

“Considering Whether Jesus Really Was Who He Said He Was” // John 20:25–29 // *Unknown God #2*

Easter

For those of you who are guests, you don't realize **how unusual** this is. You ask, “Why are you in a suit?” Well, I know that some of you who are guests are uncomfortable since they haven't been in church in a while, I figured I'd make myself uncomfortable, too. Now we're all on equal footing... **real reason: my mom and dad now come to this church...**

Summit, do you realize what this day means? The central claim of Christianity is that a man who had been confirmed dead got up out of his *grave by his own power*, walked around, greeted a bunch of people who knew him, hung out and ate dinner with them for about a month, spoke at a couple of churches, and then ascended back to heaven in the presence of over 100 people.

When we say, “**he is risen**” we don't mean in some poetic, spiritualized sense.

- It would **be like you going to a funeral** of a friend on Friday. **Watching them shut the lid** on his lifeless body, then **lower him** to the ground and cover the casket over with 6 feet of dirt.
- Then that **Monday you are sitting at Starbucks** he walks up to your table and asks if he can buy you a coffee and you go back to the grave and see it's been forced open and sits empty.

This is **what the disciples claimed** happened.

- **If this claim is false**, then Christianity is **just like every other religion**. If it is true, it changes everything.
- **If you agree with that, testify to that by putting your hands together...**

Introduction

Of course, we know that not everyone does, and so we **welcome** those of you who are in the process of asking questions. We **applaud you** for making this journey.

Last week we considered the question of whether we can know that God exists. I showed you how Paul compares it to unplugging your ears to a voice constantly whispering in creation, **suggesting** to us he is there. **I told you that *whether or not you pay attention to that voice is one of the most important decisions of your life.***

The date was **August 31, 2010**.

- It was about **2 in the afternoon**, and I had jammed myself into an elevator with **14 of my pastor friends**.
- We had an **appointment to visit** the chief representative for Muslim relations on the 6th floor of the U.S. Capitol offices in Washington, D.C.
- **We were running a few minutes behind**, and so in an attempt to save a few seconds, all 15 of us had mashed ourselves onto an elevator designed for 5 moderately-sized middle-school girls.

But **no problem, right?** It was a short ride, and surely if there's one place in the world you can count on everything working properly, it is Washington, D.C., right?

Between **the 3rd and 4th floors the elevator came to a complete and sudden halt** like a Republican Congress with a Democratic president. And **there we hung**, suspended between the 3rd and 4th floors, for over an hour. **In August.**

Fifteen pastors wearing suits and ties. Sweating. Cranky. And, y'all know there is nothing that makes you have to use the bathroom like knowing you can't physically get to one.

We pressed the little **emergency call button** repeatedly, but nothing happened. At that point, I noticed **two elevator features** I'd never noticed before. One was the "maximum weight capacity" warning. I was pretty sure we had exceeded that by the weight of a small minivan.

The other was a **little speaker I'd never noticed**. It was clearly designed to be able to get messages to someone in a situation like ours, but it was completely silent.

The **Muslim Imam** we were going to meet—who also had a great sense of humor—came to the other side of the 4th floor door and starts hollering, "Pray to Jesus; maybe he will resurrect the elevator."

Well, eventually, we **pried the elevator door open** and got someone on the 4th floor landing to do the same, creating a small, **2-foot gap barely big enough to squeeze one of us through**.

We **were just about to hoist** the first one of us up and out when the little speaker crackled to life. The voice on the other end of the line said, "I am with the elevator company. Please hang tight and don't move. Someone will be there within 5 minutes to get you out."

We told her we **already had the situation well in hand**, and explained how we were preparing our escape. "No!" she said. "Please do not do that. If the elevator drops even a few feet while you are crawling out, it could cut you in half. Hang on and we will help you."

So, we paused from our **potentially "divisive" pursuit** and waited. And **within about 15 minutes** the fire department got us out. We each had **sweat off about 6 pounds**, but nobody had been cut in half. So, I put that down in my book as a "win."

Somehow, we manage to go through life like I did with that elevator—oblivious to the fact there is a "speaker" right in front of us. That **speaker bears the quiet voice of God**.

But then something happens—sometimes something **traumatic**—that turns our attention toward it. **In the chaos of life, we hear a voice whispering to**—sometimes screaming at—us. This voice **may not answer all of our questions**, but it tells us that we are not alone and that help is coming for us. The voice lets us know that God is there, and that he is **willing to speak**, if we are **willing to listen**.¹

Last week we talked about how that voice speaks through creation. The question I want us to consider today is whether or not we hear that Voice speaking in Jesus.

Really, the only question of faith is, "Is Jesus really who he said he is?" Because if he is, then everything he taught us about God and eternity and the way of salvation are true. **But if he's not**, he's merely one religious option among many, whose spiritual advice we can take or leave as it suits us.

To get at this question, I want us to consider the story of the disciple that perhaps more people today identify with than any other: **Thomas**.

Now, what **one word description** always goes with Thomas?

- Say it: **DOUBTING**.

To be honest, I feel a little bad for Thomas. *Other disciples didn't get named for their faults*.

- Peter had a problem with fear but he didn't get labeled **"Petrified Peter"** or **"Peter the pansy"** or anything like that.
- **Luke** the Luster. **John** the Judgmental.
- **But Thomas got named** and commemorated for his flaw.

¹ *The God Who Is There* is the title of a classic book on knowing God by the great, knickers-wearing European apologist Francis Schaeffer.

John 20:25–29

HERE'S THE STORY: Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' followers, had gone to the tomb early on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus and when she got there she found the stone rolled away. She **assumed someone had stolen the body** and ran back to tell the other disciples.

Peter and John then ran to the tomb to check it out. Peter went all the way in to the tomb, and found no body, only Jesus' headscarf neatly folded up and laid on the bench (John 20:7), which indicated first that this **wasn't a burglar** (because burglars usually don't take time to fold clothes after they steal things) and it leads Peter to conclude that a **miracle has happened**.

- **2, IN FACT.** (M 1: *Jesus has resurrected.* M 2: *A single man took time to make his bed.*)
- (I say that because **one of my friends' moms** in college used to always use that as reasoning for why we should make the bed each morning: "**Look, Jesus had just risen from the dead** and he still took time to make the bed." I kid you not.)

Well, later that night Jesus appeared to the disciples and showed himself to them.

But **Thomas** wasn't there (he had probably gone out on a **Starbucks run** for everybody (and, I'm sure ~~Peter was the kind of guy who ordered a really complex drink that took forever to make, so Thomas didn't get back in time.~~)

So, when Thomas got back, they told him they had seen Jesus. But Thomas says, *Oh no. "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."* **John 20:25**

Now, this has to be at the **top of the list of "Things-You-Regret-Saying,"** right?

- Think about it: **You ever** say something stupid in small group? You're embarrassed by it, but in 5 minutes everybody forgets about it.
- Thomas says **something stupid and it's written down in the Bible** for us to read for the next 2,000 years.

Here's **the other reason I feel bad** for Thomas: **Lots of people in the Gospels doubted.**

- **Jesus' cousin, for example, John the Baptist, whom Jesus called "the greatest prophet ever to live,"** got confused because Jesus didn't seem to be bringing in the kingdom as quickly as John had expected, so John sent a message to Jesus (**Luke 7:19**): "Hey, are you really not the Messiah?" IOW, he doubted.
- **Job**, in the Old Testament, has a book named after him that is essentially 37 chapters of him confessing his doubts to God.
- Or one of my **favorites**: The Gospel of Matthew tells us that after Jesus was resurrected, and had appeared several times to the disciples, he gathered them all on the mountainside and began to ascend to heaven, "And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted." **Matthew 28:17**
 - **How crazy is that, right? He's floating in the air**, and some of the Apostles are going, "Yeah, I don't know. I'm going to keep my religious affiliation as "none" for now."

The point is: **Lots of people doubted**, not just Thomas. But **only Thomas gets the name**.

That's because **so many people identify** with Thomas. And John **highlights** Thomas' story **right at the end** of his Gospel, I believe, because he sees Thomas as **THE example** of how **those of us who struggle to believe** can learn to do so.

Let's pick up in vs. 26: [26] Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

- Which is a little ironic, because if a **guy you think is dead suddenly shows up in the middle** of a locked room, the last thing you feel is “peace.”

[27] Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

- **Q:** How did Jesus know to say **those specific things** to Thomas? He hadn’t been there when Thomas had said those things.
- It’s because **the resurrected Jesus is omniscient** (meaning he knows everything) and **omnipresent** (meaning he is everywhere at once) and Thomas, sensing then **Jesus’ deity**, falls prostrate before him and says,

[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 believed.”

OK, so... a couple of observations about this story:

Thomas was a doubter, as are many of us.

Let’s first consider: WHY was Thomas so skeptical? I mean, 10 of his trusted friends all told him they’d seen the exact same thing. Why was Thomas so slow to believe? Why cynical?

A couple of reasons:

- **First, dead people** don’t get out of the grave. That was as unbelievable back then as it was today.
 - **Jewish people had no category** for this.
 - They **weren’t looking for a crucified and resurrected Messiah**; they were looking for a conquering, victorious one.
 - If God was really at work in Jesus, surely it wouldn’t have ended with Jesus shamed and mutilated.
 - *Which leads me to the 2nd thing...*

- **When Jesus died, he shattered every category** Thomas had for what God was supposed to do.
 - **In Thomas’ day**, the Jews were under cruel and unjust Roman persecution.
 - **So, Thomas, like most Jews, expected** the Messiah to come and crush the Romans. Isn’t that what a fair and compassionate God would do? (~~**Think about it:** If you were an African American living in the Jim Crow South, and you knew God was going to send a deliverer, wouldn’t you expect that deliverer to remove your people from oppression?~~)
 - But Jesus had shown up preaching mercy to the **Romans** and telling the Jews to be kind to them—to turn the other cheek and love their enemies—and then he had **died in weakness** and shame.
 - **Thomas had no category** for this—a dying Messiah or a suffering God.

Thomas wanted to believe, but his **mind had been blown and his heart had been broken**.

Can I ask: **Do you resonate with this?** Do you find yourself sometimes saying, “I want to believe—I want to make my parents happy, but the **ways of God are so confusing**, I just can’t understand...”?

- **Why** would God... or **where** is God?

Our areas of confusion may be different from those of Thomas.

You might not be asking questions about **Roman oppression**. I’ve talked to many people today who say, for example, that the **Bible itself confuses** them.

- You **took a NT class last semester** and your professor showed you all these places the Bible seems to contradict itself; where the details don’t seem to line up.
- Or **she told you that some things in archaeology** contradict what the Bible teaches about history.

- Or maybe some of the things the Bible teaches just seem **hard to believe**.
 - You're like, "A **worldwide flood**, really? God put one family on a boat and in came the animals two by two..."
 - **Joshua and the army sang to Jericho** and the walls actually fell down?
- Or maybe it is the presence of **difficult biblical teachings** like 'hell.'
- Or **questions of why**, if there is a loving God, there is such pain in the world.
- Or how a just God could have sent Israel **on a violent, conquest mission into the Promised Land**.
- Or what about the **dinosaurs** or where did **Cain get his wife?**

Or maybe you just feel some of the Bible's teachings about **morality** are at best outdated, at worst just plain wrong or bigoted. You ask, "Why is God so hung up on sex?"

Or **do you ever sometimes** just hear the **Christian message** and think, "Really?" (I think sometimes in church we get used to it and forget about how strange the message is): A guy was born **2000 years ago who saved the world** by dying. And he brought **peace on earth** even though there's been a ton of violence since then... and one day soon he's going to **come back again** to restore peace by riding through the clouds on a white horse." **What's hard to believe about that?**

To Thomas, and every doubter, Jesus gives an answer.

But, let me warn you: It's not what you think. It's not explanation; it is revelation. Not so much an **answer to the questions**, but a glimpse of who Jesus is, proven by what he did.

Here's what we learn about the development of faith from the story of Thomas (how I learned faith)

1. Our faith is anchored not in an explanation, but in an event.

Jesus didn't really address the substance of Thomas' doubts. Instead, he **confronts him with the fact** of his resurrection. He invited him to touch the scars in his hands.

- One of my favorite definitions of faith: **Faith = the unexplainable meeting the undeniable.**

**Christianity didn't begin with people who believed something, but with people who saw something.²*

- Not a new approach to ethics, a new philosophy they wanted to see prosper around the world
- Take your doubts and ask: *What would happen to your doubts if you encountered the resurrected Jesus?*
 - **Carolene**
 - Wanted to believe, **couldn't get mind around Trinity**
 - **My question: I shared with her the story of Thomas...** if Jesus appeared to you...
 - She had a dream... called her parents.
 - My **QUESTION: Your doubts are different than hers. What if you applied this idea** to your doubts?
 - Would you be willing to **doubt your doubts** in light of the resurrection? Would you **be willing to say**, "Wow, there's just some things I don't understand yet"?
 - Listen, **I'm not saying the questions are not legitimate**. They are. Or **that there are no answers**—there are usually good answers, whether we are talking about the supposed contradictions in the Bible or the difficult questions about the Old Testament—and we often explore them here on the weekend—we'll be answering a few them next week...

Jesus did not tell **Thomas to believe just because his explanations made** the best sense. He **urged Thomas to believe** because of what he proved by his resurrection.

² From Andy Stanley, *Atheism 2.0*

The **foundation of the church** was not what the Apostles taught, but what Jesus did.

- **Maybe you've grown up hearing Christians defend** what they believe by simply appealing to the Bible. "Well, the Bible says so and so..." And you've thought, "Why do they appeal to the Bible to defend the Bible?"
- **It sounds like me saying**, "I am the smartest man in the world." And you say, "Why should I believe that?" I say, "Because I said so." You say, "Why should I believe you?" "Because I am the smartest man in the world and so I would know that."
- **Maybe you grew up hearing people do that with the Bible.** Why do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?" Because it says so. How do you know it is correct? Because it is the word of God. Makes perfect sense." And your head feels like it is going to explode.
- But **there is a reason**, you see, that we believe the Bible. It was authorized and given to us by Jesus, who proved he had the authority to do that by **raising from the dead.**

You say, "Well, if I were Thomas and got to see what he saw, I'd believe, too."

- (First of all, make sure you ask yourself that—would you? Would you really suspend your doubts in the light of his resurrection?)
- Because, if so, you're admitting the doubt itself is not the problem. The problem is you are not thoroughly convinced Jesus is who said he was or that the resurrection happened, and that's an important distinction.

Jesus acknowledged that Thomas got a privileged view. "Because you have seen and believed."

But that doesn't mean that we don't also have compelling evidence for the resurrection. What else but Jesus' actual resurrection could explain the behavior of the disciples and the events of the 1st century?

The early Christian movement was begun by a group of people—the Apostles and their friends—who went to the ends of the earth proclaiming that they had seen Jesus risen from the dead.

- It **cost them everything**—they were cast out, persecuted, hunt down. Impoverished.
- **Every one of the Apostles** died a martyr's death.

So, what are the **alternate theories?**

You say, "Maybe they didn't see Jesus, maybe they had hallucinations caused by grief."

- **People don't hallucinate to that extent.** When people hallucinate, you don't have multiple people claim to talk with and eat dinner with the person.
- You **certainly don't have groups of several hundred** all say they saw the exact same thing at once.

"Maybe they lied."

- **Well, ask yourself, "What would they gain from their lie?"** When you lie, there is always a motive.
- *People sometimes suffer for what is false (900 people drank the Kool-Aid at Jonestown), but they don't willingly suffer—they don't drink poison—for what they know to be false—unless there is something to be gained from it. Like money or power.*
- **But what would the Apostles gain from their lie?** Year after year they embraced a life of suffering to spread the gospel for the salvation of others.
 - This simply rules out the thought that they used their apostleship as a cover for a con game.
 - One Bible scholar said: "**When we know what we are teaching is false, we are motivated to line our own pockets with money, not get whipped and beaten and imprisoned and killed.**"³

³ John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory*. Parentheses mine.

- **I'm not trying to mock this**, but here's what you are saying... You've got **all the disciples out fishing on a boat** after Jesus has died. They are depressed/moping... talking about how great—really great it was when Jesus was here. How they really loved what Jesus taught and wish that more people would have paid attention to him.
- And one of them says, "I know! Let's say he resurrected. Let's make that the center of our message, and tell people that the primary point of Jesus' life had actually been to die for their sins and be resurrected. And then maybe they'll accept all the other things he taught."
- And one says, "**Will we get rich and popular doing this?**" And they say, *No, because all the influential people hate this message and have forbid us from preaching it, so we'll be hated, cast out, and our families will be impoverished.*
- "**Well, will we at least have the satisfaction of pointing people to eternal salvation?**" *No, because what we're telling them isn't true and we know that.*
- **OK, sounds like a great idea!**

And out they go, and one by one they are hunted down. And as they and the people they love are being drug off to be killed they are winking at each other saying, 'Stick to the story! This is going to be great!'

Do you find that compelling?

- **No, I mean... What compelled them** to do this was their **genuine belief** in the resurrection!
- That's **the only thing with the power to do it**. It was not some new insight to the teaching of Jesus that transformed Thomas from a doubter to a martyr—I get the story now of the Good Samaritan! It was the fact of the resurrection.
 - **Thomas would go on, btw, to be one of the 1st martyrs for his faith.** Pretty reliable evidence indicates that Thomas took the

gospel to India and was speared to death on a hill outside of Chennai for preaching there.⁴

- **What would drive a skeptical Thomas to do that?**
- **Or remember Peter**, who denied Jesus 3x on the night before his death? Ask yourself: **Would Peter, who denied the living Jesus, have been willing to die for one he knew was dead?**

That leads to a **3rd objection** people raise: **Maybe the Apostles' claims about Jesus got exaggerated.**

- What happened is that the Apostles basically **told stories** about Jesus as a great teacher and over time as those stories got **repeated, and they got exaggerated—you know, the fish gets bigger, the shot gets farther...**so that by the time the Bible was written Jesus had become this larger than life, supernatural figure.
- **I've heard it described like the TELEPHONE game.** Starts with "the nice boy asked the girl if she wanted to dance" and changes to the "the rice boy told the girl she looked fat in her pants."

But here's the problem with that: The books of the New Testament are written entirely too close to the events for legends like that to have sprung up. The NT was **written while the Apostles and people who knew the Apostles were still alive.**

- **Most of the books of the NT** were written around 30 years after the death of Jesus, some of the main ones being as early as 20 years, and the last one, John, written about 60 years after Jesus' death.
 - **Just for frame of reference**—Dale Earnhardt Sr. died a little less than 20 years ago. Is that long enough for wild stories to grow up about how he died and what happened right after?

⁴ The ancient documents (of the 3rd and 4th century) contain a *lot* of gnostic garbage, but they do uniformly place Thomas in India. Stephen Neill, in his widely acclaimed *The History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, says that Thomas was the first missionary to India—though there is some disagreement as to which areas he did and did not visit.

- **No, there's still a bunch of people around who remember it.**
- And **we know these early Christians took the testimony of the Apostles very seriously**, considering them sacred Scripture.⁵ There would have been a **lot of controversy** had people begun to change them.
- To go back to our **telephone game**: what if someone corrected along the way...?

We have no conflicting accounts of Jesus from the 1st century. The Apostolic community maintained one, consistent testimony about him.⁶

- You say, “Well, I saw on a **CNN special** that there were other rival Gospels—like the “Gospel of Judas,” or “Gospel of Thomas.” **Yes, but they give clear evidence** of being written in later centuries hundreds of years after Jesus’ birth. No one really doubts that.
- **What emerges from the 1st century** is one, consistent witness to Jesus, and that is of him as a sovereign, ruling Savior whose primary mission was to **die for sinners** and **rise again**.

In 1 Corinthians, which was one of the earliest books of the NT written—about 20 years after Jesus’ death—Paul says that everything in Christianity rises or falls with the resurrection. And **he points to 500 people who were still alive** that Jesus had appeared to simultaneously, and he **names a few of them**, and says to go talk to them if you doubt.

- That proves that this was believed by **the earliest** Christians.
- It’s like you doubting that Dale Earhardt died in the wreck, and my saying, “You can go to any Cracker Barrel and there you’ll find 500 people that will tell you he died and they saw it happened.” *I was there...*

⁵ 2 Peter 3:15–16, plus the numerous writings of early church fathers shows us how the early Christians regarded the teachings of the Apostles.

⁶ There *may have been* differing accounts of him, but they **quickly faded from circulation** because those who had been with him recognized them as fakes.

The point is, the resurrection was not a legend that got added in over time. It **was** the **core message** from the beginning.

So, it’s **not compelling to say they were lying**; it’s **unconvincing to say these were legends**. The only alternative was that he really did raise from the dead.⁷

And if he did, it changes how we look at everything else.

Before I get to that, though, let me show you one other thing John wants you to see about we can develop **assurance of faith**.⁸

Throughout the Gospel of John, John talks about a way of knowing Jesus that surpasses logical inference and evidence.

2. There’s an even better knowledge that comes through direct experience.

It’s the kind of knowledge where you just know something instinctively.

- **Imagine that you’d been blind your whole life**, and suddenly were healed so that you could see light. How do you know that you are now in the light? It’s not that you can logically prove the existence of light; it’s because you can now see everything else because of that light.
- **YouTube: Deaf child** that hears for the first time. Not logical learning, but experiencing sound. **He knows that he heard!**

John’s Gospel presents Jesus that way. John opens his Gospel by saying, “Jesus was the light coming into the world... God’s Word

⁷ *I have spent more than 42 years as a defense trial lawyer appearing in many parts of the world... I have been fortunate to secure a number of successes in jury trials and I say unequivocally the evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt.” ~Sir Lionel Luckhoo. The evidence for Jesus’ resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: First, it is a very unusual event. And second, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.—Wolfhart Pannenberg, German theologian (1928—)*

⁸ (German historian **W. Pannenberg**—the evidence is so clear the only reason you’d deny it is if you had a motive driving you to be biased against it).

became flesh and dwelled among us, and we beheld his glory, the kind of glory that could only belong to God.”

- **In Jesus, John says, we see a being of such unparalleled moral beauty that we know he has to be God.**
 - We see one **whose passion to do the will of his Father was more essential than food.**⁹
 - We see one who **never sought his own glory but always sought his Father’s glory, even to the point of death.**
 - In him we see **what love is. We see a God who possesses the power that could walk on top of waves and cast out demons but in the end emptied itself in shame and love to save those who rejected him.**¹⁰
- The **love and beauty displayed in his life is so glorious**, and so unique to the human race, that we know it has to be God.
- Look what Jesus said the proof of his life was: **“The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood” (John 7:18).**
 - Explain verse...
 - **Jesus said his life was his proof of who he was.**
- **We see in Jesus an unparalleled beauty so spectacular that we recognize it to be the glory of God.**
 - **He does not make sense, he brings sense to the world. He is sense. He is the light; and in his light, we see everything else.**¹¹
 - **In John’s Gospel**, we find a story about a blind man whom Jesus healed. And all the professors get ahold of this guy and start raising these intellectual problems to his healing: **“Hey, Jesus couldn’t have healed you because we know he can’t be the Son of God and here’s this or that philosophical problem with worshipping Jesus,”** and finally the blind guy, exasperated, says, **“Look, I don’t know the answer to all your questions—I don’t know the meaning to half the words you are using; what I know is that once I was blind, and now I see.”**

⁹ John 4:34

¹⁰ Much of this I owe to the insights of John Piper from *A Peculiar Glory*.

¹¹ Adapted from John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory*

I can lay out for you all the evidence for the resurrection. I find it compelling.

But what I can also tell you is that **in Jesus I finally learned what peace was**—in peace with God through him, I found an **end to the endless thirst** of my soul.

- In him I **finally learned a humility** that didn’t crave exalting itself all the time and **delighted in giving glory** to God.
- In Jesus learned what **self-emptying** generosity was like and learned the **power to forgive**.

In him I tasted the glory of God, and I know that he is truth as surely as I know **the sun is shining** outside.

Conclusion/Music

So, who do you say that he is? A phony? A self-deluded religious leader?

Or **is he who he said he was**, the Son of God descended from heaven, on a rescue mission to save you?

You are like Thomas—you came in with questions, and you still have some, but in your heart, you know that Jesus is the Son of God and that he rose from the dead. You know that. I want to invite you to follow him and trust him and let him answer your questions as you go – he’s got all eternity for that.

According to Jesus, you and I are separated from God. That’s the root of all of our problems in life. **And he came**, because he cared for us, to save us.

- Let me **summarize Jesus’ whole message** as bad news; even worse news; good news; even better news... **John 1:12 (Believe + receive = become)**

Have you received him? I want to give you a chance to do this TODAY. We're going to give a chance to talk with someone either about trusting Christ, or, to sign up to get baptized next weekend if you've never done so.

HERE'S what is going to happen...

In just a minute, I'm going to lead you in prayer, and then I'm going to ask you to come. We're all going to stand up together, and someone will be there to meet you in the aisle. **They are moving there now.**

This is important. This will be a **defining moment** in your life, where God begins to work in your life in a new way; a moment that will literally reshape the rest of your life, quite possibly your eternity—

- **Your future hinges on what you do in the next few seconds.**
- **Stop resisting. Stop putting off to tomorrow what you know he wants you to do today.** Are you ready to confess Jesus, like Thomas, "Lord, I have questions... But I believe you are MY LORD and MY GOD and am ready to receive you.
- **Standing next to someone, ask them to come...**

Do you have to come forward? No, but it's an important step.

PRAYER

- **WHEN WE STAND, you come, either to trust Christ or because you want to get baptized as a declaration of that... and** when we do, Summit, let's put our hands **together in celebration** of those who came last week, and the ones who will be coming this week.

OK, let's all stand together...