

Easter II: Jn. 20:19-31: Jesus' Two Appearances to the Eleven

1. This passage is paralleled at Lk. 24:36-49 and Mk. 16:14-18 which ought be read. It was late in the evening. The group was composed of the disciples, those with them and the two Emmaus disciples. They were eating.
2. Vs. 19: Mark has only ὅσπερον. Luke agrees remarkably with the first gen. abs. which gives time of day (late) and day of the week. ἐκεῖνη τῆ μιᾶ strongly emphasizes that it is the same as in vs. 1. By the way, higher critics claim that John compresses the Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost into one day, vss. 17-23. Ridiculous. Context prohibits this. The second gen. abs. tells us under what circumstances they were gathered together. Quite obviously, they must have unlocked the doors to let the Emmaus disciples in. ὅπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ is a subordinate clause modifying ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς etc. The fact that "doors" is pl. (inner and outer), and that the perf. part. is used, shows clearly that they had locked themselves inside. We know not exactly where they were. Likely in the place where the women originally found them. διὰ-Ἰουδαίων, a causal phrase, obviously modifies the second gen. abs. Ἰουδαίων is both subjective gen. (the Jews caused the fear) and objective gen. (the fear is now directed toward the Jews). On this phrase cf. 7:13; 9:22; 14:27; 16:2-4; 19:38. Besides showing how utterly the Jews rejected Jesus, it clearly shows the disciples' lack of faith at this time. After the Ascension and Pentecost they are joyful and fearless. ἦλθεν καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον clearly exemplifies what we call the genus majestaticum. Cf. Hendriksen, JOHN, pp. 458-9 and Lenski, JOHN, 1364-6, on the difference between Reformed and Lutheran theology. To this day the Reformed reject what frightened the disciples, the wonders involved in Jesus' State of Exaltation. Hendriksen rejects Calvin's explanation of Jesus' coming through a window. But he rejects this that Jesus' human nature now fully used the attributes of the divine nature. Oddly enough, Lenski concludes by stating that even in heaven we will not comprehend this but Hendriksen says that we will. Read the two passages side by side. The disciples knew that Jesus was alive but this sudden appearance filled them with wonder and awe. Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. This is not just an empty greeting. This is full Gospel. It is an absolution. The greeting is in keeping with the Greeter. The first thing He does is to forgive their sins and declare that all is well.
3. Vs. 20: These items prove His suffering and resurrection. They are "visible" Gospel if we may call them that. The God-man shows them all His wounds. οὖν in 19 is narrative. But here, in 20, it is inferential. Because He spoke and showed, the disciples were glad. Most translations consider ἰδόντες temporal, "when". Robt. and Lenski make it causal. Beck is not quite correct: "delighted to see". The rejoicing was subsequent to the seeing. The use of τὸν κύριον is significant, their heavenly, divine Lord. Lenski remarks: "Jesus appeared again and again, intensifying faith and joy, until nothing could ever disturb the solid certainty."
4. Vs. 21: οὖν in the sense of "next". πάλιν, a second time. First He actually bestowed the only peace to them personally. Now He does it again for their important office, not just to the disciples, for more than the disciples were present. καθὼς-καὶ "just as-so". Note juxtaposition of subjects ὁ πατήρ and ἐγὼ. ἀπέσταλκεν and πέμπω are synonyms but there is a difference. Jesus was sent to suffer, die and rise for all men. Christians are sent with the message which is as valid as if Christ were dealing with men Himself.
5. Vs. 22: ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει aorist and historic present are difficult to explain grammatically but the intended sense is that He actually and very personally bestowed a gift through His Word. Note the repetition of αὐτοῖς in 19, 20, 21, 22, all of them, not just the disciples. The gift is given through the command Λάβετε. The gift is the Holy Spirit for a specific purpose. They already had the Holy

Spirit for they were believers. And this is not the same bestowal of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost for that is called "power from on high". On Pentecost 3,000 were added to the Church. Here in Jn. 20:22 Jesus bestows the Office of the Keys, a permanent bestowal on all Christians. Cf. Mt. 16:19; 18:17-20. Read Luther's Catechism on the Office of the Keys.

6. Vs. 23: RSV, NEB, NASB, Beck, NIV make this read (twice) "If you. . ." KJV "Whose soever" is better. It is not conditional. It means "of whomever" and note that it is plural. There are only two classes of people, those who are to be absolved and those who are not to be absolved. Christians are to apply the two keys according to God's Word and will. ἀφήτε is an effective aorist. Lenski rightly, as often in his commentaries, quotes Ps. 103:12; Micah 7:19; Is. 43:25. Forgiven sins are buried and gone. τῶς is the possessive use of the article. ἀφέωνται is the reading preferred by Nestle and UBS Textual Commentary. The latter considers it the more difficult reading. The sins have already been lastingly forgiven. Christians merely declare what is already true. αὐτοῖς is a beautiful example of the dative of advantage. κρατήτε is the pres. subj. The "retaining" is a constant. And κεκράτηνται is perf. pass. as is ἀφέωνται. They are analogical. Jesus strengthened the faith of the disciples first by absolving them and then by giving them the commission of the Office of the Keys. Lenski prefers the pres. pass. ἀφένται rather than the perf. pass. ἀφέωνται. That is likely because he denies objective or general justification. Cf. his commentary on Rom. 5:15-21; II Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:14. At Col. 1:14, where "redemption" and "forgiveness of sins" are in apposition to each other Lenski says: "The Scriptures never identify the ransoming with the remission." Then he wrongly applies II Cor. 5:19-21 and Jn. 20:23. His position is that of the old Ohio Synod during the Predestination Controversy. In opposition to the Missouri Synod, Ohio denied objective justification. But on Calvary Christ attained redemption, justification, reconciliation, forgiveness of sins for all men. Christians have the Office of the Keys. They merely declare and announce what is already true for the repentant sinner. Read Walther, LAW AND GOSPEL, pp. 168-176. To all Christians Christ says λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον etc. They exercise privately the Office of the Keys. The pastor, by virtue of his call, exercises it publicly for the specific congregation to which he is called.
7. Vs. 24: δὲ is clearly "but". εἰς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα in apposition to the subject, is made prominent. μετ' "with" in the sense of "among". Why he was absent is not known. But to absent oneself from Christian brethren in a time of crisis leads to trouble. Christians assemble for mutual comfort in Christ. Hebr. 10:25.
8. Vs. 25: οὖν is "therefore" meaning "because he had been absent". ἔλεγον is impf. of continued or repeated action. Brown suggests that it is also conative "they tried to tell him". οἱ ἄλλοι is at least the ten, perhaps more considering the parallel in Luke. 'Εωρόκαμεν is perf. act. "have seen" with lasting results. They believed. And the use of τὸν κῆριον is to be noted. They use it in the fullest sense as did Mary in vs. 18. Cf. I Cor. 9:1; I Jn. 1:1. In a future more vivid condition, Thomas lays down three conditions. If not met, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω, a firm or categorical denial. Note τύπον-τόπον, an alliteration. NEB and Hendriksen translate "mark-place". "Mark caused by the nails--place where the nails were." Thomas was not just doubting. Thomas would not believe. And in this state he speaks in a superior, demanding fashion. He was not so "gullible" as were the rest, he maintained.
9. Vs. 26: The first Καὶ is narrative "now". Note the subparagraph. "Eight days" is inclusive time-computation. We would say "seven days later". By the way, why the disciples had not yet gone to Galilee (Mk. 16:7) is not known. Ylvisaker says: "None of them could summon the courage necessary for such a journey." Lenski remarks: "As far as making the start for Galilee is concerned, the safest view is that the disciples awaited specific directions from the Lord." In any case, their waiting in Jerusalem was providential, for it afforded opportunity to retrieve unbelieving Thomas.

Jesus cared much for Peter who had denied Him, Mary Magdalene, from whom He had driven seven evil spirits, and Thomas who would not believe. ἔσω NASB "inside" RSV "in the house" NEB "in the room". The second καὶ "and this time". Note the repetition of μετ' from vs. 24. The μαθηταὶ are identical to vs. 19. Again we have an absolute but it has special meaning for Thomas.

10. Vs. 27: εἶτα "then" in the sense of "first of all". Jesus condescendingly meets all demands made by Thomas in vs. 25. The commands are almost word for word the same as Thomas' demands. Thomas ended with a categorical denial. Jesus ends with a prohibition. This display of omniscience in the human nature of Jesus must have impressed Thomas deeply, plus the fact that Jesus' human nature now fully used the omnipresence of the divine nature. Did Thomas actually feel Jesus' wounds? We know not. But we know what I Jn. 1:1 says. Did he kneel or prostrate himself before Jesus? We know not but we know what he said in vs. 28. ἄπιστος-πιστός are antonyms. How translate μή γίνου? NEB "be unbelieving no longer" NIV "stop doubting". In any case, Jesus conquers unbelief by His Word. With the prohibition comes the power to believe.
11. Vs. 28: To understand Thomas' answer as a mere exclamation of surprise "My God!" is blasphemous in view of the context. The words are, of course, an exclamation, but, at the same time, an address (vocative) and a humble confession, confession of sin and confession of faith. He uses κύριος as did Mary and the other disciples. He recognizes this man Jesus as true God. The two μου are beautiful examples of the genitive of relationship. Cf. Mt. 27:46. By the way, if Jesus were not true God He surely would have rejected Thomas' confession.
12. Vs. 29: The commentators and translations are divided as to whether Jesus' first words in 29 are a statement (KJV, NEB, NIV) or a question (RSV, NASB, Beck). In either case, what Jesus is really criticizing is not merely "seeing" but the fact that Thomas categorically rejected the witness of the other disciples. When the women told the disciples, they did not make the demands which Thomas made. μακάριος and its cognates (μακαρίζω, μακαρισμός) always denote the blessedness of the believer in Christ. καὶ is adversative "but" "and yet". πιστεύσαντες is "have believed" (KJV, NASB, NIV, Beck) not "believe" (RSV).
13. Vs. 30: μὲν in 30 balances δὲ in 31. The many signs which Jesus actually performed are contrasted with those which have been recorded. The word οὖν introduces what has been called the conclusion, stating the purpose of the Gospel of John. (See note below.) καὶ "also" in the sense of "additional", explained in the subordinate clause. This Gospel records six great signs of Jesus. Many have not been recorded. The many were performed "in the presence of the disciples". This is the only occurrence of the word ἐνώπιον in this Gospel. ἔστιν γεγραμμένα is periphrastic "have not lastingly been recorded." βιβλίῳ is, of course, the Gospel of John. The signs spoken of in 30 and 31 do not refer to proofs (τεκμήρια, Acts 1:3) of His Resurrection, but those performed throughout His life beginning with the first miracle in Cana. Do they include His Resurrection? Yes. But it is not called that here, because it was not performed "in the presence of His disciples."
14. Vs. 31: ταῦτα, the six great σημεῖα in the Gospel of John. We agree with Lenski: "It would be misleading to regard σημεῖα as in any sense being in contrast with 'the words' of Jesus. The ἔργα are at times contrasted with the oral testimony, as in 10:37,38, but even then the oral testimony is attested by the works. . . . It is John's Gospel in particular which connects the signs with the discourses of Jesus. . . . The signs (or works) form the basis and the background without which the discourses would hang in the air." In other words, do not consider the σημεῖα as something apart from Jesus' Word. δὲ is plainly "but". γέγραπτα "have lastingly been recorded." The Word of the Lord stands forever. Now follows an important purpose clause. The sole purpose of the recording

is the gift of faith to believe in the person of the Messiah, the Son of God. This purpose clause is followed by a second purpose clause. πιστεύοντες denotes means "by constantly believing". The pres. subjunctive ἐχητε is significant. Life is the Christian's possession now already. ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ "through His revelation". ὄνομα is the man-ward side of God. That which God has revealed of Himself to man. That consists, first and foremost, of redemption, salvation, eternal life through Jesus Christ. Is the first verb for "believe", in this vs., present or aorist subjunctive? It is a difficulty. The UBS Textual Commentary reads πιστεῦ[σ]ητε which means that they cannot decide. If the pres. subj. be read it means "grow in faith". If the aor. subj. be read it means either "come to faith" or "truly believe". These notes suggest that if the aor. be read it means "truly believe".

15. Much has been written as to whether the Gospel of John ends here or at the end of chapter 21. These notes suggest that 21 is neither addition, epilogue, appendix or whatever. There are two passages (20:30,31 and 21:24,25) which bring the book to a conclusion. What they have in common: God has not told us everything. He needn't. Wherein they differ: 20:31 gives us the purpose of the book. 21:24 is testimonial of a testimony by people whom we cannot now identify.