

**The One Who Conquered Death**  
**John 19:30–20:31**  
**Part 5**

Christ told His disciples in **John 14:19**, “**After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you shall live also.**” What a wonderful promise.

This promise provides us the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, or in other words, the hope of one day living in the blessed presence of Christ forever. And what is the basis of this hope? The basis of this hope is Christ’s complete and total mastery over death. And this is a point that the Apostle John so wonderfully details for us in **John 19:30–20:31**. And in how many different ways does the apostle do this?

The Apostle John manifests Christ’s complete and total mastery over death in three different ways in John 19:30–20:31.

First of all, Christ’s mastery over death was manifested in His dying (John 19:30-37). We saw this in **John 19:30-37**.

Secondly, Christ’s mastery over death was manifested in His burial (John 19:38-42). We saw this in **John 19:38-42**.

And thirdly, we have begun to see how Christ’s mastery over death was manifested in His resurrection (John 20:1-31).

So did Christ actually rise from the dead? This is what the Apostle John believed and he gives us a very clear glimpse into why he believed this in **John 20:1-31**.

The Apostle John in **John 20:1-31** presents two different exhibits to support the fact of the resurrection. And what was the first exhibit?

The first exhibit that John presented to support the resurrection was the empty tomb (John 20:1-10). And what was the second exhibit?

The second exhibit was eyewitness accounts (John 20:11-31). This is the exhibit that we are now examining. And what was the first eyewitness account that John recorded for us and that we considered last week?

The first eyewitness account was Mary Magdalene's (John 20:11-18). Mary Magdalene was not anyone particularly special. She in fact was rather ordinary. But because of her love for Christ she put herself in a position to be extraordinarily blessed. And how did she do that?

Mary Magdalene and “**the other Mary**,” according to **Matthew 28:1**, came to the tomb of Christ early on the first day of the week for the purpose of anointing the body of Christ with spices. But after finding the tomb unguarded and open Mary apparently chose to leave “**the other Mary**” at the tomb while she went to report what they had found to Peter and John. This is based on **John 20:1-10**.

And while Mary Magdalene was away, other women, based on **Luke 23:55–24:8**, came and entered the tomb with “**the other Mary**” at which time they encountered two angels who told them that Jesus had risen and instructed them to go and tell His disciples.

Then after the women left to do exactly what the angels told them to do Peter and John arrived in order to confirm what Mary Magdalene had told them about the tomb being empty. And after they had confirmed what she had told them John tells us that they left to go back to their homes, which of course left only Mary Magdalene now at the tomb.

And what was she doing according to **John 20:1-10**? She was weeping, and while she was weeping what else did she do? She apparently for the very first time stooped and actually looked into the tomb.

And what did she see as she looked into the tomb? She saw the same two angels that the women in **Luke 24** had seen, but unlike the women in **Luke 24** it appears that she, because of her grief, was totally oblivious to their true identity. And after they asked her why she was weeping she for some reason turned and found herself face to face with Christ. And after becoming convinced that the person who was in front of her was in fact Christ He then instructed her to go and report what she had seen and heard to His brethren.

So who was the first person to see Christ alive after His resurrection? Was it Peter, James or John? No, it was Mary Magdalene. And how had that been made possible? It had been made possible because she, out of her love and devotion to Christ, had put herself in position to have this encounter with our risen Lord.

We are now ready to go on to consider the second eyewitness account, and what is this second account that John provides for us?

The second eyewitness account was Christ's disciples with Thomas absent (John 20:19-23). Let me now read for you **John 20:19-23** as John gives us details of this particular encounter.

**“So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ (20) And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (21) So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send 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, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.’”** What an amazing passage.

My hope as we consider this passage this morning is not only that we might be reminded of the overwhelming amount of evidence that we have to support the fact of Christ's resurrection, and thus the overwhelming amount of support we have to believe in His promise that even if we die we will live again in the blessedness of His presence, but also that we will once again be reminded of what we, as Christ's disciples, are here to do.

So let us now go back to these verses and look at them more closely. First of all, as we begin to break these verses down and seek to understand exactly what John is telling us I believe it is important for us to appreciate that there was an awful lot of stuff that took place between **John 20:17** and the beginning of **John 20:19**.

In John 20:18 we see Mary Magdalene after her encounter with Christ going and telling His disciples that she had seen Christ alive. But she was not the

only one who had told the disciples that they had seen Christ alive prior to **John 20:19-23**.

The other women, who had been told by the two angels that Christ had risen, also subsequently encountered Christ and later told the disciples they had seen Him alive (Matthew 28:8-10). We learn this from **Matthew 28:8-10**.

So how did Christ's disciples receive these reports? Badly! Though Mary Magdalene and the other women had told the disciples they had seen Christ alive, the disciples thought they were talking nonsense (Luke 24:11). Let me read for you **Luke 24:11**. **“But these words [the words of Mary Magdalene and these other women] appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.”**

Though they did not believe their reports, these reports certainly had stirred them up. And they obviously felt they needed to find some way to explain them. And this is why they, I am sure, were continuing to meet throughout the day. Were they successful in finding an explanation? No!

In fact, it became even more complicated when later, during the early evening on the same day, two other disciples who had been on their way to Emmaus also joined the women in reporting that Jesus was in fact alive according to **Luke 24:33-34**.

But that was not the only thing that happened that evening. There was something else that was far more amazing. Let us now go back to **John 20:19**. **“So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”** So there it is! Clearly something that the disciples at this point in time should have expected, but clearly at this point in time still didn't.

The apostle in John 20:19 tells us that Christ, in the evening on the first day of the week, suddenly appeared in the midst of His disciples while the doors were shut. This is John's second eyewitness account and this second particular eyewitness account involved Christ's disciples.

So let me ask you a question. Why did John make the point that the doors were shut? John tells us that the doors were shut in order to communicate the

supernatural nature of Christ's appearance in the midst of His disciples (John 20:19).

So how was Christ able to do this? Christ was able to do this because He now had a new body, a body no longer limited by time or space. In other words, Christ with His new resurrected body was able, and is still able, to appear when and where He wants to appear. **“So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst.”** In other words, He wasn't there and then He was there.

But some might think that Jesus walked through a wall to get in their midst. Could Jesus have done this? Of course He could have done this! But why would He want to? He didn't need to. He didn't need to walk through anything. All He had to do was to appear in their midst and that is exactly what the Apostle John said that He did.

So let me ask you a question. If you were one of these disciples and you believed that Christ was in fact dead and then suddenly, in a moment in a twinkling of an eye He appeared in your midst, how might you respond? It would have to be shocking. And certainly Christ knew this. So how did Christ seek to minister to His disciples when He for the first time revealed Himself to them? He greets them with these words, **“Peace be to you.”**

This greeting when spoken by other Jews in this particularly time period would have communicated only a kindly wish, but under these circumstances we need to see these words as far more significant. When Jesus says, **“peace be to you,”** it is not simply a lovely-looking package that is empty inside, but one that is filled with a heavenly reality far more beautiful than the covering in which it is wrapped.

So did His wonderfully rich and deep felt greeting comfort them? No, it did not comfort them at all. The reason why it did not comfort at all is because at that moment in time they actually felt that He was a spirit or ghost.

How do we know this to be true? Let us now go back to **Luke 24:36** and pick up the story of the two disciples who had also seen Christ alive while on the road to Emmaus as they were giving their report. **“While they** [referring to the two disciples who had encountered Christ on the road to

Emmaus] were telling these things, He Himself [in other words Christ] stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be to you.’”

Now remember this is a parallel account; in other words, it is the same story we are looking at in **John 20**. The only difference is that here in **Luke 24** it is now being told by Luke and he is now giving us some additional information. So after greeting His disciples with the words, “Peace be to you,” how does Luke tell us the disciples responded? Let me now read for you **Luke 24:37**. “**But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.**” Obviously Christ’s greeting of “Peace be to you” in **John 20:20** had not yet brought about the desired effect. So, what did Jesus do next in order reassure them and to calm them.

Let me now go back to **John 20:20**. “**And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side.**”

Christ showed His disciples both His hands and His side in John 20:20 in order to reassure them that He was not simply a spirit or a ghost (Luke 24:36-43). In fact, **Luke 24** adds in **verses 38-43** after showing His hands and feet that He also asked for and got a piece of broiled fish that He then proceeded to eat in front of them.

So how did the disciples respond to all of this? After Christ showed the disciples His hands, feet and side, and after He ate a piece of broiled fish, the disciples, being convinced that He was alive, rejoiced (Luke 24:38-43). And this is clearly stated in **verse 20** when it says, “**The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.**”

So now having convinced the disciples that He was in fact alive, what was He now going to tell them? What was He going to emphasize to them?

Jesus, after having convinced His disciples that He was in fact alive, went on to emphasize the mission on which He was about to send them (John 20:21-23). This is what He emphasized. This is what He highlighted. So how did He in fact do this?

First of all, He highlighted their mission by simply declaring it (John 20:21). Let me now read for you the words of Christ in **John 20:21**. “**So Jesus said**

**to them again, ‘Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’”** So, what did Christ mean when He said He was sending them?

When Christ told His disciples that He was sending them, He meant that He was sending them with His gospel into the world in order to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). This is what He meant and we know that this is what He meant based on what we call the “Great Commission” recorded for us in **Matthew 28:19-20.**

Christ did not convince His disciples that He was alive so that they might that they might remain in this world and indulge themselves, but rather that they might go into the world with the gospel of Christ and seek to make disciples.

So how else did Christ highlight their mission after He convinced the disciples that He was alive?

He highlighted their mission by speaking to them of His provision for it (John 20:22). Let me now read for you **John 20:22. “And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”** Clearly in this verse we see Christ connecting the success of their mission with the reception of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, without the provision of the Holy Spirit, we as the disciples of Christ would not be able to carry out our mission (Acts 1:8). Isn’t this clear from **Acts 1:8** when Christ told His disciples that they would not be His witnesses in the church age until after the Holy Spirit had come upon them? So did the disciples immediately receive the Spirit when He did what He did and said what He said? No! They did not.

Christ did not immediately give to His disciples the Holy Spirit, but rather He prophetically communicated to His disciples through His words and actions in John 20:22 that He shortly would (Acts 2:1-4). And when do we see Christ actually giving His Spirit them? We see Christ giving the Holy Spirit to the church and therefore to every one of His disciples on the Day of Pentecost, which is recorded for us in **Acts 2:1-4.**

So how else did Christ highlight the mission of the disciples after He had convinced them that He was in fact alive? He highlighted their mission by

speaking of the authority He would entrust to them to pronounce certain judgments when presenting the gospel (John 20:23).

Let me now read for you **John 20:23**. **“If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you have retained the sins of any, they have been retained.”** So, what is Christ telling them? Jesus in John 20:23 is telling His disciples that they, based on the authority of God’s Word, can declare a person saved or unsaved based on how that person responds to the gospel.

Are you convinced that the resurrection of Christ is not a cunningly devised fable but a rock-solid historical fact based on overwhelming evidence? If you do, then how would Christ have us to respond? He wants us to take our work of disciple making seriously.

And what do we have to look forward to after our work in this world is completed? Glory! This is what we have to look forward to based on the promise of Christ to His disciples in **John 14:19**.

May God give us the grace to understand, based on the promise of Christ and His complete mastery over death, that even if we die we will live again.