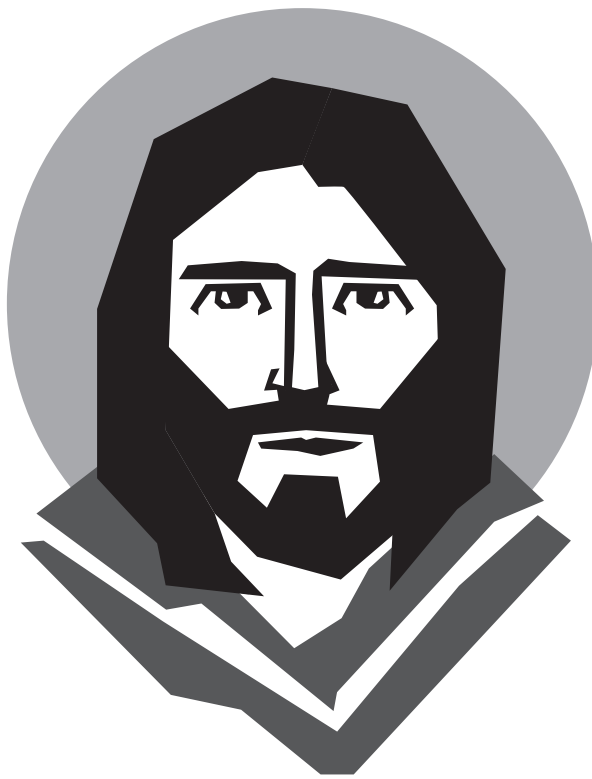


THE REAL JESUS



A study through the Gospel of Luke

BOOK 5: HIS RESURRECTION

THE REAL JESUS: HIS RESURRECTION WITNESSED BY US

Week Five | October 28, 2018 | You Can See The Real Jesus Too

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's texts. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Through God's Word and the church, we can see The Real Jesus too.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

While we are not eyewitnesses to Jesus' life on earth, through the Holy Spirit we can "spiritually see" Him as we read the Bible and participate in the church.

MEDITATE

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

GETTING STARTED

+ *Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.*

Eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume introduced to the Western Tradition deep skepticism about the Bible's account of Jesus by attacking the believability of testimony. He suggests it is more probable that an event merely looked like a miracle than for it to actually have been a miracle. Hume writes, "No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavors to establish." In other words, we are never justified in believing a miracle on the basis of someone's testimony unless it would be more of a miracle for that testimony to be false. He then explains it shouldn't be miraculous for a human testimony to be false. People mistakenly see things all the time. They have experiences that aren't real. They also lie. So, when we hear testimony of a miracle—from the Bible, for example—our first response should always be skepticism. Then, like good little Sherlock Holmeses, we should look for the perfectly logical explanation. According to Hume—and Holmes—if we do good detective work and weigh the evidence, we'll always find a natural, rather than supernatural, explanation.

As we have studied the book of Luke, we have heard testimonies of many eyewitnesses of The Real Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Have you, at any point in this study, thought to yourself, "Lucky them. If only I were an eyewitness of The Real Jesus. Then I know I wouldn't struggle with doubt, and my faith would be perfectly unwavering." Or, maybe you thought, "If only I could see The Real Jesus for myself. Then I'd know I'm not worshipping a fake version of the real thing." If so, you may be thinking more like David Hume than you realize!

For Hume, as well as many other skeptics of religion, seeing is believing. Actual, physical, saw-it-with-my-own-eyes is believing. Unless you laid your own eyes on it, you should never believe it. If that's the case, then what Jesus said to Thomas—"blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29)—would be a lie and the people who saw Him for themselves were, in fact, more blessed than we are.

Rejecting the idea that "seeing is believing," many Christians have insisted that true belief comes when you don't see. Faith shouldn't be rational; it should be irrational. If you did see with your own eyes or fully understand with your mind, they say, you would no longer have faith. For them, not seeing is believing. Historical evidence and eyewitness testimony don't support faith, but endanger it.

So, what do we do? Can we see The Real Jesus, or should we not? And we weren't eyewitnesses, so how could we "see" The Real Jesus anyway?

Today we will look at several passages to help us understand what "seeing" The Real Jesus means for us and why this kind of seeing leads to great blessing, just as Jesus said.

- Q: *Would you consider yourself a naturally skeptical person? Throughout the course of this study, have you struggled with doubting the eyewitness testimonies we have read in Luke?*
- Q: *Would you say faith is, by definition, irrational? Would you say that not seeing is believing? Are there specific places in Scripture that have led you to see faith that way?*

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Today we will look at several passages in the Bible that tell us how we can see The Real Jesus. We will learn there are two primary ways: through the Word of God and through the living testimony of the church.

1. WE SEE JESUS THROUGH THE WORD

2. WE SEE JESUS THROUGH THE CHURCH

GOING DEEPER

+ *This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.*

WE SEE JESUS THROUGH THE WORD

■ LUKE 24:25-27, 44-47; ROMANS 10:13-17

- Q: *According to these verses, how do we come to know and have faith in Jesus?*
- Q: *Why is it necessary to know The Real Jesus?*

The American Bible Society recently published an interesting survey. They found that more than half of Americans think the Bible should have more influence on culture today. Yet, only one in five Americans actually reads the Bible regularly. According to the survey, 88% of the respondents claimed to own a Bible, 80% believe the Bible is sacred, and the average American home owns 4.4 Bibles. Yet 57% of young people only read it once a year. In response to these statistics, the former president of the American Bible Society, Doug Birdsall, said, “I see the problem as analogous to obesity in America. We have an awful lot of people who realize they are overweight, but they don’t follow a diet.” Why are people quick to speak up for the Bible but slow to actually read it on a regular basis? Why has it become a museum piece or a sword for culture wars rather than something we lean firmly into in our daily lives? Do we care about it changing other people, but not really changing us?

Maybe we don’t realize exactly what the Bible is and what it does. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s word in the Garden of Eden, God could have taken His leave. But He didn’t. He went looking for Adam and Eve and talked to them (Genesis 3:8–9). The fact that the God of the universe would talk to finite, mortal creatures made of dust is evidence of His goodness (Psalm 8:4). But the fact that He would pursue and continue to talk to creatures who had disobeyed, blasphemed, and committed high treason against Him is unthinkable.

If it weren’t for God talking to us, we wouldn’t know Him at all. We wouldn’t be able to see past our sin to discover this God. Even if we had never sinned and were morally perfect, as finite creatures we are limited. We cannot comprehend the eternal. God, in His goodness, revealed the eternal to us through His Word in terms we could comprehend. This act proves He desires us for to know Him and be in relationship with Him.

As we studied in Luke 24, all Scripture points to Jesus. That doesn’t mean that Jesus is the single meaning behind every verse, but rather that all of Scripture directs us to Him. As Tony Merida says, “the goal for Christ-centered expositors is not to look for Jesus under every rock, but rather to find out how a particular text fits into the whole redemptive story that culminates in Christ.”

John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The real culmination and explanation of this verse come in verse 14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Have you ever wondered why John called Jesus “the Word?” John Piper explains, “John calls Jesus the Word because he had come to see the words of Jesus as the truth of God and the person of Jesus as the truth of God in such a unified way that Jesus himself—in his coming, and working, and teaching, and dying and rising—was the final and decisive message of God. Or to put it more simply: what God had to say to us was not only or mainly what Jesus said, but who Jesus was and what He did.”

In Revelation 19:13, John describes Jesus’ return: “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is the Word of God.” Jesus is the final, ultimate, and absolutely reliable revelation of God. His incarnation,

his taking on flesh and living among us, allowed the eternal truth about God to come down to us in such a way that it could be seen and understood by finite minds. Tim Keller notes that all other religions are about us trying to get to God. Christianity is the only religion in which God reveals Himself by coming down to us. And He does that through Christ. Colossians 2:9 says, “For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” What an incredible truth!

But for those of us who were not eyewitnesses of Christ when He was on earth, how do we see Him? Through the Word of God. This is not a new phenomenon that began after Jesus ascended into heaven. We learned in Luke 24 that Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples through God’s Word. Many commentators suggest that it wasn’t the physical evidence of seeing Jesus standing before them that really flipped the switch for the disciples; it was seeing Christ in the Word. Faith came, even for them, when they saw Jesus in the Word. As we see in Acts 11:1 and 1 Thessalonians 2:13, receiving the Word of God means receiving Christ. And receiving Christ means receiving the Word of God.

This means two things. 1) If you want to know The Real Jesus, go to God’s Word. 2) If you neglect God’s Word, you neglect The Real Jesus.

Q: *Read Hebrews 4:12-13 and discuss why and how God’s Word is living and active. How have you seen this to be true in your life?*

Q: *Are you quick to use the Bible as a sword to try to change other people or culture at large, but slow to allow it to transform you? How do you try to “hide from its sight,” as Hebrews 4:13 says?*

Q: *Does the Bible seem boring to you at times? Why do you think that may be? How do you think approaching it differently might help?*

WE SEE JESUS THROUGH THE CHURCH

■ **LUKE 9:10-11; JOHN 13:31-35; ACTS 2:42-47**

Q: *What values and activities are practiced by Jesus’ disciples in both passages?*

Q: *What does God do as a result of the disciples' obedience?*

Throughout the Bible, Jesus is called the Word of God and the Church is called the body of Christ. If you have been around the church for some time, you've probably heard people use the phrase "the body of Christ." Maybe you thought it was just another Bible-ese term. But when the Bible talks about the Church as the body of Christ, it isn't just using the term as a vague metaphor. It is explaining what the church should be and how it should function in the world. Not only do we see Christ in Scripture, but we also see Christ in and through the church.

When we studied the feeding of the five thousand, we saw that Jesus looked with compassion at the hungry crowd. He saw both their spiritual and their physical needs and actively worked to care for them. How did He do it? He miraculously provided bread and fish for them, multiplying resources like only the Creator of the Universe could do. But after He brought dinner into existence, what did He do? Jesus put the bread in the disciples' hands and told them to take it to the crowds. Everyone knew where the bread and fish came from. They knew it didn't come from the disciples, but from the hand of the Word of God Himself. But the disciples played a very important role. They physically extended God's blessings and care to those in need. They were the hands and feet of Jesus. Jesus used them not because His miracle stopped short of actually delivering the bread to the people, but because He invites us to be part of His redemptive work. His plan is for the church to not just think about Jesus, sing songs to Jesus, and wear T-shirts about Jesus. He has designed the church to give people a living, tangible picture of who Jesus really is.

Seeing Jesus in God's Word and seeing Him in the church are deeply connected. When the church is encountering The Real Jesus in Scripture and being transformed by God's living Word, they live it out. As they live it out, they see His power unleashed and expanded. Christians don't read God's Word in order to grab hold of truth, but to let Truth grab hold of them! When people read the Bible in order to grab hold of truth, they learn good things and then try to do good things. They end up with a moralistic understanding of Jesus that most likely ends in hypocrisy. But, when they read the Bible so that Truth grabs hold of them, they become transformed people who put Christ on display.

In an individualistic culture, we like the idea of being able to live our lives free of others. We want to be self-sustaining and self-sufficient, even spiritually. We think this is a sign of responsibility and even maturity. That mentality works its way into our view of the church. For many people, it is totally possible to love Jesus and not care too much about the church, to live your life having a personal—which really means private—relationship with Jesus and attend church as a social gathering or a weekly pep-talk. Church is a place you go, an event you attend. But the Bible talks about the church as a people for God's own possession (1 Peter 2:9).

It is important for each individual to be saved, but that doesn't mean that faith is lived individualistically. It is important to have a personal relationship with Jesus, but personal doesn't mean private. It is important for each individual to put Christ on display in their lives, but Christ is most fully and clearly put on display by the church,

together. This picture is lived out in a beautiful way by the early church in Acts 2:42–47. When people became Christians, they didn't just add church as another activity to their week. They became part of the church and lived out that new identity. They served one another, relied on one another, and learned from one another. They bore one another's burdens, opened their homes to one another, and lived life together.

This doesn't mean we all have to live in communes. But it does mean we have to drop the privacy walls around our lives, our homes, our pain, and our resources and embrace the joy—and humility—of not walking alone. When we do, Christ is put on display not only for people on the outside looking in, but even for those on the inside. We are reminded of God's faithfulness, His sufficiency, and His grace to us through our brothers and sisters in Christ. God uses them to show us harbored sin in our hearts and call us to repentance so we can look more and more like The Real Jesus. When we experience genuine forgiveness—whether by receiving it or giving it—we are reminded of the incredible forgiveness extended to us on the cross. Living life as the church helps us see Jesus better and love Him more.

John 13:31–35 is another passage where Jesus predicts His death, resurrection, and ascension. He explains to His disciples that He will no longer be physically on earth, but that doesn't mean God's glory won't be seen anymore. How will it be made visible? By the church, He says. The world will see The Real Jesus when they see the church loving one another with Christlike love. Christians aren't supposed to love each other because it's a nice or even impressive thing to do. Christians are to love one another because, through it, God's glory is seen!

Through the Word and the church, we don't see a lesser, more removed Jesus than we would if we were eyewitnesses. Even the eyewitnesses saw Jesus for who He was through Scripture and through the faithful obedience of the disciples. We don't have to be concerned that our faith rests on the word of some people two thousand years ago. Our faith is established and held firm by a risen Savior. We don't have to embrace a faith that has no evidence. We see evidence every day as God meets us in His Word and through the church.

Q: *A major reason people struggle to love the church is because of hurt experienced in the church. Church-hurt can leave some of the deepest wounds. Why do you think that is? What is the solution? How can you care for those who carry these wounds?*

Q: *How does this passage change the way you approach unbelievers? How does it help you pray for them better?*

NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

- Q: *God's original design is not for everyone to be eyewitnesses, but for the ones chosen to be eyewitnesses to be faithful in bearing witness to others of The Real Jesus. How have you seen The Real Jesus more clearly through Luke's faithful witness?*
- Q: *Are you being a faithful witness to what you have seen in the Word so others might know The Real Jesus?*
- Q: *Read Romans 12. Living these things out is done in a body of believers, not in isolation. Which areas do you need to grow in, and what do you need to surrender to the Lord in order to do so?*

PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- Father, thank You that You have maintained Your promise to create a people for Your own possession who would declare Your glory. Forgive us for failing to declare Your glory by allowing the sins of selfishness and pride to get in the way.
- Jesus, teach us what it means to truly be Your hands and feet in our church, in our city, and to the nations.
- Holy Spirit, thank You for working through God's Word to reveal the things hidden in our hearts and expose them to the light of Christ. May we lean firmly on the Word not to get hold of truth, but so Truth can get hold of us.

**All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes, the Christ Centered Exposition (Luke), and Preaching the Word (Luke).*

