

# The Witnesses

John 20:11-18, 24-29, 21:15-17

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

There have been some amazing accomplishments over the course of human history. To the vast splendor of Pharaoh Khufu's (2540 BCE) Great Pyramid of Giza that was the tallest structure for some 3,800 years,<sup>1</sup> to the origin and development of modern alphabets (1850 – 1700),<sup>2</sup> to the Great Wall of China that is 21,198 km long spanning some 9 provinces and principalities (7<sup>th</sup> century to 1878), to the discovery of x rays to look at bones inside of the human body without cutting the skin (1895), to the invention of the radio that allows wireless



communication (1879-1901),<sup>3</sup> to Orville and Wilbur Wright's mastery of the air with their first airplane (1903), to Charles Jenkins and John Baird's mechanical transmissions of images over wires which led to the development of a television (1924-1925),<sup>4</sup> to Charles Babbage's design of the first modern computer that would be later built by John Atanasoff (1939),<sup>5</sup> to the large scale development of vaccines (1940),<sup>6</sup> to the civil rights movement seeking equality for African Americans (1954-1968), to the landing and walking on the moon by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin (1961), and to birth of Arpanet at BBN Technologies that would later be known as the internet (1969); humanity has proven time and again to be fascinated with inventing some new and impressive things for the betterment of living.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the following website: [Amazing Facts about the Great Pyramids of Giza | Live Science](http://www.livescience.com/4747-great-pyramids-of-giza.html)

<sup>2</sup> Taken from the following website: [Who created the first alphabet? - HISTORY](http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/who-created-the-first-alphabet)

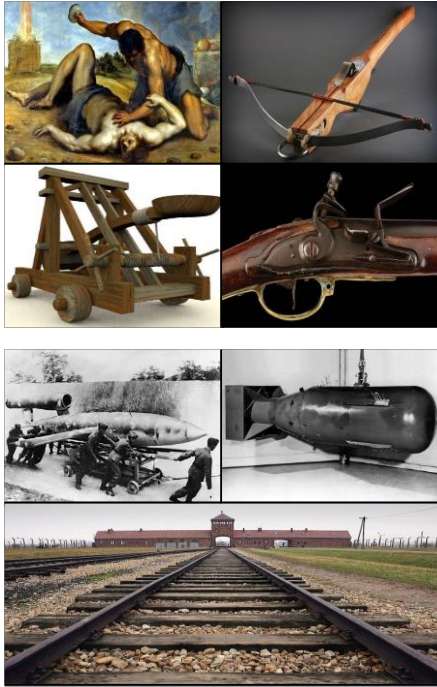
<sup>3</sup> Taken from the following website: [When Was Radio Invented? How Radio Changed The World \(radiofidelity.com\)](http://www.radiofidelity.com/when-was-radio-invented-how-radio-changed-the-world)

<sup>4</sup> Taken from the following website: [A Historical Timeline: Evolution of the TV \(1831–1996\) \(thoughtco.com\)](http://www.thoughtco.com/a-historical-timeline-evolution-of-the-tv-1831-1996-1126111.html)

<sup>5</sup> Taken from the following website: [computer: Development of Computers | Infoplease](http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/com/computer-development-of-computers.html)

<sup>6</sup> Taken from the following website: [Vaccine History: Developments by Year | Children's Hospital of Philadelphia \(chop.edu\)](http://www.chop.edu/vaccine-history-developments-by-year)

While humanity is fascinated with improving the quality of life there are sadly many historical events that demonstrate our propensity to harm one another. Ever since Cain killed



Abel (Genesis 4:8), there has been a never-ending search for a better weapon such as crossbows that throw deadly arrows (sometime before 400 BC),<sup>7</sup> catapults that can throw heavy rocks (400 BC),<sup>8</sup> gunpowder that can explode or hurl dangerous metal fragments at tremendous speeds (850 AD),<sup>9</sup> rockets that can send bombs to far away targets (1232 AD) and the splitting of an atom to release explosive energy and ravage anything in its path (first nuclear bomb tested in 1945). While some justified the invention of such weapons in the name of defending oneself with a “just war” mentality, history is filled with horrific acts of violence to “ethnically cleanse” or take land, power, and possessions from others. Who could ever forget the Cambodian genocide (1975-1979) where between 90 and 97 percent or between 1.4 to 3.0 million of the Circassian population was either killed or deported? Who could forget the Rwanda genocide (1994) in which 60 to 70 percent or between 500 and 800 thousand were executed, or what about the Nazi genocide of ethnic Poles (1939–1945) in which 1.8 to 3 million Polish people were executed or the Holocaust (1941-1945) in which about

6 million Jewish people were sent to their death?<sup>10</sup> Sadly these atrocities occurred and will forever be etched into our history as proof of the cruelty humanity is capable of performing.

While our accomplishments and atrocities will forever be etched into our minds both as a reminder of our “supposed” greatness and the dangers of not celebrating our differences, no event is more significant to humanity than the death and resurrection of our Lord! Despite being in the very nature of God Himself, Jesus chose to “make Himself nothing by taking on the nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:5-11) and freely dying on the cross (John 10:18) so that through His atoning sacrifice we might “have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10). The mastery of sin and death for all of humanity was broken over 2,000 years ago and gladly we are still celebrating our newfound freedom. Forever shall the words of Apostle Paul ring loudly and hopefully clearly be understood on Easter morning, “for we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been set free from sin” (Romans 6:6-7). If that were not enough to rejoice for on this blessed morning, we are also told that those who believe that Christ paid the price for their sins and pledge their life to Him (John 3:16; Romans 10:9) are given the Holy Spirit as a “deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are

<sup>7</sup> Taken from the following website: [Invention of the Crossbow in Asian History \(thoughtco.com\)](http://thoughtco.com)

<sup>8</sup> Taken from the following website: [Greek Scientists That Invented the Catapult \(theclassroom.com\)](http://theclassroom.com)

<sup>9</sup> Taken from the following website: [Ancient Chinese Invented Gunpowder \(thoughtco.com\)](http://thoughtco.com)

<sup>10</sup> Statistics taken from the following website: [List of genocides by death toll - Wikipedia](http://Wikipedia)

God's possessions – to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:14). Though we were "dead in our transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1) as "God's own special possession" (1 Peter 2:9) we are



to boldly approach "God's throne of grace with confidence" (Hebrews 4:16), and clothed with the garnets of salvation and righteousness (Isaiah 61:10) we thank our Lord, Savior and King that it is by faith in Him and not works that our relationship with our Creator has been restored (Ephesians 2:8-9). Given the greatness and significance of Easter how then are we His children to obey and rightly remember His death until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:26)? The following sermon is going to review three witnesses of Christ's resurrection

and suggest that celebrating His lordship, removing all doubts, and a restoration and a renewed desire to serve Him are but just three wonderful ways to celebrate Easter in a manner that that is a sweet offering unto our Lord.

### **Celebrating Christ's Lordship**

**Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 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." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' " Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that He had said these things to her.**

### **John 20:11-18**

In this miraculous event we are told of Mary's unwavering desire to be with her Lord. She who had likely spent several years with Jesus knew of the value of the pearl and treasure she had found (Matthew 13:44-46) and simply would not let go of Him for He truly was and would remain the Lord of her life! Being separated from Jesus brought so great a sorrow to her soul

that not even the presence of angels could console or damper her desire to be near and tend to her Master's body. And yet while she had mistaken the Lord for a mere gardener, when the Great Shephard called here by name, she not only recognized but held onto Him and did not



want to let Him go! To remember the Lord's death and resurrection rightly, like Mary we need to have not just knowledge but devotion to the one who purchased us at the price of His very life (1 Corinthians 6:20)! It is not enough to just merely learn from the beautiful love letter Christ gave us, we must apply what we have learned (James 1:22), not merely out of a sense of obligation or to avoid punishment but out of a sincere desire to see Him as the Lord of our lives and draw nearer to Him as He draws nearer to us

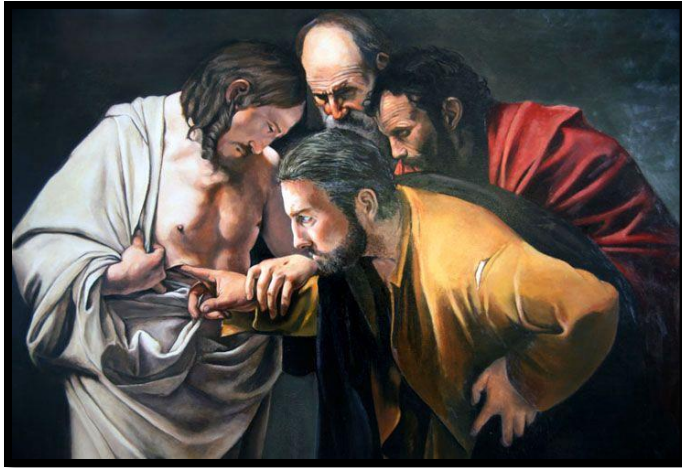
(James 4:8)! With our newfound freedom in the Lord, we are to choose (1 Corinthians 6:12) to offer our bodies, minds, and souls as "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing unto God" which means no longer will we chose to "conform to the patterns of this world" (Romans 12:1-2) but instead will never stop inviting the Son to renew our minds and transform our hearts back into His likeness. Remembering rightly the Lord's death and resurrection means constantly rejecting the worldly notion that we are the master of our own destinies and instead crying out Abba Father (Romans 8:15) help me to surrender the life I cannot keep so that I might know you the best I can and one day obtain treasures in heaven that cannot be lost or stolen (Matthew 6:19-21)! May our heart's desire be to hear the Great Shephard call out our names and we respond by saying "here I am Lord, I am forever Yours ... mold me, shape me, transform me but above all never let me go!

## Removing all Doubts

**Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 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." 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." 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."**

**John 20:24-29**

Even though Thomas was with Jesus, heard His teachings, and saw His miracles; he still had doubts, even when the apostles told him that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead! While living in hindsight of the resurrection Thomas' response might seem ludicrous to us "modern day Christians," if one defines "doubt" not as unbelief but the "questioning of the truth," as the Merriam-Webster dictionary does, then all of us must admit we have a little bit of



Thomas inside of us! How many times have we been like Gideon and put out a fleece unto the Lord (Judges 6:36-40) because we initially did not believe or want to do what the Lord has told us to do? And how many times because we have given into the evil desires of our hearts (James 1:14) have, we cried out in blindness for wisdom only to later doubt and have our decisions tossed about on the sea of indifference or worst yet on the turbulent waters of self-righteousness and pleasure (James 1:5-8)? And above all do we not sometimes shy away from asking for

personal miracles only due to our unbelief that Christ would save the worst of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:12-17) ... me? Yes, there are times that like Thomas we need to see and touch the nail marks in Christ's hands and the spear mark in His side! To honor Christ at Easter then we simply must take the time to remember that while we were His enemies Christ died and rose again (Romans 5:10) not to later abandon us but to constantly show us the way, truth, and life (John 14:6)! We must never forget that when the redeemed, masterpieces of God's grace humbly bow their knees and confess their doubts, He who knit them in their mother's wombs (Psalms 139:13) and gave them the Spirit of Truth will not only change their stone hearts of unbelief into ones of unshakeable faith (John 16:13) but place them on a solid Rock and foundation of certainty that cannot be moved (Psalms 40)! So, if you have doubts bring them to the cross to be crucified so that while self dies Christ will live and reign supreme in your hearts (Galatians 2:20).

## Restoration and a Renewal

**When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love Me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed My lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love Me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of My sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love Me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said, "Feed My sheep."**

**John 21:15-17**

The last time that we heard from Peter was his denial of Jesus. Once the rooster crowed three times (John 18:15-27) we are told that Peter went outside the courtyard and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75). Even though he was one of the inner three and the first to call Christ the Messiah (Matthew 16:16) we find Peter filled with so much shame and regret that Jesus had to go to the shores of the Sea of Galilee to once again convince Peter to fish men. In asking Peter



three times if he still loved Him, the Great Shepherd revealed to Peter on that blissful shore that forgiveness and restoration are granted even to the fallen who have gone so far as to call down curses and swearing not to even know of Christ's very existence (Matthew 21:74)! We must confess that we too have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We confess that it was not the Jewish or Roman government that put Christ on the cross for with each strike of the nails in His hand and feet we can plainly hear the deafening tone of our sin forever ringing in our ears! We come

before the communion table with our sin, guilt, and shame not to pretend it does not exist (1 John 1:10) but seek and find forgiveness and to be fed by the Master. It is not right that so many of God's children come to feast at the Lord's table when their very souls are thirsty, hungry and in so great need of rest (John 7:37; Matthew 11:28-30). So, if we are to remember rightly the Lord's death then we come today to say thank you Lord for saving a wretch like me and out of our feeble gratitude, love and respect may we not only be fed by Your loving hand but like Peter may You continually restore us to whatever ministry You have called each of us to do ... in Your name! Praise be to God that the greatest accomplishment humanity has even experienced is not by our hand but is and shall ever be the atoning sacrifice of God's one and only Son!