

Lesson 5 - Follow the Footsteps of Jesus to Heaven
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Introduction: Can we have assurance about our place in eternity?

- A. In order to know this we will have to “see the unseen.” How do we do that?
(Heb 11:27)
- B. We can not only know these things but we can give evidence to all who ask! Can you? **(1 Pt 3:15)**
 - 1. If you do not have the assurance of heaven you may not go there. **(Rom 8:24-25)**
 - 2. Assurance comes from knowing what God has done and from knowing where we stand in respect to His promises. **(Rom 8:15-17)**

I. The Resurrection

- A. Great effort was made by the enemies of Christ to prevent the resurrection. **(Mt 27:57-66)**
 - 1. They made sure that Jesus was dead.
 - a. Hear the description of an eyewitness. **(John 19:32-36)**
 - b. Medical authorities today indicate that "blood and water" was positive proof of death.
 - 2. The body was placed in a new tomb. **(Matt 27:60)**
 - 3. The tomb was cut out of rock. **(Matt 27:60)**
 - a. There is only one body to account for and there would be only one way in and one way out.
 - b. The tomb can now be easily guarded and the body produced later.
 - 4. A large stone covered the entrance. **(Matt 27:60, Mk 16:1-4)**
 - a. This boulder was to prevent any easy access to the body.
 - b. It was so large that two full-grown women could not move it!
 - 5. A Roman seal was placed on the stone. **(Matt 27:66)**
 - a. This signified that the full power and authority of Rome would stand against the one who broke the seal.
 - b. With the power of Rome behind them the enemies seem to have a certain victory.
 - 6. A Roman Guard was placed at the tomb. **(Matt 27:65-66)**
 - 7. The tomb was inspected carefully. **(John 20:3-8; John 20:11)**
- B. The disciples were slow to believe that Jesus was raised.
 - 1. They did not believe the many witnesses that came to them. **(Mk 16:9-14)**
 - a. Jesus even sent Peter a personal message! **(Mk 16:1,6)**
 - b. Why were these men reluctant to believe?
 - 2. Two men, Cleopas and an unnamed man were in such a situation. **(Luke 24:13-24)**
 - a. The events of the crucifixion of Christ had shaken their confidence to the point where the redemption of Israel was considered a past failed event!
 - b. These were men who had come to believe that Jesus was a prophet, but there is no mention of Him being the Son of God.

- c. While they heard of the evidence of His resurrection, they had not yet believed.
- d. They had so discouraged themselves that they did not recognize Jesus when He walked with them.
- e. Jesus brought a new flame into their hearts. **(Lk 24:30-35)**
- f. They were going home to eat a late supper, tired and dejected. But they now are energized and hurry back to Jerusalem ready to work.
- 3. Thomas would not believe all of these witnesses plus the other apostles! **(Jn 20:24-25)**
- C. Jesus makes several appearances to them over a 50-day period.
 - 1. He allows for close inspection of His wounds. **(Jn 20:19-20,24-29)**
 - 2. He shows the apostles that He is not a ghost. **(Lk 24:37-43)**
 - a. They all had doubts that needed to be answered!
 - b. They later would be powerful witnesses. **(Acts 10:39-43)**
 - 3. He in each case then shows how the scriptures had taught all these things! **(Lk 24:44-47)**
 - 4. There was yet one more event to awe these special witnesses.

II. The ascension of Christ

- A. Sometime we might summarize these events as “the cross.” **(1 Cor 1:18)**
 - 1. Included in the events of the cross would be His ascension on the clouds of heaven. **(1 Tim 3:16)**
 - 2. What if Jesus never ascended back to heaven? The entire gospel would collapse because we could not believe the New Testament. **(Jn 14:26-28)**
- B. Jesus foretold His ascension
 - 1. Jesus raised the question of His ascension to unbelievers. **(Jn 6:62)**
 - 2. This event would be a powerful proof of everything He had been saying about being with the Father before His birth. **(Jn 8:54-58)**
 - 3. How many confess they believe this event? What should it mean to them?
 - 4. Jesus expected His followers to clearly believe in His ascension after His resurrection but before they witness the event. **(Jn 20:16-18)**
 - a. This was to be a very difficult thing for them to grasp.
 - b. Just as His death and resurrection was hard to accept, the ascension of Christ would give great power to His disciples.
- C. Two viewpoints of the clouds of ascension: Earth and Heaven
 - 1. There is only a brief reference to this event in the gospel accounts. **(Mk 16:19-20; Lk 24:50-53)**
 - 2. The greatest detail of the viewpoint of earth is found in the book of Acts. **(Acts 1:4-11)**
 - a. There had been others who ascended to heaven like Enoch and Elijah, but not like Jesus did! The disciples no doubt were filled with wonder and fear at what would come next. Jesus was gone!
 - b. They could remember His promise to be “with them,” but how? **(Mt 28:20)**

- c. They would soon have the “promise of the father” and know the answer.
- 3. There is also a viewpoint of this event from heaven! (**Dan 7:13-14**)
 - a. Here we see a great scene of triumph. Jesus is like a victorious general similar to the Roman legions of old, returning home from victory with the spoils. (**Psa 68:18-19; Eph 4:8-13**)
 - b. Imagine the scene as Jesus approached the gates of heaven! (**Psa 24:7-10**)
 - c. Do we realize that Jesus gave these gifts to us so that we might work in His kingdom? (**Eph 4:16**)
 - d. We serve a living, reigning Lord!

III. The significance of these events

- A. Jesus is Lord of all.
 - 1. He is now at the right hand of God. (**Rom 8:34**)
 - 2. He is our absolute ruler. (**Phil 2:9-11; Col 3:1-3**)
 - 3. Do you believe that Jesus ascended to heaven? It is folly to reject His invitation.
- B. The Bible is inspired.
 - 1. Some try to explain the writers as gullible but honest men.
 - 2. How do you explain Peter’s claim? (**2 Pt 1:16, 20-21**)
 - 3. Would a man live his life for a lie and then die for it? (**1 Cor 15:30-32**)
 - 4. Angels desire to look into this book. Do you? (**1 Pt 1:10-12**)
 - 5. You can trust this world delivered from our ascended Lord.
- C. Jesus is working on our behalf now.
 - 1. Jesus understands what we are experiencing. (**Heb 4:15-16**)
 - a. Because of this He can represent us before the Father.
 - b. Have you ever needed someone to act on your behalf?
 - 2. Jesus is presently active in our forgiveness.
 - a. He presents His blood as our advocate. (**1 Jn 2:1**)
 - b. He acts as our mediator. (**1 Tim 2:5-6**)
 - 3. Jesus is now our active high priest. (**Heb 2:17-18; 4:14**)
- D. Jesus is coming again. (**Acts 1:11**)
 - 1. Do you ever wonder what it was like to see what the apostles saw? You will know one day!
 - 2. Even the enemies of Christ will see this event. (**Rev 1:7**)
 - 3. If these things are so, then what should our attitude be? (**2 Pt 3:9-11**)
- E. Because of this living hope I have a changed life. (**2 Pt 1:3-5**)
 - 1. I can “accept joyfully” the loss of things. (**Heb 10:32-25**)
 - 2. I willingly change my life because of the certainty of heaven! (**1 Jn 3:1-3**)

IV. If we go to heaven we will be tested

- A. God will always bring forth His people through a series of tests. (**Zech 13:9**)
 - 1. These people heard the same preaching but only some believed. (**Acts 13:48; 14:1-2; 28:24-29**)
 - 2. There were 12 spies but only 2 claimed the land could be taken. (**Num 32:12**)
- B. Some doubt that the Bible could be God’s word because of the different reactions

men have to it.

1. God told us ahead of time that only a few would find the truth. **(Mt 7:13-14)**
2. By design God has given a message that would cause the proud to reject it and the humble to find it. **(1 Cor 1:22-29)**

C. Jesus plainly stated that God's truth must be carefully pursued. **(Jn 7:17; Mt 13:10-15)**

1. Potentially anyone can find the truth of God, but those who do will have to dig deep and not be easily discouraged by the tests God places before them.
2. Do you have what it takes? Can you find the truth and keep the truth because you have a love for the truth?

D. While God gave powerful evidence, there were many who did not believe in Jesus. **(Mt 16:13-16)**

1. Jesus did not give men the kind of evidence they demanded but rather gave them sufficient evidence to believe. **(Jn 5:38-40)**

2. When men demanded signs, Jesus gave them something else. **(Jn 2:18-22)**

3. Consider the tests men had to pass in order to believe.

- a. The test of alleged contradictions

1. How could Jesus be from Nazareth and still be the Messiah? **(Jn 1:45-46; Mic 5:2)**

2. Did Jesus fulfill the prophecy? How would one come to know this?

3. Those who are quick to turn away will never find God's truth!

- b. The test of knowledgeable, influential men. **(Jn 7:45-49)**

1. These popular men did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

2. How many stopped listening at the words of these men?

- c. The test of Jesus teaching and doing "hard" things.

1. Jesus taught without apology in a way to drive off the shallow. **(Jn 6:61-69)**

2. Jesus at times responded in a way that would have caused the sensitive to quit. **(Mt 15:22-28)**

3. Blessed are those who persist and pass the test of truth.

E. Even after we believe God will test us!

1. Men who begin serving God will face additional tests of their faith.

- a. Abraham could plainly tell us that. **(Heb 11:17-19)**

- b. Abraham was tested and God proclaimed his grade! **(Gen 22:12)**

"I will welcome happiness, for it enlarges my heart; yet I will endure sadness, for it opens my soul. I will acknowledge rewards, for they are my due; yet I will welcome obstacles, for they are my challenge."

2. Jesus expects His disciples to follow all things He commands. **(Mt 28:20)**

- a. He made no exceptions to those who were required to make a great sacrifice. **(Mt 19:20-25)**

- b. That is a requirement of all who would be His disciple. **(Lk 14:33)**

3. We are tested in our morals. **(Eph 5:3)**

- a. We must stand against those who are in adulterous marriages.
(Mt 19:9-10)
- b. As God's people we are to be separate! (Rev 18:4; 2 Cor 6:16-18)
- 4. We are tested as a local church. (2 Cor 2:9)
 - a. We must not let one or two outspoken men cause us to pull back from obeying.
 - b. While conflict may come, we will be faithful to God.
 - c. Do not be dismayed when such tests come! We can pass it.
(Acts 15:1-2,22)

Conclusion: Are these events in the life of Christ a foundation or a curious facts?

- A. Have you ever wanted to know of an event before its time? What a blessing to know and prepare for Christ's return!
- B. There are two groups in the world. Where are you? (2 Thess 1:7-10)

Dying Words of Atheists

Charters: "I would gladly give thirty thousand pounds to have proved there is no hell."

Hobbs: "I say again, if I had the whole world at my disposal, I would give it to live one day. I am about to take a leap into the dark."

Ingersoll: "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul, from hell, if there be a hell."

Tom Paine (He wrote *The Age of Reason*, predicting it would replace the Bible. The same presses used to print his book were later used to print Bibles.): "Stay with me, for God's sake. I cannot bear to be left alone. O Lord, help me. O God, what have I done to suffer so much? What will become of me hereafter?"

Caesar Borgia: "While I lived, I provided for everything but death; now I must die and am unprovided to die."

Voltaire (He predicted that in less than 100 years the Bible would be discarded and Christianity swept from the earth. Like Tom Paine, his press was used to print Bibles, and his home was used by the *The International Bible Society* as a depot to store Bibles before shipment.): "I am abandoned by God and man; I will give you half of what I am worth, if you will give me six month's life," to the doctor treating him. When told it could not be done, he continued, "Then I shall die and go to hell."

Sir Thomas Scott: "Until this moment I thought there was neither a God nor a hell. Now I know and feel there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty."