

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #68
"Post Resurrection Appearances" (Part One)
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Acts 1:1-3:

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

INTRODUCTION: In our last lesson, we looked at the chronological order of the events on the morning of Christ's resurrection. These consisted of:

First: A group of women arriving at the tomb in the early morning hours (Mark 16:2,3).

Second: The women find the stone had been removed by an angel, who informs them Jesus had risen from the dead, and to look in the tomb and see that it was empty (Mark 16:7).

Third: When Mary Magdalene saw the empty tomb, she was so disturbed, that she left the tomb before the angels appeared. She, believing that someone had moved or stole the body of Jesus, ran to tell Peter and John what she had discovered (John 20:1,2).

Fourth: Peter and John run to the tomb to verify what had occurred (John 20:3,4).

Fifth: Meanwhile, the other women enter the tomb and see two angels who assure them that Jesus had risen from the dead and that they were to go quickly and inform the disciples (Matthew 28:5,8).

Sixth: Peter and John arrive at the tomb, whereupon they enter, observe and then leave to return to their homes (John 20:4-10). NOTE: There is no mention of them seeing or hearing the angels.

Seventh: Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb, and while there, Jesus appears to her and makes Himself known. After an extensive conversation, she was told to go and tell the rest of the disciples that she had seen the resurrected Christ (John 20:11-18).

Luke tells us in Acts 1:2,3 that after His resurrection, Jesus gave commandments to the

Apostles, "**whom He had chosen.**" The word "chosen" bears the meaning, "to select, or elect." It is used in reference to both salvation and service. Jesus sovereignly selected to whom He would reveal Himself. Some are elected, some are passed by and non-elected. We continue to be confronted with this truth as God's eternal purpose works itself out through His providence. Jesus would reveal Himself on ten different occasions before His ascension, the first five of these were on the day of the resurrection. After His ascension, He would reveal Himself to three men: Stephen, Paul, and John. His ten appearances prior to His ascension covered a period of forty days.

He did not choose to reveal Himself on just one occasion, but on several occasions which served as signs to prove in a convincing manner that He was alive. Both the King James Version and the New King James Version use the term "**infallible proofs.**" This is the only time this term is used in the New Testament. It means "to show or prove by sure signs." It becomes an indisputable fact. In these appearances He made, it is clear that He was not a spirit or a ghost. They touched Him, and He showed them His hands and feet, saying "**It is I Myself.**" (Luke 24:28-43). These appearances were not visions. They were real, objective, personal appearances. They knew Him, and He taught them the truths concerning the Kingdom of God. Now they understood how the cross and the resurrection are necessary for salvation.

The order of His appearances appear to be:

A. FIRST: TO MARY MAGDALENE (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18).

This occurred on her second visit to the tomb when she was by herself, having already informed Peter and John. Jesus told her to go and tell the rest of His disciples. In John 20:18 we are told that she did so. Since we have covered this in the previous message, we will not duplicate the material again, but proceed on to His second appearance.

B. SECOND: TO THE WOMEN RETURNING FROM THE TOMB (Matthew 28:8-10)

In Matthew 28:8-10 we read, "**So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, 'Rejoice! So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.'**

One wonders why God chose to reveal the truth of the resurrection first to the women rather than to His disciples. Several views have been set forth, but they are all

based on speculation. We simply are not told. Neither are we told why Mary, the mother of Jesus, is not mentioned in the resurrection accounts. We are told that she was present in the upper room with the disciples after Jesus' ascension.

Upon meeting Jesus in person, the full reality of the resurrection was confirmed in the minds of these women. They had heard the angel's proclamation of the resurrection. They had seen the empty tomb. They had now seen the risen Lord and had even touched His glorified body. They could now hold and worship Him. They must now go forth and proclaim that they have seen Him alive from the dead.

C. THIRD: TO PETER, PROBABLY IN THE AFTERNOON (Luke 24:34; I Corinthians 15:5).

In Luke 24:34-35 we read the account of the two Emmaus disciples meeting the eleven disciples back in Jerusalem. It was then told them that Jesus had risen and appeared to Peter. They then shared how He had appeared to them on the road to Emmaus. In Mark's account of the resurrection, the angel told the women to inform the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, and then added the words, "**and Peter.**" (Mark 16:7). We have no further information in the Gospels about the meeting between Jesus and the Apostle who had denied Him. It must have been a time of extreme emotion. Perhaps Jesus wanted some private time with Peter to discuss Peter's denial before He revealed Himself to the rest of the disciples.

D. FOURTH: TO THE TWO MEN ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13-32)

This probably occurred in the early evening. We know it was on the "third day," meaning that it was on Sunday, the first day of the week. Luke describes the encounter in considerable detail (Luke 24:13-35), while Mark mentions it only briefly (Mark 16:12, 13).

The two men were traveling home from Jerusalem to a village named Emmaus. They were discussing the happenings which had occurred in Jerusalem and trying to figure out its meaning. They were saddened about Jesus' death, in that they had hoped He was the Messiah who had come to set up a political kingdom which would overthrow Rome. They were familiar with the claim of Jesus that He would rise again on the third day. They had heard of the women's report that the tomb was empty and a vision of angels had said that He was alive.

It was at this point that Jesus appeared to them and engaged them in an extended explanation of the meaning of the events which had occurred. At first they did not recognize who He was. This appears to be due to an action on God's part. He explained that the Old Testament prophets had spoken of both the sufferings of Christ and the glory which was to follow. They came to understand that this referred to His crucifixion followed by His resurrection. As the evening drew near, they asked this stranger to stay and spend the night with them. While they were eating supper together, their "**eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.**" (Luke 24:31). NOTE: The opening of their eyes was an act controlled by Jesus to occur at the ordained time and place. God spoke and the men were blessed. God controlled the act, not the men. This is another act of divine sovereignty.

They recalled how their hearts burned "**within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?**" (Luke 24:32). The kind of preaching which does good is that which makes hearts burn with excitement. Christ's preaching was plain preaching in that it was that which was familiar and on the level of the capacity of the hearers to comprehend. They said, "**He talked with us on the road.**" It was also Scriptural preaching, in that it was based on the Bible. Ministers should show people their religion in their Bibles, and should preach no other doctrines than what is in there.

NOTE: How thrilling it is to have the Scriptures opened to us so that we are enabled to see the grand eternal purpose which God is working out, and how Christ Jesus, His Son, fits into the central portion of it. Christ must first wear a crown of thorns before He wears a crown of glory. Christ began at Moses and went through the prophets. Moses recorded the first promise, in which it was plainly foretold that the Messiah should have His heel bruised, but by it the serpent's head should be broken (Genesis 3:15). There are things dispersed throughout all the Scriptures concerning Christ, which are of great advantage to have collected and put together. This is what we are doing in this study. Some begin their study of the Bible at the wrong end. They study the book of Revelation first, but Christ has here taught us to begin with Moses and work our way forward.

It is said that after He appeared to them, that "**He vanished out of their sight.**" It would seem that though Christ's resurrection body was the same body in which He suffered and died, yet it was so far changed as to become either visible or invisible as He so willed it to be.

E. FIFTH: TO THE DISCIPLES ON SUNDAY EVENING WITH THOMAS BEING ABSENT (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25)

In the account given by Luke in chapter 24:36-43, we read, "**Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, 'Peace to you.' But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.'** When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. **But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, 'Have you any food here?'** So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence."

While the two men and the disciples were exchanging their experiences with having seen the risen Christ, Jesus suddenly appears in the midst of them. This startled them and made them afraid in thinking they were seeing a spirit. It was not the appearance of Jesus' body that frightened them. His body was not brilliantly lit like that of the angels at the tomb, or that of His own body on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was not His appearance, but His entrance that frightened them. They could not fathom how He could appear out of nowhere into a locked room, and get through the walls.

Jesus rebukes them for their doubts and unbelief (Luke 24:38). Mark adds in chapter 16:14, "**Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.**" Jesus then invites them to examine His hands and His feet to see that they were physically real, explaining that a spirit does not have flesh and bones. Still they could not bring themselves to believe what they were seeing. Their unbelief now was a special kind of unbelief. It was not a doubt in an evil sense. The Scriptures say they believed not "**for joy.**" Was the Person standing in their midst a real Person or just an hallucination? What they were seeing seemed just too good to be true!

Jesus then made a concession to their unbelief. He asked for something to eat, and they gave Him a broiled fish and some honeycomb. He did not wait for them to demand proof. He initiated the proof Himself. This is one of many infallible proofs which Luke talks about in his statement in Acts 1:1-3. This also helps to explain why the two men from Emmaus and Peter should be as shocked since they have already seen Him prior to this present meeting.

The question facing the disciples within the closed room was not whether the Person standing before them was Jesus or not. They now know it is Him. The question was - what kind of a body did Jesus possess? This question arose in the early church and is still present

today. The question is expressed in what became known as Docetism, taken from the Greek word "dokeim," which means "to seem." This view holds that Christ's appearance only seemed to take place in a human body, much like that of angels which can appear in bodily form, but do not possess a real human body. This view was held by many of the early Gnostics and is held by groups such as the Jehovah Witnesses and various liberal theologies.

We are told in John 20:24, 25 that - **"Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.'"'**

F. SIXTH: TO THE DISCIPLES ON THE NEXT SUNDAY NIGHT, THOMAS BEING PRESENT (John 20:26-29; I Corinthians 15:5)

After eight days, Jesus appears to the disciples again, only this time Thomas is present. And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. **"Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace to you!' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'"**

Not all of the Apostles were present at Jesus first appearance to them as a group. Thomas was absent. We are not told the reason why. Thomas was nicknamed *Didymas*. This is the actual word in the Greek. It means "twin" for the obvious reason that he has a twin who does not appear in Scripture. Some translations use the word "twin" instead of Didymas.

By Jewish calculation (the first and the last days being counted), this would be the following Lord's Day, meaning the Sunday following the Resurrection Sunday. The first day of the week became the day for the disciples to gather in the Lord's name, and He blessed them by His presence. This established Sunday as the day in which Christians were to gather together to worship.

Upon being told by the other disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead and that they all had personally seen Him, Thomas adamantly refused to believe their report. He replied in chapter 20 verse 25, **"Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and**

put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.

Jesus makes His appearance in the same way He did the week before. They are all in the same room with the doors locked, and He suddenly appears. Before anyone can speak, Jesus immediately speaks to Thomas, and uses the very words which comprised the grounds which caused Thomas to doubt. Jesus encouraged Thomas to examine His body and verify that it was a real body. While we are not told that Thomas actually touched the body of Jesus (he may have done so), we are told that it was enough to remove his doubts and restore his joy and courage.

He proceeds to make perhaps the greatest confession of any of the Apostles, rivaled only by Peter's great confession in Matthew 16:16. Peter had said, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**" Thomas exclaimed "**My Lord and my God.**" Jesus accepted his confession and did not correct him for ascribing Deity to Him. This is a great text to confront a Jehovah Witness who denies that Jesus is God in the flesh. Jesus then makes a profound statement which affects our faith as believers. He says in verse 29, "**Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed, Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.**"

It is through the testimony and writings of the Apostles and others that future believers will be blessed. Thus our faith rests upon the trustworthiness of those who were the actual eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. These statements are recorded in the New Testament documents. Christianity is based on the reliability of the Apostolic writings found in the Bible. D. A. Carson states,

But for the fact that Thomas and the other Apostles saw the incarnate Christ, there would have been no Christian faith at all . . . later believers come to faith through the word of the earlier believers (17:20). Blessed, then, are those who cannot share Thomas' experience of sight, but, who, in part because they read of Thomas' experience come to share Thomas' faith.
(Carson, *Gospel According to John*, p. 660).

God has not ordained that all of His people will have the privilege of seeing the resurrected Christ in person like these early believers. Instead, the rest of Christ's sheep will be brought to faith in Him through the word of those who were eyewitnesses. Their testimonies are recorded in the New Testament. Thus "**faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.**" (Romans 10:17).

Early in the New Testament age, there began to arise various groups who became known as the Gnostics. These were the ones who believed they possessed a higher knowledge of God than that which was given to the Apostles. They began to break away

from the influence of the Apostles, and draw away disciples after them. This was what was occurring in the book of First John. In I John 2:19, the Apostle says, "**They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.**" They left the authority of the Apostles and started a rival movement which claimed to be the only legitimate form of Christianity. Out of the many false teachings which they originated, the main factor which distinguished them, was their rejection of Apostolic authority and teaching. Remember that the Apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection, and their words were authorized by God.

When it was time to replace the position held by Judas, Peter explained the qualifications which must exist within the person who was to be put into the office. He says in Acts 1:21-22, "**Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.**" NOTE: The person must have been an eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ.

In the books of I, II and III John, John lists a number of marks of a false Christian. He says in III John verses 9-11, "**I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.**" In order for a person to qualify as a true believer, he must receive the teachings of the Apostles, and these are found in their writings. A Christian cannot receive another person into their fellowship who rejects the writings of the Apostles and claims them to be unreliable and untrustworthy.

Our churches today are filled with people who want the title of Christian, but reject the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Even those who do not attend a church of any type, may still want, for various reasons, to be allowed to carry the name of Christian. So how does a Christian distinguish those who are false Christians? Simply, by this rule: Jesus revealed Himself to a small group of chosen people to represent Himself before the world. Over a course of time, He inspired some of these to write the New Testament. As these men died and left the scene, they left behind the writings which have been copied and translated into virtually every language on earth. It is through the writings of these believers that we come to believe in the risen Christ who is our Lord and Savior. In the High Priestly Prayer of

Jesus in John 17:20, Jesus prayed for those given to Him by the Father and who would come to faith in the future. Here, He describes the means by which they shall do so. We read, "***I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.***"

The many infallible proofs which convinced the early eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection are confirmed to us by the testimonies of these early believers as found in the records of the Gospels.