

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

John 20:19-31

Hiding in a room with the doors locked “for fear of the Jews.” That’s where Jesus found his disciples the evening of his resurrection day! It’s easy to be hard on them and wonder, “What were they *thinking*? Shouldn’t they have been celebrating?” However, we should walk in their sandals before criticizing them. They knew Jesus had been crucified. Some, no doubt, had seen him die. They had seen the display in the heavens and on earth when God’s Son gave up his spirit (Matthew 27:45, 51-54). They had heard from the women that Jesus had risen, but they hadn’t seen him. Had the women been hallucinating because they *wanted* to see Jesus? How could it possibly be true? Confusion must have ruled their thoughts and conversation that evening. What makes us think we’d have responded any differently?

Jesus must have looked somewhat different in his new spiritual body. Mary didn’t recognize him at first outside the tomb (John 20:14). And apparently Jesus’ appearance to the disciples didn’t immediately allay their fears because his first words were “Peace be with you!” Then he showed the disciples the wounds in his hands and side to certify his identity. It may have taken a moment, but finally the disciples’ fears and confusion fell away, and they were overjoyed!

It’s easy to think that those living in Jesus’ day had an advantage over us in developing faith. But that’s not necessarily true. In actuality, we may have the advantage. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection didn’t fit the disciples’ expectations of the Messiah. When he died and then rose from the dead, they had to reconsider all their preconceived

notions of the Messiah. They had to match Jesus’ actions with what the Old Testament Scriptures predicted about the Messiah. Only then could they fully have faith.

Our advantage is that the results of their struggles are recorded for us in the Bible. We have Thomas’ declaration: “My Lord and my God!” We have the book of Acts that tells us of the disciples’ bold faith and proclamation of the good news about Jesus. And we have the epistles that explain details of faith and what it means. If one accepts that the Bible comes from God, all the evidence one could possibly need for faith is there.

Devotion for Teachers

The One Thing: Reread John 20:29. Jesus is talking about *you*! It takes great faith to believe when you can’t see or touch Jesus; that’s why he calls your relationship with him “blessed”

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: Do you ever feel like Thomas? Jesus revealed himself to Thomas and allayed his doubts. What doubts or faith questions do you have? Speak openly to God about them in prayer, and then look for ways God will reveal himself to you through Scripture, your pastor’s words, Christian friends, prayer, nature, or the promptings of the Holy Spirit.