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# Easter Sunday | Encountering Resurrection

## BIBLE VERSE

**[Rev 1:18 NKJV] 18 "I [am] He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.**

## INTRODUCTION

Do you remember an event or experience that changed you? A moment in time that brought clarity to the past or direction for the future? I have many of those moments engrained in my mind.

- I still remember the first live concert I attended and left wanting to play music.
- I remember the first swimming race I won. I was in disbelief and it finally hit me, "I can do this."
- I remember getting over my insecurities to ask my future wife to pursue a relationship.
- I remember when each of my kids was born and the overwhelming yet sobering joy and weight of those moments.
- And I remember Jesus. It wasn't the most emotional moment I ever had, but it was the most profound, and by far, the most important moment of my entire life.

What made that moment unique of course, is that I met someone who I couldn't see, who died, and yet was somehow tangibly present in that room, in my heart, and in my mind. Since that moment, I have experienced this same Jesus speaking to me, guiding me, providing for me, healing me, leading me, comforting me, and changing me from the inside out.

Today, I celebrate this truth with millions of others who have met this same Jesus and worship him today. But why? Can I truly know that Jesus is real? Are my experiences authentic?

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## CUSTOM

When Jesus died, the hopes, dreams, expectations, and anticipations of His followers died with Him. As the body of the Messiah went into the grave, those whom He led in life buried themselves in their own living tomb. The day before the resurrection, which I like to call sad Saturday, the disciples were in a bad way.

- On Sunday, the body of Jesus roared to life to solidify and verify that his atoning work was successful. For us, that Saturday is exciting because we know what happened on Sunday, but for the disciples, the Saturday after Jesus' death was horrific. It was a day of great confusion, questions, and fear. For them, it was not Holy Saturday but Sad Saturday, a Saturday filled with dashed hopes, disappointment, unfulfilled dreams, and fears of an uncertain future.
- Interestingly, every gospel leaves out what happened on that Sabbath. Luke briefly mentions that the women who prepared the burial spices for Jesus rested on Saturday. However, John's gospel does tell us what the disciples were doing on Sunday before they all confidently knew Christ had risen. We get the idea it's probably the same thing they were doing Saturday. In John 20:19 we read, **"That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders."**

There they were, locked up and hiding behind shut doors, afraid that the Jewish authorities were seeking their lives next. For most of the disciples in that room, their last memory with Jesus was fleeing in fear as the authorities arrested Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Peter's last memory was that of adamantly denying his involvement with Jesus and bitterly weeping after Jesus looked in His eyes at the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest. John was brave enough to visit the cross with Mary, but even his last memory was of His master and Messiah dying, and all his hopes dying with him.

None of the disciples had recalled to mind or even fully understood what Jesus meant when He told them that He would rise again after three days. These weren't men who were plotting to steal a body. These weren't men who were inventing fanciful stories about a resurrection. These were men who were defeated, vulnerable, afraid, dejected, and hopeless.

## APPLICATION

Now if you've read the NT, you know that the story of these very same men does not stay locked up in a room. What happened that caused a group of people locked in a room with their fears, to take the keys of God's kingdom and begin to unlock salvation as the body carried the message of Jesus to the world, most of them ultimately giving their lives for that cause?

- The answer is simple, factually, logical and why we are here today: **The same Jesus these ordinary, everyday people saw very much dead, eventually encountered Him very much alive!** The risen Jesus met them, and as a result, nothing in their life would ever be the same.
- *When the risen Jesus showed up, lives that were upside down became right-side-up. Hearts steeped in fear were filled with courage. Doubting and cynical minds were convinced and reassured. Hateful hearts were replaced with love, and tears of sorrow were replaced with tears of exuberant joy and hope.*

## ILLUSTRATION

**J. Vernon McGee was a radio Bible teacher. Once, a lady wrote him a question, “Our preacher said that Jesus just swooned on the cross and on Easter, the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?” McGee replied, “Dear Sister, beat your preacher with a leather whip for 39 heavy strokes. Nail him to a cross. Hang him in the sun for six 3 hours. Run a spear through his heart. Embalm him. Put him in an airless tomb for three days. Then see what happens...”**

## QUOTE

**“Jesus has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so.”**

## THE AFTERMATH

In the aftermath of the resurrection, Jesus didn't immediately ascend to heaven without a trace. For 40 days, the Bible teaches, He strategically made himself known to those who would carry the seeds of His good news and victory around the world. At one point, just to silence the skeptics, He appeared to over 500 people at once in a supernatural way that indicated His divine presence.

- ***Of course, this was in part to solidify the reality of His resurrection. This wasn't a conspiracy theory. It wasn't the rumor mill. It wasn't a well-executed grave theft by a band of professional criminal disciples. It wasn't a hallucinatory drug trip. And it wasn't a case of misplaced identity.***
  - *No! Jesus, bearing the scars of His crucifixion, after three days of being verifiably dead (by the Romans and the Jews), showed up alive. He walked through walls. Supernaturally appeared and disappeared, and even performed miracles to verify His identity to the disciples.*
- It's interesting that Jesus didn't immediately reveal himself to the world the moment he rose from the grave. IT wasn't the right time, nor the prophesied way. No, God's plan was to spread the kingdom first through those who would place their faith in Jesus and invite Him to be the king of their hearts.
- Jesus started this by encountering individuals after His resurrection. You see, receiving Christ Jesus for who he is, falls on an individual decision. Jesus doesn't simply want to meet the world, He wants to meet you, and me, in a way that transforms and empowers us.
- This morning I want to quickly walk you through six encounters that Jesus had with people after He rose from the grave. If you listen carefully, you might even catch a glimpse of yourself in there.

1

## Mary Magdalene - Because Jesus is alive, your demons don't have to haunt you

## CONTEXT

Mary Magdalene is a picture of a life radically touched by Jesus.

- Luke tells us that Mary was a tormented woman. She was possessed by seven demons.
- Some have tried to equate her with a prostitute, or perhaps the woman caught in adultery that Jesus saved from stoning. There's no biblical evidence to support this, but we can assume one thing for sure. **If you're possessed by 7 demons, you have issues! She had some type of torment in her life. Whether she was living out aberrant moral behavior, had serious mental health issues, or was physically abused and tormented, demons don't play nice with people.**
  - There was something about the voice of Jesus to her that caused the demons to flee and her to find freedom, peace, and joy for the first time in her life.
  - His compassion for her suffering and understanding of her past built loyalty and love for Jesus that rivaled that of his disciples.
- Mary is also a picture of how much Jesus valued the worth of women. In a culture where women were not esteemed, not educated, and seen as unworthy to carry importance or value, the fact that Jesus welcomed Mary (and other women) into the ranks of the disciples was unheard of in Rabbinic schools and traditions.
  - Mary was the first one that Jesus revealed Himself to alive after the resurrection! Again, this was a time and culture where the word of a woman wouldn't be allowed or trusted in a trial. And what does Jesus do? He gives her the very first commission to declare his resurrection.

## BIBLE VERSE

**[Mar 16:9-11 NKJV] 9 Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.**

On a side note, isn't it interesting that the very first unbelievers were the followers of Jesus? If you're an unbeliever today, you're in good company. The very ones who ultimately gave their lives for Jesus started out as the greatest skeptics.

- One of my favorite things about the gospels is their genuineness. If this was an invented tale, a work of the human imagination, no 1st-century author would have said, "Let's make the first person Jesus shows up to a woman." It's harsh and unfortunate, but it's true. No, the gospels simply tell us as it was.

## APPLICATION

John gives us some more insight into the encounter that Mary had with Jesus when she saw him. In his account we see a woman weeping; longing to simply find the body of Jesus to honor him and ensure that he had a burial worthy of a king.

## BIBLE VERSE

**[Jhn 20:14-17 NKJV] 14 ...she (Mary) turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' "**

Several observations here:

### A. SHE WAS EMOTIONALLY DISTRAUGHT

Her weeping and desperation indicate a strong bond.

- Think about it. The only one that has brought peace into the chaos of your soul is dead. The only one that could speak a word and silence the voices in her head that were telling her how vile, worthless, and abhorrent she was is now gone, seemingly forever.
- *I wonder if part of her weeping was fear. What now? What if those 7 demons who were staying away because of Jesus all come back with more? Who will protect me? Who will save me? Who will give me the ability to continue being this new person I've become?*

## B. SHE DIDN'T INITIALLY RECOGNIZE JESUS

Perhaps it was the multitude of tears in her eyes. Perhaps it's because it was the last thing she was expecting or looking for. Perhaps Jesus had something covering His face.

- But here's what I've found. There are many things that blind people to the presence of Jesus even today. Their hurt, their confusion, or even their ignorance of God's love for them blinds them to the reality that Jesus is standing right in front of them.

When does it all change? The minute she hears Him call her name.

- I can't help but think that it was the same tone, and voice that called her by name as she was released from years of demonic torture.

The beautiful thing about Jesus is that he doesn't just know about us. He calls us by name. We are not some number in his logbook of human beings.

TODAY: Jesus is still calling people BY NAME. People who are blinded to His presence because of their own past or pain. At this very moment, He is opening someone's eyes, and calling to someone's heart, ***"Jane, Meghan, Daniel, Fred... I'm here! I can bring peace to your pain. I can erase the shame of your failures. I can bring sanity into your torment, and I can free you from the demons (literally or figuratively) that have kept you in bondage!"***

## C. HER HOPE BECAME SEALED

She immediately clings to Jesus, and he wants her that it was not the right time. He had not yet ascended to the Father. But he gives her good news. Notice how He speaks of God, "I

**am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."**

- Because Jesus conquered death, He made a way for a personal relationship with God. It's no longer God who is far away and unapproachable. No, it's God who welcomes me as His son or daughter, in the same way, He welcomes His own son Jesus.
- In saying this, Jesus gives hope to Mary that she will never again be alone or distant from the presence, help, and power of God.

## 2 Peter - Because Jesus is alive, your failures don't have to define you

### CONTEXT

Peter is one of those characters that we appreciate because there's nothing fake about him.

- On one end, Peter is a self-dependant, brash, and argumentative man. In other moments we appreciate his sincerity, zeal, and loyalty.
- Peter goes from inspiring victories to miserable failures. he's the only disciple who fully understood and declared, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." He's also the only disciple who Jesus called Satan.

Put yourself in Peter's shoes for a moment after Christ's crucifixion.

- You've given your life to the One you believe is the hope of Israel. You've been striving to do your best to serve His cause.
- But all the last moments you had with him were disastrous.
  - You were complaining and wondering what you were going to get for leaving everything behind to follow Jesus.
  - You argued with Jesus when he tried to wash your feet.
  - You fall asleep when Jesus asked you to stay awake and pray with Him in the garden.
  - You create a mess that Jesus has to clean up when you slice off someone's ear.
  - You follow Jesus at a distance after his arrest like a coward.
  - Your cowardice is confirmed when the servant girl asks you about your involvement with Jesus and you curse her out, denying him three times... after



you argued with Jesus that you would never, ever do that.

- And the last interaction you had with Jesus was him looking you in the eye after denying him as he was led off to be beaten and crucified.
  - Jesus was on a trial inside the High Priest's house, and Peter was on a different trial in the courtyard. Peter failed. He was tried and found guilty.
- From that moment, bitter weeping was all that Peter knew.

When Jesus rose from the dead, an angel told several women who were the first into the empty tomb to tell the disciples that Jesus had risen.

### BIBLE VERSE

**[Mar 16:6-8 NKJV] 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. 7 "But go, tell His disciples--and Peter--that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." 8 So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.**

### APPLICATION

Did you catch that? Tell the disciples--and Peter...

- Wait, isn't Peter a disciple?
- Apparently, the angel knew that Peter wasn't feeling quite like a disciple. Peter was feeling like a failure.
- Peter was the leader. Others were looking to Him for guidance in a difficult time, but all He could see was His utter failure.
- Peter's weaknesses weren't quite as obvious when Jesus was around to cover them, but what about now? Now Peter was alone with His failures and insufficiencies.
- Even after Peter knew Jesus was alive, he was still on the fence. Not because of Jesus, but because of himself.

◦ In John 21 Peter makes the statement "I am going fishing"

- ~ In JOHN 21, PETER MAKES THE STATEMENT, "I AM GOING FISHING."
- This wasn't because he is a guy and the fish are biting. This was who he was before he met Jesus. Peter was saying, "I'm done. Jesus hasn't shown up to me again, and I deserve it. Back to what I know. I give up!"
- Perhaps you've been on the cusp of throwing in the towel. Maybe you've given up hope that God has some sort of redemptive plan for you, a person that can't really seem to get anything right.

## APPLICATION

Well, Peter's story wasn't over, in fact, it had just begun.

- As Peter was "going fishing" and "catching nothing," Jesus shows up on the shore. Jesus pulls out a miracle from the past. He tells them to cast the net on the other side of the boat (sounds familiar). Their nets are so full of fish, that they can't pull them in. Once Peter recognizes it's Jesus, the Bible says he put on his outer garment and jumped into the sea (you usually take your clothes off to go swimming)!
- Jesus tells them to bring some of the fish THEY caught (probably with a big smile on His face knowing that they didn't catch anything).
- Over a redemptive breakfast of fish and bread, Jesus not only restores Peter but calls Him to be the one to shepherd, feed, and care for His church, the flock of God.
- He then tells Peter that He would one day be led to death for His sake. Peter has a minor relapse and asks about John. Jesus patiently tells Peter, "That's not your business. You follow me."

Peter encountered the risen Jesus. No wonder in His first letter to the church he referred to the resurrection of Jesus 4 times. He wasn't spouting theology. He meant it when He wrote:

## BIBLE VERSE

**[1Pe 1:3-4 NKJV] 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,**

## APPLICATION

On the day of Pentecost, after Jesus had ascended to heaven. Peter found himself in another courtyard.

- Perhaps his memory flashed back to when he was sitting by a fire, warming himself, and cursing as he denied Jesus.
- But this time, he wouldn't be warming himself by a fire, but the fire from heaven would warm him. A flame descended upon Him and He was filled with the power and courage of the Holy Spirit.
- Peter stood up, and instead of denying Jesus, he boldly proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus to thousands, and the church of Jesus Christ was born.

## APPLICATION

If you have tried within yourself and failed. It's not over.

If you have blown your witness, it's not over.

Jesus gave the good confession, fought the good fight, and conquered sin and death. It's not over!

Today, Jesus looks at you with loving eyes of conviction and you feel your failure magnified, always remember that he also brings with Him grace, hope, and redemption. You don't have to stay outside in the courtyard at a distance. You can be forgiven and filled with His Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Him from the dead.

## QUOTE

**“ Only the risen Jesus can take a former failure and make them a fearless leader.**

Pastor Josh

# 3 Thomas - Because Jesus is alive, your doubts don't have to disqualify you

## CONTEXT

There aren't many people who haven't heard the term "Doubting Thomas."

- Poor Thomas gets the spotlight for His doubt concerning the resurrection. But it's a little unfair. The gospels tell us that all the disciples initially doubted. What singles out Thomas is not just that he doubted, but he still didn't believe after ALL of his friends and companions told him that they had seen Jesus, talked with Him, and touched His wounds.
  - Jesus appeared in a locked room to 10 of the 11 remaining disciples. He spoke to them and breathed the Spirit on them... on all of them except Thomas. for 8 days his friends tried to convince him. "Unless I see and touch for myself, I won't believe," was his response.
- Thomas was the opposite of Peter. Peter was impulsive; Thomas was thoughtful. Peter never questioned Jesus out of fear of looking stupid; Thomas asked Jesus honest questions. Peter would pretend He knew what was going on. If Thomas didn't know what was going on, He simply said so.
- Thomas' desire to know beyond a shadow of a doubt w

**For Thomas, it wasn't that He was against faith, but He insisted on having a faith that satisfied and eliminated any of His questions.**

**Praise God for His grace. Jesus showed up again, this time it seemed as though He did it just for Thomas.**

## BIBLE VERSE

**[Jhn 20:26-29 NKJV] 26 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!" 27 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." 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and [yet] have believed."

## APPLICATION

Thomas eventually bows the knee to Jesus. the Bible makes it clear that one day, everyone will. They will see him face to face and declare that he is lord. Sadly for some, it will be too late at that time to repent and believe unto eternal life. But Jesus makes an important statement for all future readers who find themselves in a "Thomas" position.

- If Jesus just showed up, in person, I would believe. If He would just do A, B, and C, I would become a Christain.
- My friend, Jesus already has. He has gone above and beyond the give all the needed historical, logical, and physical evidence for someone to believe the veracity and actuality of His life, death, and resurrection.

## ILLUSTRATION

I came across some interesting stats from New Testament Scholar, historian, and college professor Gary Habermas. He collected over 1400 critical works from secular and Christian sources on the resurrection of Jesus between 1975 and 2003. He found that the vast majority of scholars from the most conservative to the most liberal agreed on several points. Here are just 4:

1. That Jesus was real and died by Roman crucifixion.
2. That Jesus' half-brother James was converted from a skeptic who was initially embarrassed by Jesus to a follower of Jesus after seeing the risen Lord.
3. That Saul, the leading persecutor of the early church was radically transformed after claiming to meet Jesus, becoming Paul the apostle who wrote more than half of the NT and spread the gospel of Jesus to most of the known world at that time.
4. That the 11 remaining disciples of Jesus were convinced that they encountered him

after he resurrected and suffered great persecution and even martyrdom for their testimony and belief.

## ILLUSTRATION

Did you hear of the little boy who got tired of the pandemic protocols, especially his mother's insistence on him washing his hands? She was constantly warning her little boy about germs. "Johnny, wash your hands!" Finally, one day the little guy shouted back, "Germs and Jesus. Germs and Jesus. That's all I ever hear, and I've never seen either one of them."

## APPLICATION

Facts are hard things to ignore.

- History, eyewitness testimony, and changed lives speak loudly and clearly that Jesus did what no one has done.
- The gospels are not written in the style of fanciful mythology, but historical accounts from very normal, everyday human beings.

I'm not suggesting that questions don't matter. I think God welcomes our questions and our doubts. He is patient and gracious. But if you are in that space today, just know that faith is required. It's not blind faith, but God has given us enough to follow him with confidence that it's true. Perhaps today, your questions are genuine, but perhaps they are a cover. Because if Jesus is real, and he really died for your sins, and He really conquered death forever, that means you must submit your life to Him, and confess that you need Him.

The thing is, that will be the most intellectually freeing moment of your life. To know that you are walking in the truth.

## APPLICATION

*Don't assume that honest doubts, and unanswered questions, disqualify you from meeting the risen Christ. Jesus doesn't back off from a faith that's a work in progress. He's not intimidated by a pragmatic personality. He just wants us to admit the limits of our logic - that none of us have all the answers.*

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## CONCLUSION

Time doesn't allow me this morning to speak of Saul, who went from Christian murderer to Christian martyr after an encounter with the risen Jesus. Or the disciples on the road to Emmaus who went from sad to exuberant after having a walk and conversation with the risen Jesus. Or James, the brother of Jesus who initially didn't believe, until his brother showed up in power after walking out of a grave. Or the billions of people since then who have not seen, but still met this very real, very present, very active Jesus.

- Who are you? where are you? it doesn't matter, because Jesus rose for you, and He is still encountering lives, calling out names, silencing doubts, and covering shame.
- If you've come here today broken, oppressed, or tormented, you can leave freed, alive, and forgiven.
- If you've come here today full of failure and regret, you can leave full of the Holy Spirit of God with a new heart and a new mission.
- if you've come here steeped in skepticism and doubt, you can leave with assurance and faith that there is a God who loves you, is pursuing you, who died for you, and who rose from the dead to give you the hope of eternal life.

Is He calling you today? If so, don't wait another minute. Encounter the Resurrected King today.

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