

“Seeing and/or Believing”

Eight days after “Easter”, that is the “April 20th of that year”, so to speak, Jesus showed his wounds to Thomas, “Doubting Thomas”, and said to him,

John 20:27-29 "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

STARTING LINE: Maybe “*seeing is believing*”, but in order to believe, hearing is more help.

This morning, all these years later, to a crowd of people who also believe but have never seen Jesus, wounds and all, alive from the dead, it’s a blessed thing to believe even though you have never seen. This is called “*walking by faith rather than sight*.”

Peter the apostle knew it: **1 Peter 1:8-9** Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. → *Anyone here like this?*

John the apostle knew it: it is he that quotes Jesus to Thomas. And both of them saw Jesus for themselves on that Easter Sunday.

John 20:19-20 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

It wasn’t the first amazing “seeing of Jesus in his glory” they had experienced.

Mark 9:2-3 ...Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.

And back then, on that mountain, they saw what they saw and then for the first time but not the last experienced that truth that seeing is over-rated!

Mark 9:7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

Peter, it seems, got the point: **2 Peter 1:16-19** For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place...

If John is noticed as not referring as much to the “transfiguration experience” as did Peter, we need not wonder why! By the time he was writing his part of the Bible, he had seen something even more breath-taking!

Revelation 1:12-15 ... I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

Revelation 1:17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. So breath-taking it practically killed him!

Revelation 1:17-18 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

THE POINT: "Seeing" is NOT "believing" → for believing is NOT a natural experience/a natural response → it's a gift of God. When God makes a human being, he starts with a seed, and plants it in a place where it can grow. (The Greek word for "seed" is "sperm.") When God makes a Christian, he starts with a seed, and "hearing" is the way that the seed is received, because the seed that God uses to make a Christian is his Word!

NOTES: Since we are called to live by faith, and since hearing is the best help in believing, we should listen to what Jesus says:

i) about what he is: (*the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of kings on earth*)
The first, the last, ("the Alpha and the Omega") and the Living One

He is the main person in the Universe: the unique human being.

ii) about what he has done: He died! And he rose again! "firstborn of the dead!"

What just about everyone WILL do, and then something entirely unique.

iii) about what he has: The keys of death and Hades! What he has is the ultimate and perfect solution to the most profound of all human problems!

It's Easter Sunday. A really good day to think about being alive and being a person who is going to die --- and what can be done about that ...

And what can be done is to trust Jesus. To believe in him. To entrust yourself to him ... for he has the keys to the place. He can get you out of that prison. And he will, if you trust him to!

ACTIONS:

John 5:24-29 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

a) Hear Christ's words and believe God

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

b) Believe in Jesus

Revelation 1:17-18 "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one..."

c) Fear not! Don't be afraid at all: don't even be worried: about dying, about living, about anything!