's walk a little further.

EPILOGUE

LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF THE RISEN CHRIST

The stone was rolled away.

The tomb was empty.

Jesus is alive — and nothing will ever be the same.

For forty days, the risen Christ walked among His people. He came to the doubting, the broken, the weary, and the faithful. He restored what was lost, fulfilled what was promised, and prepared His followers for what was to come.

But the story didn't end with them.

It continues with you.

His resurrection was more than a moment—it was the beginning of a movement.

And it didn't stop with the Ascension—it continues through us.

You've journeyed through the powerful post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. You've seen how He:

- Met Thomas in his doubt and turned it into bold faith.
- Restored Peter from shame and gave him a new purpose.
- Walked with two discouraged disciples and opened their eyes to truth.
- Commissioned His followers to change the world.
- Promised the Holy Spirit and power to carry out His mission.
- Ascended to the right hand of God, where He reigns and intercedes for you.

Now the question is: **How will you respond?**

This isn't just history—it's your invitation.

Jesus is still alive.

He's still calling.

He's still sending.

And He's still coming again.

So wherever you are—whether you're walking in doubt, recovering from failure, searching for hope, or ready to step out in faith—Jesus invites you to join Him.

Believe.

Follow.

Go.

And live like He is risen—because He is.

"Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again."

Let the resurrection of Jesus transform your everyday life.

Let His power fuel your purpose.

Let His return shape your priorities.

And let your story be part of His.

After the Resurrection

What happened after Jesus rose from the grave? *After the Resurrection* explores the incredible moments when the risen Christ appeared to His followers before ascending to heaven. From the empty tomb to Thomas' journey from doubt to faith, from the road to Emmaus to the Great Commission—each encounter reveals life-changing truths about Jesus' love, restoration, and mission for His people. As we journey together, we'll discover how His resurrection still transforms lives today, empowering us to walk in faith, share His message, and anticipate His glorious return. Deepen your faith and experience the hope of the risen Christ!

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