

The Resurrection

According to Jesus

50 Days Learning to Live With the Risen Lord

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The Resurrection... According to Jesus
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*To all who have devoted themselves to
"making disciples of all the nations."*

*The vast majority of their work
is unknown in this world.
But the risen Lord knows it all.
His "well done" is their reward.*

Contents

Part I — Easter Sunday: Resurrection Reorientation

1. He Said It Would Happen
2. The Silent Witness of the Grave Clothes
3. Who Are You Seeking?
4. When He Said Her Name
5. My Father and Your Father
6. Go to My Brothers
7. He Goes Before You
8. What Were You Talking About?
9. Slow Hearts and Burning Hearts
10. The Breaking of the Bread
11. The Lord Has Risen Indeed
12. Peace in the Locked Room
13. It Is I Myself
14. Everything Must Be Fulfilled
15. Sent as the Son Was Sent
16. Breathe on Them
17. Clothed With Power

Part II — Restoration

18. Stop Doubting
19. Blessed Without Seeing
20. The Right Side of the Boat
21. Breakfast With the Risen Lord
22. Do You Love Me More?
23. Feed My Lambs
24. Do You Really Love Me?
25. When You Were Young
26. Follow Me

Part III — Authority and Commission

27. All Authority in Heaven and Earth
28. Make Disciples of All the Nations
29. Keep on Going
30. Baptize Them
31. Teach Them to Obey Everything
32. I Am With You Always

Part IV — The Promise Explained

- 33. You Will Be Immersed in the Holy Spirit
- 34. Another Helper Like Me
- 35. On That Day You Will Know
- 36. He Will Teach and Remind You
- 37. It Is to Your Advantage That I Go Away

Part V — The Risen Lord Continues His Work

- 38. And Then He Appeared to James
- 39. You Will Receive Power
- 40. You Will Be My Witnesses
- 41. While He Was Blessing Them
- 42. Jesus Pours Out the Holy Spirit
- 43. Every Day the Lord Added
- 44. The Son of Man Standing
- 45. Why Are You Persecuting Me?
- 46. I Have Made Myself Visible to You for This Purpose
- 47. Ananias, Go to Saul
- 48. Set Apart for Me
- 49. I Have Many People in This City
- 50. My Power Is Made Perfect in Weakness

Part I — Easter Sunday: Resurrection Reorientation

Two days in Jesus' life are unlike any others in the Gospels: the day he died, and the day he rose from the grave. On Easter Sunday Jesus appeared five different times to his disciples, from dawn to deep into the night. The other seven appearances recorded in the Gospels are spread across the remaining thirty-nine days, with only one appearance at a time.

On this first resurrection day Jesus was reorienting his disciples to his presence in a newly created, spiritual body — normally invisible, yet able to become visible at will. He was the same Jesus, now present in a new way. He is the same risen Lord believers experience today. The Easter appearances therefore announce the dawn of a new creation, a new covenant, and a new way of being with Jesus.

Day 1

He Said It Would Happen

"Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'"

Luke 24:6-7

"He is risen."

The women came to the tomb before dawn to honor a dead man. They did not come expecting good news. Suddenly two angels appeared in clothes that gleamed like lightning, and the women fell to the ground in terror.

Notice what the angels did first. They did not simply announce the resurrection — they commanded the women to remember. *"Remember how he told you."* Then they quoted Jesus' own words back to them. The angels were not introducing new truth. They were pointing the women back to what Jesus had already said.

This is the first act of resurrection interpretation, and it establishes the pattern for everything that follows in these fifty days. Faith in the resurrection was not meant to rest on the testimony of angels, or even on the empty tomb alone. It was meant to rest on the words of Jesus himself — spoken before the cross, fulfilled beyond the tomb, remembered now in the light of an empty grave. It is the fulfillment of what Jesus promised. This is the foundation on which the new covenant rests.

The angels also told the women to go to Galilee, where Jesus would meet them. Galilee was where Jesus had spent the heart of his ministry — where he had taught, healed, and formed his disciples over the longest stretch of time together. The Great Commission he would give them there was the fulfillment of everything he had said throughout his ministry. Going back to Galilee was going back to his words — and discovering that every one of them was still alive.

The angels asked one further question: *"Why do you look for the living among the dead?"* As Jesus himself had said: *"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."* We discover this truth every time we return to his living words and find that he has already said everything we need to hear.

Reflection

The angels pointed the women to what Jesus had already said before they had seen anything. Which word of Jesus do you most need to return to today — to remember, and to trust as completely fulfilled?

How are you looking to things that cannot give life to satisfy the needs that only the living Jesus can meet?

Day 2...The First Resurrection Appearance

The Silent Witness of the Grave Clothes

"He saw and believed."

John 20:8

Mary Magdalene had arrived at the tomb before dawn and found the stone rolled away. Without waiting to investigate, she ran to find Peter and John: *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him."*

Peter and John immediately ran to the tomb. John arrived first and saw the linen burial cloths lying there — but did not go in. Peter rushed straight inside. He saw the strips of linen lying there, and the cloth that had wrapped Jesus' head folded and placed separately.

Then John entered. He saw — and he believed.

John used the Greek perfect tense to describe the burial cloths. They lay in the same position in which they had been wrapped around Jesus' body. His body had passed straight through them, and they had simply collapsed in place — still looped, still in the shape of a body. No natural explanation accounts for them being arranged that way.

The face cloth was different. Jesus himself had folded it. It was the first deliberate act of his resurrection life. He was not in a hurry. He was not fleeing. He rose in perfect peace, folded the cloth, and left the tomb. Jesus left a message through his grave cloths.

This evidence convinced John before he had seen the risen Jesus and before he understood the Scriptures predicting the resurrection — the first person to believe on the basis of physical evidence. Peter saw everything John saw, but the text does not say he believed. He left the tomb in wonder, his mind struggling to take in what he had seen. Jesus would appear to him personally later that day.

The empty tomb is an undeniable fact of history. The position of those burial cloths points to only one explanation. Christians can declare boldly that Jesus is risen — on the basis of the words of Jesus, the Scriptures, the evidence, and their own personal experience of the living Lord.

Reflection

John believed in the resurrection before he had seen the risen Jesus, on the basis of physical evidence. How does that evidence strengthen your own confidence in the word of Jesus?

How well do you know the evidence for the resurrection? How might a clearer grasp of it equip you to speak of it with greater boldness?

Day 3...the 1st Resurrection Appearance

Who Are You Seeking?

"Woman, why are you crying? Who are you seeking for?"

John 20:15

Peter and John had gone home. Mary stayed.

She stood outside the tomb weeping — not shedding a few tears, but weeping continuously. She bent down to look inside and saw two angels seated where Jesus' body had been. They asked why she was crying, and she told them: She was looking for Jesus. She did not know he was already looking for her.

Then she turned and saw Jesus standing there, but did not recognize him. Assuming he was the gardener, she made her desperate request: *"Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him."* She was ready to carry the body herself.

Jesus asked her two questions: *"Woman, why are you crying? Who are you seeking for?"*

These are the first words the risen Jesus spoke to any human being. On the surface, Mary was seeking the body of her dead Lord. But the question carries more weight than the immediate moment. Jesus had asked it before — in Gethsemane, when the soldiers came to arrest him. It is the question of every human heart: who are you really looking for?

Mary did not recognize him by sight. She would recognize him soon by his voice. Before that moment, the risen Jesus stood before her and waited. He was not hiding from one who sought him — he had already found her. Yet she did not recognize him. She was in the presence of the risen Jesus and did not know it — no wonder she was weeping.

Jesus chose Mary for this first appearance for a reason. He had said in John 14: *"The person who has my commands and obeys them is the one who truly loves me — and I will reveal myself to that person."* Mary had loved him with her obedience. She had stood at the cross. She had come before dawn. She had stayed when others left. He always keeps his word. He revealed himself to the person who loved him. He will reveal himself to you.

Reflection

Who are you truly seeking? What does your daily life reveal about what you are really looking for?

Mary loved Jesus with passionate, costly obedience. How does her example challenge the way you pursue knowing him?

Day 4...the 1st Resurrection Appearance

When He Said Her Name

"Mary."

John 20:16

All it took was one word.

Mary was still looking at the person she thought was the gardener when he spoke her name: *"Mary."* She turned — a complete reorientation — and cried out in Aramaic: *"Rabboni!"* She had recognized him. Not by his face. By his voice. By the way he said her name.

Jesus had prepared his disciples for exactly this moment. In John 10 he had said: *"He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* Mary was his sheep, and there was no sound on earth like his voice.

He knew her completely. He had delivered her from seven demons, restored her to dignity and life, and she had followed him from Galilee to Jerusalem — stood at the cross when the disciples fled, come before dawn when others still slept. Now he spoke her name. This was the fulfillment of his promise: *"I know my own."*

Before this moment he had asked a question. Now he spoke a name. One word — and everything changed. One person, known completely, called directly. This is how the risen Jesus comes to each of us.

Mary threw herself at his feet and held on. Jesus' response was gentle but firm: *"Do not cling to me."* This was not a rejection — it was a redirection. She could not hold on to the old mode of relationship. The resurrection was opening something new: a presence not limited to visible, physical proximity, available always and everywhere through the Spirit. He was not leaving her. He was becoming more present, not less.

He commissioned her immediately: *"Go to my brothers."* The one who has been found becomes the one who is sent. Mary went and declared: *"I have seen the Lord."*

Reflection

Jesus called Mary by name before she recognized him. How does being personally and completely known by him change the way you understand your relationship with him? Have you heard Jesus calling your name?

Is there a way you are clinging to an old form of experiencing Jesus that may be keeping you from receiving his presence in the new way he wants to give it?

Day 5...the 1st Resurrection Appearance

My Father and Your Father

"I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

John 20:17

Before Jesus appeared to the disciples as a group, he sent a message ahead through Mary Magdalene. These were the specific words he wanted delivered first — the content of the very first proclamation of the resurrection: *"I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."* Not a proof of the empty tomb. Not a defense of what had happened. A declaration of relationship: the Father who is mine is now yours.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus had spoken of *"my Father"* as one he shared in uniquely, from eternity. *"I and the Father are one."* His Sonship was eternal and uncreated, the very ground of his being. But now he joined the two together in one breath: my Father and your Father. He was not collapsing the distinction — his Sonship and theirs are not the same. But the disciples had been brought into the same family.

This language carries the echo of the Old Testament covenant formula. At the heart of every covenant God made with his people was the promise: *"I will be their God, and they will be my people"* (Jeremiah 31:33) — reaching its fullest expression in Jeremiah's promise of a new covenant written on the heart. Jesus was fulfilling that promise in one breath on resurrection morning. The God I belong to is now your God too, on the other side of the cross. The new covenant had arrived.

The disciples had failed. They had scattered, denied, and hidden. And Jesus' first message to them was not a reckoning — it was an invitation. My Father is your Father. The cross removed every barrier, and the resurrection confirmed it forever.

Paul would later unfold this in Romans 8: *"You received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"* The Spirit through whom we cry *"Father"* is the Spirit of the risen Jesus — the same Jesus who said on resurrection morning: *"my Father and your Father."*

Reflection

Jesus' first message to his disciples after the resurrection was about their restored relationship with the Father. Do you live with the confidence that God is truly your Father? What would change if you did?

"My Father and your Father." This is the heart of the gospel. How do you need to receive this truth more fully today?

Day 6...the 2nd Resurrection Appearance

Go to My Brothers

"I command you to stop being afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Matthew 28:10

After his appearance to Mary Magdalene, Jesus appeared to the larger group of women who had first discovered the empty tomb. They came to him, clasped his feet, and worshipped him. Then he spoke.

Two things stand out immediately. The first is the word *"brothers."* Jesus had already used it through Mary. Now he used it again. He did not say "my disciples" or "the Eleven." He said *"my brothers"* — and these were the men who had fled at his arrest, among whom Peter had denied him three times, who were now in hiding, shattered by grief and shame. In any ordinary relationship, the one who was betrayed does not rise from the dead and call his betrayers brothers. But Jesus did.

He had prayed for this in John 17. Now, in the first moments of his resurrection life, he announced it twice in the same morning. The resurrection does not erase the failures of the disciples — it forgives and restores them. They were brothers in the family of God.

The second thing is the command: *"Stop being afraid."* Fear was everywhere that morning — at the empty tomb, at the sight of the angels, on the road, in the upper room. Jesus addressed it directly. He did not remove the difficult circumstances — he replaced fear with purpose. Go. Tell. There is something to do, and the living Jesus is waiting to be encountered.

The command to go to Galilee was significant. Galilee was where Jesus has spent the greatest amount of his time evangelizing and training his disciples. The Great Commission would be given there. Meeting Jesus in Galilee was essential to the plan he had announced — a plan built entirely on words he had already spoken.

Reflection

Jesus called his failing, hiding disciples *"my brothers."* What does this tell you about how the risen Jesus regards you, regardless of your own failures?

Where is the risen Jesus calling you today to replace fear with purpose?

Day 7

He Goes Before You

"He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

Matthew 28:7; Mark 16:7

Within the message the angels gave the women at the empty tomb was a promise so simple it could be overlooked: he is going ahead of you.

Not waiting for them to find him. Not standing still while they worked out what to do. Going. Ahead. Leading.

This is the language of the shepherd. In John 10, Jesus had used exactly this picture: *"He goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice."* The shepherd does not drive the flock from behind — he leads from the front, going first into unknown territory. The risen Jesus was doing precisely what he had promised. He had gone ahead into death and through it into resurrection life. Now he was going ahead to Galilee.

Mark's account adds a phrase worth noting: *"just as he told you."* Another reminder: remember! At the Last Supper, just hours before his arrest, Jesus had said: *"After I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."* The disciples had not retained it, but Jesus had said it -- and it was now being fulfilled. His word can be trusted completely.

This detail points forward to everything that would follow. The risen Jesus who went ahead to Galilee would give his disciples their commission there — and in every moment of that mission afterward, the same truth would hold. The book of Acts is the story of a risen Lord who leads his people forward, opens doors they cannot open, and meets them in prison, on roads, and in storms. Always ahead. Always leading.

He is going ahead of you today. Whatever unknown you are about to enter, the risen Jesus has already been there — and he is calling you to follow.

Reflection

In what area of your life do you most need the assurance that the risen Jesus is going ahead of you?

Mark added: *"just as he told you."* Which word of Jesus do you most need to return to and trust as still active and still reliable today?

Day 8...the 3rd Resurrection Appearance

What Were You Talking About?

"What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

Luke 24:17

It was the afternoon of resurrection Sunday. Two disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, about seven miles away, talking about everything that had happened. Their conversation was heavy with grief and confusion. Then a stranger fell into step beside them and asked what they were discussing.

They stopped, their faces heavy with sorrow. Cleopas was almost incredulous: *"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened?"* The irony was striking. Jesus was the only person on earth who fully knew what had happened — because he had lived it, suffered it, died it, and risen from it. Yet he walked with them and asked them to tell him. He patiently listened to their entire account, ending with the words: *"but him they did not see."*

More irony. Their eyes were seeing the resurrected Jesus, but they did not see that it was him! Like Mary, their understanding had not yet caught up with reality. Their eyes were not blocked by a physical disguise — they were looking through the lens of grief and shattered expectations. The moment they truly saw him by faith, he vanished from their sight, because physical sight was no longer necessary.

Notice how Jesus came to them. He did not announce himself. He did not interrupt their confusion with rebuke. He walked with them at their pace and asked the question that opened the door. He fellowshiped with them. This was patient, unhurried love. The risen Jesus is not in a hurry. He comes alongside his confused and grieving disciples, walks with them, and waits until the full weight of their loss has been spoken before he responds.

And when he responded, it was not with comfort first. It was with the Scriptures. He gave them what they actually needed, not merely what would have made them feel better.

Reflection

What are you carrying right now that needs to be spoken honestly before the risen Jesus? What shattered hope are you walking with?

Jesus met the Emmaus disciples with patient, unhurried presence and then opened the Scriptures. How does this shape the way you understand how he meets you in your own seasons of sorrow and confusion?

Day 9...the 3rd Resurrection Appearance

Slow Hearts and Burning Hearts

"How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

Luke 24:25

The two disciples had told the stranger everything. Their account ended in absence: *"but him they did not see."* Jesus responded: *"How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"*

This was not a harsh rebuke — it was a teacher's correction. The problem was not their intelligence. It was their orientation. They had been slow — resistant — to believe what the prophets had clearly written. The Scriptures, read honestly and completely, pointed to exactly this: a Messiah who would enter glory through suffering, not around it.

The disciples had heard Jesus' passion predictions and not truly received them. They had filtered out what did not fit their expectations and built their hope around a Messiah of their own construction. When Jesus did not fit that construction, their hope collapsed. But the problem was never with Jesus — it was with what they had been slow to believe.

The word *"necessary"* carries great weight. It is the Greek *dei* — it is required, it cannot be otherwise. The cross and the empty tomb were not accidents of history. They were the plan of God, spoken in advance, fulfilled in precise detail. Beginning with Moses and working through all the prophets, Jesus explained what was written in the Scriptures concerning himself.

As he taught, something happened within them. They would say afterward: *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and opening the Scriptures to us?"* The burning heart is the mark of encountering the risen Jesus through his Word. Slow hearts become burning hearts when the living Lord speaks through the very texts he has fulfilled, in his own words.

Reflection

Where have you been slow to believe something the Scriptures clearly teach? What expectation of your own has shaped what you are willing to receive from God?

When has your heart burned within you as the Word was opened? How can you create more space for that kind of encounter with the risen Jesus?

Day 10...the 3rd Resurrection Appearance

The Breaking of the Bread

"When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them."

Luke 24:30

The village of Emmaus was in sight. The stranger who had walked with them and set their hearts on fire seemed to be going on ahead, but they urged him strongly: *"Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over."* He went in to stay with them.

When they sat down at the table, he did what he had always done: he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, they recognized him — and he vanished from their sight.

Something in the way he took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it was unmistakable. They had seen this gesture before — at the feeding of the five thousand, at the Last Supper, at shared meals across the years of following him. No one prayed like Jesus. Recognition came not in the extended Bible study on the road — though that had set their hearts burning — but in the breaking of the bread. This remains a central place where we remember and commune with him.

The moment they recognized him, he was gone. This was deliberate. Jesus had been teaching them throughout this appearance that his presence was not dependent on physical visibility. He vanished so that they would not cling to the physical appearance — just as he had redirected Mary in the garden. The resurrection was not a restoration of the past. It was the inauguration of something new: his invisible, constant presence. *"I am with you always."*

They got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem — seven miles back in the dark — because what had happened was too important to keep to themselves. They found the Eleven and heard: *"The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"* Then the two told their story: how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Every time the church gathers to break bread together, this story echoes. He is known in the breaking of the bread. The risen Jesus is present at his table, his Word sets hearts on fire, and his presence nourishes and transforms.

Reflection

The disciples recognized the risen Jesus in an ordinary act at an ordinary table. Where in the ordinary moments of your life are you most likely to encounter him — if you are paying attention?

The disciples got up immediately and went back seven miles in the dark to tell others. What would it look like for you to respond to an encounter with the risen Jesus with that kind of urgency?

Day 11...the 4th Resurrection Appearance

The Lord Has Risen Indeed

"It is true! The Lord has risen, and has appeared to Simon."

Luke 24:34

The two disciples from Emmaus got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem — seven miles back in the dark — to tell the others what had happened. They found the Eleven already gathered, and were met with news before they could share their own. *"The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon."*

We are given none of the details of this fourth resurrection appearance. We are simply told that it happened. Peter and Jesus had met privately, somewhere in Jerusalem, during that long Easter afternoon. Paul confirms it in 1 Corinthians 15: Jesus *"appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve."* That is all we know.

Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and the faithful women because of their love and obedience. He appeared to Peter because Peter was the most broken. His denial of Jesus three times before the cross was the deepest failure among the disciples. Peter needed to see Jesus, face to face, more than anyone.

Jesus had known it was coming. He had prayed for Peter's failure specifically, as he said at the Last Supper. At the moment of the third denial, during the Jewish trial, Jesus turned and looked directly at Peter. Those eyes were not condemning. They were the eyes of a shepherd who had already predicted the fall and was already planning the restoration. What shattered Peter was no surprise to Jesus.

The angel at the empty tomb had singled Peter out by name: *"Go tell his disciples — and Peter."* Jesus was reaching out toward his wounded servant before Peter had taken a single step back. He was still loved. He was still claimed.

Now, alone together in the city, Jesus restored Peter privately. But Peter was not alone in his failure. All of them had sworn to die with Jesus. All of them had fled. In restoring Peter, Jesus was reaching toward every disciple in that scattered band.

One more step remained. Later, by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus would complete the restoration publicly. But it began here, privately, between a broken disciple and his risen Lord. His grace is sufficient for every failure. His power is perfected in weakness — not in strength.

Reflection

What weakness or failure do you need to bring to the risen Jesus today, trusting that his power is perfected precisely there?

How is Jesus using your own experience of failure to deepen your dependence on him?

Day 12...the 5th Resurrection Appearance

Peace in the Locked Room

"Peace be with you."

Luke 24:36; John 20:19

It was the evening of resurrection Sunday. The disciples were gathered behind locked doors, afraid. They had heard the reports — from Mary Magdalene, from the women, from Peter, from the two who had walked to Emmaus. Every report said the same thing: he is alive. And still the doors were locked. A strange mixture of fear and hope filled the room. Then Jesus himself came.

This was the fifth resurrection appearance of the day. Jesus had begun before dawn with Mary Magdalene in the garden and ended in the evening with the whole gathered community. He had filled every hour of the first day of the week with appearances of his risen presence. The disciples would give this day a new name: the Lord's Day.

The locked doors could not keep his resurrection body out. He appeared suddenly in their midst — in the central place. And his first word was: *"Peace be with you."*

They needed it. They were startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. Jesus addressed their fear immediately. He invited them to touch him. A ghost does not have flesh and bones. He was truly alive.

In the Hebrew world, *shalom* meant far more than the absence of conflict. It meant wholeness — a right ordering of all things between God, humanity, and creation. Just days earlier, in the upper room, Jesus had promised: *"My peace I give you"* (John 14:27). He had also told them that in this world they would have trouble — but that he had overcome the world (John 16:33). The cross was that overcoming. The resurrection was its confirmation.

The scars Jesus showed them are the eternal evidence of his atonement. When Jesus said *"peace be with you,"* he was not offering a general wish for their wellbeing. He was announcing the accomplished fact. The barrier between God and humanity was gone. Peace — *shalom* in its fullest sense — had been made, not by negotiation, but by the blood of the new covenant.

The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. But their joy was so overwhelming they could hardly believe it was real. So Jesus asked for something to eat, and ate a piece of broiled fish in their presence. He was truly alive in a real body — transformed and glorified, yet real. Once again they recognized him in a meal.

The risen Jesus still speaks this word into locked rooms — wherever his people are gathered in fear. *"Peace be with you."* Not because circumstances are easy, but because the work that secured peace has already been accomplished, once and for all.

Reflection

The peace Jesus announced in the locked room is not a feeling. It is an accomplished fact. What would it mean for you to receive it today — not as a wish, but as a reality already secured?

The disciples received the peace of Jesus not alone but together, gathered in the same room despite their shared failure. What does it look like for your community to receive

Day 13...the 5th Resurrection Appearance

It Is I Myself

"Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

Luke 24:39

Jesus was making an important point. In the Greek, Jesus chose the most emphatic form possible: *ego eimi autos* — "I myself am." Greek does not require a separate pronoun for the subject — the verb carries it. When Jesus added the personal pronoun "*myself*", it was double emphasis. He was insisting: not merely "it is I" but "I, myself, personally — this is who stands before you."

Both Luke and John record that he showed them his scars and spoke peace over them. The scars were still there — the permanent signature of the cross on his resurrection body.

Luke records that even after seeing and touching him, they "*still did not believe it because of joy and amazement.*" It was not skepticism. The joy was too large. They could not take it in fast enough.

What they were encountering had never existed before in the universe. The resurrection body of Jesus was not a resuscitated corpse, like Lazarus, who would one day die again. It was something entirely new — physical matter with eternal existence built into it. A body that could be touched, that bore real scars, that could eat, that could be visible or invisible — and yet was no longer subject to death.

Jesus rose as the second Adam, the beginning of a new kind of humanity. It is no accident that Easter falls on the Old Testament festival of First Fruits. Paul makes the connection explicit: Jesus is "*the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Corinthians 15:20). It was the inauguration of an entirely new order — the first moment in history when created matter crossed into eternity.

And yet: *ego eimi autos*. "*It is I myself.*" The same Jesus who had walked with them, taught them, washed their feet, and died on the cross was standing before them. He was glorified, transformed — and completely, unmistakably himself.

This is the Jesus we follow. Not a religious idea. A person — risen, present, and real.

Reflection

"It is I myself." The risen Jesus is the same Jesus who suffered and died for you. How does the continuity between the crucified and risen Lord shape your relationship with him?

What does it mean that Jesus is the firstfruits of a new creation — and that his resurrection body is the pattern for your own?

Day 14...the 5th Resurrection Appearance

Everything Must Be Fulfilled

"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Luke 24:44

They had touched him. They had watched him eat. The doubt had given way to joy — a joy almost too large to hold. Now, as that joy settled, Jesus did what he had done on the road to Emmaus. He turned them to the Scriptures. This was the pattern of every resurrection appearance. The encounter always led to the Word.

He reminded them that he had told them all this before it happened. The Scriptures — all of them, the whole Old Testament in its three divisions — had been pointing here. Then Luke records one of the most significant statements in his gospel: *"He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."*

This is how the Old Testament is to be read. It is the unified testimony of the whole biblical witness to the one who was to come — who would suffer, die, rise, and send his Spirit to the nations. Jesus is the interpretive key to all of Scripture. *"These are the scriptures that testify about me."* John 5:39

Luke 24:45–49 contains one of the most compressed summaries in the New Testament. Jesus described the entire redemptive plan in Trinitarian terms. The Father's plan: the Messiah would accomplish redemption through suffering and resurrection. The Son's work: accomplished and now to be proclaimed. The Spirit's power: promised, soon to be given, necessary for everything that follows.

The stakes were enormous. The entire world could be forgiven — or remain unforgiven — depending on whether his people carried this message. This is why the Spirit was not optional. Redemption accomplished and redemption proclaimed were intentionally joined. One without the other was incomplete.

Jesus still opens minds to understand the Scriptures. The same Spirit he promised and poured out takes the whole Word of God and makes it luminous, alive, pointing unmistakably to him. This is how the Scriptures are meant to be read — with resurrection eyes, opened by the one who fulfilled them all.

Reflection

Jesus opened the minds of his disciples to see that all of Scripture points to him. Is there a part of the Old Testament that seems disconnected from Jesus? Ask the Spirit to open your mind to see the connection.

The whole Old Testament — Law, Prophets, and Psalms — was fulfilled in Jesus. How does reading the whole Bible as pointing to Christ change the way you read Scripture?

Day 15...the 5th Resurrection Appearance

Sent as the Son Was Sent

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

John 20:21

Their minds had just been opened to understand the Scriptures. Now their mission was about to be defined. Jesus said *"peace be with you"* a second time. The repetition was deliberate. The first gift of peace had settled their fear and established the reality of his presence. The second was the foundation for what followed — a commission.

These words connected the disciples directly to the sending of Jesus himself. The Father had sent the Son into the world — with a purpose, with authority, with the full backing of the one who sent him. Now the risen Jesus was sending his disciples in exactly the same way. The mission was the same. The authority behind it was the same. The pattern of the sending was the same.

This commission would be repeated and developed in the appearances that followed. More than half of the twelve resurrection appearances included some element of it. It was clearly the central concern of Jesus during his forty days after the resurrection. The work he had accomplished had to be faithfully communicated to every person in the world, or its purpose would not be realized among the nations.

The commission did not come before the encounter. It came after it — after peace, presence, Scripture, and the proof of his risen body. The disciples were sent from the presence of the risen Lord, grounded in his peace, anchored in his Word, filled with his joy.

This is still the pattern. We are not sent into the world to find Jesus there. We are sent from an encounter with him, carrying what we have received. The proclamation flows from the presence. We go as those who have seen his wounds, heard his word, and received his peace.

He is still sending. The commission has not been completed. Every generation of disciples is included in the words: *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

Reflection

Jesus sent his disciples as the Father had sent him — with a purpose, with authority, with full backing. How does understanding yourself as sent by the risen Jesus change the way you approach your daily life and relationships?

The commission came after the encounter — after peace, presence, wounds, food, and Scripture. Is your sense of mission grounded in a living relationship with the risen Jesus, or has it become disconnected from that source?

Day 16...the 5th Resurrection Appearance

Breathe on Them

"Receive the Holy Spirit."

John 20:22

Now Jesus did one more thing — the thing that made everything else possible. He breathed on them.

"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you cause anyone's sins to be forgiven, they will be forgiven. If you do not cause them to be forgiven, they will not be forgiven."

John 20:22–23

The act of breathing carries the weight of creation itself. In Genesis 2, God breathed into the nostrils of the man he had formed from dust, and he became a living being. Now the risen Jesus breathed on his disciples and gave them the Spirit. It was a new creation moment — the beginning of the new humanity that his death and resurrection had made possible.

This was not yet the full and public outpouring of the Spirit that would come at Pentecost. That would happen fifty days later, with power and fire and the sound of a rushing wind. This was a foretaste and a promise — the first breath of the new age, given privately to the core group before the public outpouring came to all.

The authority Jesus gave with this gift was serious. The proclamation of forgiveness through Jesus was so powerful that it could either bring people into the family of God or confirm them in their rejection of it. This was not a power to be exercised arbitrarily. It was the responsibility of bearing the word of reconciliation to the world. When people believed, sins were forgiven. When they refused, they remained in them. The word of the gospel is that powerful.

Therefore the power of the Holy Spirit was not optional. It was a command. Jesus commanded them to receive the Spirit because the mission he was sending them on was impossible without him. Making disciples of all the nations could not be accomplished in human strength. It required the power that only the Spirit could give.

The same Spirit is given to every believer today. We are not sent out with our own resources. We are sent out with the breath of the risen Jesus in us.

Reflection

Jesus commanded his disciples to receive the Holy Spirit — it was not automatic, it required an active receiving. Are you living in the fullness of the Spirit that Jesus commanded and promised? What would it look like to receive more fully today?

The proclamation of forgiveness through Jesus has the power to either forgive sins or confirm people in them. How seriously do you take your responsibility to carry this message to the people around you?

Day 17...the 5th Resurrection Appearance

Clothed With Power

"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but I command you to stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Luke 24:49

The doors were still locked. The evening was still young. But the room was no longer the same room it had been that morning.

In the space of a single day — the most extraordinary day since God breathed life into the first human being — everything had changed. A new creation had entered the world. The second Adam had risen from the grave, and in rising he had begun a new human family. He had appeared five times to his disciples, spoken peace over their fear, opened their minds to the Scriptures, shown them his wounds, eaten with them, breathed his Spirit on them, and commissioned them to carry his word to the world. Now, as the evening drew to a close, he gave them one final word.

Wait.

Jesus had just breathed on them and said: *"Receive the Holy Spirit."* That gift was real — a foretaste, a first breath of the new age. But something more was coming. The private gift of the upper room was not yet the full outpouring. For that, they would need to wait in Jerusalem until the Father's promise arrived in its fullness — until they were clothed with power from on high.

The word Jesus chose is vivid. Not equipped. Not assisted. *Clothed*. As no one steps out of their home without putting on clothes, no disciple was to step out into the world without this. Clothes protect. Clothes identify. The power of the Spirit would be both their protection in a hostile world and their identity as witnesses of the risen Jesus. It would mark them unmistakably as his.

The Greek word behind power is *dunamis* — not the sudden explosive force of dynamite, but the sustained ability to function effectively over time. This was the same power that had raised Jesus from the dead and sustained him through three years of ministry, healing, teaching, and finally the cross. He knew precisely what this power could do — and he knew his disciples could not do without it.

The commission was real. The world was waiting. But the order was non-negotiable: first, be clothed. Then, go.

Reflection

Easter Sunday ended not with a command to go, but with a command to wait — to receive power before attempting the mission. Is there a way you are attempting to serve the risen Jesus in your own strength, without the Spirit's clothing?

The same *dunamis* that raised Jesus from the dead is the power promised to every disciple. What would it look like for you to depend on that power more fully today?

Conclusion to: Resurrection Reorientation

The disciples needed a fundamental reorientation. For three years they had known Jesus in a visible, physical body. Now, in his resurrected and glorified body, he was still fully present — yet no longer

bound to what their eyes could see. Through his appearing and disappearing, Jesus taught them something essential: his presence is fully real whether seen or unseen. In one sense, this was not new. The Father had always been present but unseen. The Spirit had always been present but unseen. Now the risen Jesus reoriented them into that same reality — learning to trust a presence they could not always see. He had prepared them for the new covenant age in which he would be with his people always, present through the Spirit.

Part II — Restoration

During the five Easter Sunday appearances, Jesus had begun the restoration of his disciples by reorienting them to his new resurrection presence. But two apostles required further restoration. Thomas had not been with the others on Easter Sunday and was lagging behind in faith. Peter needed to be publicly restored to the leadership responsibility he had compromised by his denial. The sixth and seventh resurrection appearances accomplished both. Their restorations were not exceptions — they reveal the pattern by which the risen Jesus restores every struggling, failing disciple in every generation.

Day 18...the 6th Resurrection Appearance

Stop Doubting

"I command you to stop becoming an unbeliever, and believe."

John 20:27

Thomas had not been present when Jesus appeared to the disciples on Easter evening. For an entire week he had listened to their testimony: "We have seen the Lord." And for an entire week he had held himself back.

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and actually put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, there is absolutely no way that I will believe."

Thomas was an all-or-nothing kind of person. He had thrown all his hopes on Jesus. When Jesus was heading to Bethany to raise Lazarus, knowing it might cost him his life, it was Thomas who had said: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." He was ready to risk everything. But the manner of Jesus' suffering and death had destroyed his faith.

A week later, Jesus came again. The doors were still locked. He appeared in the midst of them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he turned directly to Thomas. "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop becoming an unbeliever, and believe." The command "stop becoming an unbeliever" is significant. He was not a natural skeptic. He was a wounded all-or-nothing disciple who could not afford another catastrophic mistake. Jesus saw this, and he came for Thomas specifically.

Thomas responded with the most powerful confession of the deity of Jesus Christ in all the gospels: "My Lord and my God." He called Jesus YHWH — the Lord — and his God, directly to his face.

Jesus replied: "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have believed without seeing." This is the special blessing given to every generation of disciples since then — those who have not seen the risen Jesus with their physical eyes, but have believed the words of Jesus, the testimony of Scripture and the evidence it presents. Jesus commands us all: "stop holding yourself back. Believe."

Reflection

Thomas held himself back from believing because he had been so deeply wounded by unmet expectations. Is there a way you are holding yourself back from full commitment to Jesus? What would it take to let go of that resistance?

Jesus said those who believe without seeing are blessed. What does it mean for you to live in that blessing today — to trust the words of Jesus in the testimony of Scripture rather than waiting for a visible sign?

Day 19

Blessed Without Seeing

“Blessed are those who have believed, without seeing.”

John 20:29

Thomas had made his confession: *“My Lord and my God.”*

Jesus responded with a word that reached beyond Thomas, beyond the Upper Room, and across every generation of disciples that would follow: *“Because you have seen me, you have permanently believed. Blessed are those who have believed, without seeing.”* Why is the experience of Thomas so important? Not because we should all seek a physical appearance of Jesus before we believe. The point is just the opposite. The Scriptures, and the historical evidence Thomas had already seen, were enough to justify his faith. The truth of the resurrection is compelling enough for everyone.

John then adds his own word: *“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these stand written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that because you believe, you may continue to have eternal life in his name.”*

The gospel of John was written for us — for those who would not see the risen Jesus with their physical eyes, but would read the testimony of those who did. John chose these specific signs and appearances because they are sufficient. They are enough to produce the same confession Thomas made. They are enough to produce belief — and belief produces God’s quality of life that lasts forever: the resurrection life of Jesus.

This blessing is not passive. To believe without seeing requires an active, daily orientation toward a Lord who is present but invisible, speaking but not audible in the ordinary sense, acting but not visibly. It is the training ground of trust. Every moment we choose to act on what Jesus said rather than what we can verify with our senses, we are living in the blessing Thomas could not yet receive. The disciples who came after the resurrection generation — who never touched his wounds or ate breakfast with him on the shore — are not disadvantaged. They are the ones Jesus specifically pronounced blessed.

Not seeing Jesus, but still believing his word and experiencing his presence is the new covenant relationship Jesus died to inaugurate. Every moment spent in relationship with the risen Jesus now — when we cannot physically see him — will be multiplied with meaning and glory when we see him face to face. Every act of trust, every prayer, every obedience in the dark is seen and remembered. The blessing of believing without seeing is the privilege of every disciple who has come after Thomas — including us.

Reflection

John wrote his gospel specifically so that you would believe. Have you taken the time to read the gospel of John as the testimony it is — written to produce faith in you personally?

What does it mean for your daily life that you are among those Jesus calls *“blessed”* — those who believe without seeing? How does that blessing shape the way you live today?

Day 20...the 7th Resurrection Appearance

The Right Side of the Boat

"I command you to throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

John 21:6

Some time had passed since the appearances in Jerusalem. The disciples had followed Jesus' instructions and returned to Galilee, where he had promised to meet them. While they waited, Peter decided to go fishing. Six others went with him. They fished all night and caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore. The disciples did not recognize him — they were about a hundred yards out in the water. Jesus called out to them:

"Children, you do not have any fish, do you? ... Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

John 21:5–6

When they did so, they were unable to drag the net in because of the huge number of fish. Then John recognized him. *"It is the Lord!"* The moment Peter heard those words, he wrapped his outer garment around him and threw himself into the water, swimming straight to shore while the others brought the boat in, towing the net full of fish.

Jesus was deliberately re-creating the scene from the very beginning of their relationship. Two and a half years earlier, by this same sea, he had called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow him — after a miraculous catch of fish that followed a night of catching nothing. The message was the same: nothing about my grace has changed. Everything that was true at the beginning is still true now.

When they reached the shore, they found a charcoal fire burning, with fish on it and some bread. Jesus had already prepared breakfast for them. He had gone to the precise place where he could find his disciples and serve them — not because they had sought him out, but because he had sought them.

This was a picture of real fellowship — Jesus sharing all he has with us, and sharing everything in our lives with us as well. He had washed their feet on the night before he died. Now he cooked their breakfast after he rose. Love serves, and never stops.

Reflection

Jesus re-created the scene of the disciples' original calling to show them that nothing had changed about his grace. What do you need to be reminded of today about the grace that was at the foundation of your own relationship with Jesus?

Jesus rose from the dead to fellowship with us, and he never stops seeking us out. How will you cultivate and develop your fellowship with the risen Jesus today?

Day 21...the 7th Resurrection Appearance

Breakfast With the Risen Lord

“Come and have breakfast.”

John 21:12

The net was full. The men had dragged it ashore — 153 large fish, and the net was not torn. The miracle had the signature of Jesus written all over it. John had recognized him by it before he could even see him clearly on the shore.

He came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. It was a meal prepared by the risen Lord, served by his own hands, to seven tired fishermen on the shore of the sea they had worked all their lives.

The fellowship in this scene is striking. Jesus had brought his own fish and bread and cooked it on the charcoal fire he had made. Yet he graciously included some of the fish that he had miraculously provided for the men. This was a picture of his own words to the church in Laodicea, spoken sixty years later: *“Look, I am standing at the door and knocking; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with me.”*

It was a meal they would never forget.

This seventh resurrection appearance was the most extensive of all twelve — twenty-four verses in John. And John devoted the first half of it entirely to this: a fire on the beach, bread and fish, and an invitation to sit down and eat. There was breakfast.

The risen Jesus is not only Lord and Savior and sender of his people into all the world. He is the one who prepares a table, serves a meal, and says: come. Eat. Sit with me. Let’s share together. Four of the 10 resurrection appearances leading up to the Ascension include Jesus eating fellowship meals with his disciples. It is his way.

It is not only about mission. It is about this — his presence, his provision, his unhurried love for the people who belong to him.

Before the meal was over, Jesus had one more thing to do — the public restoration of the disciple who had failed most publicly, as an encouragement to every one of them.

Reflection

Jesus rose from the dead to fellowship with us forever, simply because he loves us. What would it look like for you to receive and enjoy his fellowship more fully today — not as a religious exercise, but as a real relationship?

Before the commission came the meal. Before the calling came the care. How does the order of this scene shape the way you understand your own relationship with Jesus and his call on your life?

Day 22...the 7th Resurrection Appearance

Do You Love Me More?

"Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

John 21:15

When they had finished eating, Jesus turned to Peter. What followed was the most personal exchange in any of the twelve resurrection appearances — a threefold question that went straight to the heart of everything.

Jesus used Peter's full name. Not the name he had given him — Peter, the rock — but his original name: Simon son of John. It was a tender and searching address. And the question it introduced went immediately to the center: do you love me?

The phrase *"more than these"* carried a specific echo. On the night of the Last Supper, Peter had declared confidently: *"Even if all the others fall away on account of you, I never will."* He had claimed a love superior to the rest. He had been wrong. He had denied Jesus three times that same night. Now Jesus asked: *"do you love me more than these?"* The question was not a rebuke. It was an invitation to honest self-knowledge.

Peter answered carefully. *"Yes, Lord. You know that I love you."* He did not repeat his earlier claim of superior devotion. He appealed instead to what Jesus already knew. He was not measuring himself against the others anymore — simply telling his Lord what was in his heart.

Jesus responded: *"Feed my lambs."*

This is the heart of ministry according to Jesus. We serve our Lord as an expression of our love for him, or our service is worth nothing. Paul said the same thing in 1 Corinthians 13: without love, even the most powerful gifts and sacrificial deeds count for nothing. Ministry is not primarily motivated by the needs of people — it is motivated by love for the God who gave himself for those people. Everything else flows from that.

Now it was happening publicly, in front of the other disciples. Jesus was not simply forgiving Peter — he was reinstating him. The one who had failed most publicly was being restored most publicly. The grace of Jesus is thorough.

Reflection

Jesus asked Peter whether he loved him before giving him any ministry responsibility. How honestly can you answer the same question today? What does your daily life reveal about the answer?

Peter stopped comparing himself to others and simply appealed to what Jesus already knew about his heart. What would it look like for you to bring the same honesty to your relationship with Jesus today?

Day 23...the 7th Resurrection Appearance

Feed My Lambs

"I command you to keep on feeding my lambs."

John 21:15

Three times Peter had denied Jesus. Three times Jesus now gave him the opportunity to declare his love. And three times Jesus responded to that declaration with a command: *"feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, feed my sheep."*

The threefold structure was deliberate. Peter had denied Jesus three times, before a charcoal fire, in the courtyard of the high priest. Now, beside another charcoal fire, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus gave him three opportunities to affirm his love. Each affirmation was met with a commission. The denial was not simply forgiven — it was reversed. The precise shape of the failure became the precise shape of the restoration.

These were not Peter's lambs and sheep. They were Jesus'. Peter was not being given a ministry to build. He was being given a flock to serve on behalf of another. The one who owned the sheep was Jesus. The one who tended them was to be Peter, in the name and by the word of his Lord.

Jesus commanded him to feed them — with what? With the word of Jesus. God's people need to hear the word of Jesus through his servants. Not messages that emanate from the preacher's own ideas or experiences, but the word of the Good Shepherd himself, served faithfully to his own flock. Love for God and love for his people will always mean that the pastor-teacher brings them the word of Jesus.

This commission grew directly out of the question about love. Jesus got to the heart of ministry by asking first about the heart. Ministry not rooted in love for Jesus becomes a performance, a profession, or a burden. When it flows from that love, it becomes a joy — because feeding his sheep is one of the ways we express it.

Reflection

Jesus reversed the shape of Peter's failure with the shape of his restoration — three denials answered by three commissions. Is there a specific failure in your own life that Jesus may be redeeming for a specific purpose?

The sheep belong to Jesus, not to us. How does understanding yourself as a servant of Jesus' own flock — rather than the builder of your own ministry — change the way you approach serving others?

Day 24...the 7th Resurrection Appearance

Do You Really Love Me?

"Simon son of John, do you really love me?"

John 21:17

The third time Jesus asked the question, he changed the word he used for love. The first two times he had asked whether Peter loved him with an unconditional, self-giving love. The third time, he used the word for brotherly affection. And Peter was hurt by it.

It was as if Jesus was asking: *"Do you really love me the way you say you do?"*

Peter's answer was the most honest thing he had said in any of the gospel accounts. *"Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you."*

Before his denial, Peter had spoken about his love for Jesus with great confidence. *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."* He had been certain of what was in his heart. Now he was not. So instead of declaring his love, he appealed to the one who knew him better than he knew himself.

"Lord, you know all things." This was not evasion. It was the deepest kind of honesty. It is not what we say about our love for God that matters — anyone can claim to love God supremely. It is the fact that God knows everything about us that matters. Knowing us perfectly, he still chooses to love us unconditionally. His knowledge of us is not a threat; it is our security. Peter was resting his love for Jesus not on his own self-assessment but on the knowledge and grace of Jesus himself.

Our ability to love God is itself a product of his grace, not our own strength. Abiding in his prior love for us is the secret of loving him back.

Reflection

Peter stopped claiming what he felt and simply appealed to what Jesus knew. Is there an area of your relationship with Jesus where you need to move from self-confident declaration to honest dependence on his knowledge and grace?

"Lord, you know all things." How does the fact that Jesus knows you completely — including your failures — and still loves you change the way you approach him today?

Day 25...the 7th Resurrection Appearance

When You Were Young

“Very truly I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”

John 21:18

Jesus said something unexpected. He spoke to Peter about how he would die.

John adds the editorial note: *“Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.”* Peter would die as a martyr, crucified, led by others to a death he would not choose. Christian tradition says he asked to be crucified upside down, not worthy to die in the same position as his Lord.

Why did Jesus tell Peter this? It was part of the restoration — and part of the commission. When Peter was young, or immature in his relationship with Jesus, he was self-directed and self-reliant. He went where he wanted. He trusted his own strength. That self-reliance was now broken.

As he grew more mature, the Holy Spirit would overcome his self-will and lead him where Jesus chose — ultimately to death. This was not a threat. It was a promise of transformation. The one who had fled from a servant girl’s accusation in the courtyard of the high priest would one day go to his death willingly, led by the Spirit, in a death that glorified God. The trajectory of his life was resurrection, not defeat.

When we are young in faith, we are largely self-directed — following Jesus when it is convenient, pulling back when it costs too much. As we mature, the Spirit increasingly takes hold of our will and leads us where we would not naturally go.

The self-reliant Peter who fell was being transformed, through failure and restoration, into the Spirit-led Peter who would stand before the Sanhedrin and say: *“We must obey God rather than human beings.”* Jesus saw all of this in him from the beginning. He sees the same trajectory in us.

Reflection

Jesus told Peter that maturity in discipleship means being led where you would not naturally go. In what area of your life is the Spirit currently leading you somewhere you would not choose on your own?

The self-reliant Peter became the Spirit-led Peter through failure and restoration. How has your own experience of failure and restoration contributed to your growth in depending on Jesus rather than yourself?

Day 26...the 7th Resurrection Appearance

Follow Me

"I command you to keep on following me!"

John 21:19, 22

It was the same command with which Jesus had first called Peter by the sea, two and a half years before. Everything had come full circle. The miraculous catch of fish had re-created the scene of the original calling. The breakfast had renewed the fellowship. The threefold question and commission had restored Peter to his appointed place. And now the foundation of it all was restated: *keep on following me*.

Peter could no longer see Jesus on a regular basis after the resurrection in the way he once had. But the process of living in his presence, and adjusting everything in his life to the example and will of Jesus would continue — now by the power of the Holy Spirit.

A relationship with Jesus is not about following rules or religious disciplines. It is about being under the constant influence of his character, values, and abiding presence through his word. Day by day, in the ordinary and the extraordinary, in clarity and in confusion — this is the shape of it.

But Peter was already looking elsewhere. He turned, saw John following them, and asked: *"Lord, what about him?"*

Jesus was direct: *"If I want him to remain until I return, what is that to you? You — keep on following me."*

The moment Peter was given his commission, he began comparing himself to another disciple. John's calling was not Peter's business. Peter's calling was to follow Jesus — not to monitor how Jesus was dealing with anyone else.

This brief exchange is the Christian life in miniature. We are given a command. We are distracted. Jesus repeats the command. We refocus. The more we mature, the shorter the distractions. But the process never ends on this earth. The constant repetition is not a sign of failure. It is the shape of discipleship.

"Keep on following me." It is the first command. It is the last command. It is the whole relationship.

Reflection

Jesus repeated the foundational command *"follow me"* to the very disciple he had just fully restored. What does this tell you about the nature of discipleship — that even the most mature disciples need to keep hearing and obeying this basic call?

Peter was immediately distracted by comparing his calling to John's. Where in your own life are you most prone to comparing your calling with someone else's, and how does Jesus' word to Peter speak to that?

Conclusion to Part II — Restoration

Thomas had returned to faith. Peter had been restored to leadership. The risen Jesus had done what only he could do — entered into the specific failure of each man and reversed it. With his apostles whole again, he could move forward. The next appearances would complete what he had begun on

Easter Sunday evening: the Great Commission, given now in its fullness to disciples who had been rebuilt to carry it.

Part III – Authority and Commission

The first seven resurrection appearances follow a clear chronological sequence. The remaining appearances are not presented in the Gospels in order. We will follow them in their logical sequence rather than a strictly chronological one.

Jesus had reoriented and restored his disciples through the first seven appearances. Now, in his eighth appearance on the mountain he had designated in Galilee, he gave the commission that defined his mission for his disciples until his final return to earth at the end of the age. These words directly affect all of us today, just as for those who first heard them. We will take our time remembering these resurrection words of Jesus that have changed human history.

Day 27...the 8th Resurrection Appearance

All Authority in Heaven and Earth

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

Matthew 28:18

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him — though some doubted, probably about whether it was really Jesus at the distance. Jesus responded to their worship by drawing near to them, and then speaking. It is always like that. When his people worship his invisible risen presence, he draws near and speaks his word to listening hearts.

This scene begins to fulfill that vision of the “Son of Man” that the prophet Daniel saw: *“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”* Dan 7:13–14

Daniel saw Jesus receiving authority to be worshipped by every nationality and people-group. The worship Jesus received on the mountain was the first fruits of that universal worship. We see its outcome when all nations and all creation gather at the throne of God and sing: *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.”* Jesus’ commission is the bridge between the beginning of what Daniel saw and the Revelation given to John.

So Jesus began his commission with a declaration: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*

The cross looked like defeat. The resurrection revealed it as the decisive victory by which God’s Son was enthroned as Lord over everything. The authority Jesus claimed on the mountain in Galilee is the authority of the exalted, enthroned, risen Son of God — an authority that encompasses every person, every nation, every moment of history, past and future.

This declaration is the rationale for everything that follows. Because all authority has been given to Jesus, his disciples must go to all nations. Because he reigns over every power and principality, no barrier is ultimately insurmountable. Because every living person is a subject of his kingdom whether they know it or not, every living person deserves to hear the message of their King, so they can worship him forever before his throne.

Reflection

Jesus claimed all authority in heaven and on earth as the basis for sending his disciples into the world. How does that authority change the way you approach the people and situations in your own daily life?

The disciples worshipped before they received the commission. How does worship — acknowledging who Jesus truly is — prepare you to live out his calling?

Day 28...the 8th Resurrection Appearance

Make Disciples of All the Nations

"Therefore I command you to make disciples of all nations."

Matthew 28:19

The rationale had been stated: all authority belongs to Jesus. Now came the central command that flows from it: *"I command you to make disciples of all nations."*

Because Jesus is Lord of all, every living person owes him worship and obedience. This message must be communicated to every nation, people-group, and person in the world, in their own language, so that they can fully understand the glory of their King and give him the loving obedience by faith that he alone is worthy to receive. The commission is not addressed to a professional class of missionaries — it is addressed to every disciple of Jesus in every generation.

The word *disciples* is the key. Jesus did not commission his followers to make converts, church members, or religious adherents. He commissioned them to make disciples — people who are learning to live under the ongoing authority and teaching of Jesus, who are being formed into his likeness, and who are themselves reproducing that same life in others. A disciple is not someone who has merely prayed a prayer or agreed to a set of beliefs — but someone who is following Jesus, being transformed by him, and making him known.

The scope is breathtaking: *all nations*. The Greek word is *panta ta ethne* — all the peoples. Not simply the political nations of the world, but every ethnic, linguistic, and cultural group. Jesus had a God-sized vision. He was commissioning five hundred people with no resources other than his power and presence to reach every people group on earth. More than two thousand years later, that mission is still unfinished. Every generation of disciples inherits this commission afresh.

More than half of Jesus' resurrection appearances included some element of this commission. It was clearly the central concern of Jesus during his forty days of ministry after the resurrection. The work he had accomplished through his death and resurrection had to be faithfully communicated to every person in the world, or its purpose would not be realized among the nations.

Reflection

Jesus commissioned every disciple — not just a special few — to make disciples of all nations. What is your part in that commission, given where God has placed you?

By that definition — following Jesus, being transformed by him, making him known — are you a disciple? Are you making disciples?

Day 29...the 8th Resurrection Appearance

Keep on Going

“Do this by continuing to go ...”

Matthew 28:19

The central command of the Great Commission — *make disciples of all nations* — was accompanied by three sub-commands that describe how it is to be obeyed. All three are expressed in continuous, ongoing action. The first is: *“Do this by continuing to go ...”*

The word “go” is a participle of ongoing action — *keep on going, as you go*. Evangelism cannot just be the “come to church” kind. It has to be the “go to them and let them know” kind. Every linguistic, cultural, religious, social, geographical, and economic barrier must be overcome by our going. The gospel cannot wait for the world to come to it — it goes to the world.

Jesus himself modeled this throughout his ministry. He went to Galilee, to Samaria, to the Gentile regions of Tyre and Sidon. He crossed every social and religious boundary of his day. He ate with tax collectors and sinners. He spoke to Samaritan women and Roman centurions. He touched lepers and raised the dead daughter of a synagogue ruler. His whole ministry was “going” — a crossing of barriers in the name of the Father who had sent him.

The book of Acts is the story of disciples who obeyed this sub-command. The Spirit drove Philip to an Ethiopian official on a desert road. He compelled Peter to the house of Cornelius. He directed Paul and his companions across the Aegean into Macedonia. It was costly, dangerous, and often unwelcome — but the disciples kept going, because their Lord had commanded it and his Spirit empowered it.

Keeping on going is still the shape of faithful discipleship. It means crossing whatever barriers lie between us and the people Jesus is calling us to reach — barriers of language, culture, class, religion, or geography. The risen Jesus who has all authority in heaven and on earth sends his people out with that authority at their backs. We go in his name, with his power, toward the people he died for.

Reflection

Jesus commanded his disciples to keep on going — to cross barriers to reach people. What barriers between you and the people around you most need to be crossed in obedience to this command?

The going is not occasional — it is continuous. What would it look like for the posture of going to become a way of life for you, rather than a special event?

Day 30...the 8th Resurrection Appearance

Baptize Them

“... by continuing to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...”

Matthew 28:19

The second sub-command of the Great Commission moved from the initial act of going to the decisive act of commitment: *“baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...”*

Merely going and communicating the good news about King Jesus is not enough. Those who respond must be baptized — publicly and personally committing themselves to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and being received into the community of his people. The gospel demands a response by its very nature, and disciples of Jesus must lead those they evangelize to make that faith-response that is confessed publicly through baptism.

The formula Jesus gave is the most explicit Trinitarian statement in the Gospels. Baptism is to be performed in the name — singular — of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. One name. Three persons. The new disciple is not being baptized into a doctrine or a community — they are being immersed into the name, the character, the identity, and the relationship of the Triune God. This is what salvation means: being brought into the fellowship of the Trinity itself.

Jesus had spoken of the Father throughout his ministry as the one who sent him. He had revealed himself as the Son, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. He had promised the Spirit as another Advocate just like himself, who would represent him within every believer. Now all three persons were named together in the single act by which a new disciple publicly entered the family of God. Baptism is a Trinitarian event — an immersion into the life that the Father, Son, and Spirit share eternally, now opened to every person who believes.

The commission to baptize is ongoing. Every generation of disciples is responsible for leading people to this decisive, public confession of their faith in the risen Jesus. The church that stops baptizing is a church that has stopped making disciples.

Reflection

Baptism is an immersion into the name and life of the Triune God. How fully do you understand your own baptism as an entry into the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Are you leading the people you are reaching toward the decisive, public commitment of baptism? What would it look like to take that responsibility more seriously?

Day 31...the 8th Resurrection Appearance

Teach Them to Obey Everything

"... and by continuing to teach them to keep on obeying everything I have commanded you."

Matthew 28:20

The third sub-command of the Great Commission is the one that makes the other two sustainable: *"by continuing to teach them to keep on obeying everything I have commanded you."*

Going and baptizing bring people into the family of God. Teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded forms them into disciples — people genuinely being transformed into his likeness. Without this third command, the other two cannot be sustained. Only when obedience to Jesus' teaching becomes the passionate lifestyle of all believers will the church have the depth of commitment necessary to reach the nations.

Notice the scope: *everything I have commanded you*. Not a selection of the more accessible teachings. Not the commands that fit comfortably with the surrounding culture. Everything.

Notice also the standard: *keep on obeying*. Not occasional compliance. Not intellectual agreement with Jesus' teachings. A lifestyle of ongoing, growing obedience that becomes more deeply rooted over a lifetime of discipleship. The goal is not information about Jesus — it is transformation into his likeness through living under the authority of his word.

The four Gospels contain Jesus' comprehensive curriculum — his most important examples, teachings, promises, and commands. The twelve were appointed to capture this essential content in oral and written form, so that every future generation of disciples could learn it, obey it, and teach others to do the same. Devotion to mastering the content of the Gospels is the missing link in the disciple-making chain.

Jesus spent over 1,200 days with the twelve for exactly this purpose. He could not have imagined them walking away without a solid grip on his teachings. He would be equally surprised by a modern disciple who claims to follow him while remaining largely unfamiliar with what he actually said. Daily engagement with his words in the Gospels is not an advanced spiritual discipline — it is essential to knowing him.

This third sub-command is far from complete in contemporary Christianity. The risen Jesus commands every disciple: *teach them to obey everything I have commanded you*.

Reflection

Jesus commanded his disciples to teach obedience to everything he commanded — not a selection of comfortable teachings. Which of Jesus' commands do you find hardest to obey? What would it take to submit more fully to him in that area?

The goal of discipleship is transformation, not information. How is your engagement with the teachings of Jesus actually changing the way you live?

Day 32...the 8th Resurrection Appearance

I Am With You Always

“Look! I myself am surely with you always, until the consummation of the age.”

Matthew 28:20

The Great Commission ended not with a challenge but with a promise — one of the most glorious promises in all of Scripture: *“Look! I myself am surely with you always, until the consummation of the age.”*

The word “look” demands attention. Jesus wanted his disciples to fix their gaze on this truth as they learned to live in his invisible presence. Everything else in the commission — the authority, the command, the three sub-commands — rests on this foundation. Go, because I am with you. Baptize, because I am with you. Teach, because I am with you. Make disciples of all nations, because *I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

The promise is comprehensive. *Always* — not sometimes, not when circumstances are favorable, not when our obedience is consistent. Always. In the open door and the closed door, in the fruitful season and the barren one. In prison and in freedom. In health and in suffering. In life and in death. The risen Jesus who has all authority in heaven and on earth is present with his people every moment of every day until he returns.

Matthew began his gospel with the name *Immanuel* — *God with us* — and he ended it with this promise. Matthew’s narrative moves from the announcement that God was coming to be with his people, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, to this final word: *I am with you always*. The Immanuel promise is not cancelled by the ascension. It is fulfilled and extended. Jesus is more present with his people now than he was when he walked among them in Galilee — present through his Spirit in every believer, in every place, in every generation.

The most impossible commission ever given to the most unlikely group of people was accompanied by the most sufficient promise ever spoken. Obedience to the Great Commission is not an act of human ambition — it is an act of trust in the one who said: *I am with you. Always.*

Reflection

Jesus said “look!” to draw attention to his promise of presence. How much does the reality of his constant presence actually shape the way you live and serve day to day?

The promise “*I am with you always*” is the foundation of the Great Commission. What specific aspect of the commission are you most tempted to avoid, and how does this promise address that temptation?

Conclusion to Part III — Authority and Commission

The Great Commission was now fully in their hands — and in ours. Jesus had declared his authority, named the mission, given three commands for how to carry it out, and sealed everything with the promise of his unceasing presence. Nothing was withheld. Nothing was left vague. The disciples had everything they needed except one thing: the power to do it. That promise was still coming. In Part IV Jesus turns to explain the gift that would make the impossible possible — the Spirit he had already breathed on them in foretaste, now about to be poured out in fullness.

Part IV — The Promise Explained

Jesus spent the final hours before his arrest preparing his disciples for a world they could not yet imagine — a world in which he would be physically absent but more present than ever. The promises he made that night about the Holy Spirit are the theological foundation of the entire new covenant age. They describe exactly the life every believer has lived since Pentecost.

These are not words for the people in that upper room only. They are words for us. We are the people Jesus was describing — those who would believe without seeing, who would receive the Spirit he promised, who would discover from the inside what it means to have the risen Jesus living within them through his Spirit. Every promise Jesus made about the Spirit that night has been kept. We are living in its fulfillment.

The risen Jesus did not bring new theology. He brought the same words he had already spoken, now illuminated by their fulfillment. This has been the method of the whole book — remember what he said. In Part IV that method takes a specific form. During his resurrection appearances Jesus returned again and again to words he had spoken the night before his death — promises about the Holy Spirit that his disciples had heard but could not yet fully receive. Now, on the other side of the cross and the empty tomb, those words could finally be understood. The risen Jesus was pointing them back to remember. The Spirit's own ministry, Jesus promised, is the ministry of holy remembering: *"He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."* Over the next six days we listen to Jesus explain the gift that makes that possible.

Day 33...the 9th Resurrection Appearance

You Will Be Immersed in the Holy Spirit

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for what my Father has promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John immersed in water, but in a few days you will be immersed in the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:4–5

This was the ninth resurrection appearance, and the fourth time Jesus appeared to his disciples around a shared meal. The forty days of resurrection appearances were drawing to a close. Now, at the table, he gave them the command and promise that gathered everything together:

John the Baptist had made the original promise: *“I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming — he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”* That promise had stood unfulfilled for more than three years. Now Jesus was telling them: it is about to happen. In a few days they were going to receive the same power they had seen operate in the ministry of Jesus.

The imagery of immersion is important. Just as a person being baptized in water is completely surrounded and under the influence of that water, Jesus was promising that his disciples would be completely enveloped and filled by the Holy Spirit. This was not a partial anointing or a spiritual upgrade — it was the total immersion of the whole person into the presence and power of the risen Jesus through his Spirit.

The accompanying command was equally important: wait. Do not go yet. Do not begin the mission yet. Stay in Jerusalem and wait for the power that alone makes the mission possible. They had been commissioned by the risen Lord. They had heard the Great Commission. But Jesus told them to wait, because the mission without the Spirit is not the mission of Jesus — it is merely human activity in his name.

This is still the pattern. The Spirit is not a supplement to our ministry — he is the source of it. Everything we do for Jesus in our own energy and resourcefulness, without dependence on the Spirit he has given, falls short of what he intends. He commands us to be filled. He commands us to cease from acting in our own strength. And then he sends us out in power...the same power that raised him from the dead.

Reflection

Jesus told his disciples to wait for the Spirit before beginning the mission. How much does your own daily life and ministry reflect genuine dependence on the Holy Spirit, rather than reliance on your own ability and effort?

The promise of Spirit-immersion was for all 120 disciples gathered in Jerusalem, not only the apostles. How do you understand your own share in this promise?

Day 34

Another Helper Like Me

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper just like me, to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he is living with you, and will be in you.”

John 14:16–17

When Jesus promised that they would be immersed in the Holy Spirit, it was mysterious to the disciples. For most of Israel’s history, the Spirit had come upon only a handful of people — kings, priests, and prophets. He was not the daily experience of ordinary believers. The disciples had no framework for what Jesus was promising. That is precisely why Jesus devoted so much of his last night with them to explaining the Spirit — because without that foundation, nothing that was about to happen would make sense.

The title Jesus gave the Spirit — *Paraclete* — is so loaded with meaning that no single English word captures it all. Different translations render it Helper, Comforter, Counselor, Advocate. But the most striking thing Jesus said was *“another Helper just like me.”* The Spirit is not just a force or an influence — he is a co-equal divine Person in the Trinity with the Father and the Son. He is the Spirit of Jesus, and he is just like Jesus.

The disciples did not know much about the Holy Spirit. But they knew Jesus. And that was enough. Jesus was telling them: everything you have seen in me — the help, compassion, the truth, the power, the presence — that is what is coming to live inside you. The immersion image carries its full weight here. To be immersed in the Holy Spirit is to be totally under the influence of Jesus himself. This is what the New Testament means by the word filled. After Pentecost, being filled with the Spirit became the normal description of the disciples’ daily experience — not an occasional spiritual event, but the ongoing reality of life in the new covenant.

Jesus came to represent the Father — he refused to speak or act on his own initiative, always following the will of the Father, so that he could say: *“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”* In the same way, the Holy Spirit represents Jesus in all his dealings with us. He does not speak or act on his own initiative — he is the medium through which we are linked eternally with the risen Jesus, who is now at the Father’s right hand.

The Spirit is Jesus’ own personal presence within us — always, everywhere, forever.

Reflection

Jesus described the Spirit as *“another Helper just like me.”* How does understanding the Spirit as the personal presence of Jesus — not merely a divine influence — change the way you relate to him?

The world cannot receive the Spirit because it neither sees nor knows him. But Jesus said: *“you know him.”* Do you? How would you describe your personal experience of the Spirit’s presence and ministry in your life?

Day 35

On That Day You Will Know

“On that day — when the Spirit comes to make his home in you — you will realize that I am living in the consciousness of my union with my Father, and you are likewise living in that same union in me, and I am alive in you.”

John 14:20

Jesus had promised the Spirit as another Helper just like himself. Now he unfolded one of the most staggering implications of that promise — what the Spirit’s coming would make real for every believer.

The day Jesus was pointing to was Pentecost — the day the Spirit would be poured out on the gathered disciples in Jerusalem. On that day, everything he had been teaching them about his relationship with the Father would become their own living experience. They would know it, not merely as doctrine, but as the daily reality of their inner life.

The knowledge Jesus promised was Trinitarian to its core. He was in the Father — the eternal love and mutual indwelling that had existed before creation. They were in him, and he was in them — that same quality of relationship, extended by grace to every person who believed. The Spirit was the one who would make it real, personal, and conscious within them.

Because the Spirit represents Jesus, and Jesus represents the Father, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit means the indwelling of the whole Trinity. We do not merely receive a divine influence or a spiritual gift. We receive the Father and the Son making their home with us — as Jesus said explicitly: *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”* We are the dwelling place of the Triune God.

In an earlier day we saw that water baptism is the outward, public act of identification with the Triune God. John 14:20 is the inward counterpart. Pentecost is the day the disciples would begin to know from the inside what baptism declares from the outside — that they are people living in the presence of the Trinity, just as Jesus himself had always lived.

This truth was promised before the cross, confirmed by the resurrection, and made real at Pentecost. It is the birthright of every believer in Jesus.

Reflection

Jesus promised that the Spirit would make the reality of Trinitarian union — *“I in the Father, you in me, I in you”* — a conscious daily experience. How much of that reality are you actually living in? What would it take to receive it more fully?

The indwelling Spirit means the Father and Son have made their home in you. How does that truth change the way you think about your own life — your body, your daily routine, your decisions?

Day 36

He Will Teach and Remind You

“The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

John 14:26

This promise is the one that makes the whole method of this book possible.

Jesus used the perfect tense when he said *“I have spoken these things to you while still with you.”* This indicates that the results of an action continue permanently. The truths Jesus had unveiled about the Spirit, and all his other teachings, do not fade or expire. They stand permanently as the living word of the risen Lord — and the Spirit’s ministry is to make them alive to us.

The Spirit teaches all things — not in place of the Scripture, but through it. He opens the understanding of the believer to grasp the meaning of what Jesus said — beyond mere intellectual comprehension. He gives a capacity for spiritual perception that the natural mind does not possess. He takes the words of the text and makes them luminous, pressing them into the heart with conviction.

The Spirit also reminds. He brings to mind specific words of Jesus at exactly the moment they are needed — in a conversation, a decision, a moment of temptation or grief. This is not a mechanical process. It is the personal, attentive ministry of one who knows both the word of Jesus perfectly and the need of the believer completely. He is the living connection between the words Jesus spoke and the life the believer is living now.

Throughout his resurrection appearances Jesus had done exactly this — opening the Scriptures, reminding his disciples of what he had said, helping them see that everything had been fulfilled. On the road to Emmaus he opened their minds to understand the word. The Spirit continues that same ministry in us today. This is the risen Jesus still in action — teaching, reminding, illuminating — now from within rather than from beside.

Remembering the words of Jesus has been the method of this book — because it is the work of the Spirit Jesus promised us. The Spirit can only remind us of what we have received. The more deeply the word of Jesus is planted in us through reading, study, and meditation, the more richly the Spirit can draw on it in the moments when we need it most. The Spirit and the Word have always worked together — and they always will.

Reflection

The Spirit reminds us of everything Jesus said — but only what we have received. How deeply are you planting the word of Jesus in your heart through regular, attentive engagement with the Scriptures?

Can you recall a specific time when the Spirit brought a word of Jesus to your mind at exactly the moment you needed it? How did that experience shape your trust in his ministry?

Day 37

It Is to Your Advantage That I Go Away

“Very truly I tell you, it is to your great advantage that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Helper will not come to you; however, if I go, I will send him to you.”

John 16:7

How could it be better for the disciples if Jesus went away? They had walked with him, heard him teach, watched him heal, sat at table with him for more than three years. The thought of his departure was devastating to them. Yet Jesus said plainly: *it is to your great advantage*.

The reason was the Spirit. As long as Jesus was present with his disciples in his physical, pre-resurrection body, his presence was necessarily limited by time, space, and the constraints of his incarnation. He could only be in one place at one time. He could teach one group of disciples in Galilee but not simultaneously address disciples in Samaria, Rome, or the ends of the earth. But the Spirit he would send would be limited by none of them.

As wonderful as those three years with Jesus in the flesh had been, they were never the destination. They were the preparation — building in the disciples a knowledge of Jesus deep enough to recognize him when he came to them in a new way. Through the Spirit, the risen Jesus would be present within every believer, in every place, at every moment — more intimate and more transforming than anything they had known before.

This is what Jesus was accomplishing in the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost. He was preparing his disciples to enter the age of great advantage — post-Pentecost life — with the Trinity. The disciples who grieved his departure at the Last Supper were the same disciples who, at his ascension, returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Something had already shifted in their understanding. But the full proof came ten days later.

On the day of Pentecost the Spirit arrived, and everything changed at once. The people who had abandoned Jesus at his arrest, denied him before a servant girl, and hidden behind locked doors were suddenly standing in the streets of Jerusalem proclaiming him before the very crowd that had called for his crucifixion. No fear. No hesitation. The advantage Jesus had promised was now visible to everyone who saw them. Three thousand people believed that day. This is what advantage looks like.

Reflection

Jesus said a relationship with him through the Spirit is better than knowing him in the flesh. Do you believe this? Does your daily relationship with the Spirit reflect that conviction?

What would it look like for you to live today in the conscious reality that the ascended Jesus is present with you through his Spirit — not absent, but more fully present than ever?

Conclusion to Part IV — The Promise Explained

The advantage Jesus promised was not abstract. It was Peter standing before the Sanhedrin. It was three thousand people believing in a single day. It was the unstoppable expansion of Jesus’ mission from a handful of frightened disciples to the ends of the earth — all of it powered by the Spirit he had promised, explained, and sent. Part V follows that mission forward, in the hands of the risen Lord who has never stopped working.

Part V — The Risen Lord Continues His Work

The forty days of resurrection appearances came to an end at the ascension. But the risen Jesus did not stop speaking. He did not withdraw from the mission he had launched. He ascended in order to reign — and reigning, for Jesus, has always meant active, personal involvement in his people and the advance of his gospel to the ends of the earth.

Luke understood this. He began the book of Acts by saying that his Gospel recorded everything Jesus began to do and teach. The word began carries an unmistakable implication: Acts records what Jesus continued to do and teach — from heaven, through his Spirit, through his church. The ascension was not a conclusion. It was a transition into a new and unlimited phase of the same ministry.

In one sense, the appearances recorded in Part V are the most important of all. The forty days proved that Jesus was alive and prepared his disciples for what was coming. But the post-ascension appearances show why he died and rose — the eternal ministry he came to perform, now operating without limit of time or place. The risen Jesus appearing to his enemy Saul on the Damascus road, directing a frightened disciple named Ananias to a blind man on Straight Street, commissioning Paul and Barnabas from heaven through his Spirit, speaking a personal word of grace to a tired apostle in Corinth — this is the resurrection at work in the world. This is what he rose to do. And he has never stopped.

Day 38 — the 10th Resurrection Appearance

And Then He Appeared to James

“Then he appeared to James.”

1 Corinthians 15:7

James was the younger brother of Jesus — the second son of Joseph and Mary, who had grown up in the same house, eaten at the same table, and watched Jesus leave home to begin a ministry that the family found deeply troubling. When Jesus’ reputation drew accusations that he was out of his mind, James was among those who came to bring him home. Six months before the crucifixion, John tells us plainly: his brothers did not believe in him.

Yet this same James began his letter with the words: *“a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”* The word Lord — the same word Thomas used in his confession — is the Greek equivalent of YHWH. James was confessing that his brother was the Creator and God of Israel. The distance between those two positions — embarrassed unbelief and Trinitarian confession — is enormous. Only one thing closes it.

The resurrection appearance to James is the only satisfying explanation. Jesus rose from the dead and appeared personally to the brother who had not believed in him. That encounter transformed James into the leading elder of the Jerusalem church, a martyr for the faith, and a witness whose testimony could never be dismissed — because he had known Jesus his entire life, and had not believed, until he saw him risen.

But there is something else here that Part V will make clear. In appearing to James, the risen Jesus was doing something he would do again and again after Pentecost — going personally to the unbeliever. Not waiting to be sought. Not working only through his disciples. Pursuing. James was the first. Paul on the Damascus road would be the most dramatic. Between them and beyond them, the risen Lord has never stopped reaching across the distance between himself and those who do not yet know him.

This is what he rose to do. James is the first proof of it.

Reflection

James did not seek the risen Jesus — Jesus came to him. Is there someone in your life you have stopped expecting Jesus to reach? What does his appearance to James say about the lengths to which he will go?

The transformation of James — from doubt to confession, from skeptic to martyr — was entirely the work of the risen Jesus. What area of unbelief or resistance in your own life needs that same personal encounter?

Day 39 — the 11th Resurrection Appearance

You Will Receive Power

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

These were the last words Jesus spoke before his ascension. He had gathered his disciples together one final time. Everything he had promised about the Spirit, everything he had explained in the upper room, everything he had demonstrated in forty days of resurrection appearances — it was all about to be fulfilled. And he gathered it into one final word.

The power Jesus promised was not abstract. From the first moment it was fulfilled on Pentecost, it expressed itself in a specific way: in speaking. *“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak.”* The Spirit came, and speech followed — words spoken with a confidence that the disciples had never been able to sustain on their own.

This was the same quality that had marked Jesus himself. People heard him speak and recognized something different — not just intelligence or passion, but authority. He spoke as one who knew. The Spirit’s work in the believer produces exactly that: a deep, settled conviction in the truth of what Jesus has said and done, so that when we speak of him, we speak from the inside of what we know, not from the outside of what we have been told.

Before Pentecost the disciples had fled, denied, and hidden. After Pentecost nothing could silence them. The same men who had abandoned Jesus at his arrest stood in the streets of Jerusalem proclaiming him before the crowd that had called for his crucifixion. The power Jesus promised was now visible to everyone who encountered them.

That power is the birthright of every believer. The same Spirit who filled them fills us. The same risen Jesus who sent them sends us.

Reflection

The Spirit’s power is released in speaking. Where in your life are you holding back words about Jesus that the Spirit is prompting you to say?

Before Pentecost the disciples were silent out of fear. After Pentecost nothing could stop them. What has changed — or needs to change — between those two postures in your own experience of the Spirit?

Day 40 — the 11th Resurrection Appearance

You Will Be My Witnesses

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

Notice what Jesus said and what he did not say. He did not say “you must be my witnesses” — as though witnessing were a duty to be performed. He said “you will be my witnesses” — as though it were the natural result of receiving the Spirit. When the Spirit comes, witness happens. Not because we have disciplined ourselves into evangelism, but because the one who lives in us is consumed with making Jesus known, and his passion becomes ours.

A witness is someone who tells what they have personally seen, heard, and experienced. The disciples were not commissioned to deliver an argument or defend a doctrine. They were commissioned to tell what they knew. “I have seen the Lord.” “He appeared to me.” “His grace found me and did not let me go.” This is the testimony the Spirit empowers — personal, honest, rooted in encounter with the risen Jesus.

The geography of the commission was not a sequence to complete before moving to the next stage. It was a description of ever-expanding, simultaneous reach. Jerusalem and the ends of the earth at the same time. The same Spirit who empowers witness in our own street empowers witness on the other side of the world. The risen Jesus who promised to be with his people always is present with every witness, in every place, until he returns.

From the first moment of Pentecost this commission became the spine of everything. It is the outline of the book of Acts. It is the shape of the church’s entire history. And it remains the word of the risen Jesus to every believer in every generation: “*you will be my witnesses.*” Not someday. Now. Here. Where you are.

Reflection

Witness is the natural overflow of being filled with the Spirit. How full of the Spirit are you? What does your witness look like in the Jerusalem of your own daily life?

A witness tells what they have personally seen and experienced. What is your testimony of the risen Jesus? When did you last tell it to someone?

Day 41 — the 11th Appearance While He Was Blessing Them

“While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.”

Luke 24:51

Jesus ascended not from a distance but in the very act of blessing. His last posture on earth was arms raised over his people, speaking benediction over them. This was not accidental. It was the final statement of everything his life and ministry had been: he came to bless. He died to bless. He rose to bless. And he ascended with his hands still raised, still giving his blessing.

The ascension did not end the blessing — it opened the full channel through which every blessing belonging to the exalted Jesus would flow to his people through the Spirit. Paul wrote that the Father has blessed us in Christ with *“every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.”* Every blessing. His going up was not a withdrawal. It was the beginning of an unrestricted, omnipresent ministry of blessing to every believer in every place.

We misread the ascension if we picture Jesus disappearing to a distant place called heaven, far removed from the world he left behind. He did not go far away. He moved into the invisible order of reality that underlies everything we can see and touch. That dimension is not distant — it is closer to us than we are to ourselves. This is why Jesus could say that the Spirit’s coming was to our advantage — not a lesser presence, but a greater one. The ascended Jesus is not far. He is nearer than ever, present within every believer, in every place, at every moment.

The disciples stood looking up into the sky after he had gone. Two angels appeared beside them: *“Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go.”*

The question was practical. We will not find Jesus in the sky. We find him with us, where we are.

Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. This is crucial. They had just watched their Lord disappear into a cloud. And they returned with great joy. They understood. He had not left them. He had gone ahead of them — as he always did — into the place where every blessing was his to give. And he was still blessing them. He always would be.

Reflection

Jesus ascended in the act of blessing his people. His last posture toward you was one of blessing — and he has never stopped. How does that change the way you receive your life today?

The ascension was not Jesus going away — it was Jesus becoming present in a new and unlimited way. How does that understanding change the way you think about his nearness to you right now?

Day 42

Jesus Pours Out the Holy Spirit

“Exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you now see and hear.”

Acts 2:33

It was Pentecost. Ten days had passed since the ascension. The 120 disciples were gathered in Jerusalem, waiting as Jesus had commanded. Then it happened — wind, fire, and the sound of many languages filling the streets. A crowd gathered. Peter stood with the eleven and they preached. In the middle of Peter’s sermon he said the most important thing: the one you crucified has been raised, exalted to the right hand of the Father, and has poured out what you are now seeing and hearing.

This is the heart of Pentecost. The exalted Jesus poured out the Spirit. But there is more here than a promise kept. Throughout Israel’s history, the Spirit had rested on individuals — kings, priests, and prophets — but could not be passed on. The anointing stopped with them. This was a defining mark of the Messiah: he alone could pour out on others the anointing that rested on him, without limit. Pentecost was therefore not only the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise — it was the public proof of who he was. This is why Peter ended his sermon with the words that brought three thousand people to their knees: *“Therefore let all of you know that this Jesus is Lord and Christ.”*

This changes the way we understand what followed. The book of Acts is not the story of what the early church did for Jesus. It is the story of what the risen Jesus continues to do through his church — pouring out his Spirit on every believer, in every place, in every generation. The new covenant is possible because the anointing has no limit. The meaning of the resurrection is universal because the one who rose can reach everyone.

He is still pouring out. What they saw and heard that day, we have received.

Reflection

Pentecost was the public proof that Jesus is the Messiah — only he can pour out the Spirit on others without limit. How does that reality deepen the way you understand the Spirit you have received?

The new covenant is possible because the anointing of Jesus has no limit. How does that change the way you think about what is available to you in your life with him?

Day 43

Every Day the Lord Added

“Every day the Lord kept on adding those who were being saved to their number.”

Acts 2:47

Luke used the continuous tense deliberately. Not: the Lord added people. But: the Lord kept on adding — day after day, without ceasing. The verb describes ongoing action. Jesus in heaven, actively drawing people to faith in himself and incorporating them into his body.

This was the fulfillment of his own word: *“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will actively draw all people to me.”* He had been lifted up on the cross, lifted up in resurrection, lifted up in ascension. Now from the right hand of the Father he was drawing — actively, personally. Every person who came to faith in Jerusalem in those early days came because Jesus was already at work in them before they knew his name.

The community into which he was adding them was one that had given itself entirely to the teaching of the apostles, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. It was not a perfect community. But it was a community oriented toward Jesus — and that orientation made it the kind of place the Lord could keep on blessing with growth.

Six years later, when persecution had scattered the believers beyond Jerusalem, the same pattern continued. Men from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and began witnessing boldly about the Lord Jesus. And again Luke’s summary: *“The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.”* The Lord’s hand. His active, personal involvement in every conversion, in every city, among every people.

The risen and ascended Jesus is still adding to his church. He is still drawing people who do not yet know his name, preparing them for the moment when his word will reach them. We do not build his church — he does. We are his instruments. He is the builder.

Reflection

Jesus is continuously and actively drawing people to himself right now. Who in your life might be in the process of being drawn? How might you be part of what Jesus is doing in them?

The early church devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer — and the Lord added to their number daily. How does the quality of your community life reflect the kind of church that Jesus blesses with growth?

Day 44

The Son of Man Standing

“Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

Acts 7:56

Stephen had come to faith through the apostles’ testimony — not as an eyewitness of Jesus’ earthly ministry, but as one who believed through their word, received the Spirit, and grew into a man of extraordinary faith and power. He was, in this way, exactly like us: a new covenant, post-Pentecost disciple.

When the Sanhedrin had heard enough of his testimony and rushed at him in murderous fury, Stephen looked up intently into heaven. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he saw the glory of God — and Jesus. *“Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*

This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised: *“He will glorify me.”* The Spirit’s ministry is to make Jesus visible — to open the eyes of the believer to see the one who is always present but not always perceived. Spirit-filled people focus on Jesus. And then, like Stephen, they speak about what they have seen and heard. His testimony before the Sanhedrin was not an argument. It was a witness. He had seen the Lord.

The New Testament normally speaks of Jesus as seated at the right hand of God — the posture of the reigning King whose enemies are being made his footstool. But Stephen saw him standing. Jesus had risen from his throne. He was on his feet, intensely present, fully engaged with what was happening to his servant in the street below.

To persecute Stephen was to persecute Jesus himself. They were bound together as one through the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not a distant observer of his servant’s death. He was standing — witnessing, interceding, strengthening Stephen to be faithful to the uttermost.

Stephen died praying. *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”* And: *“Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”* It was the same prayer Jesus had prayed from the cross, now prayed by his servant at the cost of his own life. The Spirit of Jesus had so formed Stephen’s character that even in death he was a living image of his Lord.

A young man named Saul stood watching, holding the cloaks of those who threw the stones. The risen Jesus who stood for Stephen was already at work in the one who was helping to kill him.

Reflection

Jesus promised that the Spirit would glorify him — making him visible to those who are filled with him. How clearly are you seeing Jesus? How much of what you say reflects what you have actually seen and heard of him?

Jesus stood up from his throne when Stephen was being killed. He is personally, intensely present with you in your hardest moments. How does that change the way you face difficulty and opposition?

Day 45 — the 12th Resurrection Appearance

Why Are You Persecuting Me?

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

Acts 9:4

Saul of Tarsus was the foremost persecutor of the church. He had stood in full agreement at the murder of Stephen, watched over the cloaks of those who threw the stones, and ravaged the church in Jerusalem, dragging men and women from their homes to prison. Now, still breathing out threats and murder, he was on the road to Damascus with authorization to seize any believers he found there.

A bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground. And a voice spoke:

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

“Who are you, Lord?”

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”

This was the twelfth resurrection appearance of Jesus — occurring six years after the ascension, to the last person anyone would have expected. The ascension had not ended his ability to reveal himself visibly. It had simply transformed the mode of his presence from earth-bound to universal.

The question Jesus asked was not a rebuke — it was an unveiling. Saul thought he was persecuting a dangerous sect. Jesus revealed that every blow struck against his people was a blow struck against him personally. The union between the risen Jesus and his church was total. To touch one was to touch the other.

This encounter gave Paul his unique understanding of the church. He alone among the apostles developed the image of the church as the body of Christ — and the reason is right here. He had experienced it from the first moment of his conversion. The church is not an organization Jesus founded. It is his living body, and he is its active head. The ascension was the necessary precondition for that headship — Jesus ascended so that he could be head of the whole body, everywhere, at all times, directing it from heaven through his Spirit. He is not a distant founder. He is a living head, still working on earth through every member of his body.

Saul rose from the ground blind, led by the hand into Damascus. For three days he neither ate nor drank. He gave himself to prayer. The one who had been so certain he was doing God’s will sat in darkness, everything he had known about himself and his God in ruins. And Jesus was not finished with him yet.

Reflection

Jesus identified himself completely with his persecuted people: *“why are you persecuting me?”* How does the depth of Jesus’ union with his church — with you — shape the way you understand what happens to you?

Paul’s entire theology of the church as the body of Christ was born on the Damascus road. How does understanding yourself as a living member of Christ’s body — with Jesus as your active head — change the way you think about your own life and calling?

Day 46

I Have Made Myself Visible to You for This Purpose

"I have made myself visible to you for this purpose — to appoint you as my servant and as a witness of what you have seen, and will see of me."

Acts 26:16

The risen Jesus did not leave Saul lying in the dust. He spoke again immediately, with words that gathered up the shock of the encounter and turned it into commission. Get up. Stand on your feet. *"I have made myself visible to you for a purpose."*

Every resurrection appearance had followed this pattern — encounter, then commission. Jesus never appeared merely to satisfy curiosity or to comfort the grieving. He appeared to send. The appearance to Paul was no different, except that the one being sent was the last person anyone would have chosen. Jesus chose him precisely because the commission required it — a former enemy, transformed by encounter with the risen Lord, sent to open the eyes of the Gentile world and turn them from darkness to light.

This is the active head of the body directing a member into his specific calling. The commission Jesus gave Paul was not Paul's idea or the church's idea. It was Jesus' own mission, carried forward through a broken, willing instrument. Paul would later write: *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."* His whole ministry was, from beginning to end, the continued ministry of the risen Jesus through him. Paul said it himself: *"I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me."*

Jesus promised to deliver Paul from both his own people and from the Gentiles — not by removing opposition, but by sustaining him through it. This was the pattern of the whole book of Acts: not immunity from suffering, but presence in the midst of it. The same Jesus who had stood for Stephen would stand for Paul. The promise was not easy ministry — it was faithful companionship on the hardest road.

Reflection

Jesus appeared to Paul *"for this purpose"* — with a specific calling already in mind. How clearly do you understand the purpose for which the risen Jesus has made himself known to you?

The commission Jesus gave Paul was the head of the body directing a member into his calling. How does understanding your own calling as something the risen Jesus has personally purposed for you change the way you approach it?

Day 47

Ananias, Go to Saul

“Get going! This man is my chosen instrument to declare my name to the Gentiles and their kings, and to the people of Israel.”

Acts 9:15

Saul sat in darkness in Damascus, blind, fasting, praying. And in another part of the city the risen Jesus appeared to a disciple named Ananias — an otherwise unknown believer — and gave him a remarkable assignment. Go to Straight Street. Find Saul of Tarsus. He is praying and he is waiting for you.

Ananias protested. He had heard about Saul. Everyone had. This was the man who had come to Damascus specifically to arrest believers like Ananias. The request seemed not only dangerous but absurd.

Jesus was not deterred: *“Get going! This man is my chosen instrument to declare my name to the Gentiles and their kings, and to the people of Israel.”*

This is the active head of the body directing one member to another. Saul did not yet know he was a member of the body he had been persecuting. Ananias did not yet know that the man he feared would become the greatest missionary in church history. Jesus knew both. He was already at work in each of them, drawing the threads together in a way that neither could see.

Ananias went. He found the house, entered it, laid his hands on Saul, and said: *“Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me — Jesus, who appeared to you on the road — so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”* Immediately something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes. He could see. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he got up, was baptized, and ate food.

Jesus chose to complete Paul’s restoration through an ordinary, frightened disciple — not through an apostle, not through a vision, but through Ananias. He could have healed Saul directly. He chose instead to involve his body. This is still his pattern. He works through willing, obedient people — often unknown people, people who protest and are afraid — to accomplish his purposes. We do not always know what hangs on our obedience. But Jesus does.

Reflection

The head of the body sent Ananias to Saul — one member to another, each unaware of what Jesus was doing. Is there someone the risen Jesus is directing you toward that seems unlikely or uncomfortable? What would Ananias-like obedience look like?

Jesus told Ananias exactly what Saul was doing — *“he is praying.”* The risen Jesus is fully aware of where every person is and what they need. How does that awareness shape the way you pray for the people around you?

Day 48

Set Apart for Me

“I command you all now to set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have permanently called them.”

Acts 13:2

Twenty years had passed since the ascension. The church at Antioch had become a thriving, multinational community of believers — the base from which the gospel would now reach the wider Gentile world. The leaders of the church were gathered together, worshipping and fasting, when the Holy Spirit spoke: *“Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have permanently called them.”*

Behind the Spirit’s word was the risen Jesus himself, who had said: *“The Spirit will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears from me.”* This was the ascended head of the body directing its next great movement. What the Spirit said to the church at Antioch was what Jesus was saying from heaven — personally, specifically, twenty years after the resurrection and still actively leading his mission.

The church prayed and fasted, laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas, and sent them out. The obedience was corporate — the whole community participating in what Jesus had directed. This is how the Great Commission advances: not through isolated heroism, but through communities of disciples who listen to the Spirit and send their best people to the hardest places.

But the most important word in the commission was the smallest one. The Spirit did not say: set apart for the mission. He said: *“set apart for me.”* Paul and Barnabas belonged to Jesus. Their ministry was his ministry. The missionary enterprise is not a human project that Jesus blesses — it is his own project, carried forward through willing, obedient members of his body.

This is still the word of the risen Jesus to every believer. Not: set apart for a task. *“Set apart for me.”*

Reflection

The Spirit’s call to set apart Paul and Barnabas was Jesus’ own word from heaven. How attentively is your community listening for the Spirit’s direction about who should be sent and where?

The Spirit said *“set apart for me”* — not for the mission, but for Jesus himself. How does understanding your calling as being set apart for Jesus personally change the way you approach it?

Day 49

I Have Many People in This City

“I command you to stop giving in to fear; keep on speaking out, do not be silent. For I myself am with you ... because many people belong to me in this city.”

Acts 18:9–10

Paul had arrived in Corinth exhausted. He had been beaten in Philippi, run out of Thessalonica, hustled out of Berea, and met with skepticism in Athens. He was tired and worn down. Then the risen Jesus came to him at night in a vision with a word that addressed his exact condition:

“I command you to stop giving in to fear; keep on speaking out, do not be silent. For I myself am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because many people belong to me in this city.”

Three things. A command. A promise. A reason.

The command: *“stop giving in to fear, keep speaking.”* Paul was not immune to fear. The man who had endured beatings, imprisonments, and shipwrecks was tired enough in Corinth to consider going silent. Jesus addressed that fear directly with the present imperative — stop giving in to what you are already feeling. The command was not to pretend fear away. It was to choose obedience in the face of it.

The promise: *“I myself am with you.”* Not *“my blessing is with you”* or *“my power is available to you.”* I myself. The personal presence of the risen Jesus — not as an abstract theological reality but as the lived, daily companionship of the one who knew Paul’s situation, his fears, and his exact needs. This was the fulfillment of the Great Commission’s closing promise: *“I am with you always.”*

The reason: *“many people belong to me in this city.”* Before a single one of them had heard the gospel, they were already his. He had drawn them, as he had always drawn. He was going to save them through Paul’s preaching, and the mission was not in doubt. Paul stayed in Corinth for eighteen months, and a church was born that would shape the New Testament itself.

The risen Jesus still speaks this word. He knows the cities and communities where many people belong to him who have not yet heard his name. He is still commanding his frightened, tired servants: *“stop being afraid. Keep speaking. I am with you.”*

Reflection

Jesus said *“many people belong to me in this city”* before any of them had believed. How does knowing that the risen Jesus has already claimed people in your community change the way you approach witness and prayer for them?

Paul was tired and afraid, and Jesus came to him with a personal word at the exact moment he needed it. When you are most worn down in your service, how do you receive the presence and encouragement of the risen Jesus?

Day 50

My Power Is Made Perfect in Weakness

“My grace is constantly sufficient for you, for my power is always made perfect in weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:9

This is the last recorded word of the risen Jesus in Paul’s letters — spoken about twenty-five years after the resurrection, to a tired apostle in a moment of real and unrelenting pain.

Paul had been given a thorn in the flesh — a physical affliction so painful he called it a messenger of Satan sent to torment him. He prayed three specific times for Jesus to take it away. Each time the answer was no. But the no came with a word: *“My grace is constantly sufficient for you, for my power is always made perfect in weakness.”*

This was not a new word. It was what Jesus had been teaching since the beginning. The one who wants to be great must become servant of all. The one who loses his life will find it. The Messiah himself had to suffer before entering his glory. The pattern of the kingdom has never changed — God’s power works through weakness, not around it. The thorn was not a mistake. It was not a failure of faith. It was the place where Paul’s self-sufficiency was broken open so that resurrection power could flow in.

Paul wrote: *“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power may come from God, and not from ourselves.”* The vessel had to be breakable. Otherwise it would take credit for the treasure inside.

So Paul learned to boast in his weaknesses — not to celebrate suffering for its own sake, but because every weakness was another doorway into the sufficiency of Jesus. *“When I am weak, then I am really strong.”* This is the paradox at the heart of the gospel.

And it is the final word of the risen Jesus in this fifty-day journey. Not triumph through strength. Triumph through grace. His grace is sufficient for every weakness, every failure, every thorn.

He is risen. He is reigning. He is speaking. And he is with us always.

Reflection

Jesus answered Paul’s prayer for healing with a no that opened into a greater yes. Is there a weakness or pain in your life that you have been asking Jesus to remove? How does his word to Paul speak to that place in you?

The fifty days of this devotional have been a journey through the words of the risen Jesus. Which word has most shaped you? What will you do with what you have heard?

Continue the Journey

These fifty days have traced the words and actions of the risen Jesus from Easter to Pentecost. But the risen Lord did not stop speaking at Pentecost — and neither does the journey.

Other resources are available to help you continue listening to Jesus in his own words. They are listed below.

A Free Companion: The Secret of Power...According to Jesus

The final word of the risen Jesus in this fifty-day journey was spoken to a tired apostle in a moment of real pain:

“My power is made perfect in weakness.”

That word did not come only once. It is the pattern Jesus lived from the beginning — and the pattern he calls every disciple to live now.

The Secret of Power...According to Jesus is a short, focused companion volume on one of the most paradoxical truths Jesus embodied and proclaimed: God’s power does not bypass weakness — it works through it.

If these fifty days have shown you how the risen Lord continues his work, *The Secret of Power* explores how that work becomes the operating principle of your daily life.

It is offered as a free companion to this volume.

Available as a free download at:

www.johnstephenwright.com

The Cross...According to Jesus

The fifty days you have just walked begin at an empty tomb. But the empty tomb is inseparable from the cross.

Before his death, Jesus spoke about the cross with the same clarity he brought to his resurrection appearances. He did not leave its meaning to later interpretation. He explained it in advance — what it would accomplish, why it was necessary, and how it would shape the lives of those who follow him.

The Cross...According to Jesus is a thirty-day devotional built on the same method as this volume — listening to Jesus interpret his own work, in his own words. It traces how he foretold the cross, interpreted its meaning, and fulfilled it.

The risen Lord you have been listening to for fifty days is the same Lord who said: *“It is permanently finished.”*

Available as a free download at:

www.johnstephenwright.com

Stay Connected

If these fifty days have stirred a desire to know Jesus more deeply, *Daily Jesus News* is the next step.

Daily Jesus News is a series of 365 long-form studies covering the complete life and teachings of Jesus in chronological order — from his birth through his resurrection appearances. Each study is

grounded in the same method you have experienced in this volume: listening carefully to Jesus in his own words, in their historical sequence.

A year spent in Daily Jesus News is a year spent walking with Jesus through everything he said and did. It is designed for those who want more than a devotional moment — who want sustained, chronological formation in the life and teaching of the one they follow.

No controversy. No theological noise. Just sustained attention to Jesus in Scripture.

The website also carries information on new and upcoming publications in the *According to Jesus* series, additional discipleship resources, and other tools for those committed to making Jesus known. The Daily Jesus New is available at:

www.johnstephenwright.com

John would love to hear your response to these fifty days. You can reach him at wrightjohns@mac.com.