

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN 20

Ver. 1. *The first day of the week*, etc.] On the sixth day of the week, towards the close of it, Christ was interred; he lay in the grave all the seventh day, and on the first day of the week rose from the dead: so the women, after they had observed where the body was laid, went home and prepared spices and ointments, to anoint it; but the sabbath coming on, they were prevented; on which they rested, according to the Jewish law: but as soon as it was over,

cometh Mary Magdalene; not alone, but other women with her; who had attended Christ at the cross, observed where he was buried, and had prepared spices to anoint him, and now came for that purpose; for not merely to see the sepulchre, and weep at the grave, did she with the rest come, but to perform this piece of funeral service:

early, when it was yet dark; as it was when she set out, the day just began to dawn; though by that time she got to the sepulchre, the sun was rising:

unto the sepulchre; where she saw the body of Jesus laid by Joseph, in a tomb of his, and in his garden; by whose leave, it is probable, being asked over night, she with her companions were admitted:

and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre: which Joseph rolled there, and the Pharisees sealed and set a watch to observe it. This was removed by an angel; for though Christ himself could easily have done it, it was proper it should be done by a messenger from heaven, by the order of divine justice, who had laid him as a prisoner there. Mary's coming so early to the grave, shows her great love and affection to Christ, her zeal, courage, and diligence, in manifesting her respect unto him: and oftentimes so it is, that the greatest sinners, when converted, are most eminent for grace, particularly faith, love, and humility; and are most diligent in the discharge of duty.

Ver. 2. *Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter*, etc.] That is, after she had not only seen that the stone was took away, but had looked into

the sepulchre, and saw that the body of Christ was removed; for otherwise she could not have said, that it was took away out of it: upon which she made all the haste she could to Peter; who, where he was she knew; and she was particularly bid by the angel she saw in the sepulchre, to go to him:

and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved; John the writer of this Gospel; for these two were together, as they usually were; nor were they alone, for the rest of the disciples were with them:

and saith unto them, they have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. The Oriental versions, the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic, read, “I know not where they have laid him”; who they were that had taken the body of Christ away, whether friends or enemies, she could not say; nor did she, or any of the women that were with her, know where it was put; whether in some other grave, or was exposed to the insults of men, or to birds and beasts of prey; whether it was laid in a more suitable and convenient place, or in a scandalous one; and whether this removal was for his greater honour, or reproach; to know this, gave her great concern and uneasiness, as she knew it must the disciples also: so Christ, in a spiritual sense, may be removed from his people for a time, and they know not where he is; sometimes he removes himself, to chastise them for their former carriage, to try and exercise their grace, to inflame their love to him, and sharpen their desires after him, and to endear his presence to them the more, when they enjoy it again; sometimes he is taken away from them by preachers, when they leave him out of their discourses; and by their own sins and transgressions, which separate between him and them, with respect to communion; and who, for a time, may not know where to find him: and for the direction of such it may be observed, that he is to be found in the ministration of his word and ordinances in his churches.

Ver. 3. *Peter therefore went forth*, etc.] Out of the house where he was, upon hearing the account Mary gave:

and that other disciple; John, the Evangelist and Apostle; the rest of the disciples staying at home and continuing together, waiting to hear what account these two would bring:

and came to the sepulchre; to see with their own eyes what was done, and whether things were as Mary had related; and to make a more particular inquiry into, and examination of them.

Ver. 4. *So they ran both together*, etc.] At first setting out, and for a while; not content to walk, they ran, being eagerly desirous to know the truth of things:

and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre; John was a younger man than Peter, and so more nimble, and swift of foot, and got to the sepulchre before him; and besides, had not that concern of mind to retard him, Peter might have; as, supposing Christ was risen, and he should see him, how he should be able to look him in the face, whom he had so shamefully denied.

Ver. 5. *And he stooping down and looking in*, etc.] That is, John; when he came to the sepulchre, stooped down to look into it, and see what he could see; he only went into the court, or stood upon the floor, where the bearers used to set down the bier, before they put the corpse into one of the graves in the sepulchre, which were four cubits lower; (See Gill on ^{“~~4116~~”}Mark 16:5”). Hence he was obliged to stoop down, ere he could see anything within: when he

saw the linen clothes lying; in which the body had been wrapped, but that itself not there:

yet went he not in; to the sepulchre itself, but waited in the court or porch, till Peter came; and perhaps might be timorous and fearful of going into such a place alone; the Arabic version reads it, “he dared not go in”.

Ver. 6. *Then cometh Simon Peter following him*, etc.] In a very little time after him:

and went into the sepulchre; itself, though not without first stooping down, as John did; (see ^{“~~4212~~”}Luke 24:12).

And seeth the linen clothes lie; as John did; and as by the mouth of two or three witnesses everything is confirmed, so was this; both saw the linen in which the body was wrapped, but that was gone; and which was a sign that the body was not stolen away, otherwise the linen would not have been left; and besides, it would have taken up some time, and given a good deal of trouble, to have unwrapped the body, when it is considered how many foldings the Jews used to wind up their corpse in.

Ver. 7. *And the napkin that was about his head*, etc.] The word σουδαριον, rendered “napkin”, is thought to be originally Latin, and

signifies an handkerchief, with which the sweat is wiped off the face, and so it is used in (^{<44912>}Acts 19:12) but Nonnus says it is a common word with the Syrians, and the word *ardws* is used in the Syriac version; and which he renders, *κεφαλῆς ζωστηρα*, “the girdle, or binding of the head”, for with this the head and face of the dead person were bound; (see ^{<81144>}John 11:44). Now Peter, by going into the sepulchre, and looking about him, and examining things more strictly and narrowly, observed that which neither he nor John had taken notice of, when only stooping they looked in: and that is, that this head binder, or napkin, was

not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself: and was plainly the effect of thought, care, and composure; and clearly showed, that the body was not taken away in a hurry, or by thieves, since everything lay in such order and decency; and which was done, either by our Lord himself, or by the angels.

Ver. 8. *Then went in also the other disciple*, etc.] John, being animated by the example of Peter, went down into the sepulchre likewise; whither Peter also might beckon, or call him, to be witness with him of the order and situation in which things lay:

which came first to the sepulchre; yet went last into it; so it was, that the first was last, and the last first:

and he saw; the linen clothes lie in one place, and the napkin folded up in order, lying by itself in another:

and believed; that the body was not there, but either was taken away, or was raised from the dead; but whether as yet he believed the latter is doubtful, by what follows; unless what follows is considered as an illustration, especially of the faith of John, that he should believe the resurrection of Christ, though till now he did not know nor understand the Scriptures that spake of it.

Ver. 9. *For as yet they knew not the Scripture*, etc.] Meaning not some particular passage of Scripture, but the writings of the Old Testament in general, and the various places in it, which spoke of the resurrection of Christ, either in a way of type, or prophecy; such as (^{<01218>}Genesis 22:3,4, 10:13, ^{<01610>}Jon 2:1-7, ^{<01610>}Psalms 16:10, ^{<20112>}Hosea 6:2, ^{<23519>}Isaiah 26:19) and though our Lord had often referred to some of them, at least as in (^{<01240>}Matthew 12:40, 16:21, 20:18,19) yet such was the dulness of the

disciples, or such their prejudices in favour of the Messiah being to continue, and set up a temporal kingdom, that even John, who leaned on his breast, and Peter, who was so inquisitive and desirous of knowing our Lord's meaning in everything, did not understand the sense of his words, nor of those places of Scripture he had reference to:

that he must rise again from the dead: so it was determined, thus it was predicted, and the justification and salvation of God's elect required it; and yet they knew not the thing, nor the necessity and importance of it.

Ver. 10. *Then the disciples*, etc.] Peter and John, after they had seen and examined things, and satisfied themselves as much as they could:

went away again unto their own home; or "to themselves", as in the original text, and so the Vulgate Latin reads it; not that the meaning is, that they had been out of their minds, and proper exercise of them, and now came to themselves; but they returned to their own company, to the rest of the disciples they left at home, who were as themselves. The Syriac renders it, *wh tkwdl*, "to their own place", and so the Arabic and Persic versions; the place from whence they came, and where the rest were assembled together, to pray, converse, and consult together, what was to be done at this juncture.

Ver. 11. *But Mary stood without at the sepulchre*, etc.] She returned from the city to the sepulchre again, following Peter and John thither, who continued here when they departed, being willing to get some tidings of her Lord, if possible. The word "without", is omitted by the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, but is in the Greek copies; and is properly put by the evangelist, when rightly understood; for the meaning is not, that she stood without the sepulchre, taken in its full extent; for she stood, *rxj b*, "in the court", where the bearers set down the corpse, in order to carry it into the cave, or vault; she stood without the innermost part of the sepulchre, but not without side the sepulchre itself; as appears from her stooping and looking into it:

weeping; that the body of her dear Lord was taken away, and she was prevented of showing that respect unto it she designed; and not knowing in whose hands it was, but fearing it would be insulted and abused by wicked men, her heart was ready to break with sorrow:

and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre; to see if she could see him, if she and the disciples were not mistaken, being loath to go without finding him: so it is in a spiritual sense, the absence of Christ is cause of great distress and sorrow to gracious souls; because of the excellency of his person, the near and dear relations he stands in to them and on account of the nature of his presence and company, which is preferable to everything in this world; nor can such souls, when they have lost sight of Christ, sit down contented; but will seek after him in the Scriptures, under the ministry of the word, and at the ordinances of the Gospel, where a crucified, buried, risen Jesus is exhibited.

Ver. 12. *And seeth two angels in white*, etc.] Matthew and Mark speak but of one, but Luke of two, as here; whom he calls men, because they appeared in an human form, and in shining garments, or white apparel; and which appearance is entirely agreeable to the received notion of the Jews, that as evil angels or devils are clothed in black, so good angels, or ministering spirits, *μυνβι γϷωβι*, “are clothed in white”^{f786}, expressive of their spotless purity and innocence:

sitting the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain; in what position the body of Christ was laid, whether from west to east, as some, or from north to south, as others, is not certain; since the Jews observed no rule in this matter, as appears from the form of their sepulchres, and the disposition of the graves in them; some lying one way, and some another, in the same vault; (See Gill on “^{<4212>}Luke 24:12”).

Ver. 13. *And they say unto her, woman, why weepest thou?* etc.] Signifying, that she had no reason to weep, but to rejoice and be glad; since, though the body of her Lord was not there, yet he was risen from the dead, and was alive. This they said, partly to rebuke her for her grief, and to comfort her under it: Beza’s ancient copy adds here, as in (^{<4315>}John 20:15) “whom seekest thou?” and so does the Ethiopic version: “she saith unto them”; without any concern of mind about what they were, and as if they had been of the human kind; for her grief made her fearless, and she cared not who she opened the case to, so that she could get any relief, and any tidings of her Lord:

because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him; and which she thought was reason sufficient for her weeping; could she but have known, that if he was taken away, it was by his friends,

and was well used, and she could have had the opportunity of paying her last respects to him, it would have been a satisfaction; but nothing short of this could dry up her tears.

Ver. 14. *And when she had thus said*, etc.] As soon as the words were out of her mouth, before she could have an answer from the angels:

she turned herself back; perceiving, either by the looks and gesture of one of the angels, or by hearing a noise, that somebody was behind her:

and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus; she saw a person, but did not know who he was, by reason of the form of his appearance, the difference of his clothes, and not expecting to see him alive; or through modesty, she might not look wistfully at him; and besides, her eyes were filled with tears, and swollen with weeping; so that she could not see clearly; and her eyes might be holden also, as the disciples were, that as yet she might not know him: so sometimes, in a spiritual sense, Christ is with, and near his people, and they know it not: Christ, as God, is omnipresent; he is every where, and in all places; the spiritual presence of Christ, is more or less, in some way or another, always in all his churches, and among his dear people; but the sight of him is not always alike to them, nor does he appear to them always in the same form; sometimes against them, at least in their apprehensions, nor always in a manner agreeably to their expectations; nor is his grace always discovered in the same way, nor has it the same effect.

Ver. 15. *Jesus saith unto her, woman, why weepest thou*, etc.] The same question he puts to her, as was put by the angels: adding,

whom seekest thou? for she was not only weeping for the loss of him, but was inquiring after him, if anyone saw him removed from thence, and where he was carried:

she supposing him to be the gardener; that had the care of the garden, in which the sepulchre was; for not the owner of the garden, who was Joseph, but the keeper of it is meant; she could not imagine that Joseph should be there so early in the morning, but might reasonably think the gardener was:

saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away; she addresses him, though she took him to be but the gardener, in a very civil and courteous manner; which was rightly judged, especially since she had a favour to ask of him: she does not

mention the name of her Lord, but imagined he knew who she meant, being so lately buried there; and suggests, that perhaps it might not have been so agreeable to the gardener to have his body lie there, and therefore had removed it; and would he but be so kind as to let her know where he was put, she, with the assistance of her friends close by, would take him away with them: so in a spiritual sense, a truly gracious soul is willing to do anything, and to be at any trouble, so that it may but enjoy Christ; it dearly loves him, as this good woman did; it early, and earnestly, and with its whole heart, seeks after him, as she did; and absence of him, or loss of his presence for a while, sharpens the desire after him, and makes his presence the more welcome.

Ver. 16. *Jesus saith unto her, Mary,* etc.] He might alter the tone of his voice, and speak unto her as he used to do, calling her by her name in his usual manner: so Christ has personal knowledge of all his people, and can call them by name; he knows them, and makes himself known to them, before they can know him; and though he may absent himself from them for a while, yet not always:

she turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master; it seems, as if she had dropped her conversation with the supposed gardener at once, and scarce waited for an answer from him, but turns herself to the angels again, if she could hear any tidings from them; acting like a person in the utmost distress, hurry and confusion; looking this way and that way, to this or the other person: and now upon Christ's speaking to her, in this plain, familiar manner, she turns herself again; when fully knowing him, she addresses him with the greatest faith and affection, reverence and humility; calling him her Lord and master, and throws herself at his feet: thus when Christ is pleased to manifest himself to his people, there goes a power along with his word, making himself known; and a word from Christ, attended with divine power, will give a soul a turn to him from the most excellent creatures, even angels; and when Christ is known, he will be acknowledged with all love, humility, and obedience. The word Rabboni, is of the Chaldee and Syriac form, and signifies "my Lord, or master"; and is commonly applied to one that has a despotic power over another; though all the Oriental versions say, that she spoke to him in Hebrew. The Syriac and Ethiopic, "Rabboni", but the Arabic and Persic, "Rabbi". The titles of Rab, Rabbi, and Rabban, are frequent with the Jewish doctors; who say^{f787}, that Rabbi is greater than Rab, and Rabban is greater than Rabbi; and a man's own name greater than Rabban: but the word in the form here used

Rabbon, I do not remember ever to have observed applied to any of the doctors; but is frequently used of the Divine Being, who, in their prayers, is often addressed in this manner, $\mu\iota\ w[\ I\ \zeta\ wnwbr$ “Lord of the world”^{f788}. I conjecture therefore, that Mary used this word, as expressive of her faith in his power and Godhead, seeing him alive from the dead; though it might be a name she was used to call him by before, being convinced from what he had done to her, and by the miracles she had observed performed by him on others, of his proper deity; as the poor blind man expresses his faith in the power of Christ to cure him, by addressing him in the same language, using the same word, (~~4115~~Mark 10:51).

Ver. 17. *Jesus saith unto her, touch me not*, etc.] Not that his body was an aerial one, or a mere “phantom”, which could not be touched; the prohibition itself shows the contrary; and besides, Christ’s body was afterwards presented to Thomas, to be touched by him, and to be handled by all the disciples; and his feet were held by the women, which is what Mary would have now done: upon the discovery of him, she threw herself at his feet, and was going to embrace and kiss them, to testify her affection and joy, when she is forbid; not as unworthy of the favour, because she sought him among the dead, for which the angels reproved her and the rest; but either because he was not to be conversed with, as before his death, his body being raised immortal and glorious; or rather, because he had an errand to send her on to his disciples, which required haste; nor need she stay now to show her respect to him, since she would have opportunity enough to do that, before his ascension; which though it was to be quickly, yet not directly and immediately; and this seems to be the sense of our Lord’s reason:

for I am not yet ascended to my Father; nor shall I immediately go to him; I shall make some stay upon earth; as he did, forty days before his ascension; when he intimates, she might see him again, and familiarly converse with him; at present he would have her stay no longer with him:

but go to my brethren; this he says, to show that their carriage to him, being denied by one of them, and forsaken by them all, and the glory he was raised unto, as all this made no alteration in their relation to him, so neither in his affection to them: Mary was a very proper person to be sent unto them, since she had lately been with them, and knew where they were all assembled together:

and say unto them; as from himself, representing him as it were:

I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God; God was his Father, not by creation, as he is to angels, and the souls of men, and therefore is called the Father of spirits; nor by adoption, as he is to the saints; nor with respect to the incarnation of Christ, for, as man, he had no father; or with regard to his office as Mediator, for as such he was a servant, and not a Son; but he was his Father by nature, or with regard to his divine person, being begotten of him, and so his own proper Son, and he his own proper Father; which hold forth the natural and eternal sonship of Christ, his equality with him, and distinction from him: and God was the Father of his disciples by adopting grace, in virtue of the covenant of grace made with Christ, and through their spiritual relation to him, as the natural and eternal Son of God: God the Father is the God of Christ as man, who prepared, formed, anointed, supported, and glorified his human nature; and in which nature, he prayed to him as his God, believed in him, loved and obeyed him as such; wherefore the Jew ^{f789} very wrongly infers from hence, that he is not God, because the God of Israel was his God; since this is spoken of him as he is man: and he was the God of his disciples, in and by the covenant of grace made with Christ, as their head and representative; so that their interest in God, as their covenant God and Father, was founded upon his being the God and Father of Christ, and their relation to, and concern with him; and which therefore must be firm and lasting, and will hold as long as God is the God and Father of Christ: this was good news to be brought to his disciples; which, as it carried the strongest marks of affection, and expressions of nearness of relation; and implied, that he was now risen from the dead; so it signified, that he should ascend to God, who stood in the same relation to them, as to him; when he should use all his interest and influence on their behalf, whilst they were on earth; and when the proper time was come for a remove, that they might be with him, and with his God and Father and theirs, where they would be to all eternity.

Ver. 18. *Mary Magdalene came*, etc.] Directly and immediately, being ready and willing to obey the commands of her Lord, with the utmost cheerfulness; and glad to go on such an errand, and carry such news to his disciples, even though her private interest and personal affection might have inclined her to desire to stay with Christ:

and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord; not only that he was risen from the dead, and she had been told so by the angels, but she had seen him herself, and was an eyewitness of his resurrection, and which she firmly believed; this she said, not only with all the marks of pleasure, joy and transport, but with an air of assurance and confidence:

and that he had spoken these things unto her; as that he called them brethren, and bid her go unto them, and acquaint them, that as he was risen, he should in a short time ascend to his Father and theirs, to his God and theirs; all which she faithfully related to them.

Ver 19. *Then the same day at evening*, etc.] The same day Christ rose from the dead, and appeared to Mary; at the evening of that day, after he had been with the two disciples to Emmaus, about eight miles from Jerusalem, and they had returned again to the rest; and after there had been such a bustle all day in Jerusalem, about the body of Jesus; the soldiers that watched the sepulchre, giving out, by the direction of the elders, that the disciples of Christ had stolen away the body, while they slept:

being the first day of the week; as is said in (⁴³⁰John 20:1) and here repeated, to prevent any mistake; and that it might be clear what day it was the disciples were assembled together, and Christ appeared to them:

when the doors were shut; the doors of the house where they were, which it is plain was in Jerusalem, (⁴²³Luke 24:33) but whether it was the house where Christ and his disciples ate the passover together, or whether it was John's home or house, to which he took the mother of Christ, since he and Peter, and the rest, seem to be afterwards together in one place, is not certain: however, the doors were shut; which is not merely expressive of the time of night, when this was usually done; but signifies that they were really locked and bolted, and barred, for which a reason is given as follows:

where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews; after their scattering abroad upon the taking of Christ, and after his crucifixion was over; and especially after the report of his body being took away, they gathered together, and made fast the doors of the place, lest the Jews should come in upon them, and surprise them; for they might fear, that since they had took away their master's life, theirs must go next; and especially since it was rumoured abroad that they had stole away his body, they might be under the greater fear, that search would be made after them, and they be apprehended and brought into trouble on that account:

came Jesus and stood in the midst of them; on a sudden, at once, and when they had no thought or fear of anyone's coming upon them, without some previous notice; but he being the Almighty God, did, by his omnipotent power, cause the bars and bolts, and doors, in the most secret and unobserved manner, to give way to him, and let him in at once among them: when as a presage and pledge of the accomplishment of his promise to be with, and in the midst of his, when met together, either in private or public, he stood and presented himself in the midst of them: and to let them know at once he was no enemy,

he saith unto them, peace be unto you: $\mu\kappa\iota \mu\omega\iota \zeta$, "peace be unto you", is an usual form of salutation among the Jews; (see ⁴⁰⁴²³Genesis 43:23) expressive of all prosperity in soul and body, inward and outward, spiritual and temporal; and here may have a special regard to that peace he said he gave unto them, and left with them, upon his departure from them; and which he had obtained by the blood of his cross, and now preached unto them.

Ver. 20. *And when he had so said*, etc.] The above salutation, in the most kind, tender, and affectionate manner: and to put them out of all pain, and that they might know certainly who he was,

he showed them his hands and his side; his hands, which had been pierced with the nails, the marks of which were then to be seen; and which they all knew must be the case, since he was crucified; and his side, which was pierced with a spear, and which left a wide open wound, and which John, who was among them, was an eyewitness of. These he showed, partly to convince them that he was not a spirit, or an apparition, which at first sight they took him to be, from his sudden appearance among them, the doors being locked and barred; and partly to assure them of the truth of his resurrection, and in the same body, as well as to lead them into a view of his great love his suffering the death of the cross for them; and also to observe to them from whence that peace and happiness sprung he had just now saluted them with. It is needless to inquire, whether these marks in his hands, feet, and side, still continue; he was raised with them, that he might show them, for the reasons above given; and should they be thought to continue till all the effects of his death are wrought, since he appears in the midst of the throne and elders, a lamb, as it had been slain, and till his second coming, when they that pierced his hands and feet, and side, shall look and mourn, it is not very unreasonable:

then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord; for by these marks in his hands and feet, and side, they were fully convinced, and entirely satisfied, that it was he; and that he was risen from the dead; and who now appeared to them, than which a more delightful sight could not be enjoyed by them; whereby was fulfilled, what he had foretold and promised, (^{<4162>}John 16:22). So a spiritual sight of Christ is always rejoicing to a disciple of his; that is, one that has learned of Christ, and learned Christ, who has believed in him, and is enabled to deny sinful, righteous, civil, worldly, and natural self, for Christ; and is made willing to take up the cross, bear it, and follow after him: a sight of Christ as God and man, of his personal beauties and excellencies, of his fulness and suitableness, as a Saviour and Redeemer, and so as to have sensible communion with him, is exceeding delightful to such an one; especially when under a sense of sin, when accused or tempted by Satan, or when Christ has been long absent, or when under affliction, and on a death bed; for Christ is a believer's all; he stands in all relations to him; and such a soul never sees Christ aright, but it receives something from him, his leaning on his breast; and who being so near his person, and allowed to use a liberty with him, everyone did not take, at the motion of Peter, asked our Lord at supper, who the person was he meant that should betray him; all this is said as descriptive of the disciple here spoken of, which leaves it without any doubt, that it was the Apostle John; and who, from (^{<4212>}John 21:2) appears to be one of this company, and is further confirmed at (^{<4214>}John 21:24).

Ver. 21. *Then said Jesus to them again*, etc.] The words he said before:

peace be unto you; which he repeated, to put them out of their fright, by reason of which they returned him no answer; and to raise and engage their attention to what he was about to say; and to pacify their consciences, distressed with a sense of their conduct towards him; and with a view to the Gospel of peace, he was now going to send them to preach:

as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you; Christ's mission of his disciples, supposes power in him, honour done to them, authority put upon them, qualifications given them, and hence success attended them; what they were sent to do, was to preach the Gospel, convert sinners, build up saints, plant churches, and administer ordinances. The pattern of their mission, is the mission of Christ by his Father, which was into this world, to do his will, preach the Gospel, work miracles, and obtain eternal redemption for his people; and which mission does not suppose inferiority

in his divine person, nor change of place, but harmony and agreement between the Father and Son: the likeness of these missions lies in these things; their authority is both divine; they are both sent into the same place, the world; and in much the same condition, mean, despicable, hated and persecuted; and in part for the same end, to preach the Gospel, and work miracles, for the confirmation of it; but not to obtain redemption, that being a work done solely by Christ; in which he has no partner, and to whom the glory must be only ascribed.

Ver. 22. *And when he had said this*, etc.] That is, declared he sent them forth in like manner as his Father sent him:

he breathed on them; in allusion to God's breathing the breath of life into man, at his creation; or rather, to the Spirit himself, who is the breath of God, and proceeds from him, as from the Father; and who breathes both upon persons in regeneration, and in qualifying for ministerial service, at the instance and influence of Christ: and such an opinion the Jews have of the Spirit of the Messiah, who say^{f790}, that

“the Spirit went from between the wings of the cherubim, **hybcnw**, “and breathed upon him” (Menasseh) by the decree, or order of the word of the Lord.”

And saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost; meaning not the grace of the Holy Ghost in regeneration, which they had received already; but the gifts of the Spirit, to qualify them for the work he now sent them to do, and which were not now actually bestowed; but this breathing on them, and the words that attended it, were a symbol, pledge, and confirmation, of what they were to receive on the day of Pentecost: hence it appears, that it is the Spirit of God, who, by his gifts and grace, makes and qualifies men to be ministers of the Gospel; and our Lord by this action, and these words, gives a very considerable proof of his deity: the Papists show their impudence and wickedness, in imitating Christ by their insufflations, or breathing on men; pretending thereby to convey the Holy Spirit to them.

Ver. 23. *Whose soever sins ye remit*, etc.] God only can forgive sins, and Christ being God, has a power to do so likewise; but he never communicated any such power to his apostles; nor did they ever assume any such power to themselves, or pretend to exercise it; it is the mark of antichrist, to attempt anything of the kind; who, in so doing, usurps the divine prerogative, places himself in his seat, and shows himself as if he

was God: but this is to be understood only in a doctrinal, or ministerial way, by preaching the full and free remission of sins, through the blood of Christ, according to the riches of God's grace, to such as repent of their sins, and believe in Christ; declaring, that all such persons as do so repent and believe, all their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake: and accordingly,

they are remitted unto them; in agreement with Christ's own words, in his declaration and commission to his disciples; (see ⁴¹¹⁶⁶Mark 16:16,) (⁴²⁴⁷Luke 24:47). On the other hand he signifies, that

whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained: that is, that whatsoever sins ye declare are not forgiven, they are not forgiven; which is the case of all final unbelievers, and impenitent sinners; who dying without repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel declaration, shall be damned, and are damned; for God stands by, and will stand by and confirm the Gospel of his Son, faithfully preached by his ministering servants; and all the world will sooner or later be convinced of the validity, truth, and certainty, of the declarations on each of these heads, made by them.

Ver. 24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus*, etc.] The person here spoken of, is described by his Hebrew name Thomas, and his Greek one Didymus, which both signify a twin; and perhaps he was one. It was common with the Jews to have two names, a Jewish and a Gentile one; by the one they went in the land of Israel, and by the other when without the land ^{f791}; nay, they often went by one name in Judea, and by another in Galilee ^{f792}; where Thomas might go by the name of Didymus with the Greeks, that might live with the Jews in some of those parts: he is also said to be "one of the twelve" apostles, which was their number at first, though Judas now was gone off from them, and therefore are sometimes only called the "eleven"; but this having been their complement, it is still retained; but what is observed of him to his disadvantage and discredit is, that he

was not with them when Jesus came: Beza's ancient copy reads, "he was not there with them"; and so read the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions; he either had not returned to the rest after their scattering one from another upon the apprehending of Christ; or did not choose to assemble with the rest, for fear of the Jews; or was taken up with some business and affair of life; however, he was not with the rest of the disciples, when they were assembled together, and Jesus appeared among them: as it is of good

consequence to attend the assemblies of Christ's disciples and followers, so it is of bad consequence to neglect or forsake them: it is frequently to good purpose that persons attend them; here God comes and blesses his people, Jesus grants his presence, the graces of the Spirit are increased, and drawn forth into exercise; souls that have lost sight of Christ find him, disconsolate ones are comforted, weak ones strengthened, and hungry ones fed: on the other hand, not to attend is of bad consequence; neglect of assembling together exposes to many snares and temptations; brings on a spiritual leanness; leads to an indifference and lukewarmness: issues in a low degree of grace, and a non-exercise of it, and in a loss of Christ's presence.

Ver. 25. *The other disciples therefore said unto him*, etc.] Some time in the same week, as they had opportunity of seeing him, with great joy, and full assurance of faith in Christ's resurrection:

we have seen the Lord; they had not only the testimony of the women, and the declaration of the angels, but they saw him with their own eyes, and beheld even the very prints of the nails in his hands and feet, and of the spear in his side, and therefore could not be mistaken and imposed upon: a spiritual sight of Christ is a blessing often enjoyed by attending the assembly of the saints to see Christ, is the desire of every gracious soul; this is the end of their meeting together for social worship; the word and ordinances have a tendency in them to lead souls to a sight of him; and it may be expected, because it is promised; and whenever it is enjoyed, it is very delightful; and a soul that meets with Christ in an ordinance, cannot but speak of it to others; and which he does with joy and pleasure, in an exulting, and even in a kind of a boasting manner; and that for the encouragement of others to attend likewise:

but he said unto them, except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. That nails were used in the crucifixion of Christ, is certain from this place, though nowhere else mentioned; whereby the prophecy of him in (¹⁹²¹⁶Psalm 22:16) was fulfilled; for these were not always used in this kind of death. The bodies of men were sometimes fastened to the cross with cords, and not nails ^{f793}. How many were used, whether three, as some, or four, as others, or more, as were sometimes used ^{f794}, is not certain, nor material to know. The Alexandrian copy, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Persic versions read, "the

place of the nails”; that is, the place where the nails were drove. Thomas knew that Christ was fastened to the cross with nails, and that his side was pierced with a spear; which he, though not present, might have had from John, who was an eyewitness thereof; but though they had all seen him alive, he will not trust to their testimony; nay, he was determined not to believe his own eyes; unless he put his finger into, as well as saw, the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, as well as beheld the wound made by the spear, he is resolved not to believe. And his sin of unbelief is the more aggravated, inasmuch as this disciple was present at the raising of Lazarus from the dead by Christ, and had heard Christ himself say, that he should rise from the dead the third day. We may learn from hence how great is the sin of unbelief; that the best of men are subject to it; and that though this was over ruled by divine providence to bring out another proof Christ’s resurrection, yet this did not excuse the sin of Thomas: and it may be observed, that as Thomas would not believe without seeing the marks of the nails and spear in Christ’s flesh; so many will not believe, unless they find such and such marks in themselves, which often prove very ensnaring and distressing. Just such an unbeliever as Thomas was, the Jews make Moses to be, when Israel sinned: they say,

“he did not believe that Israel had sinned, but said, *ymam nyna hawr nyna* *μα*, “if I do not see, I will not believe”^{f795}.”

Ver. 26. *And after eight days*, etc.] That is, after another week, the same day a week later, which taking in the day in which Christ rose and appeared to Mary Magdalene, and his disciples, and the day in which he now appeared to the disciples with Thomas, made eight days; a like way of speaking see in (~~Q188~~ Luke 9:28) compared with (~~Q171~~ Matthew 17:1). And Dr. Hammond has proved from Josephus^{f796}, that the Jews used to express a week by eight days.

Again, his disciples were within; within doors, in some private house; probably the same as before, in some part of the city of Jerusalem:

and Thomas with them: which shows their harmony and agreement, their frequency and constancy in meeting together, and their Christian forbearance with Thomas, notwithstanding his unbelief; whom they looked upon as a good man, and retained in their company, hoping by one means or other he would be convinced: and it also shows Thomas’s regard to

them, and affection for them, by meeting with them, though he had not the same faith in the resurrection of Christ:

then came Jesus; when the disciples, with Thomas, were together; so making good his promise to meet with his people when they meet; and thereby putting an honour upon, and giving encouragement to with the saints: if it should be asked, why did not Christ come sooner? it may be replied, that the reason, on his part, was, it was his will and pleasure to come at this time, and not before; Christ has his set times to himself, when he will appear and manifest himself to his people: on Thomas's part the reasons might be, partly to rebuke him for his sin, and that the strength of his unbelief might appear the more, and that some desire might be stirred up in him to see Christ, if he was risen. And on the part of the disciples, because they did not meet together sooner; and for the further trial of their faith, whether it would continue or not, Thomas obstinately persisting in his unbelief:

the doors being shut; as before, and for the same reason, for fear of the Jews, as well as for the privacy of their devotion and conversation:

and stood in the midst; having in the same powerful manner as before caused the doors, locks, and bars to give way, when at once he appeared in the midst of them all, not to Thomas alone, but to all the eleven; and this the rather, because the disciples had bore a testimony to Christ's resurrection, and which he meant now to confirm; and to rebuke Thomas publicly, who had sinned before them all:

and said, peace be unto you; which he had said before, and now, saluting Thomas in like manner as he did the rest, notwithstanding his unbelief.

Ver. 27. *Then saith he to Thomas*, etc.] For whose sake he chiefly came, and whom he at once singled out from the rest, and called by name in the most friendly manner, without upbraiding or reproaching him for not believing the testimony that had been given him:

reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thine hand and thrust it into my side; that is, make use of every way by seeing, feeling, and examining the scars in my hands, and the hole in my side, and satisfy thyself in the manner thou hast desired; which shows the omniscience of Christ, who knew what had passed between him and the other disciples, and the very words Thomas had expressed himself in; also his great

humility and condescension in submitting himself to be examined in the very manner he had fixed; and likewise the reality of his resurrection:

and be not faithless, but believing; in which words Christ dissuades him from unbelief, which is very evil in its own nature, and in its effects; it is the root of all evil; it unfits for duty, and renders the word unprofitable, and leads men off from Christ; and is the more aggravated in the people of God, by the instances, declarations, and promises of grace, and discoveries of love made unto them: and he also encourages him to believe. The exercise of the grace of faith is well pleasing to Christ; it gives glory to him, and makes for the soul's comfort; and a word from Christ, his power going along with it, will enable men to believe, as it did Thomas; which appears by what follows.

Ver. 28. *And Thomas answered and said unto him*, etc.] Without examining his hands and side, and as astonished at his condescension and grace, and ashamed of his unbelief:

my Lord and my God; he owns him to be Lord, as he was both by creation and redemption; and God, of which he was fully assured from his omniscience, which he had given a full proof of, and from the power that went along with his words to his heart, and from a full conviction he now had of his resurrection from the dead. He asserts his interest in him as his Lord and his God; which denotes his subjection to him, his affection for him, and faith in him; so the divine word is called in Philo the Jew, *κυριος μου*, "my Lord"^{f797}.

Ver. 29. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas*, etc.] The word Thomas is omitted in the Alexandrian copy, and in Beza's ancient copy, and in some others, and in the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions.

Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; which carries in it a tacit and gentle reproof for his unbelief, and suggests, that if he had not seen, he would not have believed; but is not so harsh as if that had been expressed; and which the Jews were wont to do in a severe manner^{f798}.

"One said to R. Jochanan, expound Rabbi; for it is beautiful for thee to expound: for as thou sayest, so I see: he replied to him, Raka, *tmah al tyar al al ml a*, "if thou seest not, thou wilt not believe"."

Christ here allows that Thomas had believed, that he was risen from the dead, and that he was his Lord and God; and though his faith was late and slow, it was sure and certain, and was appropriating; it was a faith of interest, though upon sight, and not on hearing, or the report of the other disciples: now faith on sight may be in persons who have no true spiritual faith; as in some that saw both the person and miracles of Christ on earth, and in others who will see him come in the clouds of heaven; and it has been in others who have truly believed in Christ, as the apostles of the Lamb: but yet, though it may be, as in many it has been, right, yet not so commendable as that without it. From hence may be observed, that Christ allows of the epithets and titles given him by Thomas, and therefore must be Lord and God; and approves of Thomas's faith, and therefore that must be right; though he prefers faith without personal sight of him to it, in the next clause.

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. The author of the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras 1:37 says of

“the people to come, whose little ones rejoice in gladness”,

in the person of the Almighty Lord, “though they have not seen me with bodily eyes, yet in spirit they believe the thing that I say”. It seems as if there were some at this time in the city of Jerusalem, who firmly believed that Christ was risen from the dead, upon the testimony of others, though they had not seen him themselves. Faith without sight, in other respects, may be considered as opposed to the beatific vision in heaven; and as destitute of sensible communion with God; and as giving credit to doctrines and things above carnal sense and reason; such as the doctrines of the Trinity, the sonship of Christ, his incarnation, and the union of the two natures in him, and the resurrection of the dead; and as believing whatever is said in the word of God, upon the credit of his testimony; and which has for its objects things past, as what were done in eternity, in the council and covenant of grace; the works of creation and providence in time, the birth, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ; and also things present, Christ, and the blessings of grace, and things to come, the invisible glories of the other world. Now such are happy that have true faith in these things, for they enjoy many blessings now, as a justifying righteousness, pardon of sin, adoption, freedom of access to God, and security from condemnation; they have spiritual peace, joy, and comfort in their souls, and shall at last be saved with an everlasting salvation.

Ver. 30. *And many other signs truly did Jesus*, etc.] Besides these wonderful appearances to his disciples once and again, when the doors were shut about them: and which signs refer not to what was done before, but after his resurrection; and which he did,

in the presence of his disciples; for he appeared to, and conversed with no other but them after his resurrection:

which are not written in this book; of John's Gospel; though they may be elsewhere; such as his appearing to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and to the eleven on a mountain in Galilee, and to five hundred brethren at once, which other inspired writers speak of: and many there are which he did; which are not particularly written in this, nor in any other book; for he was seen of his disciples forty days, and showed himself alive, by many infallible proofs; all of which are not recorded.

Ver. 31. *But these are written*, etc.]. The several ends of recording what is written in this book, in proof of Christ's resurrection, are as follow: one is,

that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; that Jesus, who was diminutively called Jesus, the son of Mary, the son of Joseph, the carpenter's son, Jesus of Nazareth, and of Galilee, was the Christ, or true Messiah; which signifies anointed, and takes in all his offices of prophet, priest, and King, to which he was anointed; and is an article of faith of the greatest importance; and is to be believed through the signs proving his resurrection, who, according to the Scriptures, was to rise again; and which, by the signs here recorded, it appears he is risen indeed, and therefore must be the true Messiah of the prophets, and also "the Son of God"; which was a known title of the Messiah among the Jews; and is not a name of office, but of nature and relation to God, and designs Christ in his divine nature, or as a divine person; and is an article of great moment, and well attested, by God, by angels, and men; and receives a further confirmation by the resurrection of Christ, who is thereby declared to be the Son of God with power; and with this view did this evangelist write the signs, proving it, herein to be found. And his other end in recording them, is,

and that believing ye might have life through his name: believers have their spiritual and eternal life through Christ; their life of grace, of justification on him, of sanctification from him, and communion with him; the support and maintenance of their spiritual life, and all the comforts of

it: and also their life of glory, or eternal life, they have through, or in his name; it lies in his person, it comes to them through him as the procuring cause of it; it is for his sake bestowed upon them, yea, it is in his hands to give it, and who does give it to all that believe: not that believing is the cause of their enjoyment of this life, or is their title to it, which is the name, person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; but faith is the way and means in which they enjoy it; and therefore these signs are written by the evangelist for the encouragement of this faith in Christ, which is of such use in the enjoyment of life, in, through, and from him. Beza's ancient copy, two of Stephens's, the Coptic, Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read, "eternal life".