

## John 20

- The dark period of Jesus' death and burial is coming to an end
  - And in keeping with John's light-dark motif, chapter 20 opens with a new day dawning and Christ risen
    - So tonight we examine the resurrection of Christ
    - And His appearances to the disciples in the days and weeks after His resurrection

[John 20:1](#) Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.

[John 20:2](#) So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

[John 20:3](#) So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.

[John 20:4](#) The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;

[John 20:5](#) and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.

[John 20:6](#) And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there,

[John 20:7](#) and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

[John 20:8](#) So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.

[John 20:9](#) For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

[John 20:10](#) So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

- On the first day of the week, two groups of women arrived at the tomb of Jesus
  - John mentions Mary Magdalene arriving first, but the other Gospel writers mention other women
    - Beside Magdalene, we find Mary, the mother of James
    - And Salome, Mary's sister and John's mother

- Mary the mother of James is the same Mary who gave birth to Jesus, yet we notice that she is not identified as the “mother” of Jesus
  - The overemphasis of Mary as the mother of Jesus came much later as a result of teaching from the Catholic Church
  - But in the early church, Mary was no more special than any other disciple
  - As Jesus Himself said concerning Mary

**Luke 11:27** While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.”

**Luke 11:28** But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.”

- Jesus specifically contradicts the notion that the woman God selected to bear Jesus was blessed merely by that act
- On the contrary, He says you are blessed to hear and observe the word of God
- So John lists Mary as merely the mother of James, who was the half brother of Jesus
  - By the way, James also refused to identify himself as the earthly brother of the Lord in his letter
  - Once Jesus’ deity was understood, no disciple dared to claim a privileged relationship to God other than the one we all know by faith alone
- Luke also says there were also other women present but unnamed in the text
  - Interestingly, no man goes to the tomb
  - While we can make much of this detail, the truth is it wasn’t unusual for women to go alone
  - Women typically attended to the dead
  - And since Jesus’ body was prepared in haste on Thursday, they returned as soon as possible to anoint Him for a proper burial

- The women go out to the tomb on the first day of the week, which is Sunday
  - In Jewish reckoning of time, Sunday begins on sundown on Saturday nightfall, counted from the moment that three stars are visible in the night sky
    - The women have been prevented from visiting the tomb since Jesus' burial on Thursday because of back-to-back Sabbaths on Friday and Saturday
    - A Sabbath prevented a person from traveling more than short distances or from attending to a corpse
    - Since to do these things so would be considered work
    - So they waited in their homes for the Sabbaths to end
  - Once the sun set on Saturday, they were free to visit the tomb, but visiting a tomb in the middle of the night was not practical nor safe
    - So, John says Mary Magdalene left for the tomb early while it was still dark
    - And the Synoptic Gospels all say that Mary and the other women arrived at the tomb as it began to dawn
  - Dawn in Jewish reckoning refers to the moment light appears on the horizon before the sun appears
    - This is still part of the "night" but the day is about to begin
    - So the women timed their departure so that they could arrive at the tomb as soon as light began to appear in the sky
    - In Israel, dawn can begin as early as 4:00 AM with a clear sky
- It's interesting to consider what the women were planning to do once they arrived
  - In fact, in Mark's Gospel, they are quoted as wondering who will help them move the stone
    - The stone rolled over the entrance would have been much too heavy for them to move
    - Nevertheless, they went anyway
  - We could explain their thinking as hope against hope

- They didn't have a plan
- As the scene plays out, we can tell they were not expecting to see the Lord resurrected...no one was
- Which makes their dedication all the more remarkable
- They just had a desperate desire to minister to the Lord
- These women give us an example of the opportunities that obedience and dedication to the Lord can create
  - When we follow the Lord in spite of fear or uncertainty or the seeming impossibility of what lies ahead, we give the Lord opportunity to show us miracles
  - These women went expecting to encounter great barriers they couldn't cross
  - But they went nonetheless, trusting that the Lord would provide
  - Consequently, they were privileged to become witnesses to the greatest miracle of all
- According to John, Mary Magdalene went on her own, before the other women, and much to her surprise the stone was already rolled away
  - The stone was actually a large disc, like a wheel, cut from rock
    - It ran in a groove cut into the ground
    - It could be pushed back and forth to open or close the entrance to the tomb
    - But it would require several strong men and a fulcrum to accomplish the task
    - Matthew tells us that angels opened the tomb, and at their appearance the soldiers guarding the tomb lay stiff with fear
  - John says Magdalene left at once to report what she had seen
    - Mary never ventures inside the tomb
    - She assumes that the body of the Lord was stolen overnight
    - So she runs back to report to the apostles

- While Mary Magdalene is returning to the city, the second group of women arrive at the tomb and also see the stone moved
  - According to the other Gospel writers, these women investigate further and happen upon one of the angels in the tomb
    - This angel explains the circumstances to these women
    - The angel gives instructions to the women to return to the eleven disciples in the city
    - And they are to report that Jesus is arisen and that He will meet with the disciples in the Galilee
  - Eventually, all the women meet up with the disciples to give their reports
    - So these women return with this good news
    - According to the Gospels, the women's reports agree that Jesus' tomb is empty
    - Yet the disciples can't accept their reports, perhaps because they were women
    - Women weren't considered trustworthy witnesses
- So Peter and John run back to the tomb to see for themselves
  - John says he arrived first (highlighting he can run faster than Peter)
    - John doesn't enter at first
    - He merely witnessed the linen wrappings through the entrance
  - Peter entered the tomb and found only the body coverings used to prepare the Lord's body for burial
    - The description of the wrappings indicate they were not unwound as was done to free Lazarus after he was revived
    - Instead, the Lord resurrected through His wrappings
    - So clearly the Lord's resurrected state is one where His body is not bound by physics in the same way that it was before
    - As we'll see later in this chapter

- The resurrection of Christ consisted of the return of Jesus' Spirit to His physical body and a restoration of life to that same physical body
  - Jesus was all man even as He was all God
    - He had a sinless body and He was one in His spirit with the Father
    - When His body died, it was no less dead than when you and I suffer death
    - But that's where the similarities end
  - Jesus body didn't decay, even in the slightest

**Psa. 16:10** For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

- It was dead but never deteriorated
- Because the deterioration process itself was something God instituted as a result of sin
- The curse on creation was the result of Adam's sin

**Gen. 3:19** By the sweat of your face  
You will eat bread,  
Till you return to the ground,  
Because from it you were taken;  
For you are dust,  
And to dust you shall return."

- Since Jesus didn't share in Adam's sin, He didn't live under the curse
- So though He was dead, the body was not decaying back to dust
- What caused Jesus's body to die at all?
  - As we discussed last week, it was that His Spirit leaving His body
  - In Luke 23:46, Jesus says He committed His Spirit into the Father's hand
  - And remember the statement Jesus spoke earlier in John's Gospel

[John 10:17](#) "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.

[John 10:18](#) "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

- When Jesus spoke these words, He was describing the timing and manner of His own death
- So Jesus' body sat in the tomb without decay while His Spirit spent three days in the depths of the Earth greeting the OT saints and preaching to the souls held under judgment
  - Jesus' Spirit spends three days separated from His body
    - During the third evening, Jesus was resurrected
    - The resurrection of the body is the moment when His Spirit returned and the body returned to life
  - Jesus' physical container (i.e., His body) was a suitable container for His spirit to return to the same body because it was not corrupted by sin
    - Resurrection must be different for you and I
    - Our spirit will must be resurrected into an entirely new body, according to Paul in 1Corinthians 15
    - Our present physical bodies are corrupted by sin and under the curse of the Garden
    - The curse requires that our bodies must decay and return to dust
    - Therefore, God will resurrect us into new bodies, which takes place at the Rapture
- After Peter and John see the tomb empty, they return to their homes in the city
  - These disciples have seen evidence that the Lord had risen as promised
    - More over, they heard the testimony of the women who saw the angels
    - Their testimony included instructions from Jesus to leave Jerusalem and return to the Galilee where Jesus would meet them

- And that testimony confirmed Jesus' earlier instructions recorded in Mark 14 to meet Jesus in Galilee after He was raised
- Despite all these signs and instructions, the eleven refuse to accept that Jesus is alive again
  - So now begins a series of appearance of Jesus intended to provoke belief and obedience in these men
  - And appropriately, Jesus begins to work through the faithful women who have attended to Him throughout

**[John 20:11](#)** But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;

**[John 20:12](#)** and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.

**[John 20:13](#)** And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

**[John 20:14](#)** When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.

**[John 20:15](#)** Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

**[John 20:16](#)** Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

**[John 20:17](#)** Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"

**[John 20:18](#)** Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.

- After the meeting with the eleven, Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb
  - In her grief, she's seeking a place to mourn, and the empty tomb was as good a place as any
    - This time Mary enters the tomb and Mary sees the angels still sitting in the tomb
    - It's like the Lord is holding an open house at Jesus' tomb, and these two angels were assigned to receive visitors
  - Apparently, Mary is unaware that these two were angels, seeing only two young men



- When they asked Mary why she weeps, she says she's looking for the Lord's body
- Before they can answer, the Lord appears behind her
- This is the first recorded appearance of the resurrected Jesus to anyone
- The fact that the first eye witness to Jesus' resurrection was a woman argues for the authenticity of the Gospel accounts
  - A woman would have been an unlikely choice for first witness of Christ's resurrection if the Gospel accounts were fraudulent records intended to prop up a lie
    - Using a woman as your witness in that day and culture made your story less believable
    - The author would only include such a detail if it were truly the way it happened
    - The Lord uses supposedly foolish things to shame the wise
  - As with the angels, Mary doesn't recognize Jesus at first and thinks he's just the man who attended to the garden
    - Only after she asks Him a question and He answers does she recognize this to be Jesus
    - When Jesus calls her name, she indicates she recognizes Jesus as Rabbi
  - The fact that Mary (and others) don't immediately recognize Jesus tells us something about His post resurrection appearance
    - We must assume that Jesus appears different in some way
    - Arnold Fruchtenbaum suggests this could be like two friends who haven't seen one another for decades and then meet again
    - At first, they don't recognize each other but after a moment, the recognition dawns on them
    - In that case, age accounts for the change in appearance
    - In this case, Jesus' resurrection must have produced physical changes in His body leaving Him to appear differently

- At this point, Mary attempted to embrace Jesus, which would have been a natural response to seeing Him, but Jesus forbid it
  - In my English translation, it says stop clinging to me, but that's not the accurate translation
    - In Greek, Jesus actually says "Touch me not"
    - So Mary was never allowed to touch Jesus
  - The reason Jesus forbids Mary to touch Him is because He has not yet ascended to the Father
    - Jesus is speaking about His ascension to cleanse the tabernacle In Heaven
    - In Hebrews we're told Jesus cleansed the tabernacle with His blood as part of His atoning work on the cross
    - The Jewish tabernacle on earth is patterned after this one in Heaven
  - It's in this Heavenly tabernacle that the first sin in all Creation occurred
    - Ezekiel describes this first sin

**Ezek. 28:12** | "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"You had the seal of perfection,  
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

**Ezek. 28:13** "You were in Eden, the garden of God;

Every precious stone was your covering:  
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;  
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;  
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;  
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,  
Was in you.  
On the day that you were created  
They were prepared.

[Ezek. 28:14](#) "You were the anointed cherub who covers,  
 And I placed you there.  
 You were on the holy mountain of God;  
 You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

[Ezek. 28:15](#) "You were blameless in your ways  
 From the day you were created  
 Until unrighteousness was found in you.

[Ezek. 28:16](#) "By the abundance of your trade  
 You were internally filled with violence,  
 And you sinned;  
 Therefore I have cast you as profane  
 From the mountain of God.  
 And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,  
 From the midst of the stones of fire.

- The first sin was committed by Satan, who was the covering cherub
  - Remember that the covering cherubs of the earthly tabernacle were cast in gold and stood above the mercy seat
  - But this design is patterned after the Heavenly tabernacle, where real cherubs guarded the mercy seat
  - Satan was the chief cherub
  - When he fell, he brought sin into the holy of holies
- Therefore, it took Christ's blood to cleanse that place
  - In the Law, the High Priest went in once a year to cleanse the tabernacle in this way
  - And on that day, no one was allowed to touch the High Priest until he had completed that work
  - The annual cleansing process by the high priest in the Jewish tabernacle pictured the higher cleansing that would come through Christ
- So here Jesus tells Mary she is not permitted to touch Jesus, Who is our High Priest, because He had yet to ascended to the Father and complete His atoning work
  - We conclude that some time after this moment, Jesus ascended and brought His own physical blood into the tabernacle

- Notice, Jesus tells Mary to report back to the brethren that Jesus ascends to the Father
- Only after completing this work in the Heavenly tabernacle, Jesus returns to make further appearances with to the Disciples
- And in those later visits, the disciples are permitted to touch Jesus, as Thomas does eight days after Jesus' resurrection
- Now Mary returns to the disciples a second time, declaring that she has personally seen the risen Lord and telling them to meet Him in Galilee
  - John doesn't record the disciples' response to Mary, but according to Mark, the disciples flatly rejecting Mary's testimony
    - Once again, they are not accepting the possibility of Jesus' resurrection
    - And once again they disobey the Lord's instructions to leave the city and go to Galilee
  - At this point, John jumps to Jesus' final appearance in Jerusalem
    - But the other Gospels record several more appearances by Jesus, all in an effort to convince the disciples to believe
    - First, in Matthew 28 we're told that the other group of women encounter the risen Lord
    - In this encounter, they took hold of His feet and worshipped Him and Jesus says:

**[Matt. 28:10](#) Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me."**

- Once again, Jesus' focus is on getting the disciples to believe in these reports and move to Galilee
- Secondly, Jesus appears to two disciples leaving the city on the road to Emmaus
  - These two men aren't part of the eleven, since Luke names one of them as Cleopas
  - In the course of that encounter, Jesus scolded these men for not believing that He was resurrected

- After these men recognized Jesus, they returned to report seeing Jesus to the eleven
- But Mark 16 says the eleven didn't believe the report of these two witnesses either
- Why do we suppose the Lord is working so hard to convince the eleven that He has truly risen through other witnesses?
  - He's giving these men a memorable lesson in how difficult it can be to convince others of the truth of Jesus resurrection – even when the one testifying is an eye witness
    - The eleven will be eye witnesses of the resurrection as well
    - And they will have a formidable task of convincing the world that their story is true
    - Even though they are eye witnesses, that experience in and of itself will not be convincing
    - The only thing that convinces a person that Jesus is Lord is the word of God
    - As Paul says:

**1Cor. 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

- As these spread the Gospel to others, they might have been tempted to rely on the power of their personal testimonies
  - They needed to think back to these moments to understand that even powerful eye witness accounts aren't a substitute for the power of God's word
  - That's why these men author the New Testament, which brings salvation by the power of God's word
- So, having refused to believe multiple reports, the Lord appears before the eleven, beginning with Peter
  - Once again, John doesn't cover this appearance in his Gospel
    - But Luke reports (and Paul confirms in 1 Corinthians 15) that the Lord appeared to Peter individually before the others

- Luke reports that the appearance to Peter happened at about the same time as the appearance to the disciples on the road
- In fact, Luke says that the two disciples returned from Emmaus found the eleven already discussing Peter's encounter with the Lord (Luke 24:33-34)
- Nevertheless, not even Peter's testimony will convince the other ten
- We know nothing more about Peter's appearing
  - But the fact that Jesus chose to appear to Peter before the others reminds us Peter was the leader Jesus appointed for the early church
    - But before he could lead, Peter needed to be restored in his position, both before God and before men
    - Jesus told Peter he would deny Him at the Passover meal, but later Jesus promised he would be restored

**[Luke 22:31](#) "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; [Luke 22:32](#) but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."**

- Jesus' personal appearance before Peter was a part of that restoration process
- The Lord willingness to appear privately to Peter reassured the apostle that the Lord still approved of Peter despite his denials
- And Jesus' decision to appear to Peter before the others cemented Peter's role as leader in the church
- I wonder if Peter's testimony of Jesus' private appearing was unconvincing to the rest of the eleven because the whole story seemed too convenient
  - How convenient that the one who denied Christ publicly should have a private audience with Christ, where he was assured that he would still lead the early church
  - Whatever the reason, Peter couldn't convince them, so another visit by Jesus is needed
- Sometime after Peter's encounter, the eleven were still locked in a room in Jerusalem fearful of the authorities

- In fact, we can see the wisdom of Jesus instructing the men to leave for the Galilee
  - These men are so afraid, they won't leave the house
  - How can they do anyone any good while remaining locked up?
  - Ironically, they don't go to Galilee *because* their fear leaves them unwilling to believe they will find Jesus waiting for them there
  - Despite seeing an empty tomb, seeing the bandages, hearing reports of angels and eye witnesses telling them of Jesus' appearances, nevertheless they refuse to accept His resurrection
- Because of the hardness of their hearts, Jesus makes a personal appearance before these men

**John 20:19** So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

**John 20:20** And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

- So late on Sunday afternoon, still the same day as Jesus' resurrection, Jesus makes a fifth appearance to ten of the eleven men (Thomas isn't there)
  - Despite the door being locked, Jesus appears in the room, demonstrating that Jesus' resurrected body is different
    - And His first greeting is peace be with you, a greeting the disciples repeated commonly in their letters
    - He is calming them in a moment when they must have been shocked
  - In Luke's Gospel, we're told that the group was terrified and didn't believe it was Jesus at first
    - They thought it was spirit, as in a ghost or apparition
    - Despite Jesus standing there in the flesh, they can't accept the notion that a man might live again
    - Their collective response to Jesus' appearance demonstrated the problem
    - These men were bound by what they could accept in nature

- They weren't willing to consider God's supernatural power to transcend flesh, time and space
- John's narrative picks up with Jesus showing His body marking to these men
  - John then says the disciples rejoiced, but it wasn't that easy
    - In Luke's Gospel we learn that Jesus had to go a step further to convince them
    - He asked for a piece of fish to eat in front of them
    - They needed proof that He was really alive, not merely some vision
  - The fact that Jesus' body still bore the markings of the crucifixion at this point prove that the torture of the cross didn't take Jesus' life
    - For otherwise, how could we explain how His body could live on again with the same holes in his hands, feet and side?
    - I also wonder if the holes in Jesus body might have been the means by which He poured out His blood in the tabernacle?
  - In Israel, the high priest drained blood from the animal sacrifice at the altar
    - And then a bowl of that blood was carried into the Holy of Holies where it was sprinkled on the mercy seat
    - Perhaps Jesus performed that work in a similar manner, using His physical body as the source of that blood
- John's portrayal shows the extent to which Jesus had to go to bring these men to the point of acceptance
  - According to Mark's Gospel, this encounter was also the moment for Jesus' strongest rebuke in all the Gospel accounts
    - According to Mark, Jesus said:

**Mark 16:14** Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

- This was exactly the problem...these men were hard-hearted



- Hard-heartedness in the Bible refers to the difficulty with which a person will accept spiritual truth
  - Unbelievers are by nature hard-hearted, until the Lord should choose to open that heart to the truth
  - They will repeatedly reject the truth of the Gospel because they are spiritually dead and unable to consider the message as truth
- But believers can also become hard-hearted
  - Pride, arrogance, stubbornness, anger, bitterness, apathy, laziness and the like can conspire to block spiritual truth from reaching a believer's heart
  - Bible teachers and pastor routinely encounter believers who had shut down to new truth
  - They only seem interested in hearing someone affirm what they already believe and will argue against anything different
  - The only way to penetrate that kind of hardness is by the sword of the Spirit, that is the word, cutting into the soul
- That's why it's a policy of VBVM (and my personal policy) never to engage in debates over the meaning of scripture
  - We strive to present an honest, accurate view, well-supported by the text of scripture
    - At the same time, we know we err occasional in our interpretation, as every teacher and ministry will at times
    - Therefore, we remain open to critique and consider all feedback carefully in light of scripture
    - We gladly answers sincere questions and explain our reasoning from scripture
  - But we never debate those who have unteachable, hard hearts
    - We teach those who have ears to hear and remain open to what God is prepared to deliver by His word
    - We trust in the Lord to open closed hearts

[John 20:21](#) So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

[John 20:22](#) And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

[John 20:23](#) “If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.”

- Having rebuked the disciples, Jesus then reiterates He is at peace with them
  - Jesus may not have been happy with their unbelief, but this doesn't mean they risk losing their peace with God
    - They have been saved by God's grace
    - So they will forever be at peace with God
  - Therefore, they still have a mission waiting
    - As the Father sent Jesus into the world, so He sends them
    - So let's ask *how* did the Father send Jesus?
  - Jesus was sent with a message of truth and with power to validate the message...but He was met by a skeptical and hostile audience
    - So it will be for the apostles
    - Their message is Christ's message, that of the Kingdom
    - And these men will possess Christ's miraculous powers by the Spirit to validate their message and authority
    - And like Christ, many of those who hear their message will doubt, disbelieve and react in anger
  - But these men can't fulfill that mission until they're willing to face the dangers that serving the Lord requires
    - Men prefer the darkness because the light reveals their evil deeds
    - Still, you can't be used by God to invade spiritual darkness if you're afraid to walk into the shadows

- At this point Jesus does something curious: He breathes on the ten men and declares they should receive the Holy Spirit
  - Was this the moment the men received the indwelling of the Spirit?
    - On the contrary, we can know this can't be the moment they received the Spirit for two reasons
    - First, these same men received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as described in Acts 2
    - If they had already possessed the indwelling of the Spirit here, then an additional indwelling would not have been needed
  - Secondly, any indwelling of the Spirit prior to Pentecost would violate the purpose of the Feast
    - Pentecost of Acts 2 was the fulfillment of the Feast of Pentecost
    - The Jewish feast of Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks commemorates the giving of the Law to Israel at Sinai
    - That law was written on stone and it was given to Israel 50 days after the Passover escape from Egypt
  - This feast pictures the giving of the Spirit to God's people
    - Exactly 50 days after Christ fulfills the Passover in His body, the Lord delivers a law to His people, a law written on their hearts
    - This law comes by way of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost
    - Just as Jesus had to die exactly on the day of Passover to fulfill that feast as God intended, so must the indwelling of the Spirit happen on the proper feast day
    - Therefore, the Spirit couldn't have come to the disciples in this moment of John 20...it had to wait for the Pentecost moment as it did for all believers
- Then what is happening here when Jesus breathes on them?
  - It helps to remember that the word for breath in Hebrew is the same word used at times for spirit
    - So breath or air can be used as a picture of the Spirit

- Just as Jesus used wind as a symbol for the Spirit in John 3
- Therefore, Jesus uses this gesture to promise things to come
- As Jesus commissions these men to take His place, He uses His breath as a symbolic gesture of the arrival of the Spirit, Who will empower them for that mission
  - The Spirit's arrival at Pentecost will fulfill this promise
  - And the disciples will remember that the Spirit was sent by the Son as like His breath
- Lastly, the Lord designates these men with the apostolic authority to bring men to salvation just as Jesus did by His personal ministry
  - Jesus gives a conditional command
    - If you forgive someone...they will be forgiven
    - We know that the power to forgive sins is God's alone and it comes based solely on belief in the Gospel

[Luke 5:20](#) Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."

[Luke 5:21](#) The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

[Luke 5:22](#) But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?"

[Luke 5:23](#) "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?"

[Luke 5:24](#) "But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," – He said to the paralytic – "I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home."

- So Jesus didn't say these men will *decide* who will be forgiven by God
  - Jesus is saying that the outcome of their ministry determines who are saved from those who are not
  - These men will use the same basis for determining forgiveness as did Jesus: belief in the Gospel
  - So to paraphrase Jesus, He said, "when you preach the Gospel and someone receives it, you can assure the person that God has forgiven their because of their faith..."

- “Likewise, when someone rejects the Gospel, you can assure them that they remain in their sins”
- This statement may seem obvious to us now, but it’s only became obvious after watching it work over centuries of evangelism
  - At the beginning of the Church, these men would have had little reason to understand that they possessed the power to bring salvation to other men
    - Until this point, they had only witnessed Jesus declaring that someone’s sins were forgiven
    - It would be easy to think that unless Jesus personally declared someone forgiven, no one could have that assurance
  - These men were to become instruments of God’s salvation and judgment working in Jesus’ absence
    - Paul says the same thing in Romans

[Rom. 1:16](#) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[Rom. 1:17](#) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

- God’s salvation is revealed from faith to faith
  - As a person demonstrates faith in the message of the Gospel, they reveal God’s power to save
  - Their faith is proof of God’s work in their heart
  - And Jesus is explaining to His apostles that the citizens of the Kingdom will be found through them by this manner
  - Just as God multiplied the population of earth through a command for men to procreate, so now He reveals He will grow the Church through a command to men to preach the Gospel

[John 20:24](#) But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

[John 20:25](#) So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

[John 20:26](#) After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."

[John 20:27](#) Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."

[John 20:28](#) Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

[John 20:29](#) Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

[John 20:30](#) Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

[John 20:31](#) but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

- As I mentioned earlier, only ten of the eleven men were present in the first appearance of Christ, leaving Thomas still without that opportunity to see Christ
  - Thomas' hesitation to believe has long been held against him
    - We still have the saying "doubting Thomas" as a result of this scene
    - But to be honest, Thomas gets a bad rap here
    - All the disciples were equally doubting
    - Thomas was just the last man to see the proof he required
  - Thomas hears the reports of the others but demands to see it himself
    - This goes on for seven more days
    - Imagine the frustration of the ten trying for a whole week to convince Thomas that Jesus was raised
    - If ten apostles can't convince another apostle that Jesus has been resurrected, how hard will it be for them to convince others?

- On the eighth day, Jesus returns to the eleven when Thomas was present
  - Jesus grants Thomas the same opportunity to inspect His resurrected body
    - This experience convinces Thomas that Jesus is in fact God
    - To which Jesus says if seeing convinced you, how blessed are those who will be convinced seeing?
    - The blessing Jesus is describing is the blessing of God's grace poured out on people like you and me who have been granted eyes to see and ears to hear by faith
    - It's an eternal blessing that God opened our hearts and showed us the truth of Jesus as Lord
  - This is the only way anyone truly believes
    - So although these men ultimately became convinced by Christ's appearance, Jesus is saying this won't be the usual method
    - Jesus doesn't intend to make personal appearances
    - In fact, after He ascends to the Father, He will not appear again until He returns for the Church at the Rapture
    - In the meantime, we are blessed to receive the gift of faith by which we are saved
- With that, John essentially ends His Gospel
  - He explains there was much more He could say, but he's provided enough for his readers to know and believe that Jesus is the Son of God
    - And by believing in His name, we might have eternal life
    - This is the point of the Gospel John wrote and he feels he has accomplished his purpose
  - Then why do we have chapter 21?
    - John writes it as a footnote, a conclusion to show that these men eventually obeyed His instructions to leave the city
    - Also, John will combine many of the themes and storylines from the rest of His Gospel...can you find them all?