

LESSON 295

THE RISEN CHRIST

Related Scripture: John 11:14-27

KEY VERSE: "I am he that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—Revelation 1:18.

Lesson Scripture: John 20:19-31

Introduction:

Christ crucified at Calvary purchased eternal redemption for His people; Christ risen from the dead lives and will live to complete the redemption of that purchased possession. (Eph. 1:14.) The doctrinal importance of the resurrection in the Christian faith is set forth at length in I Corinthians 15; our present lesson is from John's account of the appearances and instructions of Jesus following His resurrection.

Apart from the fact of the infallible inspiration of the scripture record, the firsthand testimony of apostles and other eyewitnesses is more valuable and trustworthy than all the vain speculations and infidel attacks by all the enemies of truth. If there are those who still deny the resurrection of Christ, it is not for any lack of historical evidence; they merely reveal in themselves the disposition of the citizens in the parable: "We will not have this man to reign over us." (Lu. 19:14.)

Lesson outline follows:

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Notes on the Printed Text:

Life Appearing, John 20:19, 20.

"Harmonizers" and commentators, comparing and compiling from the different scripture accounts, have listed at least 10 separate appearances of Jesus to various witnesses after His resurrection. But the records do not claim to be complete; in fact, John in this lesson expressly disclaims giving a complete record. Luke sums up the evidence furnished to the apostles by saying that Jesus showed Himself to them "alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3.)

Spiritual Body, 19.

Mention of the closed doors seems intended to tell us that the resurrection body is a spiritual body, as we are more plainly told in I Cor. 15:44. To this spiritual body the shut doors were no obstacle.

Substantial Body, 20.

Yet the spiritual body is not a so-called "spirit body," of which the Bible tells us nothing. The resurrection body is a substantial body, having flesh and bones (Lu. 24:39), and being both visible and tangible.

Life's Allegiance, John 20:21-23.

Our life is in the risen Lord, and so we owe complete allegiance to Him. As Jesus Himself said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Mat. 7:21.) And this will of the Father is perfectly revealed to us in and through the Son.

Mission of Peace, 21.

As the Father sent the Son to make peace with sinful men, so the Son sends His disciples on a mission of peace to a lost and rebellious world. There is one great difference: Christ made this peace in Himself; we can only refer sinners to Him Who is our peace. (Eph. 2:14.)

Mission of Power, 22.

But we are not by ourselves on this mission, nor are we limited to our own power. God is with us in the person of the Holy Spirit, given in some measure to every true child of His. (Ro. 8:9.) In proper scriptural usage of terms, God's people experience numerous "receivings" and "fillings" of the Holy Spirit, referring to various manifestations and gifts. As Paul reminds us, "our sufficiency is of God." (II Cor. 3:5.)

Mission of Promise, 23.

Whatever "authority" may have been given here (as likewise in Mat. 16:19 and 18:18), it is not determinative, but declaratory. That is, if we are led by the Spirit of God in our testimony, we will faithfully declare His promises and judgments, and so our declarations will be in accord with the facts. In this sense ours is a mission of promise—the promise that God will do as He has said.

Life Avoided, John 20:24, 25.

Sometimes we find it hard to face the harsher realities of life, and some people resort to various means of withdrawal to avoid facing life at all. Far worse than attempted avoidance of the problems of natural life, however, is refusal to face up to the issues of eternal life and death. The risen Christ demands our attention; it is the utmost folly to avoid Him.

Absent from Fellowship, 24.

Here was the first church in regular meeting for fellowship on the Lord's day, and Thomas was absent. Of course, he was not expecting Jesus to appear at the meeting. Who knows what blessings we may miss when absent from the fellowship of the saints?

Averted from Faith, 25.

Not for nothing do we use the nickname, "Doubting Thomas." Absentees from church services generally grow progressively weaker in faith until, if not revived, they talk and act as if they had no faith at all.

Life Assured, John 20:26-28.

Thomas, however, was not a habitual absentee. He attended church the next Sunday and received, though a week late, the assurance of resurrection life that he had doubted.

Doubter Comforted, 26.

Again the shut doors could not keep out the risen Lord. Whatever difficulty Thomas may have had in accepting the testimony of his own eyes, it must have been some comfort to him to hear the familiar voice of his Master in friendly greeting.

Doubter Confronted, 27.

His unbelief, however, was not to be ignored. Jesus confronted him in a tangible body. If nothing but his sense of touch would satisfy this original doubting Thomas, then let him touch his Master's wounds in a body now glorified but apparently still bearing the marks of the crucifixion.

Doubter Convinced, 28.

Thank God for His patience with honest doubt! It is far better to be an honest doubter than a lying hypocrite. Thomas needed overwhelming evidence, but when he was finally convinced he came across nobly, without any grudging or reservations.

Life Abounding, John 20:29-31.

Resurrection life is life abounding. We may not understand much yet of what it will be to be like Jesus (I Jn. 3:2), but the foretaste that we have of His Spirit makes us hunger and thirst for more of His presence and power. It is enough to know that we shall be like Him!

Blessed Believers, 29.

Unquestionably Thomas was greatly blessed by being brought to believe in the risen Christ because he saw Him with his own eyes; but Jesus pronounced a still greater blessing on us who believe without seeing. The record of His word is evidence enough.

Surplus Signs, 30.

John had no shortage of material evidence of the eternal deity of Jesus the Christ. Rather, his problem was, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to make from the surplus of signs given a suitable selection for the record. See also John 21:25.

Living Lord, 31.

Is any reader unaware of the divine purpose in John's writing of this gospel account? It is stated here clearly enough. Our living Lord has life to give to all who will believe in Him.

Key Verse:

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—Revelation 1:18.

History, prophecy, and assurance are brought to us in these few words of Jesus. The word for "hell" here is properly hades. Christ is in complete authority and control not only in heaven above and in the things of this world but also over all the powers of darkness below. His resurrection victory is our victory also through faith in Him.