

What makes Christianity so weird? By weird, I mean “strange” or “unusual.” Among all the major world religions, followers of Jesus Christ believe something singularly unique about the founder of our faith. **What is it? We believe that while He died 2,000 years ago, He rose again from the dead and He’s alive today. Let me put it this way:** Muhammad died and is buried Medina, Saudi Arabia. The Buddha died and his body was cremated in Kushinagar, India. His remains are still there. Confucius died and is buried in his hometown in the Shandong Province of China.

But Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, believe that He died... for our sins on the cross... that He was buried... that He descended to the dead... and that three days later He rose again from the dead, never to die again. Christians believe that the risen Christ ascended to heaven and this very morning Jesus Christ is alive, risen and reigning as our Lord and as our God. We confessed earlier: “*We believe in the resurrection of the body.*”

The bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead makes Christianity different. We’re willing to be perceived as weird, because the resurrection also happens to be true.

What evidence is there for the resurrection of the Son of God? And what effect should the resurrection of the Son of God have upon you?

For answers to those questions, please open your Bible to John 20:24-31. Jesus has risen from the dead and appeared to His disciples, except for one of the Apostles named Thomas, also known as “Doubting Thomas.” We pick up the story in Verse 24. This is what Scripture says: *“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.” 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.” 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*

In this passage we discover two things:

- 1) The Evidence for the Resurrection (Verses 24-27)
- 2) The Effects of the Resurrection (Verses 28-31)

My prayer is that each one of us would believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing we would find life in His name and that we would proclaim the glories of our risen King to the whole world.

I. The Evidence for the Resurrection

In this chapter, the Apostle John draws our attention to two main lines of evidence to show that Jesus is, in fact, risen from the dead.

1) The Empty Tomb (Verses 1-10) and 2) The Eye-Witnesses (Verses 11-27).

This morning, we will focus our attention on the eye-witness testimony of the Thomas. But first, let me summarize the rest of the chapter.

1. Jesus' Empty Tomb

In Verses 1-10, we discover the truth that **Jesus' tomb is empty**. Jesus was crucified on **Friday**. He died around **6pm** on Friday. That's why Christians call it "**Good Friday**." Jesus' hasty burial right before the Sabbath is described for us in John 19. Holy Saturday passed over in silence. It's now Sunday morning, "*the first day of the week.*"

At this first opportunity to resume regular activities, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb where Jesus was laid to rest. **Presumably, she was going to anoint Jesus' body more extensively for burial.** We're not told how she expected to move the stone away. What John makes clear is Mary's shock when she arrives at the tomb and the stone that barred the entrance had already been taken away.

Mary is startled and it's clear from her response that she assumes grave robbers have come and stolen Jesus's body. Grave-robbery was a common crime in the First Century. The Romans had laws against such crimes. Mary fears that not only has her Lord been wrongly executed on the cross, but now someone has taken His body.

So, Mary runs and tells the Simon Peter and John, "*They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.*"

Peter and John run to the empty tomb. What do they find? Verse 6 [Peter] saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

First, notice the fact that both John and Peter are eyewitnesses to the empty tomb. The fact that two men saw the items mentioned in the empty tomb renders the evidence admissible under the Jewish legal system (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). John and Peter saw the empty tomb with their own eyes.

Second, notice how John draws attention to the care that had been taken in the way the tomb was left: *He saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.*

Illus.: Remember earlier in John's Gospel, when Lazarus was raised (John 11), Lazarus came out of the tomb wearing his grave-clothes and his burial cloth was still wrapped around his head. **By contrast, Jesus' burial cloth is discovered to have been neatly rolled up and set to one side. It's as if the One who wore it no longer had any use for it¹.** Jesus' resurrection body apparently passed through his grave-clothes, spices and all, *much in the same way how He'll appear in a locked room later on (20:9, 26)*. That detail of the folded-up face cloth lying by itself, is the kind of detail one would expect from an eyewitness account.

Notice, we're told that after seeing the empty tomb, John believes. This introduces a theme that runs throughout this chapter. Believing *by seeing* is contrasted with *believing by Scripture*.

So we have an empty tomb, but no Jesus. What happens next? Several eye-witnesses!

2) The Eye-Witnesses (Verses 11-27)

John records for us multiple eyewitnesses who meet and speak and even touch the risen Christ proving that He has been raised from the dead. Jesus appears to Mary, then to His disciples, and then to Thomas.

A. Jesus appears to Mary. (Verses 11-18)

The disciples go back home but we find Mary weeping just outside the tomb. What happens next is breathtaking. After serving as a witness to the empty tomb for Peter and the beloved disciple, Mary now comes face to face with Jesus himself.

I love the fact that when Mary initially sees Jesus, she supposes Him to be the gardener. A new creation is happening on the first day of the week and they are in a garden. Jesus is the Second Adam, but He's not a gardener!

Verse 18 *Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.*

Illus.: In the first century, the testimony of a woman was not accepted in the court of law. So if John and the other Gospel writers were concocted a story about the resurrection of Jesus, it's highly unlikely that they'd make the first report of the resurrection of Jesus come from a woman! If someone in the first century had wanted to invent a story about people seeing Jesus, they wouldn't have dreamed of giving the star part to a woman. The reason the Gospel writers tell us this is because... that's precisely what happened! **"I have seen the LORD!"**

¹ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 637.

B. Jesus appears to His disciples. (Verses 19-23)

The apostles see Jesus and He assures them of His forgiveness and sends them into the world with the assurance that their message is the message of forgiveness and life.

The risen Jesus apparently no longer needs to knock. He can just appear in a locked room where His disciples are hiding for fear of the Jews.

Twice in these verses Jesus says a common Jewish greeting, *"Peace be with you."* (Verse 19, 21) But what is so uncommon, what is so unique is what Jesus does after saying this.

Verse 20: *"When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side."*

Jesus Christ was pierced for our transgressions and so He offers His hands and His side as evidence to His disciples that He is indeed risen from the dead.

But the wounds of Christ are also as a proof that He has secured peace with God for those who believe.

Illus.: Jesus is playing "Show and Tell." He tells the disciples *"Peace be with you."* And Jesus shows His pieced hands and side. *"The reason I can offer peace to you is because my blood shed on the cross has covered all of your sins."*

Peace with God only comes through Christ crucified and risen from the dead... because Jesus Himself is our peace. Over in Ephesians 2, Paul writes: *"He himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has reconciled us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."*

C. Jesus appears to Thomas. (Verses 24-29)

We finally arrive to Thomas, the Twin, was one of the twelve apostles. We're not told where Thomas had gone in Verse 24. But we're told that he wasn't present when Jesus appeared. What a bummer for Thomas! **"While you were gone, the risen Lord dropped by... sorry you missed Him."**

But the disciples testify to Thomas about what they have seen: ***"We have seen the Lord."*** They ***kept on telling*** him. **But Thomas wants empirical evidence for himself!** He doesn't believe the words of testimony spoken by the other apostles.

Verse 25: *"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."*

I think part of the reason Thomas wants this **particular evidence** is because of what, I imagine, the other disciples told him. Jesus appeared to them and ***showed them His pieced hands and side.*** So Thomas wants the same evidence for himself.

App.: We often refer to Thomas as “*Doubting Thomas*.” But we shouldn’t be too hard on Thomas. John Calvin is usually quite reserved in his commentaries, but he said: “The stupidity of Thomas was astonishing and monstrous.” Thomas wasn’t alone in his struggles of doubt. The other disciples doubted too. Matthew tells us right before receiving the Great Commission, even after seeing the risen Christ, the eleven disciples “*worshiped Him, but some doubted*” (**Matthew 28:17**).² **One of Jesus’ brothers, Jude, commanded us:** “*Have mercy on those who doubt*” (**Jude 22**).

The Lord Jesus Himself shows mercy on Doubting Thomas, because “*eight days later*,” the disciples are once again inside together. But this time, Doubting Thomas was with them. By Jewish reckoning, once again it’s the Lord’s Day. We’re told that the “*doors were locked*.”

Then something amazing happens: “*Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Verse 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.”*”

Notice, first, Jesus displays supernatural knowledge. He knew what Thomas had demanded even without being physically present earlier when Thomas made his ultimatum.³

Notice, second, how John wants us to understand that Jesus rose *bodily* from the dead. The risen Jesus bears up under physical scrutiny and examination by Thomas.

Jesus’ resurrected body is both the same and also different. His body can be seen and touched (**20:27**) and still bears the marks of crucifixion (**20:20, 25, 27**), but His resurrected body apparently rose through the linen wrappings (**20:6–8**), and is even able to walk through closed doors (**20:19, 26**).

But Jesus is really, truly, bodily raised from the dead. “*Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe. Don’t be faithless but believe. Stop doubting and believe.*”

Jesus’s tomb is empty because Jesus is risen from the dead. Jesus isn’t an apparition. Jesus isn’t a ghost. Jesus didn’t appear to rise from the dead. Jesus rose again bodily.

Two false teachings that attacked the early church called “**Docetism**” and “**Gnosticism**.” **Gnostic ideology** said that the spirit is good, but the material body is an evil trap to be escaped. **Docetic ideology** said that the physical body is merely a projection of the spirit.

² See also Luke 24:36-43; 24:13-34.

³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, John, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 579.

We can hear these ancient untruths, echoed in our world today, under different names. *“My body is false.” “My body is not the real me.” “My body is a plastic and moldable projection of my mind.”*⁴

App.: Islam teaches that God would never let one of his prophets die like Jesus did on the cross. So what happened wasn't that Jesus died in the flesh on the cross, it only appeared, seemed, like He did.

The Bible teaches that God made the body and the body is good! God us in His image, male and female, and this is good! We marred His image by our willful rebellion and sin. **But in His love,** the Father sent His Beloved Son, the eternal Son of God, into the world to take on flesh, true flesh, being conceived by the Holy Spirit and being born of the Virgin Mary, truly God and truly Man in one person.

App.: **“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”** Jesus really died on the cross and Jesus really rose again bodily from the grave. **The apostolic evidence of Christ's resurrection—the empty tomb and the eye-witness testimony—is held out to the world to be examined, scrutinized... and received.** If you are not a follower of Jesus, that same evidence is held out to **you** this morning.

John would write later in his first Epistle, the letter of First John, that the message he was delivering was: *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.”* (1 John 1:1)

Paul was later write that Jesus would also appear to more than 500 others. Jesus rose bodily from the dead. If you're not a follower of Jesus, I wonder what you make of this evidence? You might be doubting that “resurrection” is actually a uniquely Christian belief at all. It is. Throughout the Roman Empire in the first century, nearly everyone believed in “life after death.”

In other words, nearly everyone believed that after you died, your soul or spirit would go to some spiritual afterlife. **Life after death was a commonly held belief.**

However, apart from a certain portion of the Jews, nobody, and I mean nobody, believed in resurrection. 2,000 years ago something happened, almost over night. A group of Jews who believed in One God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, began teaching that the promised Messiah had come and that He'd been executed on a Roman cross, **and that three days later, He had risen from the dead according to the Scriptures!** **And not only this, this small band of Jews were now worshipping this Jesus as God.** This small band of Jews were teaching and preaching that there is something far greater, far more wonderful, far more exciting, far more glorious than life after death: namely, **RESURRECTION.**⁵

⁴ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/all-of-us-sinners-none-of-us-freaks>

⁵ N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 82-83.

This small band of Jewish followers of a divine, crucified, and risen Savior started in Jerusalem and within a few decades, had scattered and spread throughout the Roman Empire, and every corner of the world. They turned the world upside down!

My non-Christian friend, what explanation can you offer for what happened 2,000 years ago that accounts for such a radical transformation? What explanation can you offer for the transformative impact and the enduring influence on the world that began with the “execution of an obscure criminal in a long-vanished empire” millennia ago?

The Scriptures offer only one answer: *the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead.*

App.: If you’d like to learn more about who Jesus is and what He came to accomplish, I’d invite you to read through the Gospel of John...

II. The Effect of the Resurrection (Verses 28-31)

John doesn’t just provide us with evidence for the resurrection. He also provides us with the effect the resurrection is intended to have upon you and me: Trust, treasure, and tell.

1. Trust in Him. Because Jesus is risen from the dead, trust in Him as Lord and God.

Verse 28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

Thomas goes from doubting, to offering the greatest confession of faith in all the Gospels! Thomas calls Jesus “Lord” and “God.” He declares Christ’s deity. But it’s those personal possessive pronouns that move me most. “MY Lord... and... MY God.”

Earlier Jesus said in Verse 17: *‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”*

In other words, Thomas’ confession isn’t simply a profession of faith in Christ... it’s also a sign of Thomas’ adoption in Christ. When we trust in the risen Christ, we are united to Christ by His Spirit, and we instantly become children of God.

John told us that at the very beginning of his Gospel: *“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (1:11-13)*

But John also wants you to go from being a Doubting Thomas to a Believing Thomas!

Verse 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

That word “*other*” indicates that the **resurrection of Jesus** is a sign. *“Besides the resurrection, Jesus did many other signs that aren’t written in this book...”*

The first half of John’s Gospel (chs. 1-11) is overflowing with signs: Jesus turns water into wine (2:1–11). Jesus heals an official’s son (4:46–54). Jesus heals a man who cannot walk (5:1–15). Jesus feeds 5,000 people (6:1–15). Jesus walks on water (6:16–21). Jesus heals a man born blind (9:1–41).

John 1-11 is often called the Book of Signs and it culminates with the glorious sign of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. But this raising of Lazarus, as mighty as it was, was only a preview of a greater coming attraction, a mightier display of power yet to come.

The second half of John’s Gospel concludes with the glorious resurrection of Jesus Himself from the grave, the ultimate sign that points to the reality of who Jesus is and what Jesus came to do.

What’s the only fitting response to the resurrection of Jesus? Trust Him. Believe in Him that you might have life in His name!

All of these signs point to this reality: He came as the **eternal Son of God** made flesh to reveal the glory and grace of God. He came as the obedient **Last Adam** to rescue sinners who were condemned because of the disobedience of the First Adam. He came as the **seed of Eve** to conquer our ancient enemy. He came as **Israel’s Messiah** to fulfill all the promises of God and to usher in a feast that will never end. He came as the true and spotless **Passover Lamb** to take away the sin of the world and to bear the judgment of God in our place for our sins on the cross. He came as the **risen Lord** to restore God’s blessing through a new creation that began when He rose on the first day of the week. He came as our **ascended King** to return to His Father to prepare a place for His bride.

Why did John record all these signs? So that you might believe in Jesus! *“Do not disbelieve, but believe.”*

You can have a relationship with the God who created you this morning by trusting in Jesus Christ, by receiving Him in the empty hands of faith. You don’t have to work for it. You don’t have to earn it. You don’t have to clean yourself up. In fact, you can’t work for it. You can’t earn it. You can’t clean yourself up enough for it.

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever **believes** in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (3:16) “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and **believes** him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (5:24) “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever **comes** to me I will never cast out.” (6:37)*

You receive this relationship by faith alone in Christ alone, for His glory alone! **Trust Him.**

2. Treasure Him.

Because He is risen, followers of Jesus treasure Him as our Lord and as our God.

Verse 29 *Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

App.: Sometimes we think *"If only I had been there with Mary when she discovered the empty tomb. Or if only I'd been there with Thomas to touch the wounds of the risen Jesus... What a blessing that would be!"* But Jesus says, "Actually, it's those who have not seen, and yet believed who are blessed!"

App.: There is a day coming when you'll walk by sight. But right now, you walk by faith and because you have believed the apostolic witness, Jesus, your Lord and your God, says to you this morning, "***You are blessed.***"

One of the blessings you receive is **joy**. *"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."* (**1 Peter 1:8-9**) **Treasure Him!**

3. Tell of Him. If Jesus is indeed risen from the dead, then tell the whole world.

Verse 21 *Jesus said: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."*

The Son of God was sent into the world to save sinners. He rises again and sends His disciples into the world to make His gospel known to the whole world!

If we are His followers, we will center our lives around the church that He's gathered to Himself and around the mission to take this message of forgiveness by the power of the Spirit of God to all nations!

This is our mission as a local church: **to make disciples of all nations**. We cannot keep this message to ourselves, can we? We must tell someone!

Mary went and told others the good news of her risen Savior! **The apostles** went and told others about the good news of the risen Savior! **John** has written this Gospel so that the whole world might hear the good news of the risen Savior!

Christian, someone loved you enough to tell you this news. Who in your life needs to hear this wonderful news! Who can you tell of the risen Jesus even this week?

Consider offering to read through John's Gospel or Mark's Gospel or Luke's Gospel!

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the words of Christ.

Right before Jesus went to the cross, He comforted His doubting, anxious apostles.

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.”

How comforting are those words, brothers and sisters? Those are words spoken at nearly every Christian funeral and burial I’ve ever attended or participated in.

Do do you remember who spoke up next? Doubting Thomas did!

Verse 5 *Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”*

Verse 6 *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* **(John 14:1-6)**

If Christ was not raised, then we are still in our sins so then let’s eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.

But the tomb is empty and Christ is risen from the dead. The new creation, as it were, the new day, has dawned.

Christ who was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now.

Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Him.

If you trust in Him, you will one day, like Thomas, behold His pierced hands and side, in beauty glorified.

The praise and the glory of our Risen King shall not fail throughout all eternity.

Of these things... we are all witnesses.