

The Gospel of John 20:14-31

I Appearing to the Seekers and Ascending to the Father

- A. On the day of His resurrection the Lord ascended to the Father. This was a secret Ascension, the ultimate fulfillment of the going predicted in 16:7. It occurred forty Days prior to His public ascension, which took place before the eyes of the disciples (Acts 1:9-11). On the day of resurrection, early in the morning He ascended to satisfy the Father, and late in the evening He returned to the disciples (v.19). The freshness of His resurrection must be first for the Father's enjoyment, as in the type the firstfruit of the harvest was brought first to God.
- B. Previously, the most intimate term the Lord had used in reference to His disciples was "friends" (15:14-15). But after His resurrection He began to call them brothers, for through His resurrection His disciples were regenerated (1Pet. 1:3) with the divine life, which had been released by His life-imparting death, as indicated in 12:24. He was the one grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died and grew up to bring forth many grains for the producing of the loaf, which is His Body (1Cor.10:17). He was the Father's only Son, the Father's individual expression. Through His death and resurrection the Father's only begotten became the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom.8:29). His many brothers are the many sons of God and are the assembly (Heb.2:10-12), a corporate expression of God the Father in the Son. This is God's ultimate intention. The many brothers are the propagation of the Father's life and the multiplication of the Son in the divine life. Hence, in the Lord's resurrection God's eternal purpose is fulfilled
- C. Through His life-imparting death and resurrection, the Lord made His disciples one with Him. Therefore, His Father is the Father of His disciples, and His God is the God of His disciples. In His resurrection they have the Father's life and God's divine nature, just as He does. In making them His brothers, He has imparted the Father's life and God's divine nature into them. By making His Father and His God theirs, He has brought them into His position—the position of the Son—before the Father and God. Thus, in life and nature inwardly and in position outwardly they are the same as the Lord, with whom they have been united.

II Coming as the Spirit to be Breathed into the Believers

- A. This was a fulfillment of the Lord's promise in 16:22. Now they rejoiced because they saw the newborn child (16:21), who was the resurrected Lord, born in His resurrection as the Son of God (Acts 13:33). The Lord fulfilled His promise and came back to His disciples, bringing them five blessings: 1) His presence, 2) His peace, 3) His sending, His commission (v.21), 4) the Holy Spirit (v.22), and 5) His authority, with which they could represent Him (v.23).
- B. This was the Spirit expected in 7:39 and promised in 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-8,13. Hence, the Lord's breathing of the Holy Spirit into the disciples was the fulfillment of His promise of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter.
 - 1. This fulfillment differs from the one in Acts 2:1-4, which was the fulfillment of the Father's promise in Luke 24:49. In Acts 2 the Spirit as a rushing, violent wind came as power upon the disciples for their work (Acts 1:8).
 - 2. Here the Spirit as the breath was breathed as life into the disciples for their life. By breathing the Spirit into the disciples, the Lord imparted Himself into them as life and everything. Thus all that He had spoken in chs.14—16 could be fulfilled.
 - 3. As falling into the ground to die and growing out of the ground transformed the grain of wheat into another form, one that is new and living, so the death and resurrection of the Lord transfigured Him from the flesh into the Spirit. As the last Adam in the flesh, through the process of death and resurrection, He became a life-giving Spirit (1Cor.15:45).
 - 4. As He is the embodiment of the Father, so the Spirit is the realization, the reality, of Him. It is as the Spirit that:
 - a) He is received into His believers and flows out of them as rivers of living water (7:38-39).
 - b) Through His death and resurrection He came back to the disciples, entered into them as their Comforter, and began to abide in them (14:16-17).
 - c) He can live in the disciples and enable them to live by and with Him (14:19).
 - d) He can abide in the disciples and enable them to abide in Him (14:20; 15:4-5).
 - e) He can come with the Father to His lover and make an abode with him (14:23).
 - f) He can cause all that He is and has to be fully realized by the disciples (16:13-16).
 - g) He came to meet with His brothers as the assembly to declare the Father's name to them and to praise the Father in their midst (Heb.2:11-12).
 - h) He can send His disciples for His commission, with Himself as life and everything to them, in the same way that the Father sent Him (v.21). They are thus qualified to represent Him with His authority in the fellowship of His Body (v.23) for the carrying out of His commission.
- C. After His resurrection the Lord came to meet with His disciples, starting from the evening of this first day. Thus, in the Lord's resurrection the matter of meeting with the saints is crucial. Mary the Magdalene met the Lord personally in the morning and obtained the blessing (vv.16-18), but she still needed to be in the meeting with the saints in the evening to meet the Lord in a corporate way to obtain more and greater blessings (vv.19-23). Thomas missed the first meeting that the Lord held with His disciples after His resurrection, and he missed all the blessings as well. However, he compensated for it by attending the second meeting (vv. 25-28).

III Meeting with the Believers

- A. After the Lord came in v.19, eight days before, there is no plain word or hint in John's record that the Lord left the disciples. Actually, He stayed with them, though they were not conscious of His presence. Hence, His coming in v.26 was actually His manifestation, His appearing. Before His death the Lord was in the flesh, and His presence, which is more available, prevailing, precious, rich, and real than His visible presence. In His resurrection this dear presence of His was just the Spirit, whom He had breathed into them and who would be with them all the time.
- B. This Gospel proves strongly and purposely that the man Jesus is the very God (1:1-2; 5:17-18; 10:30-33;14:9-11). "The Christ" is the title of the Lord according to His office, His mission. "The Son of God" is His title according to His person. His person is a matter of God's life, and His mission is a matter of God's work. He is the Son of God to be the Christ of God. He works for God by the life of God that man, by believing in Him, may have God's life to become God's many sons and work by God's life to build the corporate Christ (1Cor.12:12), thus fulfilling God's purpose regarding His eternal building.