



The Gospel of John: Behold the Man

John 20:19-31

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In this teaching on John 20, we examine the amazing moment when Jesus appeared to His disciples after the resurrection. The focus is on belief, doubt, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. We see how Jesus meets His followers in their fear and uncertainty, offering them peace and breathing upon them. This act made each of them a new creation, for at that moment, they were Born Again, with Jesus breathing new life into them, just as God the Father breathed life into Adam in Genesis.

The passage encourages us to reflect on our own faith journeys. Are we like Thomas—demanding physical proof—or are we willing to believe based on the testimony of others? Jesus' words, 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed,' speak to us today as we navigate our faith without physical sight.

This message urges us to embrace the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, allowing Him to work through us just as He did with the disciples. It reminds us that our mission, like theirs, is to share the good news of forgiveness and reconciliation with the world.

5-Day Devotional and Small Group Guide

Day 1: Encountering the Risen Christ

Reading: John 20:19-23

Devotional: Jesus' appearance to the disciples after His resurrection was a pivotal moment that transformed their fear into joy. Like them, we too can encounter the reality of a living Christ in our daily lives. When Jesus says, "Peace be with you," He offers not just a greeting, but a profound gift of inner tranquility that surpasses all understanding. Reflect on areas of your life where you need Christ's peace. Do you have barriers of doubt or fear in place that prevent you from receiving it? How can you open your heart to receive it? Remember, just as Jesus showed His wounds to the disciples to emphasize the reality that He truly was with them, He understands our pain and brokenness and knows exactly how to minister to each one of us where we are. Today, invite Jesus into your fears and doubts, allowing His presence to bring comfort and assurance.

Day 2: Receiving the Holy Spirit (Being Born Again)

Reading: Romans 8:1-17; Romans 10:8-13; 1 Corinthians 6:19

Devotional: Prior to Christ's appearance in the upper room, the disciples lived in fear and doubt, lost and bereft of any future or hope. Then Jesus appeared, breathed upon them and told them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Their reception of the Holy Spirit granted Him the right and privilege of living within them—indwelling them—which caused them to become "born again." Having the Spirit of the Living God indwelling us opens our ears to hear His voice as He assures us that we are, indeed, children of God and joint heirs with Christ. We can absolutely know that we are His. Do you believe in your heart that Jesus rose from the dead? Have you confessed with your mouth that He is Lord? Then rest assured, O Christian, you are the temple (dwelling place) of the Holy Spirit.

Day 3: Baptism With the Holy Spirit

Reading: Acts 1:4-8; Acts 2:1-4; Ephesians 5:18

Devotional: Different from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—which marks a new era in our relationship with God—comes the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This separate experience bestows upon us the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit, releasing us in a special way for the work of the ministry. Although we see lists of how those gifts may be given (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12), the important thing to note today is the power with which they are used. The Holy Spirit, having indwelt us and baptized us, now grants the boldness and authority to speak and minister in His name. Is there a laxity about your walk? Are you indifferent to His words, both in speaking and in living them? The wonderful thing about this aspect of our lives is the fact that having been baptized, we can continue to be “filled with the Spirit,” bringing a greater awareness of His presence into our lives, which can turn our ordinary days into extraordinary ones.

Day 4: Overcoming Doubt

Reading: John 20:24-29

Devotional: Although doubt is a relatable human response to the extraordinary claim of Christ's resurrection, Thomas additionally expressed willfulness: “Unless I see (Christ revealed in the way of *my* choosing), I will not believe.” But isn't the grace of God amazing? Despite the stubbornness of his attitude, Jesus still met Thomas with patience and grace, inviting him to touch and see. This encounter reminds us that Jesus meets us where we are, even in our moments of deepest doubt...or even amidst our refusal to believe. Reflect on your own journey of faith. What doubts or questions do you struggle with? Bring these honestly before God, knowing that He welcomes our questions and desires to strengthen our faith. Remember Jesus' words: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." How can you cultivate a faith that trusts even without physical proof?

Day 5: Proclaiming Forgiveness

Reading: Acts 2:37-39; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Devotional: As believers, we are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation: a ministry which reconciles sinners crying out for salvation with the only One who can remove their burdens and set them free. When Jesus told His disciples, "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven," He was commissioning them (and us) to proclaim the good news of God's forgiveness to a world in need of grace. Consider the weight of this calling. How can you be an ambassador of Christ's reconciling love in your sphere of influence? Look for opportunities today to extend forgiveness, to speak words of grace, or to share the hope of the gospel with someone who needs to hear it. Remember, we don't have the power to forgive sins ourselves, but we have the privilege of declaring God's forgiveness to those who turn to Him.

Small Group Guide: That You May Believe

Key Takeaways:

1. Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, bringing them peace and commissioning them for ministry.
2. The Holy Spirit's indwelling at salvation is distinct from the baptism and filling of the Spirit for ministry.
3. Believers have the authority to declare the truth about salvation and forgiveness based on God's Word.
4. Jesus meets people in their misplaced doubt and their willful unbelief, as demonstrated with Thomas.
5. Jesus blesses Faith based on the written testimony of Scripture.

Discussion Questions:

- How does Jesus' appearance to the disciples, despite locked doors, challenge our understanding of His resurrected body and His ability to be present in our lives today?
- In what ways might we—like Thomas—place conditions on our belief in Jesus, and how can we move towards a faith that doesn't require physical proof?
- How does the concept of Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit onto the disciples mirror God breathing life into Adam in Genesis 2?
- What is the significance of Jesus showing His wounds to the disciples, and how might this inform our understanding of suffering and redemption?
- How does Jesus' commission to the disciples, 'As the Father has sent me, I also send you,' apply to our lives as modern-day followers of Christ?

- In what ways might we misunderstand or misapply Jesus' words about forgiving and retaining sins, and what is the proper understanding of this authority given to believers?
- How does John's stated purpose for writing his gospel—that we may believe and have life—challenge us in our approach to reading and applying Scripture?
- What is the difference between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and why is this distinction important for our spiritual growth?
- How can we cultivate a willingness to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit in our daily lives, as Paul encourages in Ephesians?
- In what ways does Jesus' patient and loving approach to Thomas' doubts (and even his willfulness) encourage us in our own moments of uncertainty or unbelief?

Practical Applications:

1. **Prayer:** Open your heart to God, asking Him to show you how fully you are walking in the Holy Spirit. Pray that He fill you afresh with His Spirit, enabling you to overflow with “rivers of living water” (John 7:38).
2. **Reflection:** Consider areas of doubt or unbelief in your life. Bring these to Jesus in prayer, asking Him to meet you where you are; then consider how you can take steps of faith to walk with Him away from those doubts and unbelief.
3. **Scripture Study:** “Therefore, I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7)
4. **Accountability:** Practice sharing the gospel with a someone (even an already saved friend), focusing on declaring the truth about sin and salvation based on Scripture.
5. **Thankfulness:** Consider with gratitude the words that John has written for us so that we “may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing, [we] may have life in His name.

Further Discussion Questions:

- How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst? How might you have reacted?
- Discuss the difference between receiving the Holy Spirit at salvation and being filled with the Spirit for ministry. How have you experienced these in your own life?
- What does it mean to have the authority to "forgive or retain sins" as mentioned in John 20:23? How should we apply this in our lives today?
- Why do you think Thomas struggled to believe despite the testimony of his fellow disciples? Have you ever experienced similar doubts?
- Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." How does this encourage you in your faith journey?
- How does John's purpose statement in verses 30-31 impact the way you view the Gospel accounts?

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