

# The Christian Skeptic

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 April 2023

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[ 0 : 00 ] As we begin, let me just remind you, as I did on Friday night, that the four biblical gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are not merely biographies of Jesus.

They do provide biographical sketches of the life of Jesus that are helpful to us, but that's really not their main purpose or intention. They are also historical documents.

They are reliable, credible historical documents, even by the estimation of those who do not believe the message of the gospels, they are regarded as historically accurate and factual.

But these books are not primarily history. These books are very evangelistic in their nature. John's purpose in writing this was not just to give you a sketch of who Jesus was, nor was it just to merely record the historical events of his life.

It was to present certain facts about the person and the work of Christ so that he might persuade the reader that Jesus is indeed the Messiah and the Son of God.

[ 1 : 10 ] And everything in these four books pushes forward to the most significant proofs of Jesus' identity and purpose, which is his death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection from the dead three days later.

And as we come to this particular study today and as we think about the resurrection throughout the day, it becomes immediately apparent to us that the resurrection of Jesus is crucial to the Christian gospel.

I mean, it's absolutely crucial. And we could point to many different ways. Let me give you just a few, just to remind you of how crucial this is to our faith as a whole.

First, the resurrection verifies Jesus' divine identity. Jesus came saying, I am the Father and one. People were claiming that perhaps this man is a deified figure. Maybe this man is God. Jesus is making those claims himself. And the Bible repeatedly asserts this deity, this divinity of Christ, and his resurrection is the ultimate validation of those claims.

[ 2 : 25 ] Without the resurrection of Christ, we cannot say that Jesus is divine. We see this in Acts chapter 2, Peter's first sermon after the resurrection.

In verse 24, he says, God raised him up, speaking of Jesus, God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

It wasn't possible for him to remain dead. Why was it not possible for him to remain dead? Well, partly because he's not just a man. He is also truly God.

He could not be held by death. Therefore, the resurrection of Christ verifies the claims of Jesus that he is divine. Hebrews chapter 1 echoes this.

Many places do, but maybe I'll show you Hebrews 1.3. He is the radiance of the glory of God. He is the exact imprint of God's nature.

[ 3 : 29 ] And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. And here's part and parcel of what goes along with this thought of Jesus's divinity. That after making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Jesus's work as Messiah gives credibility and validity to his claims as being the son of God. So the resurrection is crucial to that.

If Jesus doesn't raise from the dead, we have no reason to believe that Jesus is anything other than a good man, which is what many people claim. The resurrection changes that, though. Secondly, the resurrection shows that God the Father accepted Jesus's sacrifice for our sins on the cross.

It was a sinless sacrifice that was necessary. We see that pictured in the Old Testament sacrifices when they would bring the lambs and the goats and the bulls.

They had to be without blemish and without spot. Why? Because God is holy and he demands perfection for one. But they were pointing forward to a greater sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ,

which meant that in order for our salvation to be won and for sins to be forgiven, his sacrifice must be won that is without spot and without blemish.

[ 4 : 48 ] It would take a sinless man to die for the sins of men. And if Jesus had not risen from the dead, it would mean that Jesus himself was a sinner, that his death paid for his own sins.

But Jesus had no sins for which he had to pay. Therefore, his death was an atonement for our sins. And the resurrection is what proves this to us.

It's echoed for us in Romans chapter 4. Therefore, righteousness will be counted to us who believe in him, who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses.

And then this last phrase is so important. He was raised for our justification. Our justification and righteousness before God hinges on Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Because if Jesus had not risen, then he was a sinner. And there was no way that his atonement would be sufficient for us. But the Father raises him from the dead, saying and declaring, I have received this sacrifice.

[ 5 : 55 ] It has appeased my wrath for sinners. Thirdly, the resurrection proves Christ's power over life and death.

Jesus claims over and over in the Gospels to have the power to give us eternal life. Those claims would be absolutely meaningless if he himself was powerless against death.

We think of very simply, John 3.16, God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish, should not die, but have eternal life.

That's a promise given to those of us who believe specifically in the person and the work of Christ. Jesus said himself, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Well, those claims mean nothing if Jesus himself does not have power over death. If he does not have power of life and over death, then he is a liar.

[ 7 : 01 ] He's a lunatic, as C.S. Lewis said. He's either a liar or he's a lunatic or he's the Lord. And if Jesus doesn't raise from the dead, he cannot be a good man. He cannot be a moral teacher.

He cannot be a good example. He can only be a liar and a wild man. The resurrection is crucial. Fourthly, without the resurrection, the Christian faith would be in vain and we would remain lost in our sins.

Paul tells us this explicitly in 1 Corinthians 15. If Christ had not been raised, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins. Those who have fallen asleep or those who have died believing Christ have also perished.

If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. The resurrection is absolutely crucial to the Christian gospel.

If you remove the resurrection of Jesus, you effectively dismantle the entire Christian faith. It's completely destroyed.

[ 8 : 09 ] There's nothing left. Everything Christians believe ultimately hinges upon the reality that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead.

Even our conviction that the Bible is the inerrant word of God hinges first on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

So it's no surprise then that skeptics through the centuries have taken the Christian message and they have targeted the credibility specifically of Jesus' resurrection.

Because if you can discredit it, you can completely dismantle Christianity. And if you can dismantle Christianity, you can discredit the word of God. And if you can discredit the word of God, then you can say, I am my own God.

I choose my own way. There is no one for which I am accountable to. So they target the resurrection. They have to. Because if the resurrection is not true, then all of this is a waste.

[ 9 : 14 ] All sorts of theories have been developed through the centuries in attempts to rationalize the resurrection of Christ away. We could go into all of those things. We won't do it now for sake of time.

But all kinds of things have been presented. Still, none of those theories are ultimately compelling. They're just not. There is just too much evidence that they have to overcome showing that natural reason does not ultimately have the final word.

It's not ultimately, does it make sense to our human minds that something like this would happen? It just doesn't work. There's too much evidence to the contrary that these theories have to overcome.

And not a single theory going against the resurrection of Christ has come even close to being compelling to dismiss all of the evidence that's available to us.

But our text presents for us this morning a different kind of skeptic. What we're dealing with here in John 20 is not the skeptic that we've just thought about.

[10:23] The skeptic who is trying to do away with Christianity and trying to disprove it that is utterly hardened and rebellious toward everything that Christ is and everything that Christ has done.

That's not the kind of skeptic that we find here. Thomas wasn't trying to outright deny or disprove the resurrection in the way that, for example, the Jewish leaders were in Matthew 28 who upon hearing of Christ's resurrection literally made up a lie and told the Roman soldiers, said just tell them that the disciples came and stole the body away or whatever.

He's been stolen. Even they, in that moment, they're trying to do something completely different.

That's not what Thomas is doing here. Thomas, like all of the disciples, would have been devastated by the surrounding events of Jesus' crucifixion.

He wanted the resurrection to be true. He's not trying to deny it or disprove it outrightly in an antagonism against Christ. And yet, he still struggled with an unbelieving heart.

We might call Thomas a Christian skeptic. Friendly toward Jesus, identifying in some sense with the Christian community, but still remaining lost in unbelief.

[11:48] I think there's many Thomases that fill churches every single Sunday. They're friendly toward Jesus. In some sense, they identify with the Christian community, but ultimately, they are lost in unbelief.

And there may be a few here this morning that fit that description quite well. The resurrection demands something of us that most people are unwilling to supply.

Total faith. That's what it demands. And the issue of belief is at the very heart of this passage. And my goal this morning is to allow the text of Scripture to call you to the same belief that the risen Christ called Thomas to possess here.

The three things I want to point out to you as we work our way through the narrative. First, I want you to see an unbelieving heart. An unbelieving heart. Verse 24.

Now Thomas was one of the twelve called the twin. He was not with them when Jesus came. So the disciples told him, we have seen the Lord. But he said to them, unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

[13:15] That's a strong statement. I will never believe unless my conditions are met, Thomas says. Let's think for just a minute about this man Thomas in the Bible.

There's not a lot that the Gospels tell us outside of the general list that are given of the disciples. And one other occasion in John chapter 21, we see that Thomas is just with Peter and some of the others as they're fishing.

And Galilee. Other than that, there's only two places in the Gospels where we find any kind of detail at all about Thomas. Both of them are found in John's Gospel.

And I just want to look at them quickly to give maybe a little bit of a character sketch of this man. In fact, just turn with me first to John chapter 11. You're already in chapter 20. Just turn a couple of pages back to John chapter 11.

You remember the disciples had been around the area of Jerusalem and it had become very clear that the Jews were trying to arrest and murder Jesus. They left the vicinity of Jerusalem and they were serving.

[14:25] Jesus was teaching and was doing things in another place. Well, while they were away, Lazarus, Jesus' friend, brother of Martha and Mary, died. Word was sent to Jesus that he was near death and that he had died.

And then Jesus decided to remain in that area for a couple of days. And then he tells the disciples in verse 7 that he wants to go back to Bethany, which is just outside of Jerusalem.

And the response of the disciples in verse 8 is, are you crazy? Essentially. They're trying to kill us there. Why would we go back? And Jesus goes through and he explains exactly what's happening and why he's going to go back.

And then it's during this discussion about going back toward Jerusalem that John records a brief statement from Thomas. It's in verse 16. So Thomas, called the twin, said to his fellow disciples, let us also go that we may die with him.

Let us also go that we may die with him. Now let me tell you what this isn't. This is not an exhilarating battle cry from Thomas. You know, there are those, you know, there are those crazy people who just love war.

[15:40] Like they're just, they get themselves all worked up over it and they're ready to go. That is not Thomas. That's not any of these disciples except perhaps Simon the Zealot. Peter shows some aggression in a couple of instances.

That's not what Thomas is saying here. He's not trying to muster up some kind of courage. This is a combination of Thomas and his tendency to battle with faith and doubt all at the same time.

Spurgeon says this about this text. It's a singular mixture of faith and unbelief. Thomas so believes his master that he's willing to die with him.

He so doubts his master that although the Savior had plainly told him that he was immortal till his work was done, Thomas is afraid that his master and all of them will be put to death.

Thomas loves Jesus. He wants to be with Jesus. He maybe will even commit to dying with Jesus as a friend but he does not fully believe Jesus' words.

[16:50] He says, well, we might as well go with him and all die in the process of it. It tells us a little bit about this man, doesn't it? This mixture of faith and doubt. The next one is in John chapter 14.

Just flip there quickly. John chapter 14. John chapter 14. John chapter 14. This is the night of Jesus' arrest. This is in the upper room at the Last Supper.

John records part of Jesus' final words to the disciples on the night of his arrest here and he was preparing them for his approaching death. He was comforting them with the promise of heaven for all who believe in him.

And I want you to notice in verse 4. Jesus says, I'm leaving and he says, and you know the way to where I am going. Where is it that Jesus is going?

He's going to the Father. It's a picture of heaven but he's going to the Father. That's the point of the statement that he's making. And he tells the disciples, you know the way there. You know the way to God.

[17:56] And look what Thomas says. Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way? And that produces this amazing statement from Jesus.

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me. Now I want you to notice the emphasis of Thomas' statement. He does not ask how they are to know the way.

That's not what he's asking. As if he needs to gain some type of information to be more pliable to the things that Jesus is saying. That's not what he's saying. Giving what he thought to be a mystery in Jesus' words.

He asked how they could possibly know. Lord, we don't know where you're going. How could we possibly know the way? This is another moment of skepticism and pessimism.

There's a sense even in which Thomas was pushing against Jesus' assertion that they knew the way to God. He says, how could we possibly know? And this helps us understand a little bit Thomas' tendency toward pessimism and skepticism.

[19:01] So when the other disciples declared to him back in John chapter 20 that they had seen the risen Lord, it's not entirely surprising that Thomas, having been absent on that occasion, faced another troubling battle of unbelief.

It's his continual struggle, it seems. And the issue for Thomas and for us is not a lack of evidence. The issue for Thomas is a stubborn, unbelieving heart.

Now I want you to consider for just a moment the credibility of the evidence that Thomas had in John chapter 20. First, the scriptures had foretold that Jesus would rise from the dead.

All of the ultimate, the Old Testament pointed to the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Think about Isaiah. 53 first in verse 10. When his soul has made an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring.

He will see his offspring after he's been put to death, meaning that he will not remain dead. There will be life after this death. He shall prolong his days.

[20:16] The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. That's beyond becoming a guilt offering for the sins of man. How about Psalm 16? This is what Peter quoted in Acts chapter 2.

He looked at David's words and he said, for you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or to death or let your holy one see corruption. Peter is saying David wasn't talking about himself and the reason we know he wasn't talking about himself is because his tomb is right over there and if you go open it

up, you'll see David's bones are still there.

He's still dead. He wasn't talking about David. He was talking about Jesus. Now, why would you think that Peter would go to Psalm 16 and use that as a proof for the resurrection of Christ? Because as we just read in Luke 24, Jesus himself sat down with Peter and with all the other disciples and opened their minds to understand all that the Scripture said concerning him and no doubt in that setting, Jesus had opened up to Psalm 16 and said, look, David's still dead, men. This is about me. Matthew 12, Jesus himself says that Jonah was a sign for the resurrection. But he answered them, an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

[ 21 : 47 ] For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The Old Testament had prophesied this and had pointed towards this moment. That was evidence that Thomas had. Secondly, Jesus plainly told his disciples this was going to happen.

Mark chapter 10, Jesus says, see, we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priest and the scribes. They will condemn him to death, deliver him to the Gentiles, they'll mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him and after three days he will rise. That's the third time Mark records Jesus telling Thomas, I'm going to die and then I'm going to rise. The evidence was there for him.

Third, look at the credible witnesses that declared this news to him. These were not people just off the street. These were not people Thomas didn't trust.

[ 23 : 00 ] These were Thomas' closest friends. People he trusted thoroughly and they came to him and they said, we've seen the Lord and he says, I don't believe it.

I won't believe it, he says. The issue is not the evidence. The evidence was there for him. The issue is a stubborn, unbelieving heart.

1 Corinthians 15 again, Paul helps us here, doesn't he? Jesus appeared to Cephas, that's Peter. He appeared to the twelve. He appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive.

In other words, Paul says, go to the people that saw him and ask, they will verify what they saw. He appeared to James, he appeared to the apostles, last of all, he appeared also to me.

The issue wasn't lack of evidence, the issue was an unbelieving heart refusing to trust the evidence that was provided. Thomas tried to set his own terms for faith, declaring, I will never believe until my conditions are met.

[ 24 : 14 ] And maybe you're in a similar situation to that this morning. The issue isn't evidence. The issue is you just don't want to believe. And unless God meets your demands, whatever they may be, you refuse because of the hardness of your heart.

You may say, unless Jesus appears to me himself, I'm not going to believe it. Unless I finally get a satisfying answer for the problem of evil in the world, I'm just not going to believe. Unless people start being nicer to me, I'm not going to believe.

Unless all of this stuff works out, the things I've been praying for, all of these prayers that I've been asking that have gone unanswered, unless they are answered, I will not believe. And you try to set your own terms for faith.

It doesn't work. More than enough credible evidence has been provided. You've decided to set your own, maybe even intentionally impossible, terms for faith.

And perhaps you do think, if Jesus were just to appear to me, if he would just make it easy and just come and just kind of do in this room this morning what he did for those disciples in whatever room it was that they were in on that day, then finally I would believe.

[ 25 : 26 ] But no, you wouldn't. Because the problem isn't evidence. The problem is your heart. You have a hard heart. Stubborn, unbelieving heart. And here's why I know it.

Because Jesus himself said it. In Luke chapter 16, telling the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. He gets to the end and remember, the rich man is crying out to Abraham and he says, if you will just send somebody from heaven to go to my brothers who are still living, somebody from the dead, then they'll repent and believe.

And Abraham says, no they won't. They have Moses and the prophets. They have the scriptures. And if they will not receive the testimony of the scriptures, even if somebody raises from the dead, they will not believe.

And you sit here and you think, if Jesus would just appear, I would finally believe. No, you wouldn't. Because the issue is not the evidence. The issue for you is your heart. And if he were to appear, you'd find some kind of way, unless he touches your heart, you'd find some kind of way to dismiss it.

Well, I must need to take my medicine today. Well, I must be hallucinating again today. That can't possibly be what it is. Pastor Jared's pulling one of those faith healer tricks on me. No, it's not the evidence.

[ 26 : 36 ] It's your heart. So we see an unbelieving heart. Secondly, we see encountering the risen Lord. Encountering the risen Lord.

Verse 26, 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. And he said to Thomas, put your finger here. See my hands. Put out your hand. Place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe. And here's what I love about this. It's another glowing example of God's patience and grace towards us.

Despite his doubt, Jesus graciously, mind you, very graciously, confronts Thomas, meeting him at his weakest moment.

[ 27 : 41 ] He comes to where he is. And there's three simple things that I want to point out to you about this. The first thing is this. Jesus came to Thomas.

Jesus came to Thomas. There's so many people that think for Jesus to be willing to save them, that they have to make themselves savable first.

They burden themselves with all of this religious practice and the pursuits of self-righteousness, hoping that it will be enough for God to grant them salvation. salvation. And if that's you this morning, you've totally missed the point.

You've totally missed everything that's happening here in the Scriptures. The Scriptures teach us that salvation comes by God's grace alone. And Thomas' encounter is just one of many illustrations of this in the Bible.

Jesus didn't wait for Thomas to get his act together before he was willing to appear. No. He graciously pursued Thomas in his sin and doubt.

[ 28 : 51 ] Jesus came to him graciously, mercifully, lovingly, appears to Thomas in this moment. It reminded me, thinking of this this week, some of you may remember this song.

It was an old Squire Parsons song. I remember my dad singing when I was growing up. He came to me. Do you know that song? He came to me. He came to me. When I could not come to where he was, he came to me.

That's exactly the point of the Bible. We could never come to where he is. You will never be good enough for what God's law demands. So God graciously comes to us in the person of Jesus Christ. And we see it all over again right here with Thomas. Jesus coming to him. Secondly, Jesus announced his peace. He announced his peace.

Shalom is the common greeting of peace among Jews. But the peace that Jesus announced was more than a simple greeting. In spite of his refusal to believe the reports, Jesus did not appear to Thomas in anger.

[ 29 : 56 ] He appeared to him with a comforting peace. And this peace that he announces to Thomas and the others was the peace with God that he had just won for them on the cross.

In other words, when Jesus appears to Thomas and he says, peace be with you, he is announcing that he was God's messenger of peace for the very sin of unbelief that Thomas was living in at that moment.

I have brought peace to you, Thomas. To be sure, judgment, God's wrath awaits all unbelievers at the end of this life.

But right now, it is not a message of judgment that Jesus comes and brings. Right now, it's a message of peace, his peace, won through the cross.

And it's one that he brings to you today. We see this all over the New Testament. Romans 5, therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

[ 31 : 03 ] So Jesus comes to Thomas. When he comes to Thomas, he doesn't say condemned. When he comes to Thomas, he says peace. And then notice thirdly, Jesus calls him to faith.

He calls him to faith. Do not disbelieve, Thomas. But believe. Now I love that Jesus hasn't appeared to the disciples since that night a week before.

At least it doesn't appear that way in the scriptures. Thomas has not yet seen Jesus. Jesus wasn't there physically. Wasn't there physically when Thomas tells the disciples, unless I put my fingers in his wounds, I will not believe.

But notice that the first thing Jesus says after he announces his peace is he says, Thomas, put your finger here. Put your finger here. Faith is necessary.

But God does not bring us, he does not demand of us a blind faith. He gives us verifiable evidence for that faith. And he reaches out his hand and he says, put your finger here. Put your finger here. Put your hand here.

[ 32 : 14 ] See me. Touch me, Thomas. Don't disbelieve. Believe. And after showing Thomas his wounds, he calls him to stop doubting, to believe.

You see, the only way to receive the peace won by Christ on the cross is by believing in who he is and what he has done.

And genuine faith does not preclude sincere investigation. But true faith is ultimately at the heart of the gospel message. And saving faith is more than just assenting to historical facts.

It is to turn from sin and to turn from self and to turn from doubt to trust wholly in the person of Christ alone for eternal life.

And it is to this kind of faith that Jesus calls Thomas. And it's to this kind of faith that he calls each and every one of us stop disbelieving and believe.

[ 33 : 25 ] Remember John 11, 25? This is again in the whole scene with raising Lazarus from the dead. But before he does it, he's talking to Lazarus' sister. And he tells her, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. And then notice what he says to her.

Do you believe this? Will you believe? And Jesus does that with Thomas. He says, look at my hands and look at my sight.

See me. Listen to me. Hear me. Will you believe? And it's unfortunate that Thomas has gained this popular nickname, Doubting Thomas.

I say it's unfortunate because not one of Jesus' followers immediately believed the news of his resurrection. Not a single one of them. When the women saw the empty tomb and the angels said to them, he has risen, he's not here.

[ 34 : 29 ] They didn't believe the angels until Jesus appeared to them. And then they go and tell the disciples and the disciples run, at least Peter and John do. They run to the tomb and they see the tomb is empty, but they don't believe the ladies.

They go home, they're amazed at the circumstance, but they do not believe the message until the risen Lord appears to them. And then we get here to Thomas and we see this dramatic refusal to believe until his conditions are met and we give him this name, Doubting Thomas, but he's no different than any of the others.

He's no different than any of us. And I want you to notice that the scripture never says that Thomas actually went so far as to touch Jesus' wounds.

He doesn't say he did that. He doesn't say he actually touched him. I don't think he had to because an encounter with the risen Lord is all that it took.

Coming to him, announcing his peace, and saying, believe, calling him to faith. A personal encounter with the risen Christ is necessary for saving faith.

[ 35 : 43 ] It's necessary. But that doesn't mean we must physically see and touch Jesus to believe. Jesus said that our stubborn hearts are moved to faith through the work of his spirit.

John chapter 16. When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak.

And he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me. For he will take what is mine and declare it to you. In other words, what the spirit's going to do is he's going to say everything that relates to me.

He's going to glorify my death and resurrection. He's going to open your hearts to believe. And what you need this morning is not for Jesus to appear before you. What you need is for his spirit to move within you because an encounter with the risen Christ through the work of the spirit is essential for saving faith.

If you don't have it, you will not be saved. You cannot be saved because you will not believe. So, we see an unbelieving heart. We see encountering the risen Christ.

[ 36 : 52 ] Thirdly and finally, we see responding in faith. Responding in faith. Verse 28, Thomas answered him, my Lord and my God.

And Jesus said to him, have you believed because you have seen me? And he's not saying that's a bad thing. He's just acknowledging that's the reality of what has happened. Have you believed because you've seen me?

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen me yet they believe me. Blessed are those who do not have all of their questions answered and yet they believe.

Blessed are those who are still wondering and still struggling with hurt and doubt and all the things yet they believe. Blessed they are. And this is the only appropriate response to an encounter with the risen Lord.

Notice Thomas' affirmation is twofold. He says, my Lord, showing he was now wholly committing his life to follow and obey Jesus.

[ 37 : 56 ] My Lord, my God. Proclaiming that Jesus would forever be the object of his affection and worship. Loved ones, this is true saving faith.

It does not merely agree to a set of facts. It is taking those truths and casting yourself wholly on Christ as Lord and Savior and God turning away from all else and saying, my Lord, my God, I will follow you.

I will obey you. I will love you. I will worship you. That is true saving faith. Now notice Jesus' reply. It was necessary for all the apostles to have a physical encounter with Jesus after his resurrection. That was actually something that must have happened. He had specifically chosen them to be his witnesses, particularly witnesses of his life and his death and his resurrection.

But that would be impossible for them to be if they had not actually witnessed it. At some point, Jesus was going to appear physically to Thomas because that's why he had chosen Thomas.

[ 39 : 14 ] He had chosen him for that purpose and you can read about that further in Acts chapter 1. But Jesus also says here in verse 29 that all who believe without seeing him as a result of the apostles' witness that we read even now that they would be blessed.

And blessed in this case is not simply a word for happiness. That's not what he means. It means that all who believe in Christ will receive the eternal blessing of God in forgiveness of sin and peace with him.

That's the blessing. And it does not come through your best effort. It comes through your faith. Faith in what? Faith in Christ according to the witness of the apostles in the word of God.

That's the faith. Peter wrote about it. 1 Peter 1 Though you have not seen him you love him.

Though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory obtaining the outcome of your faith which is the salvation of your souls without having ever seen the physical Christ.

Has this ever been your response to Christ? My guess in getting to know all the people that are in this room at this point my guess is that this is not your first Easter service.

[ 40 : 54 ] You've probably been to many maybe dozens. You've heard the stories you've read the chapters maybe you read them again this morning in your personal devotions you're willing to assent to the historical facts because you can't find a way to disprove them at least so you might as well agree that okay this must have happened but has this ever been your response to those things?

My Lord my God it's one thing to be friendly toward Christ and Christianity but salvation belongs only to those who trust him as Lord and God it is not enough to be a friend of Christians you must be a Christian and you cannot be a Christian without faith in his gospel you can't let's finish with verses 30 and 31 John says now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name it's through the Holy Spirit of God that Jesus comes to us and announces his peace and calls us to faith but it is the written word of God that the Spirit uses to draw us to faith and to give us life in all of the evidence supporting Jesus his resurrection of all of it nothing is as powerful and as necessary as the testimony of God in the Bible more than any other historical figure or historical document you can read all about

Josephus' estimations of Christians and what they believed and what his thoughts were on the apostles on the apostles and on their faith none of that compares to the power of the written word of God it is our highest authority it is our most preeminent evidence because it comes directly from him Romans 10 17 so faith comes by hearing hearing comes through the word of Christ the Bible the scriptures God used John to write these things so that we would believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God and that by believing we would receive eternal life through him because the resurrection is the very pinnacle of the case for Christ without the resurrection there is no Christianity it doesn't exist and without believing in the resurrection you cannot be a Christian Romans 10 verse 9 if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved nothing more nothing less without the resurrection there is no Christian faith and without believing in the resurrection you cannot be a Christian and my curiosity this morning is to think of how many of us are the Thomas from verse 25 you're saying unless these demands are met I will not believe and what I want to call you to become is the Thomas of verse 28 my Lord and my God and in the words of Jesus say to you do not disbelieve but believe asNINGNINGNING as