



*Seeing Jesus
at Easter*

10 Daily Readings from
the Gospel of John

J.C. Ryle
Adapted by Ron Jones

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TIPN # 102

J.C. Ryle Bio

J.C. (John Charles) Ryle was born on May 10, 1816 in Cheshire, England. He grew up in a nominally Christian home. His parents were members of the Church of England, but were never committed to it or to Christ. However, God began to work in J.C.'s heart when he was a young man. He became seriously ill with a chest infection and was confined to rest. During this time, he began to read the Scriptures seriously and to pray and eventually came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Reflecting on his salvation, J.C. commented later, "Nothing to this day appeared to me so clear and distinct as my own sinfulness, Christ's preciousness, the value of the Bible, the absolute necessity of coming out of the world, [and] the need of being born again."

He was ordained as a pastor and preacher in the Church of England in December 1841 at the age of 25 years old. He served as pastor in four congregations during his ministry. He became well-known as a strong and Biblically sound teacher of the Scriptures. He preached many sermons and wrote many tracts (small booklets on various Bible topics) addressing contemporary issues of his day that he felt Christians needed to understand. He wrote several books, the most famous being "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels." The "Expository Thoughts" is a book which gives a passage by passage explanation of the four gospels balancing solid scholarship with practical exhortation. Ryle lived to be 84 years old and died on June 10, 1900 in Chidwall, England.

J.C. Ryle was a man who loved Christ and loved his Word. He was a careful scholar who had a desire that Christians understand the practical applications of the Gospels based up a clear understanding of what the writers meant when they wrote them.

Preface

The season of Easter can easily be forgotten in our busy lives. Good Friday suddenly comes followed by Easter Sunday and we have a difficult time focusing on and remembering the death of Christ for us and celebrating his Resurrection from the dead. This often happens because we haven't really thought much about it in the previous days or weeks. One of the best ways we can prepare to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord is to spend a brief amount of time each day during the weeks before Easter reading and reflecting on what the Scriptures reveal about our wonderful Savior at the time of his death and resurrection. Through these Bible passages we can come to know Jesus in a deeper way. This eBook of ten daily readings has been adapted from JC Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John. I have designed this daily reading schedule to help you as a believer to focus on Jesus as you prepare to remember his death and celebrate his resurrection.

I have adapted his writing by updating his wording for contemporary readers and by adding my own exposition about Christ from the text in places where Ryle may not have given as full an explanation of Christ as it was my purpose to do in this eBook for Easter.

My hope is that JC Ryle would have been blessed by how I have taken his work and adapted it for Christians living today. I do know that he, like I, am always encouraged when the Word of God is carefully explained and the Lord of our lives is glorified through that exposition. May the Lord encourage you through his Word as you prepare to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ who has done so much for us!

Ron Jones

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Day 1
Jesus' Entrance into Jerusalem
John 12:12-18

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

In the final days of his life and ministry, Jesus chooses to present himself publicly as the long-awaited messiah and king of Israel as he enters the city of Jerusalem. The excitement over his miraculous signs had been growing, culminating in the boisterous crowd who came together as a result of his raising Lazarus from the dead. The people proclaimed Jesus as the messiah by quoting a prophecy of the messiah from Psalm 118, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

This was a different approach than what Jesus had done previously. Before this, we have seen him withdrawing as much as possible from public notice, retiring into the wilderness, and stopping those who would have brought him forward and made him a king. As a rule, he did not court popular attention lest he end up on the cross too soon. But circumstances have changed. We see him making a public entry into Jerusalem, attended by an immense crowd of people, and causing even the Pharisees to say, "Behold, the world has gone after him."

The time had come at last when Christ was to die for the sins of the world. The time had come when the true Passover Lamb was to be slain. Knowing this, he placed himself prominently under the notice of the whole Jewish nation. If ever there was an event in our Lord's earthly ministry which was public, it was the sacrifice which he offered up on the cross of Calvary. Jesus came as the messiah who was prophesied to be not only Israel's king but her priest who was to offer up himself as the sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

Notice, also in these verses, how entirely voluntary the sufferings of Christ were. Jesus takes the lead as he enters Jerusalem. Jesus does not resist his enemies in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus does not bring a legion of angels to rescue him and scatter the band of soldiers. Jesus was a willing sufferer in order to gain redemption for the lost. He had undertaken to give his own life as a ransom that we might live forever, and he laid it down on the cross with all the desire of his heart. He did not bleed and suffer and die because he was vanquished by superior force, and could not help himself, but because he loved us, and rejoiced to give himself for us as our substitute. He did not die because he could not avoid death, but because he was willing with all his heart to make himself an offering for sin.

Forever let us rest our hearts on this most comforting thought. We have a most willing and loving Savior. It was his delight to do his Father's will, and to make a way for lost and guilty man to draw near to God in peace. He loved the mission he had taken in hand, and the poor sinful world which he came to save. Never, then, let us give way to the unworthy thought that our Savior does not love to see sinners coming to him, and does not rejoice to save them. He who was a most willing sacrifice on the cross is also a most willing Savior at the right hand of God. He is just as willing to receive sinners who come to him now for peace, as he was to die for sinners, when he held back his power and willingly suffered on Calvary.

Notice, for another thing, in these verses, an example of the prophecies concerning Christ's first coming being fulfilled. The riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, which is here recorded, might seem at first sight a simple action, and in no way remarkable. But when we turn to the Old Testament, we find that this very thing had been predicted by the Prophet Zechariah five hundred years before. (Zechariah 9:9) The messiah king would come the first time, not as a conquering powerful king but as a humble king who identified with his people and desired to help them at all costs.

Such fulfillments of prophecy as this deserve the special attention of all who love the Bible and read it with reverence. They show us that every word of Holy Scripture was given by inspiration of God. They teach us to beware of the mischievous practice of spiritualizing and explaining away the plain language of Scripture. We must settle it in our minds that the plain, literal meaning of the Bible is generally the true and correct meaning. Here is a prediction of Zechariah literally and exactly fulfilled. Our Lord was not merely a very humble person as some spiritualizing interpreters would have explained Zechariah's words to mean, but he literally rode into Jerusalem on a donkey which demonstrated his humility.

Jesus did not want to be a worldly king who enslaves his people and uses them for his own purposes. He did not want to parade around in beautiful royal clothes and live in a luxurious palace surrounded by servants. He showed the true nature of a loving and humble king whose first priority is to be among his people and identify with them. No one could have invented a person like Jesus. No one could have imagined anyone like him. Jesus is the one and only Son of God who was willing to humble himself and become a human being and dwell among us and make the ultimate sacrifice for us. Oh, what a Savior we have!

Day 2
Jesus the True Light
John 12:44-50

And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment - what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.

Jesus has come to Jerusalem for the final week of his life ending in his sacrifice on the cross. He is openly proclaiming his identity and mission. He has come to call people to believe in him as the messiah. His messiahship is based upon his unity with God the Father. Christ's oneness with the Father and his ministry for the Father are clearly exhibited in these words.

Concerning the unity of the Father and the Son, we must be content to believe reverently, what we cannot grasp mentally or explain distinctly. Let it suffice us to know that our Savior was not like the prophets and patriarchs, a man sent by God the Father, a friend of God, and a witness for God. He was something far higher and greater than this. He was in his divine nature essentially one with the Father, and in seeing him, men saw the Father who sent him. This is a great mystery, but a truth of vast importance to our souls. He that casts his sins on Jesus Christ by faith is building on a rock. Believing on Christ, he believes not merely on him (the Son of God), but on him (God the Father) who sent him.

Concerning the ministry of Christ, there can be little doubt that in this place he compares himself to the physical light of the sun which is central to the physical life of the earth. Jesus is the spiritual light which is central to the spiritual life of people on the earth. Like that sun, he has risen on this sin-darkened world with healing on his wings and shines for the common benefit of all mankind. Like the sun, he is the great source and center of all spiritual life and comfort. Like the sun, he illuminates the whole earth, and no one need miss the way to heaven, if he will only use the light offered for his acceptance. Light is also used metaphorically in Scripture to symbolize truth and righteousness. Truth is a light to a world trapped in the darkness of the lies and deceit of Satan. Righteousness is the light to a world trapped in the darkness of sin and evil. Jesus Christ is the light of the world bringing truth and righteousness to all!

Forever let us exalt Christ in all our faith. We can never trust him too much, follow him too closely, or pray to him too unreservedly. He has all power in heaven and earth. He is able to save all who come to God by him.

Unfortunately, there are those who will reject Jesus and his spiritual light and face a judgment to come. We find our Lord saying, "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day." There is a last day! The world shall not always go on as it does now. Buying and selling, sowing and reaping, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, all this shall come to an end at last.

There is a time appointed by the Father when the whole operation of creation shall stop, and the present dispensation shall be changed for another. It had a beginning, and it shall also have an end. There is a judgment coming! Men have their days of reckoning, and God will at last have his. The true character of those who have refused to believe in Christ will come out before the world. There will be no concealment, no evasion, no lying about reality. Every one of them shall give an account of himself to God, and all of them shall be judged according to their works. These wicked shall go away into everlasting fire.

These are dreadful truths! But they are truths, and ought to be told. No wonder the Roman governor Felix trembled when Paul the prisoner discoursed about "righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come." (Acts 24:25) Yet the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has no cause to be afraid. For him or her, Paul says "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1). Paul's statement is based on the incredible words of Jesus when he said, "He who hears my word and believes in him who sent me, has eternal life and will not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." Jesus Christ has paid for our sins!

We, who are believers, have done what Jesus told us to do, believed God the Father who sent him by believing the words Jesus spoke. We have come to and embraced Jesus as the light of the world and hold onto his truth and righteousness. As a result, Jesus brought us spiritually into his kingdom of light, his kingdom of truth and righteousness. One day, he will come again and bring the physical kingdom of truth and righteousness and when he does, we will experience the most incredible life beyond our imaginations. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Day 3
Jesus' Betrayal and Arrest
John 18:1-11

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

These verses begin John's account of Christ's sufferings and crucifixion. We now enter on the closing scene of our Lord's ministry and to his sacrifice. We should notice, first, in these verses, the exceeding hardness of heart to which a person who professes Christ, but does not possess Christ, may attain. We are told that Judas, one of the twelve Apostles, became a guide to those who captured Jesus. We are told that he used his knowledge of the place of our Lord's retirement, in order to bring his deadly enemies upon him. We are told that when the soldiers and officers approached his Master, in order to take him prisoner, Judas stood with them. Yet this was a man who for three years had been a constant companion of Christ, had seen his miracles, had heard his sermons, had enjoyed the benefit of his private instruction, had professed himself a believer, had even worked and preached in Christ's name! Let us be aware that those who rest their hopes of salvation on religious knowledge, however great or religious advantages, however many may infiltrate the church the way Judas infiltrated the disciples of Christ. One day when they show their true colors we should not be surprised and let it shake our faith in Christ.

We should notice, secondly, in these verses, the willingness of Jesus to face his sufferings. We are told that the first time that our Lord said to the soldiers, "I am he, they fell back and to the ground." God's supernatural power, no doubt, accompanied the words. In no other way can we account for a band of hardy Roman soldiers falling down before a single unarmed man. The same miraculous influence which tied the priests and Pharisees powerless at the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, which stopped all opposition when the temple was purged of buyers and sellers, that same miraculous power was present now. A real miracle was wrought, though few had eyes to see it. At the moment when our Lord seemed weak, he showed that he was strong.

Let us carefully remember that our blessed Lord suffered and died of his own free will. He did not die because he could not help it. He did not suffer because he could not escape. All the soldiers of Pilate's army could not have taken him, if he had not been willing to be taken. They

could not have hurt a hair of his head, if he had not given them permission. But here, as in all his earthly ministry, Jesus was a willing sufferer. He had set his heart on accomplishing our redemption. He loved us and gave himself for us, cheerfully, willingly, gladly, in order to make atonement for our sins. Let this thought abide in our hearts and refresh our souls. We have a Savior who was far more willing to save us than we are willing to be saved. If we are not saved, the fault is all our own. Christ is just as willing to receive and pardon, as he was willing to be taken prisoner, to bleed, and to die.

We should notice, thirdly, in these verses, our Lord's tender care for his disciples' safety. Even at this critical moment, when his own unspeakable sufferings were about to begin, he did not forget the little band of believers who stood around him. He remembered their weakness. He knew how little ready they were to go into the fiery furnace of the High Priest's palace, and Pilate's judgment-hall. He mercifully makes for them a way of escape. "If you seek me, let these men go their way." It seems most probable that here also a miraculous influence accompanied his words. At any rate, not a hair of the disciples' heads was touched. While the Shepherd was taken, the sheep were allowed to flee away unharmed.

We need not hesitate to see in this incident an instructive type of all our Savior's dealings with his disciples even at this present time. He will not allow them "to be tempted above that which they are able to bear." (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will hold the winds and storms in his hands, and not allow believers, however sifted and buffeted, to be utterly destroyed. He watches tenderly over every one of his children, and, like a wise physician, measures out the right quantity of their trials with unerring skill. "They shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of his hand." (John 10:28) Forever let us lean our souls on this precious truth. In the darkest hour the eye of the Lord Jesus is upon us, and our final safety is certain.

We should notice, lastly, in these verses, our Lord's perfect submission to his Father's will. Earlier, in the Garden of Gethsemane, we find him saying, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." Then we find him saying, "If this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, your will be done." (Matthew 26:39-42) Here, however, we find trusting acceptance and commitment, "The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

Let us see in this blessed frame of mind, a pattern for all who profess and call themselves Christians. Jesus, as a human being, struggled with the extremely difficult task ahead of him. However, he did not doubt his Father's love, but each time sought his Father's comfort and encouragement in accomplishing his mission. Being a follower of Jesus Christ is no easy task. It requires turning away from a myriad of temptations and the self-centered path of those in the world and doing what Jesus did, seeking comfort and encouragement from our heavenly Father who will always be there for us!

Day 4
Jesus' Trial Before Pilate
John 18:33-40

Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world - to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

Jesus now stands before Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea. The Jewish leaders wanted him here because by Roman law they could not impose capital punishment, only the Roman authorities could.

The first point that we should notice in these verses, is the account that our Lord Jesus Christ gives of his kingdom. He says, "My kingdom is not of this world." Our Lord's main object in saying these words was to inform Pilate concerning the true nature of his kingdom and to correct any false impression he might have received from the Jews. He tells him that he did not come to set up a kingdom which would interfere with the Roman Government. He did not aim at establishing a temporal power, to be supported by armies and maintained by taxes. The only dominion he exercised was over men's hearts, and the only weapons that his subjects employed were spiritual weapons. A kingdom which required neither money nor servants for its support, was one of which the Roman Emperors need not be afraid. In the highest sense it was a kingdom "not of this world."

Jesus describes even what we as Christians are experiencing today. The kingdom of God has come in spiritual form in a fallen world. Jesus rules as king over our hearts and lives spiritually. He spreads the light of his truth and righteousness in a lost world through us, his church. In Matthew 28:19-20 when Jesus gives to his church the Great Commission of "making disciples," he promises that he will be with us always as we share the Gospel and build one another up in Christ. And he is not just sitting around and observing us. He is actively working in, through, and around us in his spiritual kingdom on earth. Be assured that Jesus is accomplishing all that he desires as our sovereign King of kings.

The second point we should notice is that although Pilate seems to be in control as Jesus stands before him, make no mistake in thinking that God has lost control over the situation. Everything is being done according to God's sovereign plan. Peter spoke of this plan in Acts 2:22-23 when he said, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and

wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know - this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." God's plan was for his Son to sacrifice himself for the penalty of sin and thus to die at the hands of godless men. Jesus himself says that if this were not the case, his servants would have been fighting, that he might not be delivered over to the Jews. Jesus submitted himself willingly to stand before human authority to accomplish his mission. We must always remind ourselves that God is in control of this universe and that nothing happens without his consent. He has cursed the world because of man's willful sin and allowed free will within limits he sets. No one and nothing is able to thwart his divine plan for us and the world around us.

The third point that we should notice in these verses is the account that our Lord gives of his own mission. He says, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world - to bear witness to the truth." No doubt he spoke with special reference to what he knew was passing through Pilate's mind. He did not come to win a kingdom with the sword, and to gather adherents and followers by force. He came armed with no other weapon but "truth." To testify to fallen man the truth about God, about sin, about the need of a Redeemer, about the nature of holiness, to declare and lift up before man's eyes this long lost and buried "truth," was one great purpose of his ministry. He came to be God's witness to a lost and corrupt world. That the world needed such a testimony, he does not shrink from telling the proud and powerful Roman Governor. And this is what Paul had in view, when he tells Timothy, that "before Pontius Pilate Christ testified the good confession." (1 Timothy 6:13)

The servants of Christ in every age must remember that our Lord's conduct in this place is meant to be their example. Like him we are to be witnesses to God's truth, salt in the midst of corruption, light in the midst of darkness, men and women not afraid to stand alone, and to testify for God against the ways of sin and the world. To do so may involve much trouble, and even persecution. But our responsibility is clear and plain. God has opened our hearts to see the truth about Jesus Christ and we should help others see that truth as far as we are able and trust the Holy Spirit to open their hearts to see it.

The last point that we should notice in these verses is the question that Pontius Pilate addressed to our Lord. We are told that when our Lord spoke of the truth, the Roman Governor replied, "What is truth?" We are not told with what motive this question was asked, nor does it appear on the face of the narrative that he who asked it waited for an answer. It seems far more likely that the saying was the sarcastic, sneering exclamation of one who did not believe that there was any such thing as "truth." It sounds like the language of one who had heard, from his earliest youth, so many barren speculations about "truth" among Roman and Greek philosophers, that he doubted its very existence. "Truth indeed! What is truth?"

Pilate is a sad example of life without God where everything is relative and human power and authority become man's truth. We should praise God everyday that he has opened our hearts to see the truth of Jesus Christ and that truth has set us free from the darkness of error and evil!

Day 5
Jesus' Punishment by Pilate
John 19:1-16

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" 6 When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

These verses exhibit to our eyes a wonderful picture, a picture which ought to be deeply interesting to all who profess and call themselves Christians. Like every great historical picture, it contains special points on which we should fix our attention. Above all, it contains three life-like portraits, which we shall find useful to examine in order.

The first portrait in the picture is that of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. We see the Savior of mankind scourged, crowned with thorns, mocked, smitten, rejected by his own people, unjustly condemned by a judge who saw no fault in him, and finally delivered up to a most painful death. Yet this was he who was the eternal Son of God, whom the Father's countless angels delighted to honor. This was he who came into the world to save sinners, and after living a blameless life for thirty years, spent the last three years of his time on earth in going about doing good, and preaching the Gospel. Surely the sun never shone on a more wondrous sight since the day of its creation!

Let us admire that love of Christ which Paul declares, "surpasses knowledge," and let us see an endless depth of meaning in the expression. There is no earthly love with which it can be compared, and no standard by which to measure it. It is a love that stands alone. Never let us forget when we ponder this tale of suffering, that Jesus suffered for our sins, the Just for the

unjust, that he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and that with his stripes we are healed.

Let us diligently follow the example of his patience in all the trials and afflictions of life, and specially in those which may be brought upon us by religious persecution. When he was reviled, he did not revile; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him that judges righteously. Let us arm ourselves with the same mind. Let us consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners without a murmur, and strive to glorify him by suffering well, no less than by doing well.

The second portrait in the picture before us, is that of the unbelieving Jews who favored our Lord's death. We see them for three or four long hours obstinately rejecting Pilate's offer to release our Lord, fiercely demanding his crucifixion, savagely claiming his condemnation to death, persistently refusing to acknowledge him as their king, declaring that they had no king but Caesar, and finally accumulating on their own heads the greater part of the guilt of his murder. Yet, these were the children of Israel and the seed of Abraham, to whom pertained the promises of God for a messiah. These were men who professed to look for a Prophet like unto Moses, and a son of David who was to set up a kingdom as Messiah.

There is such a thing as judicial blindness; and it is the last and worst judgment which God can send upon leaders and nations. He who, like the Pharaoh in Egypt, is often reprov'd but refuses to receive reproof, will finally have a heart harder than stone, and a conscience past any feeling of guilt. This was the state of the Jewish nation during the time of our Lord's ministry, culminating in their sin of deliberate rejection of Jesus, the Son of God, when Pilate desired to let him go. There is no worse judgment from God than for people to be given over to their own wicked hearts and the devil. Praise the Lord that he preserved a remnant of Jews who were open to the truth about Jesus and would be the foundation of his church.

The third, and last portrait in the picture before us, is that of Pontius Pilate. We see a Roman Governor, a man of rank and high position, an imperial representative of the most powerful nation on earth, a man who ought to have been just and equitable, doing the opposite. We see him knowing what was right, and yet afraid to act up to his knowledge, convinced in his own conscience that he ought to acquit the prisoner before him, and yet afraid to do it lest he should displease his accusers, sacrificing the claims of justice to the fear of man, and sanctioning from sheer cowardice, the enormous crime of the murder of an innocent person.

Let us learn what happens when leaders have no high principles within them, and no faith in the reality of a God above them. The lowest laborer who has grace and fears God, is a nobler being in the eyes of his Creator than the king, ruler, or statesman, whose first aim it is to please the people. To see clearly what is right before God, and yet for the sake of popularity to do wrong, this may seem to some both right, statesmanlike, and wise. But it is a character which no Christian can ever regard with respect. Being righteous and living a righteous life is the standard for those who lead and those who follow. Jesus stood as a righteous man before unrighteous men as a shining example for us to follow as his disciples.

Day 6
Jesus' Crucifixion
John 19:17-27

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things.

When we read this passage, we get a deep sense of man's debt to Christ. Great must be the love of the Lord Jesus to sinners, when he could voluntarily endure such sufferings for their salvation. Great must be the sinfulness of sin, when such an amount of vicarious suffering was needed in order to provide redemption.

We should observe, first, in this passage, how our Lord had to bear his cross when he went forth from the city to Golgotha. We need not doubt that there was a deep meaning in all this circumstance. For one thing, it was part of that depth of humiliation to which our Lord submitted as our substitute. One portion of the punishment imposed on the vilest criminals, was that they should carry their own cross when they went to execution; and this portion was laid upon our Lord. In the fullest sense he was reckoned a sinner, and counted a curse for our sakes.

The practical lesson which all true Christians should gather from the fact before us, is one that should be kept in continual remembrance. Like our Master, we must be content to go forth in the world as his followers bearing his reproach. We must come out from the world and be separate, and be willing to stand up for him and his ways. Like our Master, we must be willing to take up our cross daily, and to be persecuted both for our doctrine and our practice. It would be well for the Church if there was more of the true cross to be seen among Christians! To wear material crosses as an ornament, to place material crosses on churches and tombs, all this is cheap and easy work, and entails no trouble. But to have Christ's cross in our hearts, to carry Christ's cross in our daily walk, to know the fellowship of his sufferings, to be made conformable to his death, to have crucified affections, and live crucified lives, all this requires faith and self-denial. The times require less of the cross outwardly and more of the cross within.

We should observe, secondly, in this passage, how our Lord was crucified as a King. The title placed over our Lord's head made this plain and unmistakable. The reader of Greek, or Latin, or Hebrew, could not fail to see that he who hung on the central cross of the three on Golgotha, had a royal title over his head. The overruling hand of God so ordered matters, that the strong

will of Pilate overrode for once the wishes of the malicious Jews. In spite of the chief priests, our Lord was crucified as “the King of the Jews.”

It was fit and right that so it should be. Even before our Lord was born, the angel Gabriel declared to the Virgin Mary, “The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:32, 33) The very week before the crucifixion, the multitude who accompanied our Lord at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, had cried, “Blessed is the King of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord.” (John 12:13)

The current belief of all godly Jews was, that when Messiah, the Son of David came, he would come as a King. A kingdom of heaven and a kingdom of God was continually proclaimed by our Lord throughout his ministry. A King indeed he was, as he told Pilate, of a kingdom utterly unlike the kingdoms of this world, but for all that a true King of a true kingdom, and a Ruler of true subjects. As such he was born. As such he lived. As such he was crucified. And as such he will come again, and reign over the whole earth, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Let us take care that we ourselves know Christ as our King and his kingdom is set up in our hearts by having repented from our sins and trusted Christ to save us. Those who have obeyed him as King in this world will be the only ones who find him their Savior at the last day. Let us cheerfully give him our faith, love, and obedience, which he desires from us. Above all, let us never be afraid to own ourselves his faithful subjects, soldiers, servants and followers, however much he may be despised by the world. A day will soon come when the despised Nazarene who hung on the cross, shall take to himself his great power and reign, and put down every enemy under his feet. The kingdoms of this world, as the OT prophets foretold, shall be swept aside, and become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. And at last every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Lastly, John describes the soldiers callously gambling for the garments of Jesus as they had done in the past for those who had been crucified before him. Little did the godless soldiers know that they were fulfilling a prophecy written about a thousand years before this event by David in Psalm 22. This psalm is a messianic psalm describing the sufferings of the messiah which can be seen in the life of Jesus. David says in v.16-18, “For dogs encompass me. A company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

This was the scene at Christ’s crucifixion. It is amazing that a prediction so exceedingly specific should be fulfilled to the letter by a godless military in crucifying the messiah. But this was God’s plan all along and he spoke details of this plan through the OT prophets so that when those events occurred, we would know the true identity of Jesus and the true significance of his death on the cross. The OT prophecies are one of the great apologetics proving that Jesus was who claimed to be, the Son of God sent from God the Father to redeem us for himself. This should strengthen our faith in Jesus as King and give us great joy in anticipating the coming of his kingdom.

Day 7
Jesus' Death on the Cross
John 19:28-37

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." And again, another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

Crucifixion is a very slow and painful death. If a man was strong enough, he could hang for 24 hours before he died, but it would be with intense suffering. The Gospel narratives show that our Lord and Savior hung for six hours and then died, not just because he was particularly weakened by his beatings, but also because he, not his persecutors, would choose the time of his death for the sins of mankind according to God's redemptive plan.

In reading this passage, let us mark, for one thing the peculiarly solemn saying which came from our Lord's lips just before he died. John relates that when Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and then bowed his head and gave up his spirit. It is surely not too much to say, that of all the seven famous sayings of Christ on the cross, none is more remarkable than this, which John alone has recorded. In the statement "It is finished" Jesus reveals that at his death which would come in just a moment, all that he had come to accomplish was complete. This included all the known and unknown sufferings which he came to endure as our substitute, the Mosaic Ceremonial law which he came to perfectly fulfill as the true Sacrifice for sin, the many prophecies God had given which he came to accomplish, and the great work of man's redemption from sin.

We rest our spiritual lives and destinies on Christ's "finished work." We need not fear that either sin, or Satan, or law shall condemn us at the last day. We have a Savior who has done all, paid all, accomplished all, performed all that is necessary for our salvation. When we look at our own works, we may well be ashamed of their imperfections. But when we look at the finished work of Christ, we may feel peace.

We should mark, secondly, in these verses, the reality and truth of Christ's death. We are told that one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and blood and water flowed out. This incident, small as it may seem at first sight, supplies probable proof that the heart of our blessed Lord was pierced and this blood and water showed that our Savior was dead. He did not merely faint or become unconscious as those who deny the resurrection propose. Great, indeed, is the

importance of this fact. We must all see, on a moment's reflection, that without a real death there could be no real sacrifice; that without a real death there could be no real resurrection; and that without a real death and real resurrection, the whole of Christianity is a house built on sand, and has no foundation at all. Little indeed did that reckless Roman soldier dream that he was a mighty helper of our holy faith when he thrust his spear into our Lord's side.

We should mark, lastly, in these verses, the specific prophecies that John points out were fulfilled as Jesus Christ was crucified. John mentions that Jesus' legs were not broken and his side was pierced as the specific actions predicted by OT prophets. In Psalm 34:20, David writes, "He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken." In Zechariah 12:10, God proclaims through Zechariah, "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn." These prophecies were fulfilled at this time.

There were frequent fulfillments of prophetic Scripture throughout every part of Christ's crucifixion. All combine to prove one and the same thing. They prove that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ at Golgotha was a thing foreseen and predetermined by God. Hundreds of years before the crucifixion, every part of the solemn transaction was arranged by God and the minutest particulars were revealed to the Prophets. From first to last it was a thing foreknown, and every portion of it was in accordance with a settled plan and design. In the highest, fullest sense, when Christ died, he "died according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3.)

We need not hesitate to regard such fulfillments of prophecy as strong evidence of the Divine authority of God's Word. The Prophets foretell not only Christ's death, but the particulars of his death. It is impossible to explain so many accomplishments of predicted circumstances upon any other theory. To talk of luck, chance, and accidental coincidence, as sufficient explanation, is preposterous and absurd. The only rational account is the inspiration of God. The Prophets who foretold the particulars of the crucifixion, were inspired by him who foresees the end from the beginning, and the books they wrote under the Spirit's inspiration ought not to be read as human compositions, but Divine. Great indeed are the difficulties of all who pretend to deny the inspiration of the Bible. It really requires more unreasoning faith to be an unbeliever than to be a Christian. Let us hold fast to these inspired Scriptures that God has so graciously given to us!

DAY 8
Jesus' Body Entombed
John 19:38-20:10

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

There is peculiar interest attached to these five verses of Scripture. They introduce us to a stranger, of whom we never heard before. They bring in an old friend, whose name is known wherever the Bible is read. They describe the most important funeral that ever took place in this world. From each of these three points of interest we may learn a very profitable lesson.

We learn, for one thing, from these verses, that there are some true Christians in the world of whom very little is known. The case of Joseph of Arimathea teaches this very plainly. Here is a man named among the friends of Christ, whose very name we never find elsewhere in the New Testament, and whose history, both before and after this crisis, is completely withheld from the Church. He comes forward to do honor to Christ, when the Apostles had forsaken him and fled. He cares for him and delights to do Him service, even when dead, not because of any miracle which he saw him do, but out of free and gratuitous love. He does not hesitate to confess himself one of Christ's friends, at a time when Jews and Romans alike had condemned him as a malefactor, and put him to death. Surely the man who could do such things must have had strong faith! Can we wonder that, wherever the Gospel is preached, throughout the whole world, this pious action of Joseph is told of as a memorial of him?

Let us hope and believe that there are many Christians in every age, who, like Joseph, are the Lord's hidden servants, unknown to the Church and the world, but well known to God. Even in Elijah's time there were seven thousand in Israel who had never bowed the knee to Baal, although the desponding prophet knew nothing of it. Perhaps, at this very day, there are saints in the back

streets of some of our great cities, or in the lanes of some of our rural towns, who make no noise in the world, and yet love Christ and are loved by him. Ill-health, or poverty, or the daily cares of some laborious calling, render it impossible for them to come forward in public; and so they live and die comparatively unknown. Yet the last day may show an astonished world that some of these very people, like Joseph, honored Christ as much as any on earth, and that their names were written in heaven.

We learn, for another thing, from these verses, that there are some servants of Christ whose latter end is better than their beginning. The case of Nicodemus teaches that lesson very plainly. The only man who dared to help Joseph in his holy work of burying our Lord, was one who at first "came to Jesus by night," and was nothing better than an ignorant inquirer after truth. At a later period in our Lord's ministry we find this same Nicodemus coming forward with somewhat more boldness, and raising in the Council of the Pharisees the question, "Does our law judge any man, before it hears him, and knows what he does?" (John 7:51.)

Then, we see him in the passage before us, ministering to our Lord's dead body, and not ashamed to take an active part in giving to the despised Nazarene an honorable burial. How great the contrast between the man who timidly crept into the Lord's lodging to ask a question, and the man who brought seventy-five pounds weight of myrrh and aloes to anoint his dead body! Yet it was the same Nicodemus. How great may be a man's growth in grace, and faith, and knowledge, and courage, in the short space of three years. We should strive to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as Nicodemus did (2 Peter 3:18).

We learn, lastly, from these verses, that the burial and entombment of Jesus' body gave a powerful testimony of the resurrection of his body three days later. John says, "So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews." The Jews would wrap the body in linen strips mixed with the spices to keep them together and give a fragrant smell. They would then put a linen cloth over the face and head rather than wrap the head. This made it physically impossible for Jesus to have faked his death and resurrection. If he had not died and had revived in the tomb as some secular scholars propose, he would not have been able to get himself out of the wrappings to leave the tomb.

Peter and John ran to the tomb to see what had happened after Mary reported the body of Jesus missing. What they saw when they looked into the tomb were "the linen cloths lying there" most likely in the position in which they held the body, but there was not a body in it. What an incredible sight! Then they saw the face cloth lying by itself folded up by itself. Could Jesus have revived and done that himself? No. If the disciples or someone else had stolen the body, would they have taken the time to unwrap the body? No. If Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, this is the scene that John and Peter would have encountered. The condition of the linen wrappings in the tomb was consistent with the disciples claim of resurrection, not with the false claims that Jesus revived and left the tomb or that his body was stolen. Our faith in the resurrection is consistent with the evidence left at the scene of the tomb. But we have even greater confirmation of our faith. Jesus himself appeared to the apostles in his resurrected body as we shall see. Peter and John left the tomb that day, not realizing they were about to see their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ alive!

Day 9
Jesus' Resurrection
John 20:11-18

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

The meeting of the Lord Jesus and Mary Magdalene immediately after his resurrection, described in these verses, is a narrative unique to John. No other Evangelist has been inspired to record it. We see, first, in these verses, Mary's great love for Jesus Christ. It is a fact that should be carefully noted that Mary Magdalene would not leave the sepulcher, when Peter and John went away to their own home. Love for her gracious Master would not let her leave the place where he had been lain. Where he was now she could not tell. What had become of him she did not know. But love made her stay at the empty tomb, where Joseph and Nicodemus had recently laid him. Love made her cling to the last place where his precious body had been seen by mortal eyes.

And her love reaped a rich reward. She saw the angels whom Peter and John had never observed. She actually heard them speak and had comforting words addressed to her. She was the first to see our Lord after he rose from the dead, the first to hear his voice, the first to hold conversation with him. Can anyone doubt that this was written for our learning? Jesus meets Mary at her point of need and blesses her for her devotion to him. He shows her compassion and love by appearing to her and speaking to her. He gives her the privilege of being the first to see him resurrected from the dead and take that message to the apostles.

This is highly significant not only because Jesus blesses her for her devotion, but also because he does not follow that culture's view of women. At this time, the testimony of women was not considered acceptable to establish a fact in a court of law, yet Jesus chose her to give testimony to his disciples that he had risen from the dead. In his ministry, Jesus elevated the status and role of women as followers of Christ.

We see, secondly, in these verses, that Mary was devoted to Christ, but still was human and had fears and sorrows when facing this extreme circumstance. We are told that Mary stood at the sepulcher weeping, and wept as if nothing could comfort her. She wept when the angels spoke to her; "Woman," they said, "why are you weeping?" She was weeping still when our Lord spoke to her, "Woman," He also said, "why are you weeping?" She voiced her fear and sorrow

when she said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Yet all this was happening just as Jesus had predicted was necessary for the redemption of mankind. Jesus had told her and his other disciples that he would rise again from the dead. For that to happen, there must be a missing body and an empty tomb. But like the other disciples Mary struggled with the predictions of Jesus and couldn't grasp them.

We have here a faithful picture of many a believer's experience? Life is filled with extreme circumstances where God is at work behind the scenes, but we can only see what is happening in the physical realm. Mary and the other disciples could only see death by their physical eyes and could not see God working in this situation with eyes of faith. In love and gentleness, Jesus appears to Mary to open her eyes of faith and use her to open the eyes of faith in his other disciples.

Let us pray for more faith and patience, and allow more time for the full development of God's purposes. Let us believe that things are often working together for our good, our peace and joy as Romans 8:28 states, even though it seems at the time to contain nothing but bitterness and sorrow. If Mary had found the seal of the tomb unbroken, and her Master's body lying cold within, she might well have wept! The very absence of the body which made her weep, was a sign of something good, even incredible, and a cause of joy for herself and all mankind.

We see, lastly, in these verses, how kindly and graciously our Lord speaks of his disciples. He bids Mary Magdalene carry a message to them as "his brethren." He now reveals the wonderful relationship all his disciples would share with him and God the Father which his death made possible. They were now to be called his brothers and sisters in the family of God. Before he had called them "disciples," then "friends," but now "brothers" (and sisters)!

It was just three days earlier that they had all forsaken him shamefully, and fled. Yet this merciful Master speaks as if all was forgiven and forgotten. His first thought is to bring back the wanderers, to bind up the wounds of their consciences, to reanimate their courage, to restore them to their former place. This was indeed a love that passes knowledge. To trust deserters, and to show confidence in backsliders, was a compassion which man can hardly understand. So true is that word of David, "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:13-14)

Let us leave the passage with the blessed thought that Jesus Christ never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) As he dealt with his erring disciples in the morning of his resurrection, so will he deal with all who believe and love him, until he comes again.

Day 10
Jesus' Resurrection Appearances
John 20:19-20, 24-29

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord...

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 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."

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." 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." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Did Jesus rise bodily from the dead? Secular scholars say "no" because they do not believe in miraculous supernatural acts by a powerful and sovereign God of the universe. They believe that his disciples hallucinated the resurrection appearances of Christ. However, they were not there. The ones who were there and were eyewitnesses of Jesus such as John the apostle who wrote this Gospel, recorded these two appearances as eyewitnesses of these incredible events.

In these two appearances, we should observe first, the remarkable evidence which our Lord supplied of his own resurrection. He graciously appealed to the senses of his trembling disciples. He showed them "his hands and his side." He encouraged them to see with their own eyes, that he had a glorified body, and that he was not a spirit. "Handle me and see," were his words, according to Luke, "For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." Great indeed was the condescension of our blessed Master, in thus coming down to the feeble faith of the eleven Apostles!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ proved his claim to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-20). No one before and no one after ever rose from the dead by his own power except Jesus. Only God who became a man could do so.

These two appearances, secondly, also provide a testimony to our hope in Christ that one day he will bring our bodies out of the grave into a resurrection state. These appearances reveal several characteristics of Jesus' resurrected body. Jesus' resurrection entailed the transformation of his dead physical body into a glorified spiritual body that could be touched and felt. It also had flesh and bones (blood is not mentioned as it is no longer needed) which were glorified. In the same incident described by Luke (Luke 24:36-49) Jesus eats some fish which means his glorified body is capable of eating. When he originally appeared before them, it showed that his body was capable of moving from the spiritual realm to the physical realm and thus could exist in either realm.

In Philippians 3:20-21, Paul tells us that our resurrected bodies will be like Jesus' resurrected body. He says, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." No matter what happens to us and our bodies in the physical realm we can be assured that we will one day stand before Jesus Christ in glorified bodies and worship him. What a hope we have in Jesus!

In his second appearance, Jesus speaks specifically with doubting Thomas. We should observe thirdly, how kind and merciful Christ is to doubting believers. Nowhere, perhaps, in all the four Gospels, do we find this part of our Lord's character so beautifully illustrated as in the story before our eyes. It is hard to imagine anything more tiresome and provoking than the conduct of Thomas, when even the testimony of ten faithful brethren had no effect on him, and he doggedly declared, "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."

But it is impossible to imagine anything more patient and compassionate, than our Lord's treatment of this weak disciple. He does not reject him, or dismiss him, or excommunicate him. He comes again at the end of a week, and apparently for the special benefit of Thomas. He deals with him according to his weakness, like a gentle mother dealing with a difficult child, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." John does not record that Thomas attempted to touch Jesus' hands and side. Instead, Thomas falls down on his knees in humble belief and makes the clearest declaration of the true identity of Jesus of all the disciples. Jesus is Lord and God.

A passage of Scripture like this, we need not doubt, was written for the special comfort of all true believers. The Holy Spirit knew well that at times we can doubt the Lord. The Holy Spirit has taken care to supply abundant evidence that Jesus is rich in patience as well as compassion, and that he bears with our weaknesses as humans and will strengthen our faith as he did for Thomas.

We should observe lastly, in these verses, how Christ was addressed by Thomas as "God," and how he responded to him. The noble exclamation which burst from the lips of Thomas, when convinced that his Lord had risen from the dead, "My Lord and my God," admits of only one meaning. It was a distinct testimony to our blessed Lord's deity. It was a clear and unmistakable declaration that Thomas believed Jesus to be not only man, but God. The Jewish people recited Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." It was a confession that the Lord God of the OT was their God and that he was the one and only God, no other existed. This was the center of their faith. Thomas declared, as a Jewish Christian, that the risen Jesus was his Lord and God. Here Thomas showed he understood that God was a Trinity, three persons in one God.

Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for such a lofty claim. Instead, he said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Thomas gave the proper response of a human being who is in the presence of the resurrected and glorified Jesus, but our Lord says that those who are blessed are those who have not seen me in my presence on earth, but believe that I am Lord and God. He is talking about every believer that believes the testimony of the apostles to the true identity of Jesus Christ through his resurrection from the dead as they proclaimed it verbally and through the four gospels of the New Testament. Most people that have ever trusted Christ did so through the testimony of the apostles in the gospels proclaimed by Christ's followers through the last 2100 years. Jesus says

they are blessed because they did not need to be in Christ's presence on earth to believe in him and they received eternal life with him forever.

Let us settle it firmly in our minds that the deity of Christ is one of the great and central foundation truths of Christianity. Let us bless God that the deity of our Lord is taught everywhere in the Scriptures, and stands on evidence that can never be overthrown. Jesus can save us because he is God. Jesus will save us because he is God. All that Jesus has promised us in the future in resurrected glorified bodies will come true because he is God. The message of the resurrection is a message of a great hope in a great God!