

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

John 19:16b – 20:31

Key Verse 20:31

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Recently a Time magazine editor in response to the pastor who burned a Koran and the Afgans who rioted and killed said, “Burning the Koran is much more inflammatory than burning the Bible because the Koran comes directly from God and the Bible doesn’t.” Throughout history many people have tried to discredit the Bible. But they have failed because the Bible is the inspired word of God testifying about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And this is John’s inspired account.

Up to this point Jesus had been arrested, tried and sentenced to die by crucifixion. While for us Jesus’ crucifixion is an extraordinary event, for them, in Jesus’ day it was nothing new. It was not uncommon for people to be crucified. I heard the Romans had one particular season where they’d been at war and they averaged 500 crucifixions a day for almost 3 months, and, so this event was a very common occurrence, something that happened frequently in their land.

And here is where we pick up the story in John Chapter 19. Take a look at 16b-18. “So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).¹⁸ Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.” This fulfills the prophecy Isaiah made 700 years earlier, “where Jesus would be killed between two transgressors.” (Isa 53:13)

“Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek.” (v19-20) The chief priests of the Jews protested Pilate. ‘Do not write the King of the Jews, but rather, this man claimed to be King of the Jews.’ Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written.’”

“When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.²⁴ “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, “They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” So this is what the soldiers did. This was promised nearly 1000 years before Jesus in Psalm 22:18. ²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,”²⁷ and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

That’s the account of Jesus’ crucifixion. It’s very simple, plain and straightforward. John does not add a lot of emotion or vivid detail. He doesn’t tell us about Jesus’ bleeding, open wounds or how his beard was yanked out. In some ways, John’s is the most brief, and least dramatic account of Jesus’ crucifixion. It reads like a newspaper just telling the facts of an event as they

occurred. There was nothing unusual in Jesus' crucifixion. This is how thousands of people in Rome were killed. They would be accused of something, tried and if found guilty, they would be sentenced to death by crucifixion. They would be flogged, whipped until the flesh was ripped off their back and would have to carry their own cross across their exposed shoulders, to their place of crucifixion. They would be nailed to that cross, and that's where they would hang and die. Above them would hang the charges that they were accused of and then a few family and friends would gather around the base of their cross and mourn and weep until they were dead.

The next section concerns Jesus' death. Verse 28: "Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.'" This is a fulfillment of Psalm 69:21. Verse 30 "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." That's it. Jesus was dead. It was all over.

"Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down." To me this is so hypocritical. The Jews want to get the area cleaned up before the big religious holiday comes. Because you know the kids couldn't have the Easter egg hunt with all those bodies hanging around. After all, when you're killing God, you don't want to ruin the religious holiday. So they ask the governor to speed up the process. Verse 32 continues, "The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other."³³ But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs."³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water." And this all happens again, according to the way the Bible promised. "The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe."(v35) Then John quotes Psalm 34:20, "Not one of His bones will be broken," and another Scripture in Zachariah 12:10, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

And then in verse 38 we see that Joseph of Arimathea, with help from Nicodemus and permission from Pilate, wraps Jesus' body with 75lbs of myrrh, aloes and spices and places it in the tomb he had prepared for himself. Joseph was a wealthy man and thus yet another prophecy is fulfilled where in Isaiah said "Jesus would be laid to death with the rich." (Isa 53:9)

Some people claim that the resurrection never happened or that Jesus never died. One of their theories is that because Jesus' legs were not broken, so he could have still been alive by propping himself up. But John's account tells us very clearly that Jesus died. In fact, that was the Roman soldiers' job: to make sure the criminals were dead. That's why one of them plunged the spear into Jesus' side. He was convinced that Jesus was dead. In addition to this, if Jesus had still been breathing, Joseph and Nicodemus would not have wrapped him up and waste 75lbs of expensive spices. This was the factual account that John states as an eyewitness of the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus. John recorded the facts, almost too emotionless. It was clear that at the end of chapter 19 that Jesus was dead and buried. This was a fulfillment of yet another prophecy, one that Jesus quoted over and over again. This would have been a sad story if it ended here because a good man, an innocent man was murdered by corrupt leaders. But thank God that the story doesn't end here. We still have chapter 20.

Take a look at verse 1. ⁴¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.” It was early Sunday morning and still dark. If the resurrection was made up, Mary would not have been included for 2 reasons. First, she wasn't a good character witness. She didn't have a good reputation. Luke said that she had been possessed by 7 demons. (Lk 8:2) If you are going to make up a story you wouldn't use a demon possessed person as your eye witness. Second, she was a woman and as such she would not have been welcome to give a testimony in a court of law. So if the resurrection was made up they would not have picked a woman, especially someone of her reputation to be the first witness. But because Mary loves Jesus the most we find her at the tomb before everyone else. Historically what we see is that those who have sinned a lot, love Jesus a lot. If you have been forgiven of a lot, your love for Jesus is in proportion to what you have been forgiven. And in a moment, God is going to honor Mary's faithfulness in a beautiful way.

When Mary gets to the tomb she finds the stone that was blocking the entrance is gone. At the sight of the open tomb, she is distressed and goes running to Peter and John and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!”. (v2b) She was worried about grave robbers, or people who might want to desecrate Jesus' body. Her first thought is that someone was messing with the grave, not that Jesus rose. So Peter and John go running to the tomb to investigate what the heck is going on. Verses 6-9 tell us, “Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there,⁷ as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)” As I said earlier the body was wrapped in 75lbs of spices. The body probably was not stolen because the thieves would not take the time to unwrap the body and then fold up the clothes. John reports this very unemotionally. He simply states the facts. He probably doesn't even realize the impact he would have later by just stating the facts. He is very detailed. John is the first to understand that Jesus had risen. He is the first to put the pieces of puzzle together and he believes. On the one hand, Mary may have loved Jesus the most but John was the first to have faith.

So Peter and John leave Mary there and go back home. And as Mary is standing outside the tomb crying, she looks in one last time. But this time she sees “two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.”¹³ They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don't know where they have put him.” (v12-13) If I had been there I would have freaked out because the tomb was empty a minute ago. But she is completely un-phased, maybe because she is overcome by sorrow so she doesn't realize what's happening, which might explain what happened next. Take a look at verses 14-15. “At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.¹⁵ “Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Mary is looking right at Jesus and she doesn't recognize Him. She is overcome with grief. Then Jesus says to her, “Mary” and immediately she turns toward Him and cries out, “Teacher!” All it took was for Jesus to speak a single word and Mary knew who He was. It's true, the sheep do recognize their shepherd's voice and the Shepherd knows

their name. (Jn 10) Here Jesus honors Mary's faithfulness as He spends some personal time with her as he says, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (v17) I imagine her holding on to Jesus not wanting to let Him go, as a mother to a lost child. And Jesus gives her a message of hope as he says, my Father and your Father, my God and your God. Before Jesus' resurrection all people stand as God's enemy because of sin. But because of His resurrection we can call God our Father. Then Jesus gave Mary a mission to tell the others. She is the first person who Jesus commissioned into the mission of the church. And she carried out her mission running to tell the others, "I have seen the Lord!"

Take a look at v19-20. "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'"²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord." The disciples were locked in a room, scared to death, fearing for their future when Jesus appeared to them in that locked room. However when He appeared Jesus said, "Peace be with you." This declaration gives them great joy. This is the hand of God reaching out to them. Because before this they were the enemies of God, but after Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus extended the peace of God to them. Once they have been given peace, Jesus gives them a job to do, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."(v21b) In John's gospel we see a series of sendings. The Father sent the Son and the Father & Son sent the Holy Spirit, and the Father, Son & Holy Spirit sent us. Acts 17:26 tells us that God determines the times and places in which we live. If you think about this, it's really amazing because out of all history, God chose to put you right where you are. And God gives each person their specific mission or purpose in life.

And then Jesus equips them to do the work, v22," And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Why did Jesus give them the Holy Spirit? Because the Holy Spirit is the one that changes people's hearts. This is an echo of Genesis 2:7, when God breathed into Adam the breath of life and Adam became a living being. In the same way Jesus breathed upon the disciples and they became new beings through the Holy Spirit. What this means is that after Jesus' resurrection we have a whole new world with a whole new start. Everything is fresh with a new beginning. Verse 23 gives the function of the church. "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." It's not that the church forgives sin, that's God's job, but by sharing the gospel is the way we participate in the forgiveness of sins. When we tell others about Jesus and what He has done for them, they can receive forgiveness and this is how we participate in the gospel.

Next Jesus appears to Thomas. "Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came."²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.'" (v24-25) Unfortunately Thomas usually gets a bad rap. Thomas was a guy who loved God, it's just that he had some questions. He has a good healthy skepticism. He isn't going to be pushed by the other disciples to just believe, he wants to check it out himself. He says if I see Jesus alive, I'll believe, if I don't I will go back to Judaism. "A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be

with you! Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” (v26-27) What’s neat about this is, that no one told Jesus what Thomas said. He just knows it because He’s God. Jesus answered all of Thomas’ questions. Each of us starts out like Thomas. We have questions and Jesus can answer them. But there comes a time that we have to get over our questions and come to belief. Thomas had to get over his questions and believe and get on with life. “Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” (v28) Thomas proclaims his belief that Jesus is God and worships Jesus as Lord. Verse 29 talks about us. “Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” We are blessed because we have not seen like Thomas and yet we believe.

Earlier in the week you read about events that happened in the paper or on the internet and you believed that they happened, sport scores, wars, storms, car wrecks, whatever. There are lots of things that you believed even though you were not present to see those things. The reason you believe them is because there were accounts written down by reliable people, the news reporters. If those reporters were lying there are enough other witnesses that would come and call them on their mistake and say they published a lie. So you and I base our whole understanding of the world upon faithful recording and eye witness testimony. So does God. That’s how this works. God has faithfully recorded through John, the eye witness, the events of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. How do we know that Napoleon or George Washington ever lived? Well, whether you believe or not, Napoleon lived because there is evidence to show that he existed. It’s the same with Jesus. Eye witnesses were present. This is why it is important to read the scriptures because they talk about Jesus.

Another thing you have to look at is the motive of the person who is writing down the event. In no way is this writing beneficial to those who are reporting it. The men who write these things get killed. By the time that John writes this gospel he has seen the other disciples get murdered in bloody and brutal ways. And John writes this down probably knowing that it’s his death sentence. He is not writing this for fame, popularity or wealth. John summarizes his writing of the gospel in verses 30-31. Let’s read them. “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.”³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Matthew, Mark and Luke recorded 36 miracles that Jesus performed while John included 7, 5 of which are unique. Essentially John is saying, “I could have told you a million stories about Jesus but I only told you a few and finished it with His greatest miracle: His resurrection. The reason I’ve told you these is so that you may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and have life.”

The Bible gives us many witnesses of Jesus. Starting with the prophets, and continuing with the disciples, and Paul who said there were many others; large groups 500 at a time. In fact you will find witnesses of Jesus even today. A witness of Jesus simply tells what they have seen. I am a witness of Jesus. I have seen the Lord. I have seen Him work in my own heart and many others who did not believe at first. Jesus has risen. Jesus rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God in heaven. If the resurrection of Jesus is just a human story, made up and not the word of God, you can just throw it away. We should then live our life with no holds barred. As Paul said to the Corinthian’s, “Let’s eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” (1 Cor 15:32) Let’s live it up

because life is short. If there is no God, then sin all you want. But if Jesus rose from the dead and He is God then that changes everything. Jesus is the Christ, He is the Son of God and His resurrection proves He is who He says He is. And if you are a true witness of Jesus Christ you can't go on living as before because Jesus is alive. This means that how we perceive things, how we react to things and how we treat people, and how we view God and how we live life are practically affected by Jesus' resurrection. Our life MUST change. We can not remain as we are. We must be like Mary and go and tell others. We must be like Thomas and stop doubting and believe. We must be like John and have faith. We must be like the many witnesses before us and proclaim, that Jesus has risen and we have seen the Lord. Who do you think Jesus is? Is this just a story or have you witnessed the resurrection? Is Jesus your God, is He your Savior?