



Sunday School Lesson
John 20:19-31
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What It Means To Believe



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The Bible study for this week moves from the event of the resurrection itself -- last week's focus -- to a couple of the resurrection appearances of Jesus to his disciples before his ascension back to Heaven. For a listing of the various appearances to the [detailed Life of Christ outline](#) at Cranfordville.com.

I. Context

As is normal, the background information on the gospel of John is important to a more accurate understanding of our passage.

a. Historical

Regarding the composition of the fourth gospel, a wide range of viewpoints will be uncovered in modern New Testament scholarship. Regarding the origin of the document, Massey H. Shepherd in the Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible has a helpful summation:

The acceptance of the gospel in the NT canon in the late 2nd - early 3rd cent. was a seal of acceptance of its authorship by John son of Zebedee, one of the 12 apostles of Jesus. Though contested at that time, this official view held the day without serious challenge until recent times; and it is still stoutly defended by many able scholars,

Catholic and Protestant. Its strongest support is the testimony of Irenaeus, who claimed to have received the tradition firsthand, when a youth, from Polycarp. Although modern NT scholarship is not as confident in the traditional view of authorship, the document's origin is generally viewed to have taken place sometime in the middle 80s to the middle 90s of the first Christian century. Assuming the cor-



rectness of the Johannine connection to this document, the ministry of the Apostle John seems to have been focused in the region of Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia during the second half of the beginning Christian century. In this view, the gospel would have been written in that region and most likely addressed to Christians living in the same general area. Alternative views move in the direction of not having an idea about who wrote the gospel and will tend to project a somewhat later date but still originating in the same region.

In either case the gospel comes out of a Johannine oriented community of believers and seeks to provide insight about Jesus to members of that community as well as those perhaps attracted to this new religion that would come to be called Christianity. For a helpful summary of the religious views found in the gospel, see Gary M. Burge, “John, the Theology of,” in the [Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#).

b. Literary

Regarding the literary setting of 20:19-31, Gary M. Burge in the [Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#) has a helpful summary of the literary structure of the fourth gospel:

The Fourth Gospel is organized into two principle sections and these are framed by a prologue (1:1-18) and an epilogue (21:1-25), each of which were likely added at some later date either by the Gospel’s author or one of his followers. The prologue introduces the incarnation of the preexistent Word and poetically sets the stage for all that is to follow: God discloses his Son in the world of darkness; he is popularly rejected; a select group of followers discover life; and even though the darkness tries, it cannot defeat this Son.

The first section is commonly called the Book of Signs (1:19-12:50) in order to describe how Jesus appears within Judaism replacing its institutions (the temple, sacred wells, teachers) and festivals (Passover, Tabernacles). He offers overwhelming messianic gifts that exploit images intrinsic in the Jewish setting in the narrative (wine, wisdom, water, healing, bread, light, life). The final event is the raising of Lazarus—which utterly discloses Jesus’ identity—as well as seals his fate. But even though Jesus experiences hostility among the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, still he discovers receptivity in Galilee (2:11; 4:45; 7:1; etc.) and at the end of this section, Greeks from Galilee eagerly line up to follow him (12:20-26).

The second section is called the Book of Glory (13:1-20:31) because now Jesus takes aside his followers, washes their feet at his final Passover meal (13:1-20), and exhaustively explains to them who he is and what will happen (13:31-17:26). But hinted throughout the Gospel is the notion that the impending cross of Christ will be no tragedy, but a time when his glory will become visible to all (3:13-15; 13:31; 17:1-5). The cross is one more sign given to disclose that Jesus has been sent by the Father and is now returning to him. For John, this cross is voluntary (10:11, 17, 18). Christ is departing, having completed the work he set out to do. But before he goes, he distributes gifts to all among his followers (20:19-29), blessing them one more time.

Most scholars think that the earliest ending of the gospel is in 20:30-31 and that chapter 21 is a later addition no doubt from the same Johannine sources that supplied the original Gospel. If it is secondary, it nevertheless has the ring of historicity and the echo of Johannine language. Jesus makes a resurrection appearance and commissions his followers in anticipation of his permanent absence.

This is perhaps the most commonly held view regarding the thought structure of the gospel of John. And it has more to commend it than most of the alternative viewpoints.

My own understanding derived from almost forty years of study of this document is that the role of the [Prologue](#) is quite substantial in setting a conceptual foundation for the rest of the document. The basic viewpoint of Jesus as the divine Word (Logos) set forth in 1:1-18 becomes the conceptual filter through which the story of Jesus is told in the remainder of the gospel. For more details see [my treatment](#) at Cranfordville.com under [NT Study Aids](#). This is a major reason for the narrative view of John being so dramatically different than that of the Synoptic Gospels, as each gospel writer tells his own story of Jesus.

The particular context of 20:19-31 can be seen more clearly from looking at the [Life of Christ](#) outline at Cranfordville.com:

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
VI. Resurrection appearances and ascension				
	28:1-20 (2%)	16:1-20 (3%)	24:1-53 (5%)	20:1-21:25 (6%)
A. The Empty Tomb	28:1-8	16:1-8	24:1-12	20:1-10

B. The Appearances to His Disciples	28:9-20	16:9-20	24:13-53	20:11-21:25
1. The Bringing of the Soldiers	28:11-15			
2. To the Eleven in Galilee	28:16-20			
3. To the Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus	—	(16:12-13)	24:13-35	—
4. To the Disciples in Jerusalem	—	(16:14-18)	24:36-49	—
5. The Ascension of Jesus	—	(16:19-20)	24:50-53	—
6. To Mary Magdalene	—	(16:9-11)	—	20:11-18
7. To the Disciples in Jerusalem	—	—	—	20:19-23
8. To the Disciples with Thomas present	—	—	—	20:24-29
9. To the Seven Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias	—	—	—	21:1-23

Our passage, 20:19-31, contains two (#s 7 & 8) of the four resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples and to Mary that are found in the fourth gospel. These are unique to this gospel and are not described by any of the other gospel writers. Establishing a clearly defined sequence of the resurrection appearances of Jesus between the three gospels that originally contained accounts is very difficult. The thematic concerns of each gospel writer was more important than reconstructing a chronology of the appearances. We must, therefore, content ourselves to looking at the various accounts in each gospel and gain the insight provided by each. Since there is no overlapping between the accounts, the chronological issues become less important than they would otherwise be. We can determine, however, that these eight appearances took place over a forty day period between the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus. Luke provides this insight in [Acts 1:3](#) (NRSV): “After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”

Additionally, the third segment, 20:30-31, contains an expression of the purpose behind the writing of the gospel document itself.

II. Message

The division of thought inside vv. 19-31 falls naturally into three segments: (1) the appearance of Jesus to the disciples in Jerusalem without Thomas (vv. 19-23); (2) a subsequent appearance to the same group with Thomas present (vv. 24-29); and (3) the purpose behind the writing of the gospel document (vv. 30-31).

a. Appearance to the Disciples (1st), vv. 19-23

The Greek NT

<20:19> Οὐσης οὖν ὀψίας τῆ ἡμέρα ἐκεῖνη τῆ μιᾷ σαββάτων καὶ τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων ὅπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. <20:20> καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἔδειξεν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῖς. ἐχάρησαν οὖν οἱ μαθηταὶ ἰδόντες τὸν κύριον. <20:21> εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς [ὁ

NRSV

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again,

NLT

19 That evening, on the first day of the week, the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. 20 As he spoke, he held out his hands for them to see, and he showed them his side. They were filled with joy when they saw their

Ἰησοῦς] πάλιν, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν· καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ πέμπω ὑμᾶς. <20:22> καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον· <20:23> ἂν τινῶν ἀφῆτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφέωνται αὐτοῖς, ἂν τινῶν κρατῆτε κεκράτηνται.

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Lord! 21 He spoke to them again and said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 Then he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you refuse to forgive them, they are unforgiven."

Comments:

The setting for this episode is on Sunday evening after Jesus was raised from the dead that morning. It follows the appearance of Jesus to [Mary Magdalene](#) in vv. 11-18, which took place early that Sunday morning. Interestingly, the narrative details are pretty close to the resurrection appearance described in [Luke 24:36-43](#).

36 And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. He said, "Peace be with you." 37 But the whole group was terribly frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost! 38 "Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why do you doubt who I am? 39 Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do!" 40 As he spoke, he held out his hands for them to see, and he showed them his feet. 41 Still they stood there doubting, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he ate it as they watched. 44 Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me by Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must all come true." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand these many Scriptures. 46 And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah must suffer and die and rise again from the dead on the third day. 47 With my authority, take this message of repentance to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me.' 48 You are witnesses of all these things. 49 "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

50 Then Jesus led them to Bethany, and lifting his hands to heaven, he blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. 52 They worshiped him and then returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy. 53 And they spent all of their time in the Temple, praising God.

It could be that both gospel writers are giving their version of the same event, but the additional materials in both Luke and John suggest otherwise.

The Johannine narrative sets up the scene with the disciples behind locked doors, fearful of being arrested by the Jewish authorities. Even though Mary had informed them of Jesus' resurrection according to John 20:18 ("Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her."), they were still uncertain about their safety and what might be done to them by the authorities. Against this backdrop, Jesus then suddenly makes an appearance to them and speaks the customary word of greeting of that time, "Peace to you" (Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.). With words of reassurance, Jesus made his presence known to these fearful men. When one thinks about it, the scene has almost humorous tones. From the accounts of the resurrection in all four gospels, the women made the wonderful discovery of the living Christ early that Sunday morning. They were filled with both awe and joy. But by late that same evening the men were still in fearful doubt about what was going on.

Jesus' words of greeting were followed by 'show and tell' one: "he showed them his hands and his side." The mention of the hands and the side allude back to the crucifixion scene where Jesus' hands were nailed to the cross beam of the cross and then after his death his side was pierced by a sword from the Roman soldier ([Jhn. 19:35](#), NRSV: "Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out."). [Luke 24:38-40](#) has more detail for the initial appearance to the disciples, (NRSV), "38 He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet." The point of both being that Jesus offered the disciples concrete evidence that he really was alive, and that he wasn't some kind of Casper style ghost. The reaction of the disciples were overwhelming joy! Jesus was alive; they were seeing the Lord. As George Beasley-Murray comments in the John volume of the *Word Biblical Commentary* (v. 36, p. 379), "The

promise of Jesus, made to them in the Upper Room, that he would 'come' to them (14:18) and turn their grief into joy (16:20-22) was now fulfilled."

The Johannine narrative again repeats the greeting, "Peace to you" (v. 22; Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν). This time it is followed by words of commissioning, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, κἀγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς.). One should remember that each of the three gospel writers contains a resurrection appearance of Jesus with a commissioning by the Lord of the Twelve (Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-49). John's interpretation of Jesus' commands provides important unique insight. In Matthew and Luke, the commissioning is simply couched in Jesus' authority to command the disciples to evangelize, and that this is according to the Father's will. But John links the commissioning of the disciples by Jesus to Jesus' own commission from the Heavenly Father. What we glean from this is that the work of the disciples was to be an extension of the work that Jesus came to earth to accomplish. Although Jesus, by his death and resurrection, completed the work of redemption in its provision, his disciples are to spread that message so that others may have opportunity to respond in saving faith and experience the blessings of that redemption.

The New Testament, and especially the Lukan writings of the Gospel and Acts, especially emphasize the divine commissioning of followers of Jesus to be witnesses to Jesus in both word and deed. See my [Commissioning Narratives](#) in regard to Acts for further details. This continues the perspective begun in the Old Testament with Abraham's call to leave his homeland and go in the land of God's promise. Almighty God comes to his people and assigns them jobs to do. The appropriate response is the one voiced by Isaiah in his calling (Isa. 6:8, NRSV): "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'"

The third action segment of Jesus (vv. 22-23) deals with the needed spiritual resources for this enormous job that Jesus had just given to the disciples: "When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον· ἂν τινῶν ἀφῆτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφεῶνται αὐτοῖς, ἂν τινῶν κρατῆτε κεκράτηνται.). The marvelous affirmation of these statements is that with job assignment comes the needed resources to get the job done. What can enable us to win a lost world to Christ as we have been commanded to do by our Lord? Nothing less than the empowerment of the Spirit of God can get the job done! Not programs, not church organizations, nothing but the divine power of God is essential for carrying out our commission. This we must humbly seek if we are to obey our Lord.

One important side note. Luke divides out the commissioning (24:36-49) and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1-2) into two separate events, in a more chronologically oriented depiction. Sometimes tension between John and Luke is assumed at this point. But John's strongly thematic orientation argues against seeing a different theological viewpoint. The same essential theological view is present in both gospel accounts: Jesus has commissioned us to evangelize the world, and has then provided the Holy Spirit as the spiritual empowerment to carry out this task.

The last part of this third segment of Jesus' instructions to the disciples alludes to the authority given to the disciples (v. 23, NRSV): "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (ἂν τινῶν ἀφῆτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφεῶνται αὐτοῖς, ἂν τινῶν κρατῆτε κεκράτηνται.). This statement is similar to one found in Matt. [16:19](#) (NRSV, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.") and [18:18](#) (NRSV, "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."). One clear implication of this declaration is that the task of the followers of Jesus both to proclaim salvation and judgment. The issue is that of forgiveness of sins. The preaching of the gospel message is essential. This theme is found elsewhere in John's gospel. The early declaration of Jesus in chapter three combines both these emphases (3:14-21, NRSV):

14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved

darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. 20 For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. 21 But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

Thus our proclamation has a binding and loosing impact; how the listener responds to the gospel message is critical in terms of whether forgiveness takes place or not.

What can be learned from this passage? Much! Just as the disciples received assurances that Jesus lives, we have that assurance as well. Just as they received their marching orders, we have inherited those same orders as subsequent followers of Jesus. Just as they received the Holy Spirit for empowerment for the task, we have the same access to the divine Spirit today to get the same job done in our generation.

b. Appearance to the Disciples (2nd), vv. 24-29

The Greek NT

<20:24> Θωμᾶς δὲ εἷς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα, ὁ λεγόμενος Δίδυμος, οὐκ ἦν μετ' αὐτῶν ὅτε ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς. <20:25> ἔλεγον οὖν αὐτῷ οἱ ἄλλοι μαθηταί, Ἐώρακαμεν τὸν κύριον. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων καὶ βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου εἰς τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων καὶ βάλω μου τὴν χεῖρα εἰς τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῦ, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω.

<20:26> Καὶ μεθ' ἡμέρας ὀκτῶ πάλιν ἦσαν ἔσω οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ Θωμᾶς μετ' αὐτῶν. ἔρχεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ εἶπεν, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. <20:27> εἶτα λέγει τῷ Θωμᾶ, Φέρε τὸν δάκτυλόν σου ὧδε καὶ ἴδε τὰς χεῖράς μου, καὶ φέρε τὴν χεῖρά σου καὶ βάλε εἰς τὴν πλευρὰν μου, καὶ μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός. <20:28> ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. <20:29> λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ὅτι ἐώρακάς με πεπίστευκας; μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες.

NRSV

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

NLT

24 One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. 25 They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side."

26 Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. He said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" 28 "My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed. 29 Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who haven't seen me and believe anyway."

Comments:

The focus of this second appearance is on the disciple named Thomas. Thomas surfaces in the gospel narratives in [some eleven passages](#), usually as a name in a list of the Twelve. In [John 11:1-16](#) the pessimism of Thomas surfaces with his statement, (v.16, NRSV): "Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'" Then again in [John 14:4-11](#), (v. 5 NRSV): "Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?'" In spite of the negative tones of these three passages in John about Thomas, he does provide the opportunity for us to learn some valuable lessons about faith and following Jesus.

His lack of acceptance of the other disciples report of Jesus' resurrection is a reflection of their own skepticism at the report of the women earlier. But Thomas makes the demand that he can't believe until he

can see with his own eyes. His faith demanded reasonable confirmation. The following Sunday, according to John, Jesus appeared to the disciples again with Thomas present.

With the Lord's sudden appearance behind locked doors, came the same greeting to the group, "Peace to you" (Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.). This time they did not experience shock and surprise as before. Thomas becomes the focus of the narrative with Jesus' challenge to him (v. 27, NRSV), "[Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.](#)" Thomas' responded without touching Jesus by declaring (v. 28, NRSV), "[My Lord and my God!](#)" Thus Thomas confessed faith in the resurrected Jesus when confronted with the physical proof he had demanded. Jesus is acknowledged as the sovereign Lord and God. The meaning of the confession is commitment now to follow Jesus unquestioningly. Doubt has been turned into commitment.

Jesus then declares that a far superior expression of faith is found when (v. 29, NRSV) "[Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.](#)" This beatitude pronounces God's favor on the one who comes to faith without having to have the physical confirmation. This represents a superior expression of faith, as well as the one that subsequent followers of Jesus would have to exercise after Jesus' ascension back to Heaven. For more details on Beatitudes in the New Testament see my [Literary Forms of Beatitudes](#) at Cranfordville.com.

What can we learn from this episode? The primary lesson is that Thomas expressed honest doubt and that God honored that with affirmation that removed his doubt. Expressing honest lack of understanding or hesitancy about faith commitment is not sinful within itself. Particularly when openness to God and His way is present. Doubt can turn to faith, when we're not set against faith! But a far superior kind of faith doesn't need physical confirmation to see the Lord's presence. This was the life changing faith that Paul experienced in his encounter with the resurrected Lord on the road outside Damascus. It is the same faith we need to express today.

c. The Purpose for Writing, vv. 30-31

The Greek NT

<20:30> Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν [αὐτοῦ], ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ· <20:31> ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύ[σ]ητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ.

NRSV

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

NLT

30 Jesus' disciples saw him do many other miraculous signs besides the ones recorded in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life.

Comments:

Again George Beasley-Murray in the *Word Biblical Commentary* on John (v. 36, p. 387) has some helpful insights about these verses:

"There is much to be said in favor of viewing the resurrection appearances as signs, particularly the last appearance to Thomas. The statement that Jesus did 'many other signs' is then comprehensible. It is evident from a comparison of this Gospel with the synoptics that other miracles were known in the circles of those who fashioned the traditions, and it is only to be expected that there were other that they did not record. John restricted his choice of signs to a group that were especially instructive."

The clear purpose of the entire gospel document is set forth in verse 31. The gospel is a document promoting faith in Jesus as the Messiah, that is, as the Son of God. The objective of this faith is then the experiencing of spiritual life in the name of this Messiah Jesus.

One quick side note. This expression of purpose makes this document somewhat less trustworthy when the modern standards of collaborative factual history are imposed on it. But John clearly indicates his objective was to create faith. Thus the gospel is written as a document encouraging religious response to Jesus as the source of salvation. We need to read it that way, if we're going to understand its message.