

A.D. the Series

“Resurrection Reality”

Last week celebrated Easter, most important event in history.

Without it, we've got nothing! With it, we have everything!

Resurrection power is not only the guarantee for eternal life but God says He wants us to have this power in our everyday lives!

No matter how numb you find yourself, how dead and hopeless your situation may be—it is no match for the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:19 That you may know the greatness of his power which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead!

The disciples are a great illustration of this. Do you know why Jesus confronted Thomas?

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” John 20:26 - 29

Jesus confronted Thomas because He wanted him to know, to realize the power of the Resurrection in his own life!

Thomas had seen Jesus raise 3 other dead people but he wasn't impressed. Now He sees Jesus alive after death and he needs to be impressed!

Jesus did not die and rise again so Thomas could live in doubt! He did it so that Thomas could live in faith!

No matter how impossible your situation is, God can turn it around if you will “stop doubting and believe.” Jesus promised a greater blessing for you and me because we did not see Him alive.

So, look with me at 3 things that the reality of Christ's Resurrection can do!

1. Resurrection Reality strengthened the disciples' Resolve

What is resolve? Commitment, boldness, or courage.

After Jesus died the disciples were running scared.

I believe their fear and lack of courage surprised even themselves.

Imagine the disciples coming together after the death of Jesus. One looks to the other: "Where did you go? What did you do? What did you say? Did anyone stand up for Jesus?"

Resolve is hard to come by when your life is in danger. It quickly diminishes when your family's life is in danger. Questions and doubt fill your mind.

Thomas wasn't the only one to doubt. He was just the most vocal. Thomas, like Peter, really loved Jesus. Why do I say that? Because he, like Peter, was willing to die with Jesus.

When Jesus wanted to return to Judea, the disciples reminded Jesus that recently they wanted to stone Him there. Thomas was the only one who said to the rest of the disciples, *"Let us also go, that we may die with him"* (John 11:16).

You can always tell what people are made out of during difficult moments. When someone's in a tight spot they reveal what's inside.

For example, what do you get when you squeeze an orange? Orange juice.

What do you get when you squeeze lemons? Lemonade.

What do you get when you squeeze disciples? Here, you get fear from the majority of the disciples, but from Thomas you get a real sense of loyalty.

But his resolve was out the window the moment Jesus was arrested. Why?

Because Thomas was human. Because he was flesh and blood, and that's what flesh does in the face of huge disappointment and doubt.

Like many in that day, Thomas had two names: "Thomas" is Aramaic, and "Didymus" is Greek (John 20:24). They both mean "twin."

That might mean Thomas literally had a twin. Or it could refer to his faith struggle. Thomas was obviously struggling with doubt.

Thomas was like a lot of us. We believe and then we don't believe.

We are courageous and then we fear.

Like the father who exclaimed to Jesus, *"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"* (Mark 9:24).

In his commentary, author David Guzik explains, "This man's unbelief was not rebellion. 'Help my unbelief' is something a man can only say by faith."

So Thomas's doubt didn't make Jesus reject him. Instead, his doubt drew Jesus to Thomas. Jesus wanted to prove to Thomas that His resurrection was real because He wanted Thomas to believe.

There is no doubt that all the disciples, including Thomas, were changed after seeing Jesus resurrected. In fact, the transformed lives of the disciples is one of the greatest proofs of Jesus' resurrection.

The resurrection was never far from their lips. It drove them, made them wake up every morning, and motivated them for the rest of their lives. Notice these verses from Acts.

“They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 4:2).

“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all” (Acts 4:33).

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:5).

The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 presents a contrast of everyday frailty and weakness versus the Resurrection Life:

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. . . .

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. . . .

Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. . . .

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:7, 10, 14, 16).

The resurrection does what nothing else can do. It proves that Jesus is the Son of God. Nothing else does. If you take away the resurrection, you take away the power of the cross.

The disciples’ resolve was strengthened in a way that transformed their lives. For the rest of their lives, because after He arose?

History tells us that all of the disciples lived the rest of their lives spreading the news that Jesus was alive.

All of them, except John, died a martyr’s death. The resurrection was such a personal reality that they gave up their lives for it.

Thomas was perhaps the only apostle who went outside the Roman Empire to preach the Gospel. According to Christian tradition, Thomas’s reach extended as far as India, where he was martyred for his teaching on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Not bad for the disciple known as doubting Thomas. So Thomas did change. He did not stay “doubting Thomas” but became faithful, bold, and courageous Thomas.

2. Resurrection Reality strengthened the disciples’ Relationship with Jesus

The reality of the resurrection is found in the relationship that Jesus had with His followers. The way the disciples lived out the rest of their lives tells us a story of relationship. Jesus was not only their Messiah, He was their Savior and friend.

Christianity is not a Religion - it is a Relationship with Jesus Christ.

The disciples were invested because Jesus was invested in them. He not only talked about brotherhood—Jesus lived out brotherhood.

After the resurrection, Jesus told Mary Magdalene and the other women, *“Go and tell my brothers” (Matthew 28:10).*

It was the first thing He thought of. He essentially said, “Don’t be afraid and make sure you tell My disciples not to be afraid. I want to meet with them.”

What could have been Jesus’s moment in the spotlight, He deliberately turned into a moment of true humility and kindness: “Go and tell my brothers.”

Thomas could not believe the other disciples when they told him they had seen Jesus alive:

“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25).

This is what Thomas said. Faithful, loyal Thomas had moved to such a state of unbelief that he made these demands.

And Jesus basically gave into his demands! Why?

Because Jesus was still doing the work of discipleship—even after the resurrection.

Because to Jesus, the relationship continues . . .

Jesus demonstrated an enormous amount of love and even restraint by giving in to Thomas’s demands.

He was invested in Thomas’s life. Again, He wanted to prove the reality of His resurrection. Jesus knew that Thomas needed evidence to fulfill the calling on his life.

Jesus desired faith for Thomas—a letting go of doubts and unbelief.

The disciples were gathered as instructed. They were experiencing both fear and joy, and suddenly Jesus appeared.

As a father comforts his children, Jesus comforted His disciples by assuring them He was real.

Fear dissolved to joy, and the disciples were finally free to worship.

Jesus’ concern was for them. His thoughts were on them. All was already forgiven. He didn’t sit around thinking about how they had left Him alone, how Peter had denied Him, and how Thomas had doubted Him.

Instead, Jesus reached out in what can only be described as friendship.

He proved the reality of the resurrection. He appeared to Mary Magdalene and other women, to the Emmaus disciples, to the disciples without Thomas and then again with Thomas, to five hundred others, and finally to Paul himself.

While Jesus walked on earth, He was relational. He was Emmanuel (“God with us”). Jesus touched people, walked with people, ate with people. After the resurrection, Jesus was still meeting with them, walking with them, eating with them.

He taught us that the purpose of it all is relationship.

3. Resurrection Reality Results in Restored Lives

In John 21:15-17 we find what is called Peter's Reinstatement:

After eating with the disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus addressed Peter directly for the first time since His resurrection.

The last time Jesus spoke to Peter, was in the Garden of Gethsemane—a place of suffering. When Jesus was arrested, tensions were high. Peter did what he knew and assaulted a soldier:

"Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?'" (John 18:11).

This time with Peter after the resurrection was different. The place was different. Jesus met Peter in a place of comfort—where Peter had first met Jesus: "From now on you will fish for people" (Luke 5:10). It was a place of audacious faith, where Peter once walked on water, a place where Peter felt most at home.

Here, Jesus asked Peter this question:

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15).

To Peter's surprise, Jesus asked him three times, "Do you love me?" Why three times?

To remind Peter of the three times he had denied Him?

Maybe, but I like to think of it this way: Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to make up the three times he had denied him—kind of like a do-over.

He offered Peter a second chance.

The death and resurrection of Jesus left a profound impact on Peter's life. He finally learned what it meant to be a disciple of Christ. After denying Jesus, it's probably a lesson he would have preferred to learn differently. But it was a moment Peter would never forget.

Jesus pursued Peter . . .

Jesus invited Peter . . .

Jesus began the conversation with Peter . . .

And the conversation was about love.

The message?

We will not know love until we love Jesus.

Jesus told Peter: "If you love me, take care of my sheep."

Meaning: We are to love people in the same manner we love Jesus.

Jesus restored Peter to confirm His word over Peter's life:

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18).

Restored intimacy after failure is great for the relationship:

- The relationship is more intense.
- The relationship is more genuine.
- The relationship is more pure.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He reminded the disciples of their own assignment:

“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about’” (Acts 1:4).

The restoring of their assignment teaches them:

1. to stay . . . together
2. to wait . . . for power
3. to trust . . . in God
4. to remember . . . God’s promises

APPLICATION / INVITATION / CLOSING

It matters how we treat the resurrection. It either entertains us or motivates and energizes us.

We are either onlookers to God’s liberating, redeeming plan or we are actively engaged, moving in the power and authority of the resurrection.

Thomas’s faith needed to be once and for all resolved before he could receive the fire of the Holy Spirit. Thomas needed to move from a relationship with his rabbi Jesus to a genuine, authentic relationship with his Savior Jesus Christ, and he needed to be restored to his calling and assignment.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is meant to be real in our everyday lives—not tucked away in some nice little story but living, breathing, and powerfully stirring our lives just as it was in the lives of the disciples.

No matter how numb you find yourself, how dead and hopeless your situation may be—it is no match for the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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