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## Jesus’ Resurrection - What Changed?

**John 21:12:** (NASB) *Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast. None of the disciples ventured to question him, Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord.*



After the greatest act of love ever committed, Jesus lay dead in a donated tomb. His loyal companions and followers were stunned, sickened by what they had witnessed. But beyond the gory details of this death, they were hit with the uncomfortable thought that perhaps all they had known the past three and a half years was a lie, fake, delusional. This man, Jesus, they had trusted and loved was dead. He died like everyone else. There was no last-minute fire from heaven to kill the Roman soldiers or the angry mob of his own brethren demanding his death. There was no angelic rescue team to pull him off that dreaded piece of wood. He was dead. For real. No one was coming to save them from the Roman rule. They would not be sitting on anyone’s right hand in the new government. They had seemingly been duped. Now what? Well, three days later, it was imperative that the risen Jesus convince them beyond a shadow of doubt that all he had promised was REAL and was happening. His followers needed to be 100% convinced and energized to tell the Good News at any cost to all who would listen. The man Jesus was gone forever, but the spirit Jesus would have life within himself and power to restore all of mankind back to his Father. They needed to urgently tell that story to you and me. How did the disciples go from feeling ultimate betrayal and grief to absolute certainty and joy?

Our podcast is all about tragedy, doubt and clarity. When we go through the all too familiar life experiences of tragedy and doubt what we find is that we are always seeking clarity to balance them, to help us cope with and overcome them. At the time of Jesus’ crucifixion and death his followers were overwhelmed in tragedy and doubt, the risen Jesus sought to prove to them that the seemingly incomprehensible facts of his resurrection and change were not only factual, but the most world-changing factual events that would ever occur. Giving his followers clarity in such immense and unique circumstances would not be easy. But Jesus is good at “not easy” and this is the story of how he would help his followers to see, absorb and stand for his cause as their risen Messiah. The revealing of Jesus’ resurrection came in steps - small steps - as the magnitude of change and significance that needed to be absorbed by his followers was overwhelming.

### THE FIRST REVEALING STEP: AN ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT

We begin with the first hint that Jesus was alive: Matthew 28:1-7: What was the most gentle and yet believable way that the disciples could receive the message that this Jesus who they knew, who they saw crucified, who they saw dead was again alive? The most gentle and believable way was by announcement of an empty tomb. Not some passerby announcing the tomb was empty and not some Roman soldier’s report. This announcement had to have a higher credibility. So, God chose an angel! There is no more powerful messenger than an angel. The angel said: 1. Do not be afraid. This was similar to the angelic announcement of Jesus’ birth. 2. I know why you are here - you are seeking Jesus who was crucified. 3. He is not here. 4. He is risen - AS HE SAID. It was important to establish the fact that Jesus was a true prophet. This very fact established it, because he said this was going to happen. 5. Come, look and see for yourselves - do not take my word for it; he is not there anymore. 6. Go tell the others! While the actual message was a simple statement of fact, the delivery of the message was a dramatic event. The drama got their undivided attention while the message simply showed them that the door of clarity was in fact open.

When we are faced with tragedy, doubt and grief are we open to hearing the word of God through whatever messenger He may choose to assure us that the door of clarity is in fact open?

### THE SECOND REVEALING STEP: JESUS APPEARED AS HIMSELF IN A FAMILIAR WAY

Matthew 28:8-10: For this second step to be a powerful follow-up to the angelic announcement, Jesus would have to appear as himself. There really was no choice, because human nature needs a solid base on which to build a life-changing belief. This second step adds personal recognition to their received information. Had Jesus appeared as anything other than the old familiar Jesus, it would not have been believable. It was a logical second step. He did not push them away; he let them touch and worship him and gave them the ability to have a feel for the communion they once had with him before.



What message does Jesus personally give them? There are four parts to the message: 1. He told them not to be afraid. 2. He told them to go tell the others. Make sure they know this. Spread it by word of mouth. 3. He told them to instruct his brethren to go to Galilee. 4. He told them, “Do not worry; I am not going to disappear; I am going to see you again in Galilee.” Jesus not only looked familiar, he acted in a familiar way by giving them assurance and instruction. This combination added to the angelic announcement began to address their doubts and enhanced the reality of the open door of clarity.

Do we find our doubts addressed when we go back to read and meditate on our risen Lord and his mission?  
Are we familiar enough with Jesus to see him and be guided by him to greater clarity?

### THE THIRD REVEALING STEP: JOHN BELIEVES FROM AN EMPTY GRAVE - FAITH WITHOUT THE DRAMATIC EXPERIENCE

In this step, Mary Magdalene plays an important role in the faith of the Apostle John. Luke 24:22-24: We know what happened - the women told as they were supposed to tell (this is faith in action). The disciples were not quite convinced, so they had to run and see for themselves (this is faith being tested). You cannot blame them. It is a normal response. We do that all the time if somebody tells us something, we say, no we must go look for ourselves. It is not a bad thing, especially under the tragic and doubtful clouds they had lived under for the last few days. So, they ran and they found an empty tomb. The only thing they were convinced of was that Jesus was not there, except for John, whose faith was at this moment stronger. He believed. John 20:2-10: Obviously, this was an important step - the women already believed because they saw him, but John believed simply because the grave was empty. Why did Peter not believe? Perhaps because of his denials of Jesus he had a longer road to firmness of faith than John. What we are observing is a slow, methodical process of conviction: an angelic announcement, an interchange with a familiar Jesus and the message of these things relayed to others. Now the others must find their own footing. *Faith cannot always have dramatic events unfolding for it to be built.* Sometimes we are called upon to believe based upon the most basic facts - the tomb is empty, he is therefore risen.

Do we intentionally face our doubts with a willingness to build our faith based on the basics?  
Are we willing to accept God’s will is present, even if we do not understand it?

### THE FOURTH REVEALING STEP: JESUS APPEARS IN AN UNFAMILIAR WAY TO MARY

John 20:11-16: Here is Jesus’ first appearance in an unrecognizable form. He chose to appear this way before a woman, which is very significant. Even though Mary had not yet comprehended his resurrection, she seemed to be searching for answers as she could not seem to stay away from the tomb. She was evidently the most ready to receive Jesus in whatever form he would reveal himself.

Please note the explanation below regarding the small apparent contradiction in the reading quotation that asserts Mary Magdalene as the first person to see Jesus. This is quoted from Mark 16:9 and contradicts Matthew 28:1-10. (Source: Biblical commentary by C.T. Russell) Omitted in the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts. Evidently Mark’s Gospel was originally incomplete and someone undertook to finish it about the fifth century. The fifth century Alexandrian manuscript is the oldest to contain the last 12 verses. These verses are spurious according to the American Standard Version, the Diaglott and the Revised Version.

John 20:17-18: Jesus needed to establish the fact that his nature had changed, that he was the same in character yet entirely different in nature, because flesh and blood had been replaced by a spiritual being. This was radical and was his first revealing on such a level. *Mary recognized his voice and not the way he looked.* Jesus’ message to Mary: 1. I am going to stay awhile as I have more convincing to do. 2. But he stressed the fact: I am going to ascend. *You have two elements here that demonstrate a change of nature*: 1. He does not look the same. 2. He has the ability to ascend. In one occurrence, here he has given two evidences that he is not the same flesh and blood Jesus that they knew. From angelic announcement, to appearing in a recognizable and familiar fashion, to faith without seeing, to appearing in an unrecognizable state, Jesus was methodically and gently revealing the magnitude of the effects of his resurrection. Small steps give opportunity to find clarity as one seeks understanding.

Are we carefully observing the small steps of clarity Jesus gives us as we wrestle with our personal tragedies and doubts?



### THE FIFTH REVEALING STEP: JESUS' SECOND UNFAMILIAR APPEARANCE WITH A SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE

Luke 24:13-32: Jesus again proved (this time to two disciples) that he was no longer a man and that what he looked like to them did not define who he was. He became recognizable *by what he did*, showing that he was still their loving and devoted master. Further, he was able to vanish from their sight. Step by step, element by element, they are beginning to understand the magnitude of who and what their Lord is.

Do we allow the magnitude of who and what Jesus is to overwhelm us with clarity in the face of our tragedies and doubts?

### THE SIXTH REVEALING STEP: JESUS MIRACULOUSLY APPEARS TO MANY FOLLOWERS

Up to this point Jesus appeared to one, two or three. Now that he had begun expanding the minds of a few and given them the ability to communicate their experiences, he again appears miraculously to several: Luke 24:33-37: This startled reaction was in part because they were in a locked room.

John 20:19: Not only was Jesus capable of vanishing, he could also pass through walls or doors!  
Luke 24:38-49: Jesus obviously appeared in his recognizable form and furthered their ability to comprehend him by showing them things they could identify with. He showed them his hands, feet (perhaps the wounds of the cross) and that he could eat with them. Jesus then tied his own words together with the words of prophecy as the absolute proof of what had happened, and how it was that he was now miraculously standing before them. And now Jesus for the first time adds into his explanation their part - their responsibility going forward to him and to the Gospel. The journey of clarity for Jesus' followers continues as Jesus appears as himself, though now he shows several followers that he can pass through inanimate objects at will. He is the same Jesus, yet so very different as he now as a spirit being and no longer human, obviously wielded a spiritual power they could not even comprehend.

Are we cognizant of the ever-present and ever-powerful existence of Jesus in all aspects of our lives?  
Does his presence bring us clarity and peace as we face our personal doubts?

### THE SEVENTH REVEALING STEP: JESUS APPEARS AS HIMSELF AND DEMONSTRATES HIS SPIRITUAL NATURE

With all the varied appearances of Jesus in such a short time, the Apostles and disciples had much to work with. They had angelic announcement, they had Jesus appear multiple times in a familiar form as well as in an unfamiliar form, and he could come and go miraculously. More than all of this, they had Jesus on several occasions point them to the prophecies of old as infallible proof of what had happened. He verified those prophecies by reminding them of his own words! Yes, he had indeed been raised - raised to a glory beyond their wildest imaginations! With all of this we can still doubt. Thomas was in that little boat of doubt. He had not yet himself seen the risen Lord and was called upon to trust in the accounts of the others. Thomas was not there in the last revealing step behind locked doors, as we see from the continuation of the John text: John 20:24-29: *I will not believe*. Such are the proclamations of those of us who might be in that little boat of doubt with Thomas. Such a boat has no anchor of trust and finds itself listing about as we think and wish, as we wonder and second guess and as we are reduced to desperately clinging to the sides of that little boat, ever fearful of capsizing. Jesus understands doubt, and if we are willing, he will gently show us how to step out of that little boat of doubt and into the unsinkable vessel of his love and power. Jesus faces the doubts of Thomas with the truth. He not only shows Thomas exactly what he needs to see, he demonstrates his spiritual power by recounting what Thomas had said eight days ago! Jesus had already invisibly been in the presence of Thomas, it is just that Thomas could not see him! Thomas immediately displays the humility and faith that had been left behind when he boarded that little boat of doubt. Thomas leaps from his little boat of doubt as he worships the risen Lord! Sometimes because of tragedy and doubt the clear evidence of truth and hope that is presented can be ignored. Thomas had his heart in the right place and Jesus knew just how to reveal himself in such a way that Thomas would again stand in faith.

Are we too comfortable in our little boat of doubt? Are we looking for the clarity of Jesus' presence in our lives, even when we cannot see him? Even when we cannot see him, he IS there!



## THE EIGHTH REVEALING STEP: JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF IN THE FAMILIAR ACTIONS OF GIVING TO AND LIFTING HIS FOLLOWERS

We have seen Jesus reveal himself by way of prophecy, miracles, physical gestures and voice. Now he would reveal himself to his disciples in an even more familiar way. He would help them, feed them and teach them as he had done so often before. He would now also remove the clouds of guilt that they had stubbornly covered themselves with. John 21:1-13: This was a powerful moment as these humble fishermen are face to face with Jesus and FINALLY, no one had to ask, “Who are you?” They all KNEW. With their knowledge came a sense of awe and an even deeper sense of humility as well as an awareness of the clouds of guilt that haunted them. Jesus’ tender forgiveness towards a guilt-ridden Peter took this step of revealing himself to a whole new level because it gave his followers a profoundly practical sense of clarity. This Jesus was undoubtedly the same in character but he also carried a depth of godliness that transcended human capacity. Peter especially would change as a result of this new beginning. The risen Jesus in these last two revealing steps addressed and dissolved two of the most debilitating experiences of the human condition - doubt with Thomas and guilt with Peter. The clarity and familiarity of his message to both troubled men changed them.

Are we willing to have Jesus change us? Do we tenaciously cling to our little boat of doubt and stubbornly persist under our dark cloud of guilt or are we willing to face our Lord, see his works, hear his words and accept his love?

## THE NINTH REVEALING STEP: JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF TO BID THEM FAREWELL WHILE GIVING THEM THE MAGNITUDE OF THEIR MISSION AND THE PRIVILEGE OF WITNESSING HIS MIRACULOUS ASCENSION

Acts 1:1-8: The summary of Jesus’ steps of revealing himself tells us that for those 40 days his appearances were stunningly successful. His revealing came through angelic announcements, being seen as himself, as a stranger and as one who could miraculously appear and vanish. His voice revealed him, his breaking of bread revealed him, his prophetic teachings revealed him and his very character revealed him. He had shown himself unequivocally to be Jesus Christ, but he was now Jesus Christ the powerful spirit being, far above any station that a mere man could manage. Why these overwhelming proofs? There was world changing work to be done as a result of his change! The Holy Spirit would change everything and his followers needed to be steeped in the conviction of Jesus’ resurrection and glory to be able to wield such godly power. In this last revealing step, Jesus gives specific instructions about where and when and he also tells them that just because they will have God’s influence it does not mean that they will know all things. Such advice dovetailed well with the lessons of deep humility over the past 40 days. Because Jesus had so meticulously prepared his followers these past 40 days he was now totally convinced they were able, capable witnesses. There was no question that could not be answered by them because of all the appearances Jesus had made. They now knew in the deepest recesses of their souls who Jesus was! Their “Who are you, Lord?” question had been answered for all ages to come! Acts 1:9-11: The risen Lord Jesus was first announced to have ascended from the grave by two angels all clothed in white and as he now ascends to his Father he is again announced by two angels in white. This announcement was not the end! It was just the beginning, for the Angels also spoke of his returning, the same returning that Jesus himself had taught them about. This return would be for the purpose of entirely finishing the work that he had started. This return would wrestle the kingdoms of this world from Satan’s grip, it would dissolve all the ungodly governments of this world and end the reign of sin, terror and death. This return would restore that which was lost - human harmony with God Almighty on a perfect earth. Micah 4:1-5. The revealing of Jesus’ resurrection came in small steps. What a caring and sensitive way Jesus revealed himself to those whom he loved. These steps helped them to know he was there and what he would become when he was raised to the Father with all power and glory to bring the kingdom to its full fruition. Everything Jesus did after he was crucified and resurrected was for giving his followers not just hope and clarity, but direction and confidence that they could do the work before them, because Jesus was risen and more powerful than they could have ever imagined.

*So, Jesus’ resurrection - what changed?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*