

## Brett Blackwell - Do You Believe

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I stand before you this morning asking you this rhetorical question or what might seem to be a rhetorical question to those of you who do believe.

And that's good, because it's really a trick question, a very complex question that we're going to spend the better part of an hour talking about today.

So just as sure as we are all gathered here in this room and online, each one of us is in fact a believer, and knowing that today is Easter Sunday, some of you probably assumed that the object of my question was the resurrection. As in do you believe in the Resurrection? Others of you may have thought the question meant do you believe in him, in Jesus? Or do you believe in the Gospel, the truth, the plan?

And others may thought that I meant, do you believe that Jesus was the only begotten Son of God? That Jesus was born on earth as a man, he laid down his life as a ransom for all, bearing the sins of many, and was fully dead in the tomb for parts of three days and then was resurrected, a spirit being. Well, you'd be alright if you asked any one of those forms of that question. But there's a reason that my question wasn't worded very specifically. Do you believe Is not just taken from any one scripture.

It's taken from scores of scriptures, many of which are the words of our Lord Jesus. Let's look at just two of them.

First, from John 2, 1922, Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up, and therefore, when he had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this to him to them, and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had headset. Here Jesus uses prophetic language speaking of the temple of his body based on his knowledge of the upcoming events of his crucifixion and resurrection. On the third day, the belief that the disciples showed was not only in the resurrection, but also in Jesus's word and his scripture.

Their second scripture is found in John 6:40. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who beholds a Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I myself will raise him up on the last day. Again, these words of our Lord, spoken of all who will truly believe in Him. This is a personal hope to us because by believing that Jesus is the Son, that the Son of God, we have a promise from our Lord that He will raise us up, that we have eternal life.

And both of these scriptures, as you can see, are particularly appropriate for this day Resurrection morning.

But belief is not such A simple word, let alone a simple concept with good intent. When you say to yourself or to someone else that you believe in something, you probably mean it. But this is a simplistic idea at best. Most intelligent and reasonable people would agree that you actually have to know what something is before you can know that you believe in it. Now, last month, Sister Tamara and I and Justin were able to visit Washington, D.C.

we what an interesting place. I think we were overwhelmed by all of the history and the things to do, and every American likely knows that Washington has some of our nation's most impressive memorials. Memorials are markers so that we don't forget what happened in history, usually related

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to a specific person or to a group of persons, and as time passes, circumstances change and history has an uncanny way of repeating itself.

So memorials help present and future generations to not only remember the people and the events, but also what might have preceded them or their involvement in history. Now, as you know, there are plenty of war memorials in Washington that honor and recognize those Americans who gave their lives for their beliefs, specifically their belief in freedom, and the Lincoln Memorial stands as a testimony to one man's ideals and beliefs and their profound effect on the history of our country, and you've been looking at this on the screen for a while, so you know where this is going. But there's another memorial in Washington that helps me to explain belief in an even more powerful way.

Many of you have been to the U.S. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The intent of this museum is clear and direct. This is from their publications, a living memorial to the Holocaust. The United States Holocaust Museum inspires citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity.

Well, in my own words, the intent is to make sure people believe that the Holocaust happened and to make sure that the root causes for the Holocaust are understood, and to motivate people to take action to prevent anything akin to the Holocaust from ever happening again, whether it be to Jews or to other people, as their indication states, and of course, we also remember the lives that were lost.

Now, the principal way that the museum carries out its intent is through an immersive walking tour, a journey through the rise of Nazism, the Holocaust at its peak, and the aftermath of the experience. Leveraging powerful imagery, audio and physical techniques that make you feel like you might have been there. Before you begin your tour, you pick up an identification card like the one on this screen and the one in my hand. This card is unique to a specific person who lived in the experience, and you are encouraged to follow their personal journey as you make your way through the exhibits, I was struck by the many things that I saw and that I learned, and the person on this card, Joanna Buchner, was a Jehovah's Witness.

I think most of us know that Bible students were treated very similarly to Jehovah's Witnesses during the Holocaust, and among all the signs to read throughout the museum, one small sign said, this Nazi harassment of Jehovah's witnesses began in 1933. Because they refused military service and would not swear allegiance to the regime. Witnesses were often accused of espionage and conspiracy against the state. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

To our day and our Lord, the Nazis interpreted the Witnesses predictions of future anarchy as revolutionary threats and their prophecies about the return of the Jews to Palestine as Zionist statements. Nevertheless, the Witnesses continued to meet, preach and distribute literature. They lost their jobs, pensions, and all civil rights, and beginning in 1937, they were sent to concentration camps. There, the Nazis designated them as voluntary prisoners.

Jehovah's Witnesses who renounced their beliefs could be freed. Not one of them recanted.

Joanna Buechner went into a woman's prison in 1939, and she was fortunate enough to be liberated in May of 1995 or 1945. Excuse me.

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Now, the second item that I wanted to share about this was also something that I read in the museum, and the museum had a sign that discouraged the overemphasizing of the scale or the sheer numbers of those killed in the Holocaust. Instead of saying that there were 6 million Jews who died in that Holocaust, the sign said, to think of it this way, one death, six million times.

Needless to say, this was a very powerful experience for me, and I have to admit that by going through it, meaning a tour of it, I feel like the level of my belief in the Holocaust is much higher than it was before because I understand it better now, even though I've always believed that it happened.

Now, for our discussion this morning, we'd like to cover three principal lines of thought. The first is to touch on the complexities of Christian belief, and next, we'll look at one of the most beautiful topics of belief found in the Bible, that of Jesus, resurrection, appearances, and finally, we'll summarize a number of lessons that we see portrayed in the growing belief of Jesus disciples.

First, Christian belief.

Belief can be very complex, especially in the case of religion. I think we all know this. Most religions have written documents that define their beliefs. The Christian religion has a complex set of documents depending on where the spectrum of belief contained in one particular denomination falls. So some denominations have many creeds and many other documents that complicate the Bible that we use now over the past 100 years, but in particular over the past few decades in this country.

Anyway, Christians seem to me to be more free in their definition of being a Christian than ever before, and that's a good thing in the sense that they're free from denominations, but it's also a bad thing in that they're also becoming more free from the Bible, and the Bible itself has in some ways become more important to some of the megachurches that are out there, but it's also become less important to those under the influence of populism, and if you don't know what populism is, think of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump, two ends of the political spectrum that appeal to the individual and not to what has been traditionally the form of government that we're used to. Bernie Sanders being one who wanted to change the way Washington did things.

Donald Trump in a completely different way. The same thing in principle, but not obviously in action. So we have anti establishment voices on the left and on the right and in particular in this country on the right who have become what is called Christendom or the New Christian way of thinking.

Well, let us remember that Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of being Christian. I think most Christians would say that they believe in Jesus Christ, but common ground between Christians believers may disappear quickly thereafter based on just how much they believe. Serious Christians, being honest, would have to agree that Jesus said a lot about how to live and what to do if someone wanted to follow him personally on how others may be content to believe the basics, understand the highlights, and let others do the reasoning for them.

But Jesus didn't want followers that weren't committed to knowing Him. He developed personal relationships with those who followed him closely, and he asked them to believe a lot, considering who he was first and foremost. He wanted his believers to know that he was the Son of God. In explaining this, he wanted others to know that everything he did was not for his own self, not for his own glory, but for the glory of God.

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He made his entire life a testimony to who his Father was, and that is what defined him. We read in John 5:36, the works which the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I do testify about me that the Father has sent me.

This is very clear. When challenged by the Jews for the healing work that he was doing on the Sabbath, Jesus gave a very detailed explanation of his relationship to his Father and what believing in him would mean for those who chose to follow him.

We read further on in John chapter five a little earlier, actually. Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. John 5:24. Now, being the Son of God was an extremely controversial topic for this time for many reasons. But the most important reason was that the elite in Israel did not know their God the way that Jesus knew him.

The thought that calling yourself the Son of God was equivalent to being God, that's what the Jews thought, and they also thought that was blasphemy. If you were the Son of God, you had to be equal to God. It's what they said. Well, if we were to ask the scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus Day, do you believe in Moses?

What do you think they would have said? Of course they would have said they believed in Moses. But Jesus challenges their belief in Moses by saying the following.

How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father. The one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope for. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. John 5, 44, 46.

These words would be very cutting to someone like the scribes and Pharisees of that time, who were the elite of their day, knowledgeable in the Scriptures, professors of Moses, law. But they were blinded. They did not see Jesus in the writings of Moses, like the tabernacle shadows and many other types, including the Passover that we've just studied.

Now, in contrast to this rebuke of the Jews who did not believe in him, Jesus gave coaching to his disciples on how to successfully follow him and to grow in their belief in him later on. In John 8, he says, if you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

John 8, 31, 32. As Jesus's popularity and renown for his miracles and teaching grew, the disciples were given more responsibility for their beliefs, and sometimes the messages would get quite difficult. Jesus would give them parables or dark sayings, some of which he would explain to them. Other times, he just gave them hard things to swallow, quite literally.

One of those things was him in John 6. We read there that many of his followers left his discipleship when he said that he was the living bread that came down from heaven.

But the 12 were particularly devoted, and with the notable exception of Judas, they all continued to seek Jesus throughout his ministry. As his earthly life came to a close, Jesus naturally began preparing his disciples for his eminent departure.

After the Last Supper, Jesus tells his disciples that he will be going away to he who sent him his Father, and after a lengthy explanation, with reasoning, Jesus tells him something that seems to

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tells them something that seems to be riddle. Some of his disciples. Therefore said one to another, what does this mean which he is telling us, A little while and you do not see me, and again, a little while and you shall see me, and because I'm going to the Father.

So they asked one another repeatedly, what can the little while mean which he speaks of? We do not understand his words. This is from John 16, verses 17 and 18 in the Weymouth translation. Now Jesus senses their confusion on this topic, and so, after giving them additional lessons for their future use, as he so often did, he helps them to understand by saying the following.

I came from the Father, and I've come into the world, and again, I am leaving the world, and I am going to the Father.

Ah, now you are using plain language, said his disciples, and are uttering no figure of speech. Now we know that you have all knowledge and do not need to be pressed with questions. Through this we believe that you came from God. What does Jesus say to this?

Do you at last believe?

When Jesus asked the disciples this question, so now do you believe, or do you at last believe? It was a very meaningful question. The disciples had just climbed a step in understanding. They recognized this later lesson as a clear saying and not a dark one.

But this progressive nature of their learning was all just a step, and there was more to come, and so Jesus said this, I think very intentionally. He was training them. They were in the school of Christ, and they had so much to learn. I think he was giving them here a measuring stick, a test of their future faith.

But they were overconfident, as you can read in their belief, a problem that had already caused issues that night in terms of who would sit at his right hand and would undoubtedly cause a few more over the next few foreboding hours, and so clearly he knew that their belief would need to go much further. He didn't blame them, of course, but in some sense he knew that as he said this, do you at last believe? Their belief would indeed be challenged in the coming hours, if not crushed, and so instead of telling them, you have much more to learn, he merely Let them affirm themselves in this moment, asking a question that would lead them to further growth.

When they eventually realized that he had been teaching them, feeding them, and nurturing them as they grew.

Well, last year at this time, I was blessed to stand here before you and share the new things that I found springing forth out of the Scriptures. I gave the resurrection discourse two years in a row. So it was suggested to me earlier I should just give it again and see who would remember it.

Well, the title last year was New Things I Declare, and I found so much springing forth out of the Scriptures about Jesus, old and new. Everything was just about him, and I think that's what you're going to find when you study the resurrection appearances, you'll find some of the same things. We recall that the encounter of our risen Lord with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, that's one of our precious ones I think we all love.

And of course, Jesus was not recognized. He was a stranger to these two that were traveling on the road, and after the disciples had expressed their sadness at the events surrounding Jesus death and his crucifixion. Whoops, sorry, I'm a little behind.

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Hmm. I might be hitting the arrow in the wrong direction. Has that ever happened before? Okay, here we go. All right.

So as the disciples expressed their sadness at the events surrounding Jesus death and his crucifixion, how they had hoped in his redemption of Israel, which now seems so inexplicably lost, our Lord rebuked them, and he said, o foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory. Luke 24, 25 and 26. The old words of the prophets were the declaration of who he was, what was to happen to him, why he needed to come to the rescue of man, and how he was to satisfy justice, what would come next and more.

And so for these two disciples, Jesus went on to explain to them the things concerning himself. In all the Scriptures, the entire Word of God declares the glorious story of God's Son and His redemption for all. Now, truly, the belief the disciples that they had shown throughout Galilee and even in Jerusalem on the last night of Jesus, life had not stayed with them, and so our Heavenly Father, through His work, through His Son, gave the disciples this special period of time after Jesus death for them to come to grips with all that they'd seen and heard about Jesus. But now in a new context.

Now they would be alone. In part with a number of short encounters with their risen Lord in a period of six weeks from his death to his ascension, and this would be a most critical time for them to reflect, look ahead, and most of all put all their trust fully in the Lord. Now studying these post resurrection appearances of Jesus became one of my inspirations for the topic of do you believe in this period of 40 days from the tomb to the Mount of Olives, Jesus, the resurrected Spirit being appears multiple times in each of the four gospels. His resurrection appearances are also mentioned in Acts in the book of first Corinthians.

And depending on your perspective you might consider Jesus appearance to Saul of Tarsus in the same category, although by timing and by description of the story. Of course this occurs much after Jesus ascension to the right hand of God. So I'd like to share with you a chart on the right hand side. We'll cover it in a little more detail, but for sake of time we won't dig in too far. But this chart was Adapted from reprint 3903 which is entitled he has Risen or the title of the article is he has Risen even as he said.

And this shows the occurrences and approximately when they occurred over the 40 day period between the resurrection and the ascension. Now the chart's not in the reprint, but the items are Brother Russell identified here 11 post resurrection appearances and we've added of course the 12th for Paul that we just mentioned after of course Jesus was glorified. So let me just summarize the article. It's actually a very small article. It's mostly focused on a couple of correcting a few things that were promulgating I think amongst some at that time.

When Brother Russell wrote this in 1906, he addresses the logic behind the three days for when he has risen, the third day and the three days which some found confusing, and he addresses also at a high level the importance of these appearances and the personal risk that would have been brought to the disciples for actually mentioning that Jesus had been resurrected, and of course you recall and it's in the accounts that one of the accounts that guards were posted on Jesus tomb to prevent the potential that somebody could go in and steal his body and then claim that he was resurrected. So there was a real threat in Israel after Jesus was crucified that these disciples, if they were to carry on his way and continue, they would see a similar fate to him, and of course they were not yet prepared for that.

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Of course as we mentioned, there's these 11 post resurrection appearances that are brought to our Attention by Brother Russell. Now, personally, I'll summarize my observations on this. I think that the purpose of these appearances gives us a variety of biblical perspectives to see what it might have been like for these disciples, and I know the brethren have different ideas on actually how many appearances there are. There's been some good discussion on the fact that some of these appearances really are the same appearance just shown from a different perspective.

I think some may feel there were as few as seven appearances, and some may feel there were potentially even more. I'll just point out a scripture at the end of John, chapter 20, verses 30 and 31, that says, Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. So I think this is directly after John's account of resurrection appearances in one of the two chapters that he talks about in John 20, and so I think there's a.

A strong indication that there could have been more. But of course, there aren't any that we know of that are written. I think Brother Richard gave an excellent treatise some time ago on his thoughts in that there were 10 resurrection appearances, and there's a lot of meaning in that number, and I encourage you to look that up or ask Brother Richard of his thoughts on that topic.

It's a beautiful lesson.

Okay, well, let's quickly. I'm going to show you some charts that I made in preparation for studying this, and I don't think we're going to have time to get into the depth of them, but I'm going to pick highlights over the resurrection appearances so that you see kind of where they occur in the Gospels and in what order. So let's start.

So first off, expanding the chart. You'll see that there is blue in the first five appearances, and these all occurred on the first day, which was Sunday. This would have been the first day of the week, and so.

And this would have been. Oh, you want me to zoom in a little bit? Okay, let's see if I can do that. I just learned this technique. I don't know if it works.

Well, it's working on my screen, but it's not there. I'm sorry. Well, again, we don't have a lot of time just to go through all the depths. The one in green is the appearance to Thomas, which occurred one week later. So on the eighth day, this occurred to Thomas, and then there was probably a substantial gap between the appearances after the appearance of Thomas, perhaps as many as three weeks, maybe even more.

But the next occurrence of appearances for resurrection of Jesus post his resurrection was in the area of Galilee, and there were three events that are recorded there, one being from John 21, where Jesus sees he's the man on the shore, and he sees his disciples fishing in a boat. They've gone back to fishing, and what happens when they go back to fishing? They can't catch anything.

They're not being very productive, and so Jesus is sitting on the shore, and there's a whole lesson about how they recognize, and we'll come back to that in a little bit. The other are on the mount in Galilee, where he appeared to not just the seven that were the ones in the boat, but to 11 disciples, and then there were about 500 that were associated with this.

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And in fact, I think some brethren think that occurrences 8 and 9 in this list were in fact part of the same occurrence. The green on this Particular slide shows two other references that were made. Two appearances. One to James, which is quoted in 1 Corinthians 15, and then to all of the apostles, of course, at the end of the 40 days at the Ascension, and then in gray, you see the 12th appearance, which was to Saul of Tarsus.

This was, of course, Jesus after he ascended. Okay, so let me just quickly show you the amount of detail that is in the Scriptures, and again, this is going to be too small for you to read, so I'm just going to point out in general where these things occur and maybe a highlight or two. So you'll see that the resurrection appearances of Resurrection Morning appear in all four Gospels. There are accounts there in all four Gospels.

And we see in this particular chart of breaking down what happens in each, that there's some common themes, one of which is that there are angels in each of the accounts at the tomb in different order, but there are angels at each one. The first occurrence of a resurrection appearance occurs with Mary Magdalene, and this was when she encountered Jesus, supposing him to be the gardener, and he says to her in his voice that she recognized Mary.

And it's a beautiful thought to think that this personal attention she got from the Lord caused an immediate reaction and belief in him. Like immediate. She heard his voice. She recognized that. She knew it was him.

There was no doubt. There was nothing else she needed to say to her. Now, we think that was witnessed by our Lord's words to her, which she said, don't cling to me. She must have just reached out to grab him right away, and then the second appearance was also to women.

And this is an account of which Mary Magdalene was included, and there was other Marys that came to the grave, and on the way back from the tomb, Jesus met and greeted them and again says something very similar, or doesn't say something similar, but they grab hold of his feet. So there is a physical contact there.

Now, the road to Emmaus is the next occurrence, or at least that's the account where we read about the next occurrence, and it's parenthetical. So in the account in Luke 24, we find that in verse 34, it actually says that Jesus appeared to Peter and there was a reference to Peter, and so we might think of that as being perhaps Peter was actually on the road to Emmaus with the other disciple named Cleopas. But we don't know that for sure.

It's just interesting when you read it to see it in that context. The fourth appearance, of course, is on the road to Emmaus, and I will show you that the two who were journeying with the Lord on the road go back to Jerusalem to find the disciples and say, the Lord has really risen and appeared to Peter. So in any event, that's what's going on in Luke. Now, Luke 24 has the most amount of information here, specifically on the resurrection appearances.

But it also appears that in Luke 24, this account tends to combine appearances into one. It goes directly in, like some of the other accounts, into the Ascension, and it doesn't show a change in venue other than the road to Emmaus and going back to Jerusalem.

The fifth, of course, as we saw on that first chart, was when Jesus back in Jerusalem now appears in the room, and he appears in the room to the disciples, all of whom were there, it says to the 11, but there were 10. Because we know that Thomas wasn't there from another account, and this is

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where Jesus really shows his wounds to his disciples and encourages them to touch him and to see him. That's in Luke 24 as well. Excuse me.

Yeah.

And then the account in Tom about Thomas, the sixth one occurs in John 20, and this is where Thomas, you know, has that precious, precious moment with the Lord where, you know, he says, I'm not going to believe he said this earlier. I'm not going to believe unless Jesus, I can actually touch him and do it with my own fingers. Thomas was, I think, a symbol for many Christians that need to really experience something before they believe it, and of course, our Lord says, because you've Seen me?

Have you believed? Blessed are those who did not see and believed. That's what he says to Thomas in John 20. In any event, there are more occurrences. Seven occurs in the seventh appearance at the Sea of Galilee for those that are fishing is in John 21.

And then the eighth appearance shows up in Matthew 28. Now here's something interesting. We'll pause on this for a few seconds, and that is from First Corinthians 15, we see that Paul lays out the order of appearances for some of the appearances here, and he shows in verse 5 that Peter appeared to Cephas or, excuse me, Jesus appeared to Peter and then to the 12, which would have been several visits later.

He talks about the 500 and James and of course his own to all apostles at the Ascension, and then all he appeared to him, as well as the 12th.

Luke also has a summary of this. Now, Luke wrote Acts and his book of Luke, the Gospel, to somebody named Theophilus or Theophilus, and he wrote it as some sort of an instruction manual to help this person, this disciple believes, and so he summarizes some of these experiences very, very quickly in verse three, when he says that Jesus had presented himself alive for his suffering by many convincing proofs appearing to them over a period of 40 days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

And then he talks about the Ascension as well.

Now, one other way I found helpful to study, and we won't have time to go into this, but I'll highlight this, is to actually look at how Jesus was manifested to each of the disciples, and we note that there were three occurrences where Jesus was manifested to the disciples in a form that they did not recognize from a visual standpoint. To Mary, he was recognized as the gardener by his voice.

To the disciples on the way to Emmaus, he was recognized to them by what he said. Their hearts were burning, it was building as they were with him, and then they finally recognized him by the way that he broke bread, a mannerism of his, and then in that example, we briefly touched on the shore of Galilee, where he was the man on the shore, and he told the disciples to cast their net on the other side of the boat, and the net filled up. Well, they recognized him for two things.

The first was John, who recognized him and said, it's the Lord because of the miracle that he had performed, and then when they came to sit with him and sup with him and eat fish and bread, they also recognized in the mannerisms of how he was feeding them, representations of what had happened previously with their experience of him feeding the many, and so in these three examples, we see something very beautiful in each one of them. There's a very strong emotional

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response from the disciples when it goes beyond just what their eyes see, and I think that these experiences in particular teach us a lot about belief, going back to the idea of Thomas, who actually had to see and touch it.

And Jesus said, blessed are those who actually believe without seeing. I think these resurrection appearances show us a little bit of that.

Now, returning back to this particular chart, or read something about Saul's conversion to Paul in reprint 45 18. Under the second count, he had seen the Lord as a spirit being in the brightness above the sun at noonday in advance of the remainder of the church. What the other apostles saw of the Lord during the 40 days of his appearance as a man after his resurrection would not compare to the importance or to the witness of our Lord's resurrection which St. Paul had seen. Besides this, he had a most astounding vision of revelation in which he was caught away to the third heaven and saw things he was not authorized to explain.

And now, in due time, St. Paul's writings constitute the key to the divine plan of the ages, and that is so true.

Well, let's briefly consider some lessons from the disciples. I'll try to highlight a few of these fairly quickly for sake of time. But I think when you look at all of the biblical accounts and you read all the words, and there are a lot of words, roughly 4% of the new Testament is dedicated to resurrection appearances by word count.

Belief in Jesus seems to be one of the biggest themes, and we know that the hopes of the disciples were not fully developed when they saw these resurrection appearances. We know that their belief was not yet strong enough to endure hardship, and there were things that, although presented to them by the Lord, proverbially right in front of them, they didn't understand them, and so their faith was not yet strong enough to give them the strength to endure such difficult experiences?

After all, wouldn't they have remembered that the Lord told them at least four times that he would be killed or crucified and that he would rise on the third day? Well, let me show you something about this foretelling that Jesus gives to the disciples in the Gospel accounts. This doesn't even include the ones that are in John. There are at least eight occurrences in Matthew and Luke. Not saying that these were eight times that he told them.

We think that it's about four or five. But this is in many ways repeated. By the disciples and others at various points. Now let me read from Mark 10:32, 34, and he again took the 12 and began to tell them what things should happen to him, saying behold, we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock him, and they shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him and shall kill him, and the third day he shall rise again.

Well, this was very plain language. So why didn't the disciples believe this? Well, we get a little bit of a clue. We know that of course they didn't have the Holy Spirit yet they didn't have this during his ministry. They didn't have it during that 40 day period.

But there's just a basic human perspective here that I think we have to remember and that's found for us in Mark 9, and this is also another example where Jesus had told them he was going to be delivered into the hands of men who would kill him, and what does he say or what does the scripture say about the disciples? It says, but they did not understand this statement and they were

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just afraid to ask him.

So it's clear that the disciples weren't ready and many scriptures and words of our Lord would be remembered by them once the comforter the Holy Spirit had been granted to them. Well, there's many other blessings in the resurrection appearances. I didn't go into the postscript to the lesson of Jesus as the man on the shore, but there are beautiful lessons about the early church, about Peter and about John. Beautiful lessons about how Peter is being trained by the Lord after his three denials to take care of the church, and Peter would be the first apostle to the church, the one that was really the preeminent apostle.

And of course he had the support of John during that. When talking about their deaths that Jesus brings up, he points out that Peter's will be against his will, and he says that John's going to remain, and of course we know John holds a special place to the church, A representative of the church of the last days that were in the feet members of the church and he stayed on. Well, both of them defended against hypocrisy in the church, against false prophets, against disbelief throughout their ministries.

And there are beautiful scriptures to corroborate that. I won't read them for where we're at with time, but I will tell you that it's interesting. When Peter spoke to the rulers in Acts 4, after he'd been in prison the night before and he had just healed someone. The apostles blessed with the Holy Spirit had healed somebody in Jesus name.

I think it's here. The observation from those that were the chief priests and rulers was that now, as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. So it's a pretty powerful lesson for us. Further lessons include belief and faith from Abraham. We know that Abraham did not waver in his faith.

He was a. A banner mark, if you will, for all of us in terms of his faith, and Peter, excuse me, Paul brings that to our attention in Romans 4, verses 19 to 25, and again, we get the same opportunity to be justified through the faith that Abraham demonstrated, and so it's another beautiful lesson.

We talked about Thomas a little bit and the idea that seeing without believing, and I'll stop on one other thing. Of course, we have the road to Emmaus and the burning within the hearts of those that started to recognize our Lord without really knowing it was him on the way, and then the two that we talked about. Well, I want to talk a little bit about women because Mary Magdalene was the first to see Jesus and she believed him right away.

And it seemed like her commitment was strong. Well, the faith of Martha after the resurrection of Lazarus was incredibly strong, and she says, yes, Lord, I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, even who. He who comes into the world, and so one other thing to conclude on as we're out of time is the faith of Elizabeth and Mary.

Back at the beginning of the Gospels is another example of how women seem to have a propensity to believe and to understand things in a way that maybe just men can't get over themselves for, and so there's a beautiful picture in. In Elizabeth's response being filled with the Holy Spirit, and she heard Mary at the door, who had come in, who had just been visited by an angel. This is what the account says about Elizabeth.

## **Brett Blackwell - Do You Believe**

And she cried out with a loud voice and said, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, and how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? What great faith from that Holy Spirit being in her, and so, of course, we know that the baby leapt in her womb and that she saw that there would be a fulfillment of the Lord. Well, brethren, as we conclude, we'd like to just think about the topics that we've studied over the last few months, if we are sincere, believing Christians, and we've been blessed to study the concluding chapters in our Lord's perfect and complete life as a man on the earth.

We've considered his final hours with his disciples. We've considered that that time would have been a blessed time, and we've read his words, recorded us for in the latter chapters of the Gospel of John, intended especially to provide future comfort to those who loved Jesus the most, those who loved him and therefore loved His Father. We personally considered the Passover types and celebrated a beautiful, somber memorial service in his honor and for our common union on the anniversary of the last night of his human life, we personally studied our Lord's final week, filling both our minds and our hearts with the magnitude of his sacrifice. How can we not be touched by the love of our Savior and His Father, our Heavenly Father?

Well, brethren, we'll conclude with two scriptures, and those scriptures are the purpose for which Jesus came, which was to do his Father's will. John 4:34 My food is to do the will of him who sent me to finish his work, and for us we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Well, brethren, we're sorry that we ran out of time, but we're thankful for the privilege to share some thoughts with you.

We wish you the very best of resurrection days today. May your hearts be inspired by the lessons from our disciples, from our Lord's disciples, the apostles. We pray that the Lord would overrule anything set amiss to his glory. Amen.