

John 20:19-31
February 1, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What do you think is the difference between doubt and unbelief? How would you distinguish those two words? [Let people engage]

Transition: The best distinction I've heard between doubt and unbelief is this: Doubt is an intellectual problem – faith in Jesus is not happening because the person is overwhelmed with problems or questions. Unbelief is an emotional or moral problem. A person simply chooses not to believe.

In today's text, there will be a focus on Thomas, aka "Doubting Thomas," who is struggling with doubt about Jesus. Let's watch how Jesus responds to Thomas. I think we should be encouraged when we have friends or family members who are struggling with doubt and haven't made a decision to trust Jesus. Jesus doesn't give up on them and neither should we! Let's be aware of the "blocks" that interfere with people who want to make a decision to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Let's journey with them and be a help to them. Let's begin.

BOOK:

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors 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 side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "**Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.**" ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "**Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.**"

Jesus Appears to Thomas

²⁴ Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you!**" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "**Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.**" ²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "**Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**" ³⁰ Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may (or may continue to) believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus meets people where they are. You don't have to "clean up" fear, confusion, or doubt before coming to Jesus. Uncertainty and skepticism are not barriers to his presence in your life. Remember that doubt is not the opposite of faith. Thomas stayed engaged, and Jesus met him there. Pray for opportunities to create space for your friends and family members to have curiosity about what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The Holy Spirit will lead you.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 391-396). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

From Fear to Courage (John 20:19–25)

Our Lord rested in the tomb on the Sabbath and arose from the dead on the first day of the week. Many people sincerely call Sunday “the Christian Sabbath,” but Sunday is not the Sabbath Day. The seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, commemorates God’s finished work of Creation (Gen. 2:1–3). The Lord’s Day commemorates Christ’s finished work of redemption, the “new creation.” God the Father worked for six days and then rested. God the Son suffered on the cross for six hours and then rested.

God gave the Sabbath to Israel as a special “sign” that they belonged to Him (Ex. 20:8–11; 31:13–17; Neh. 9:14). The nation was to use that day for physical rest and refreshment both for man and beast; but for Israel, it was not commanded as a special day of assembly and worship. Unfortunately, the scribes and Pharisees added all kinds of restrictions to the Sabbath observance until it became a day of bondage instead of a day of blessing. Jesus deliberately violated the Sabbath traditions, though He honored the Sabbath Day.

There were at least five Resurrection appearances of our Lord on that first day of the week: to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11–18), the other women (Matt. 28:9–10), Peter (1 Cor. 15:5 and Luke 24:34), the two Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13–32), and the disciples minus Thomas (John 20:19–25). The next Sunday, the disciples met again, and Thomas was with them (John 20:26–31). It would appear that the believers from the very first met together on Sunday evening, which came to be called “the Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10). It appears that the early church met on the first day of the week to worship the Lord and commemorate His death and resurrection (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1–2).

The Sabbath was over when Jesus arose from the dead (Mark 16:1). He arose on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). The change from the seventh day to the first day was not effected by some church decree; it was brought about from the beginning by the faith and witness of the first believers. For centuries, the Jewish Sabbath had been associated with Law: six days of work, and then you rest. But the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, is associated with grace: first there is faith in the living Christ, then there will be works.

There is no evidence in Scripture that God ever gave the original Sabbath command to the Gentiles, or that it was repeated for the church to obey. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the church epistles, but the Sabbath commandment is not repeated. However, Paul makes it clear that believers must not make “special days” a test of fellowship or spirituality (Rom. 14:5ff; Col. 2:16–23).

How did our Lord transform His disciples’ fear into courage? For one thing, *He came to them*. We do not know where these ten frightened men met behind locked doors, but Jesus came to them and reassured them. In His resurrection body, He was able to enter the room without opening the doors! It was a solid body, for He asked them to touch Him—and He even ate some

fish (Luke 24:41–43). But it was a different kind of body, one that was not limited by what we call “the laws of nature.”

It is remarkable that these men were actually afraid. The women had reported to them that Jesus was alive, and the two Emmaus disciples had added their personal witness (Luke 24:33–35). It is likely that Jesus had appeared personally to Peter sometime that afternoon (Mark 16:7; Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5), though Peter’s *public* restoration would not take place until later (John 21). No wonder Jesus reproached them at that time “with their unbelief and hardness of heart” (Mark 16:14).

But His first word to them was the traditional greeting, “Shalom—peace!” He could have rebuked them for their unfaithfulness and cowardice the previous weekend, but He did not. “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Ps. 103:10). The work of the cross is peace (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14–17), and the message they would carry would be the Gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15). Man had declared war on God (Ps. 2; Acts 4:23–30), but God would declare “Peace!” to those who would believe.

Not only did Jesus come to them, but *He reassured them*. He showed them His wounded hands and side and gave them opportunity to discover that it was indeed their Master, and that He was not a phantom. (The Gospels do not record wounds in His feet, but Psalm 22:16 indicates that His feet were also nailed to the cross.)

But the wounds meant more than identification; they also were evidence that the price for salvation had been paid and man indeed could have “peace with God.” The basis for all our peace is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He died for us, He arose from the dead in victory, and now He lives for us. In our fears, we cannot lock Him out! He comes to us in grace and reassures us through His Word. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Prov. 27:6).

When Jesus saw that the disciples’ fear had now turned to joy, *He commissioned them*: “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). Keep in mind that the original disciples were not the only ones present; others, including the Emmaus disciples, were also in the room. This commission was not the “formal ordination” of a church order; rather, it was the dedication of His followers to the task of world evangelism. We are to take His place in this world (John 17:18). What a tremendous privilege and what a great responsibility! It is humbling to realize that Jesus loves us as the Father loves Him (John 15:9; 17:26), and that we are in the Father just as He is (John 17:21–22). It is equally as humbling to realize that He has sent us into the world just as the Father sent Him. As He was about to ascend to heaven, He again reminded them of their commission to take the message to the whole world (Matt. 28:18–20).

It must have given the men great joy to realize that, in spite of their many failures, their Lord was entrusting them with His Word and His work. They had forsaken Him and fled, but now He was sending them out to represent Him. Peter had denied Him three times; and yet in a few days, Peter would preach the Word (and accuse the Jews of denying Him—Acts 3:13–14!) and thousands would be saved.

Jesus came to them and reassured them; but He also *enabled them* through the Holy Spirit. John 20:22 reminds us of Genesis 2:7 when God breathed life into the first man. In both Hebrew and Greek, the word for “breath” also means “spirit.” The breath of God in the first creation meant physical life, and the breath of Jesus Christ in the new creation meant spiritual life. The believers would receive the baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost and be empowered for ministry (Acts 1:4–5; 2:1–4). Apart from the filling of the Spirit, they could not go forth to witness effectively. The Spirit had dwelt *with* them in the person of Christ, but now the Spirit would be *in* them (John 14:17).

John 20:23 must not be interpreted to mean that Jesus gave to a select body of people the right to forgive sins and let people into heaven. Jesus had spoken similar words before (Matt. 16:19), but He was not setting aside the disciples (and their successors) as a “spiritual elite” to deal with the sins of the world. Remember, there were others in the room besides the disciples, and Thomas was missing!

A correct understanding of the Greek text helps us here. Some years ago, I corresponded with the eminent Greek scholar Dr. Julius R. Mantey (now deceased) about this verse, and he assured me that the correct translation both here and in Matthew 16:19 should be: “Whosoever sins you remit [forgive] shall have already been forgiven them, and whosoever sins you retain [do not forgive] shall have already not been forgiven them.” In other words, the disciples did not provide forgiveness; they proclaimed forgiveness on the basis of the message of the Gospel. Another Greek scholar, Dr. Kenneth Wuest, translates it “they have been previously forgiven them.” As the early believers went forth into the world, they announced the good news of salvation. If sinners would repent and believe on Jesus Christ, their sins would be forgiven them! “Who can forgive sins but God only?” (Mark 2:7) All that the Christian can do is announce the message of forgiveness; God performs the miracle of forgiveness. If sinners will believe on Jesus Christ, we can authoritatively declare to them that their sins have been forgiven; but we are not the ones who provide the forgiveness.

By now, their fears had vanished. They were sure that the Lord was alive and that He was caring for them. They had both “peace with God” and the “peace of God” (Phil. 4:6–7). They had a high and holy commission and the power provided to accomplish it. And they had been given the great privilege of bearing the good news of forgiveness to the whole world. All they now had to do was tarry in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit would be given.

From Unbelief to Confidence (John 20:26–28)

Why was Thomas not with the other disciples when they met on the evening of Resurrection Day? Was he so disappointed that he did not want to be with his friends? But when we are discouraged and defeated, we need our friends all the more! Solitude only feeds discouragement and helps it grow into self-pity, which is even worse.

Perhaps Thomas was afraid. But John 11:16 seems to indicate that he was basically a courageous man, willing to go to Judea and die with the Lord! John 14:5 reveals that Thomas was a spiritually minded man who wanted to know the truth and was not ashamed to ask questions. There seems to have been a “pessimistic” outlook in Thomas. We call him “Doubting Thomas,” but Jesus did not rebuke him for his doubts. He rebuked him for unbelief: “Be not faithless, but

believing.” Doubt is often an intellectual problem: we want to believe, but the faith is overwhelmed by problems and questions. Unbelief is a moral problem; we simply will not believe.

What was it that Thomas would not believe? The reports of the other Christians that Jesus Christ was alive. The verb *said* in John 20:25 means that the disciples “kept saying to him” that they had seen the Lord Jesus Christ alive. No doubt the women and the Emmaus pilgrims also added their witness to this testimony. On the one hand, we admire Thomas for wanting *personal* experience; but on the other hand, we must fault him for laying down conditions for the Lord to meet.

Like most people in that day, he had two names: “Thomas” is Aramaic, “Didymus” is Greek, and they both mean “twin.” Who was Thomas’ twin? We do not know—but sometimes you and I feel as if we might be his twins! How often we have refused to believe and have insisted that God prove Himself to us!

Thomas is a good warning to all of us not to miss meeting with God’s people on the Lord’s Day (Heb. 10:22–25). Because Thomas was not there, he missed seeing Jesus Christ, hearing His words of peace, and receiving His commission and gift of spiritual life. He had to endure a week of fear and unbelief when he could have been experiencing joy and peace! Remember Thomas when you are tempted to stay home from church. You never know what special blessing you might miss!

But let’s give him credit for showing up the next week. The other ten men had told Thomas that they had seen the Lord’s hands and side (John 20:20), so Thomas made that the test. Thomas had been there when Jesus raised Lazarus, so why should he question our Lord’s own resurrection? But, he still wanted proof; “seeing is believing.”

Thomas’ words help us to understand the difference between *doubt* and *unbelief*. Doubt says, “I cannot believe! There are too many problems!” Unbelief says, “I *will not* believe unless you give me the evidence I ask for!” In fact, in the Greek text, there is a double negative: “I positively will not believe!”

Jesus had heard Thomas’ words; nobody had to report them to Him. So, the next Lord’s Day, the Lord appeared in the room (again, the doors were locked) and dealt personally with Thomas and his unbelief. He still greeted them with “Shalom—peace!” Even Thomas’ unbelief could not rob the other disciples of their peace and joy in the Lord.

How gracious our Lord is to stoop to our level of experience in order to lift us where we ought to be. The Lord granted Gideon the “tests of faith” that he requested (Judg. 6:36–40), and He granted Thomas his request as well. There is no record that Thomas ever accepted the Lord’s invitation. When the time came to prove his faith, Thomas needed no more proof!

Our Lord’s words translate literally, “Stop becoming faithless but become a believer.” Jesus saw a dangerous process at work in Thomas’ heart, and He wanted to put a stop to it. The best commentary on this is Hebrews 3, where God warns against “an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb. 3:12).

It is not easy to understand the psychology of doubt and unbelief. Perhaps it is linked to personality traits; some people are more trustful than others. Perhaps Thomas was so depressed that he was ready to quit, so he “threw out a challenge” and never really expected Jesus to accept it. At any rate, Thomas was faced with his own words, and he had to make a decision.

John 20:29 indicates that Thomas’ testimony did not come from his *touching* Jesus, but from his *seeing* Jesus. “My Lord and my God!” is the last of the testimonies that John records to the deity of Jesus Christ. The others are: John the Baptist (John 1:34); Nathanael (John 1:49); Jesus Himself (John 5:25; 10:36); Peter (John 6:69); the healed blind man (John 9:35); Martha (John 11:27); and, of course, John himself (John 20:30–31).

It is an encouragement to us to know that the Lord had a personal interest in and concern for “Doubting Thomas.” He wanted to strengthen his faith and include him in the blessings that lay in store for His followers. Thomas reminds us that unbelief robs us of blessings and opportunities. It may sound sophisticated and intellectual to question what Jesus did, but such questions are usually evidence of hard hearts, not of searching minds. Thomas represents the “scientific approach” to life—and it did not work! After all, when a skeptic says, “I will not believe unless—” he is already admitting that he does believe! He believes in the validity of the test or experiment that he has devised! If he can have faith in his own “scientific approach,” why can he not have faith in what God has revealed?

We need to remind ourselves that everybody lives by faith. The difference is in the *object* of that faith. Christians put their faith in God and His Word, while unsaved people put their faith in themselves.

From Death to Life (John 20:29–31)

John could not end his book without bringing the Resurrection miracle to his own readers. We must not look at Thomas and the other disciples and envy them, as though the power of Christ’s resurrection could never be experienced in our lives today. *That was why John wrote this Gospel*—so that people in *every* age could know that Jesus is God and that faith in Him brings everlasting life.

It is not necessary to “see” Jesus Christ in order to believe. Yes, it was a blessing for the early Christians to see their Lord and know that He was alive; but that is not what saved them. They were saved, not by seeing, but by believing. The emphasis throughout the Gospel of John is on *believing*. There are nearly 100 references in this Gospel to believing on Jesus Christ.

You and I today cannot see Christ, nor can we see Him perform the miracles (signs) that John wrote about in this book. But the record is there, and that is all that we need. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17; and note 1 John 5:9–13). As you read John’s record, you come face to face with Jesus Christ, how He lived, what He said, and what He did. All of the evidence points to the conclusion that He is indeed God come in the flesh, the Savior of the world.

The signs that John selected and described in this book are proof of the deity of Christ. They are important. But sinners are not saved by believing in miracles; they are saved by believing on

Jesus Christ. Many of the Jews in Jerusalem believed on Jesus because of His miracles, but He did not believe in them! (John 2:23–25) Great crowds followed Him because of His miracles (John 6:2); but in the end, most of them left Him for good (John 6:66). Even the religious leaders who plotted His death believed that He did miracles, but this “faith” did not save them (John 11:47ff).

Faith in His miracles should lead to faith in His Word, and to personal faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Jesus Himself pointed out that faith in His works (miracles) was but *the first step* toward faith in the Word of God (John 5:36–40). The sinner must “hear” the Word if he is to be saved (John 5:24).

There was no need for John to describe every miracle that our Lord performed; in fact, he supposed that a complete record could never be written (John 21:25). The life and ministry of Jesus Christ were simply too rich and full for any writer, even an inspired one, to give a complete record. But a complete record is not necessary. All of the basic facts are here for us to read and consider. There is sufficient truth for any sinner to believe and be saved!

The *subject* of John’s Gospel is “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” He presented a threefold proof of this thesis: our Lord’s works, our Lord’s walk, and our Lord’s words. In this Gospel, you see Jesus performing miracles; you watch Him living a perfect life in the midst of His enemies; and you hear Him speaking words that nobody else could speak.

Either Jesus was a madman, or He was deluded, or He was all that He claimed to be. While some of His enemies did call Him deranged and deluded, the majority of people who watched Him and listened to Him concluded that He was unique, unlike anyone else they had ever known. How could a madman or a deluded man accomplish what Jesus accomplished? *When people trusted Him, their lives were transformed!* That does not happen when you trust a madman or a deceiver. He claimed to be God come in the flesh, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. That is what He is!

John was not content simply to explain a subject. He was an evangelist who wanted to achieve an object. He wanted his readers to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved! He was not writing a biography to entertain or a history to enlighten. He was writing an evangel to change men’s lives. “Life” is one of John’s key words; he uses it at least thirty-six times. Jesus offers sinners abundant life and eternal life; and the only way they can get it is through personal faith in Him. If sinners need life, then the implication is that they are *dead*. “And you hath He quickened [made alive, resurrected] who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). Salvation is not resuscitation; it is resurrection (John 5:24). The lost sinner is not sick or weak; *he is dead*. This life comes “through His name.” What is His name? In John’s Gospel, the emphasis is on His name “I AM.” Jesus makes seven great “I AM” statements in this Gospel, offering the lost sinner all that he needs.

Eternal life is not “endless time,” for even lost people are going to live forever in hell. “Eternal life” means *the very life of God experienced today*. It is a quality of life, not a quantity of time. It is the spiritual experience of “heaven on earth” today. The Christian does not have to die to have this eternal life; he possesses it in Christ today.

The ten disciples were changed from fear to courage, and Thomas was changed from unbelief to confidence. Now, John invites *you* to trust Jesus Christ and be changed from death to eternal life. If you have already made this life-changing decision, give thanks to God for the precious gift of eternal life.

If you have never made this decision, *do so right now*. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

Blum, E. A. (1985). *John*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 343-344) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

H. Jesus’ appearance to His disciples (20:19–23).

20:19–20. **The disciples** had almost been arrested with Jesus. They remained under the **fear of death** at the hands of **the Jews** (i.e., the Jewish authorities), so they met in secret at night, with fear, behind locked doors. (What a contrast with their boldness about seven weeks later on the day of Pentecost!) **Jesus** passed through the door, as indicated by the fact that when the **doors** were **locked**, He **came and stood among them** (cf. v. 26). This showed the power of His new resurrection body. But His body had substantial form and continuity with His pre-Cross body (cf. v. 27). His first words, **Peace be with you!** were a conventional greeting similar to *šālôm* in Hebrew. But the words were now invested with a deeper and fuller meaning (cf. 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7).

Seeing the wounds in **His pierced hands and side**, they **were overjoyed** (though at first they were frightened, as Luke stated [Luke 24:37–44]). What a change from their fear and despondency!

20:21–23. Jesus then recommissioned the disciples as His apostles: He was **sending** them as His representatives, **as the Father had sent Him** (cf. 17:18). They were sent with His authority to preach, teach, and do miraculous signs (Matt. 28:16–20; Luke 24:47–49). For their new commission they needed spiritual power. So **He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit**. The image and wording of breathing on them recalls God’s creative work in making Adam (Gen. 2:7). Now this post-Resurrection “breathing” was a new kind of creative work for they would soon become new creations (Eph. 2:8–10). This reception of the Spirit was in anticipation of the day of Pentecost and should be understood as a partial limited gift of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment until Pentecost, 50 days later.

Forgiveness of **sins** is one of the major benefits of the death of Jesus. It is the essence of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 26:28; Jer. 31:31–34). Proclaiming the forgiveness of sins was the prominent feature of the apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts. Jesus was giving the apostles (and by extension, the church) the privilege of announcing heaven’s terms on how a person can receive forgiveness. If one believes in Jesus, then a Christian has the right to announce his forgiveness. If a person rejects Jesus’ sacrifice, then a Christian can announce that that person is **not forgiven**.

I. Jesus' appearance to Thomas (20:24–29).

20:24–29. In his Gospel, John has traced the development of unbelief, which culminated in Jesus' enemies crucifying Him. Conversely, John also traced the disciples' development of faith, which was now climaxed in **Thomas**. **The disciples** were affirming Jesus' resurrection to Thomas (**told** in v. 25 is *elegon*, an imperfect tense which indicates their continual activity). But **he** remained unconvinced. He wanted bodily proof of Jesus' risen state. The reappearance of Jesus **a week later** provided the opportunity Thomas wanted. **Again ... Jesus** miraculously entered a room with **locked** doors (cf. v. 19). He asked **Thomas** to touch Him (cf. "showed" in v. 20) and to **stop doubting and believe**. This was a forthright challenge to a personal commitment.

Thomas' response, **My Lord and My God!** is the high point of the Gospel. Here was a skeptical man, confronted by the evidence of Jesus' resurrection. He announced that Jesus, the Man of Galilee, is God manifest in the flesh. Thus, the truths in the first chapter were realized personally in this apostle (1:1, 14, 18). The Resurrection (a) demonstrated that what Jesus predicted about His being raised was true (Mark 8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34; John 2:19), (b) proved that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4) and was sent by God ("vindicated by the Spirit," 1 Tim. 3:16), (c) testified to the success of His mission of salvation (Rom. 4:25), (d) entitled Jesus to a position of glory (1 Peter 1:11), and (e) proclaimed that Jesus is the "Lord" (Acts 2:36).

Jesus then pronounced a blessing on all who would come to faith without the help of a visible, bodily manifestation to them (John 20:29; cf. 1 Peter 1:8). This blessing comes to all who believe on the basis of the proclaimed gospel and the evidences for its validity. Believers living today are not deprived by not seeing Him physically; instead, they are the recipients of His special blessing: **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**

J. The purpose of the book (20:30–31).

20:30–31. John explained His purpose in writing this Gospel, that people might contemplate and perceive the theological significance of Jesus' miracles (*sēmeia*, "signs"). Many people today ignore, deny, or rationalize Jesus' miracles. Even in Jesus' day some people attributed them to God whereas others attributed them to Satan (3:2; 9:33; Matt. 12:24). To ignore, deny, or rationalize them in that day was impossible because the miracles were manifold and manifest.

John indicated He was aware of the Synoptic miracles: **Jesus did many other miraculous signs**. In fact, 35 different miracles are recorded in the four Gospels (see the list at John 2:1–11). John selected 7 for special consideration in order that people might come to **believe that Jesus is the Christ**, the promised Messiah, and **the Son of God**. (The NIV reading, "may continue to believe," is probably not the correct textual reading; the NIV text correctly renders the Gr. by the words **may believe**.)

White, J. E. (1998). *John*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 489-490). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Forgiveness of Sins (20:19–23)

Jesus encountered a group of frightened disciples behind locked doors and gave them what they needed most—Himself. He showed them His hands and His side in order to dispel any doubt that they were seeing anything but their crucified Lord (20:20). As with the “Great Commission” recorded in Matthew 28, Jesus decisively gave His followers the command to go into all the world and continue His ministry. To enable them to respond to this task, they received a precursor of the full coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—almost as a deposit for that which was to come fully fifty days later—breathed to them now from the very mouth of Jesus (20:22). Jesus stated that if the disciples forgave anyone, they were forgiven, and if they did not forgive them their sins, they were not forgiven. At first glance this is a remarkable statement that seems out of step with the role and authority of the disciples. It was not the disciples who could forgive sins but Jesus. The literal reading from the Greek is more clear, stating: “Those whose sins you forgive have already been forgiven; those whose sins you do not forgive have not been forgiven.” God’s forgiveness is not dependent upon human forgiveness, but rather forgiveness is extended by God as a result of individual responses to the proclamation of the gospel by fellow human beings.

Do You Believe? (20:24–31)

Thomas’s doubt was that of many in the modern world. Unless he could see, taste, touch, and hear what was being presented as reality, he would not accept it as the truth. As Jesus noted, however, “blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (20:29).

John’s purpose statement is included here, following the resurrection, in order that the reader may know the reason for this carefully detailed narrative of the life and teaching of Jesus. This Gospel was “written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31). The purpose of the Gospel of John is to present Jesus as God in human form and that through faith in Jesus, individuals would embrace salvation to eternal life.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). John 20:19-31. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.