

# Reimagining Your Soul Pt. 3

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     A man was walking his dog by a river and just casually bent down and picked up a stick and threw it onto the river. His dog walked across the water, picked up the stick and walked back across the water and dropped it at his feet.

Now he was a little bit surprised at this, so he thought, I'm just going to do that again. He picked the stick up, threw it onto the water, the dog walks across the water, picks up the stick and walks back across the water and drops it at the man's feet.

He said, I'm just going to try this one more time. So he does it a third time, the dog does the same thing. So he goes back to his neighbor and he says, could you come down to the river with me for a minute because I just want to show you something.

So his neighbor said, okay, fair enough. So they go down and the man picks up the stick, throws it onto the water. The dog walks out across the top of the water and walks back again across the water.

And he says to his neighbor, did you notice? I mean, did you notice anything unusual about that which you've just seen? His neighbor said, I did actually, your dog can't swim.

[ 1 : 1 3 ]     Sometimes we look, but we don't see. Or sometimes we see, but we will not believe our eyes. What I'm going to talk to you about this morning is a story of people who saw things but weren't sure they could believe what they were seeing.

And were struggling with it time and time again. So I'm going to read you some words from a book called the Gospel of John. John was a very good friend of Jesus of Nazareth.

And he was also his cousin. John's mother and Jesus' mother were sisters. So the words that John wrote were an eyewitness account. And here are the verses that I'm going to read to you.

By the way, when it's called a verse in the Bible, it's not a rhyming set of lines. It's just a way of dividing the Bible into manageable pieces. So it says this. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fears of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

After this, he said, after he said this, he showed them his hands inside. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, Peace be with you.

[ 2 : 3 3 ]     As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven.

If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. Now, Thomas, also known as Didymus, that means twin, one of the twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, We've 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 in his side, I will not believe.

So, first Sunday, it's Easter Sunday morning, and it wasn't called it then, but that's what we call it now. The disciples are gathered, doors are locked because they're afraid.

Their leader has been tortured to death, and they're afraid that they will be in line for execution themselves. And Thomas, the fisherman, was not with them.

[ 3 : 37 ] So before this, on the first Easter Sunday, Thomas, we know, was a fisherman. He was a friend of John, and he was called a twin.

And he was a bit of a melancholic character. He was a little bit depressive and a little bit skeptical. And he was a doubter. And in fact, he's called today Doubting Thomas, which is not really fair, because he doubted for a while, but then he'd changed his mind.

But he was quite a stubborn character. At one point, he said, well, let's go to Jerusalem with Jesus, and let's all die together. It was a slightly sort of melancholic, depressed state.

And then one time he said to Jesus, we don't know where you're going, so how can we possibly go with you, or how can we possibly follow you? So that's the kind of character Thomas was. So then the friends of Thomas experience what we call a resurrection appearance.

Jesus has died, and he shows himself to these people in a locked room. And they're overjoyed. They're astonished. They're overjoyed.

[ 4 : 42 ] Thomas is not there. So his friends start to tell him what they've seen, and Thomas says, I don't believe you. In fact, I won't believe it unless I see it with my own eyes.

And his friends have been trying to convince him all week that what they've seen is true. Now, maybe you have some Christian friends who've been trying to convince you for a long time that the Christian faith is true.

These friends were struggling to believe it themselves. The person who invited you here this morning may be struggling to believe it themselves, but they believe it. And they've invited you here because they want to try and encourage you to believe in the way that they believe.

So in that sense, we're in the same position. There are some people here this morning who are believers, and there are some people who may not be believers. And the believers may be trying to persuade you that what they believe is true.

That's what was going on here. For a whole week, Thomas would not believe it, unless I see it for myself. He was the kind of seeing is believing type of person.

[ 5 : 47 ] Have you heard that? Unless I see it, I won't believe it. Seeing is believing is a strange phrase because there's lots of things we don't see, and yet we believe. I don't know how many of you have seen your own heart.

If you have, generally you don't live to tell the tale. But there's lots of things we don't see, yet we believe are there. I've never seen my face. You've never seen your face.

Yeah, you've seen it in the mirror maybe or on a photograph, but actually looking at your own face or your own nose, you've not seen it. It's crazy, isn't it? Yet you believe you have a face.

I can assure you you do looking out. And I'm hoping that you believe I've got a face. But we haven't seen it, literally, have we?

But that's just silly illustrations. There are lots of things we don't see, and yet we believe. Anyway, so we get to the next Sunday, a whole week later. Thomas is there. Jesus offers Thomas exactly what he wants.

[ 6 : 48 ] Have a look. Have a look at my hands. Put your finger in the side where the spear went into me. Stop doubting and believe, Thomas. Stop doubting once and for all and believe.

And Thomas says this amazing phrase. He goes down on his knees and says, My Lord and my God. Listen to the words from John's Gospel.

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. He had to keep saying that because they were terrified.

Then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here. See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe. Thomas said to him, My Lord and my God.

Then Jesus told him, Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. So Thomas, you are happy.

[ 7 : 51 ] You're blessed. You've benefited because you've seen and believed. And then he says, There are those who have not seen and yet believed. Now that's you and me.

We haven't seen. We haven't seen what Thomas has seen. We haven't seen what the others have seen. And yet we're being invited to believe. And that's what Jesus is saying. Blessed are those who have not seen and have yet believed.

So Thomas goes on a journey from, I will not believe. It's not just, I'm not too sure. I will not believe it. To my Lord and my God.

It's one of the highest forms of praise that we read in what we call the New Testament. My Lord and my God. At the end of this service, I'm going to invite you to go on that journey.

I'm going to give you an opportunity to go from doubt or concern to belief. I'm going to invite you to become a believer if you're not already. If you are a believer, I'm going to invite you to ink over what you may have done in pencil.

[ 8 : 52 ] But I'm going to invite you and give you that opportunity. Now doubting is a human characteristic. We doubt all kinds of things, don't we? There are some people here this morning who may have been believers for a long time, but you know sometimes you doubt.

Sometimes you pray and you feel like there's a presence in the room. And sometimes you pray and you think, I'm just talking to the ceiling here.

Nothing's going on. That's a normal human thing. We doubt. It's faith in two minds. Sometimes I believe, sometimes I don't. Thomas was a believer to a point.

He'd already seen a lot of things that you and I haven't seen. And seeing is believing was one of his mottos, clearly. But his heart was being honest and being real.

And if you're doubting this morning, that's okay to be honest and real about it, whatever state of mind you're in. It's okay to doubt. It's not a good place to live all the time.

[ 9 : 55 ] That's why Jesus said to Thomas, stop doubting once and for all and believe. Now, why is this so important? And I want to remind you if you already believe why this is so important.

This isn't just a part of the Christian faith. This is the heart of it. This is the foundation of it. Why did they want Thomas to believe what they believed?

Why do your friends want you to believe what they believed? Christians believe that Jesus predicted his own death and his coming back to life.

Sixteen times, for example. From that time, Jesus Christ began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and be killed and be raised on the third day.

Now, if that didn't happen, when Jesus said it would happen, sixteen times, Jesus is shown to be mistaken or a liar or a fraud. But Jesus predicted that he was going to die and rise again from the dead.

[ 11 : 01 ] But more than that, Christians believe that Jesus' death has a meaning. We sang about it just a moment ago. Now, dead people, in my experience, are not very good at solving problems.

I don't find, if I want answers, that I go to a graveyard. And I don't mean this flippantly. If I go to a graveyard, it's to respect someone I know who's died and may be there.

But I don't expect them to help me. I don't expect a conversation. If Jesus Christ is not risen from the dead, he can't help me. But Jesus himself described his death as a solution to a problem.

Listen to what he said. I didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many. So he said that his death was a ransom.

A ransom solves a problem, doesn't it? Let me tell you what the problem is. God loves you. Whoever you are this morning, God loves you. God has a problem.

[12:07] He is also a God of justice. You're a person of justice. You do not believe that if someone commits a crime, they should get away with it, do you? You don't believe if someone does something, even a tiny bit wrong, that they should just get away with it.

God, who is even more perfect and holy and pure than any of us, he doesn't believe that either. So he loves us, but he doesn't want us to get away with all the things that we do, say, think, believe that are wrong.

So that's his problem. It becomes our problem because the things that we do create a fatal disease inside of us. It's got an old-fashioned name because it's an old-fashioned problem.

It's called sin and it kills us. So God's problem is this. He loves us with all his heart, but he cannot just sweep sin under the carpet.

So Jesus says, I will take that on myself. And that's what the ransom is. It's buying us out. But it's not paying the devil or paying another human being.

[13:10] God is paying himself. He is satisfying the demands of his own love and his own justice. So he says, listen, I've solved the problem. And Jesus said that that's what his death would do.

Now, if he hasn't risen again from the dead, we don't know that he solved the problem. Because he's still dead. That's why it's so important that we understand that. Jesus also said that if you believed in him, even though you die, you will live again.

Now, if he died and disappeared, it's a hollow promise, isn't it? If I said to you, if you come to me, I will teach you how to run an Olympic 1,500 meters race.

You come to me and I'll show you how to do it. And then you had a look at me and you thought, it doesn't really look like an Olympic 1,500 meter race. And then you say to me, well, have you ever run a 1,500 meter race?

I said, well, yes, once when I was at college and I came in pretty near the end and it was really slow. But I've never run in the Olympics and I've never trained anyone. So they say, well, what do you know about it?

[14:17] Well, nothing really. So it's a pretty hollow promise. If Jesus said, if you believe in me, even though you die, you will live again. And then he died and didn't come back again. It's a hollow promise, isn't it?

But he predicted it. He promised it and he raised other people from the dead. If Jesus Christ is not risen from the dead, the whole of the Christian faith is a waste of time.

What we've done this morning is a waste of time. If Jesus is not alive, that's why I'm laboring the pot. So let me just take you through some things that Thomas knew that we didn't and we don't.

And we'll bring it together. And let me explain to you why we believe Jesus rose from the dead. We have, in what we call the New Testament, four books.

They're called books. The Bible itself means book of books. We have, in the New Testament, four books called Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew and John were eyewitnesses.

[ 15 : 20 ] Mark used Peter, who was also an eyewitness, and Luke was a doctor who was a painstaking researcher and interviewed the eyewitnesses. Then we have Peter, who was an eyewitness himself, and Paul, who was a friend of the eyewitnesses.

John, for example, tells us, we have seen his glory. We have heard. We have seen with our own eyes. We have looked. Our hands have touched. Peter explains, we did not follow cleverly invented stories.

We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. Now, we've not seen directly like Thomas, so we have to look through their eyes and see if we can make sense of what they said.

So I'll tell you quickly what they said. And if you've heard this before, this is a refresher course, and use it when you're talking to people who don't know about the Christian faith. And I hope you do that regularly, and I hope it matters to you that you share your faith with other people.

But we're sharing it today. So let me tell you quickly the things they said. First of all, Jesus Christ lived. Secondly, he was crucified on a cross under a Roman governor called Pontius Pilate.

[ 16 : 27 ] A spear was put into his side, and blood and water came out, and they saw him dead. He was buried in a tomb, and they were all totally discouraged. Three days later, the tomb was empty, and the grave clothes were in a neat pile.

They say they saw him alive ten times over a period of 40 days. Ten days later, they preached that that he was alive after being convinced that he was.

Their lives were totally changed, as well as the lives of others. And history adds that billions of people since then have become believers in Jesus Christ. Thomas being one of them, and by the way, Thomas became a missionary to India, in case you want to know anything else of the story.

So what were they thinking? Well, they thought it was true. These followers thought it was true, and they expected others to believe it. They expected others to question the evidence because they questioned it themselves.

It might be worth noting, if you haven't noted already, the writings that were written about the story of Jesus were written not so long after his life and his death.

[ 17 : 38 ] The material had been preached and gathered long before it was written down, so they were contemporaries of the stories they were writing, and the listeners were contemporaries of the messages they were hearing.

So a quick investigation into this. Some people say that Jesus Christ did not live. There was no Jesus of Nazareth. He did not live at all.

Nice story, maybe, but there was no Jesus of Nazareth. Well, let me just give you a couple of things to help you. Five writers outside of the Gospels refer to Jesus of Nazareth.

Historians, writers, refer to him. We date our lives right back to what says B.C. and A.D.

Are we going to say we date our calendars back to something that never happened? Very odd. We have a church that's founded and billions of people are followers of a person who never existed.

[ 18 : 42 ] You might be interested to know that there's more evidence, documentary evidence, that Jesus Christ existed than Julius Caesar existed. Did you know that? Somebody came sore and conquered, didn't they?

Somebody made our road straight. They were going 20 miles an hour in those days as well. But there's more evidence that Jesus of Nazareth lived than Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great, for example.

I'm talking about documentary evidence. Thomas knew that. He'd seen it. We have to examine the eyewitnesses. There was somebody called Jesus of Nazareth who lived.

Some people say, well, what happened was he didn't die. So he lived, but he never died. It was some sort of hoax or he didn't die in the way they said.

It's called the swoon theory. And it was initially talked about by a man called Venturini and then a chap called John Allegro. And the story goes like this.

[ 19 : 40 ] When Jesus was on the cross, he didn't die, but he fainted. And when they took him down, they put him into the tomb and they wrapped him up.

And in the cool of the tomb, he came round. So let me just expand that a minute. Jesus was whipped at least 39 times. His back would have been torn to shreds.

They put a clump of thorns on his head. They put a robe across him. Then they took him to a cross. They put nails through his wrists and nails through his ankles.

And a spear was put in his side and blood and water came out. They took him down from the cross. They wrapped him up and put him in a cave. And in the cool of the cave, he comes round, unwraps himself.

Remember, his hands have got holes in him. His wrists have got holes in him. Pushes back a stone that is so huge that soldiers had trouble pushing it back on with hands that had got wounds in them.

[ 20 : 42 ] Then walks into Jerusalem on feet that have got holes in them after having left the grave clothes in a nice, neat little pile and convinces his followers that he's alive.

Now, if you believe that, I think you have more faith than I do. It just doesn't make any sense, does it? But the other thing we need to remember is the Romans knew how to kill people.

They'd been killing people all over the world for some time. They knew how to do it. But there's another thing. There's this spear that went into his side and blood and water came out.

Somebody who used to be a member here of this church is a gentleman called Ian McCall. And Ian McCall was president of the Royal College of Surgeons at one time. And I asked him what he thought this blood and water meant.

And he said, the heart of Jesus was burst already. The spear didn't kill him. He was dead already before the spear went into his side.

[ 21 : 40 ] And if you wrap someone up in linen and put them in a cool cave, they don't come round, they suffocate. He was dead. Thomas knew that. You can know it.

He was dead. Some people say, well, the women went to the wrong tomb. Now, I've made it clear.

I do not believe women are less intelligent than men. In fact, in many cases, more intelligent than men. But just suppose, for the sake of argument, that the women went to the wrong tomb.

Do you think Peter and John would have gone to the wrong tomb? But just for the sake of argument, the women and Peter and John all went to the wrong tomb. Do you think the Jewish authorities would have gone to the wrong tomb?

They knew the area. It was their patch. Just for the sake of argument, the women and Peter and John and the Jewish authorities and the Roman authorities who'd conquered the world all went to the wrong tomb.

[ 22 : 37 ] There's one person in Jerusalem who would not have gone to the wrong tomb. His name was Joseph because it was his tomb. Can you imagine Joseph walking around Jerusalem saying, where did I leave my tomb?

If you buy a tomb, you know where it is. If you buy a plot, you know where it is. Anyone could have gone to the tomb. The people who didn't believe the story could have got the wheelbarrow and said, enough of this, we're going to go get the body.

But no, they went to the right tomb and the tomb was empty. And Thomas knew that. Thomas could see that. But you and I have to look through their eyes.

So where is the body? Well, somebody's nicked it, clearly. And the primary candidates for the people who stole the body are the disciples themselves. Just to make it clear, the disciples, who Jesus had been teaching not to steal, and Jesus had been teaching not to lie, stole his body and lied about it.

Doesn't make much sense. But the other thing, if the disciples had stolen Jesus' body, many of them died horrific deaths proclaiming that he was alive.

[ 23 : 47 ] Now, if it was me and an axe is coming down on my head and I know that I'm lying, I think I'd call it a day. I'd think I'd say, no, no, we stole the body.

I admit it. But none of them did. They went through horrific deaths still saying he's alive. And the same thing would be true if the Jews or the Romans had stolen the body, the disciples would have known they were lying.

Doesn't make any sense. Or if the guard had stolen the body. No, he lived. He died. He was buried.

And the tomb was empty. And so far, there's nothing remarkable about that. Until we get to what we call the resurrection appearances. Ten times over a period of 40 days.

And some people say, well, they're hallucinations. They were all dreaming it. They were all imagining it. They were stressed. They were troubled. 500 people at once. Same dream.

[ 24 : 52 ] Same time. Same place. When was the last time you were in a group of 500 people? If you're a Crystal Palace supporter, maybe. But if you're in a group of 500 people and everybody sees the same thing, you tend to say, there's something there.

We're not all imagining the same thing. But when they saw Jesus, they were terrified. And at one point, they think he's a ghost. And do you know what he does?

He explains to them the science of ghosts and why he isn't a ghost. No, no, no. He eats some fish. Because they knew, and he knew, that ghosts don't eat fish.

And do you think they weren't looking at him thinking, can we see the fish being eaten? Of course they were. Because he was showing them he was alive.

And slowly, slowly, these ordinary people, like you and me, were becoming convinced that their friend, who they'd been with for several years, had died and was back again.

[ 25 : 56 ] And he had solved the problem of death. He had solved the problem of our lack of ability to meet with God. He had paid the ransom.

And the ransom had been accepted. And Jesus was alive in front of them. I want you to ponder that for a moment. And I'm going to attempt to sing a song that illustrates the point.

The song is called Suddenly There. And it picks up the stories. You'll meet Mary, who we met two weeks ago. You'll meet the couple on the road. And then you'll meet the disciples.

Jesus. There's surprises whenever he's around.

You never can be totally sure. Although they thought they'd see him no more. It really doesn't make any difference if you lock your door. Because he's suddenly there.

[ 27 : 10 ] But wasn't what they expected. It wasn't that they suspected he was alive. But he's suddenly there. A woman weeps feeling the pain Love's gone away From her life Reacting to an empty cave Distracted by the depths of her grief I don't suppose the gardener has the power to turn her down to believe And he's suddenly there It wasn't what she expected It wasn't that she suspected He was alive But he's suddenly there But he's suddenly there A couple walk

Down a lonely road Hearts full of hopes That might have been That might have been Two turns so easy To three Eyes turned But just cannot see I wonder if the bread And the wine Will jog a dead memory And he's suddenly there It wasn't what they expected It wasn't what they expected He was alive But he's suddenly there Jesus There's surprises Whenever he's around You never can be totally sure Although they thought they'd see him no more

It really doesn't make any difference If you lock your door Cause he's suddenly there It wasn't what they expected It wasn't that they suspected He was alive But he's suddenly there A fishing trip Cool morning air Just like before He touched their lives A shadowy breakfast host The devil was what they feared most A fish disappeared And they knew that it wasn't a ghost And he's suddenly there It wasn't what they expected It wasn't that they suspected

He was alive But he's suddenly there A message spreads Right round the world Here as our heal And lives repair The power's the same as before You really can't hide anymore Open your mind Then you'll find It's not hard to be sure And he's suddenly there It wasn't what you expected It wasn't that you suspected He was alive But he's suddenly there Saying the same things again Doing the same things again Stirring the same thoughts again Changing the same lives again

Let me finish by explaining something to you Very important The number eight bus Goes from outside of my house To Southampton Station If you want to know Whether that statement is true You could ask some of the passengers At the bus stop Does the number eight bus Go from Marchwood, where I live To Southampton And they would probably say yes Otherwise they wouldn't be there You could speak to the driver And say Does this bus Go from Marchwood to Southampton And he would say yes Or she would say yes You could look at the timetable On the bus stop And it would tell you The stops From Marchwood to Southampton Or you could go online And check out It says yes The number eight bus Does go to Southampton You could go to the bus garage And you could speak to the mechanics And say Is this bus capable Of going from Marchwood

[ 32 : 14 ] To Southampton Yes it is But the only way to know for sure Would be to get on the bus And sit down And wait Believe without seeing Yes but not believe Without knowing anything The only sure way For you to know That Jesus of Nazareth Is alive Is to commit yourself To him Stop doubting And believe And I'm going to explain to you How to do that Then I'm going to invite you To do it And The way I'm going to explain it Involves the word Act A Admit Admit your need Admit you can't solve The problem Of life And death You can't pay Your own ransom Now you know that already You can't solve Your problems You can't overcome

Your own difficulties You can't get through To God You can't become Right With God On your own So you need to admit that It's not so hard to do To admit that you've fallen Short of God's standards I'm prepared to admit I've even fallen short Of my own standards Let alone God's standards That's not hard to do Then Come Come to the feet of Jesus Like Thomas Like the others Bow down And say My Lord And my God Come To Jesus He invites you to And then T Is take Take the free gift Of God's love That Jesus Came to give us The free gift Of forgiveness The free gift Of the breath Of the Holy Spirit Remember He said Jesus Breathed into them And they received The Holy Spirit Do you know why We have to have that?



Because that's the power That we need I cannot solve this myself You cannot solve it  
Jesus will breathe Into your life The Spirit of God Who will teach you From the inside out  
Who will clean you From the inside out Take the blessedness That Thomas Received The  
happiness How do you do that?

You do it by praying When Thomas said My Lord And my God He was offering A prayer of  
worship So I'm going to lead us In a closing prayer And the prayer Will be an opportunity  
For you to do What I've just said To admit To come And to take Let's pray I'm going to  
pray This prayer As if I was you Lord Jesus Thank you That you love me I don't  
understand All that But I admit That I cannot Solve my own problems I cannot Get through  
to God On my own I cannot live up To my standards Or yours I admit My need Of you I  
come to you And In my mind I bow down And I say

You are My Lord And my God I willingly Worship You I don't know All that that means But I  
willingly Do it And I take Your free gift Of God's love Of forgiveness And I ask you To give  
me The gift Of the spirit Of God To be breathed Into my soul So that I Can have the power  
To live a new life Jesus I want To believe In you And so I pray That by the spirit Of God  
You will empower me To go from doubting To believing Thank you Now if you prayed that  
prayer And you meant it You became a believer Today And we would like

[ 36 : 38 ] To help you And I would like To help you So come talk to me Afterwards There will be  
some other leaders Around the front here Or there may be someone Who brought you  
here Who you could speak to I also have a free gift It's not as valuable As the gifts I've just  
been talking about But I've got a copy Of John's gospel And a copy Of Luke's gospel Both  
of which Contain the story Of Thomas I read to you And you're very welcome To come  
and receive One of those Just give it to you As a free gift And you can take it And go and  
read it Yourself In the meantime God be with you And thank you For having me As your  
guest And don't rush off And certainly Don't go away If you don't feel That you've resolved  
Something that you brought With you Thank you