

16th April 2017 Easter Sunday Communion 10.30 am.

The Jesus we never knew x16. LOOKING CLOSELY AT JESUS.

Explanation of what the Reflection will involve. JTH

PLAY: 4.31 mins. Song and visuals on you tube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlKrUPk4keo&feature=share>

Behold the man – Imperial – sung by the tenor Jim Murray. Art work by Jan Pienkowski.

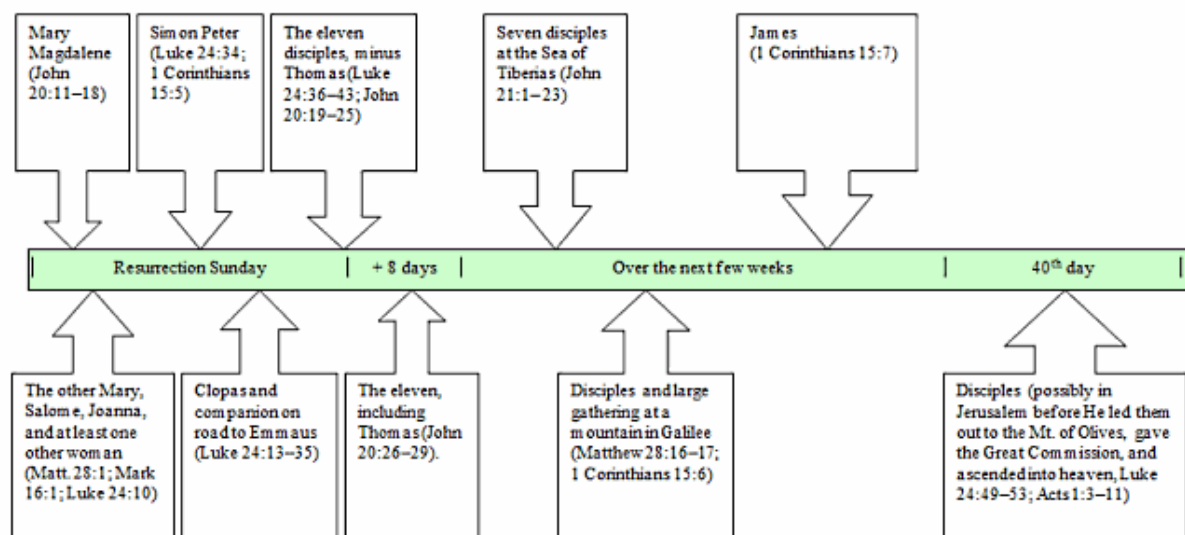
“Behold the man” - Ecce homo, Latin words spoken by Pontius Pilate as Jesus lead out following a scourging, and mocking - wearing the crown of thorns. John 19: 5.

In this you tube the song prevails upon to ***“look at him and then you’ll understand”***.

There is an imperative in the song to stop, lift up our downcast eyes and look at the one who has been pierced! (*John 19: 37 quoting Zechariah 12: 10*).

The 2 disciples as they travelled on the road out to Emmaus (Luke 24) had **down cast eyes**...they didn’t recognise Jesus until he broke bread. (See Easter Sunday 2016 what a difference a day makes). In their despair, they were unable to see the Risen Jesus – how often do we really take to look at and get to fully know Jesus. **Acts 1: 3 tells us that Jesus made post resurrection appearances for 40 days – 6 weeks before his Ascension.**

Timeline of the Post-Resurrection Appearances



READ John 20: 19 – 29.

On the Sunday evening of resurrection day and a week later Jesus appeared to the Disciples. Thomas had not seen the LORD the first time and told the others *v25 unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in his side I will not believe.* Jesus when he appeared the second time behind the locked door said to Thomas:

V27 Put your finger here, and look at my hands, then stretch out your hand and put it in my side.

Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God".

V29 Do you believe because you see me? How happy (blessed-makarios) are those who believe without seeing me. Stop your doubting and believe!

Even TODAY people may say to us: unless I see Jesus physically I won't believe that Jesus is alive or I won't believe that he physically rose from the dead unless I touch him. What do we say to them?

Straw poll: stick your hand up if: 1. You think Thomas did put his hand in Jesus' side. 2. Thomas did not put his hand in Jesus side. 3. Put your hand up if we don't know. Result: equal nos. thought 1 and 2 and a few chose 3 and quite a lot didn't vote. What does this tell us about ourselves and background and personality type? Well – we really don't know and I think we should not be definitive since the Gospel doesn't tell us.

Commentators have noted that John avoids saying whether Thomas actually did "thrust" his hand in. Before the [Protestant Reformation](#) the usual belief, reflected in artistic depictions, was that he had done so, which most Catholic writers continued to believe, while Protestant writers often thought that he had not.

Protestant theologians emphasized Jesus' statement of the superiority of "faith alone". The Catholic interpretation was that, although Jesus asserts the superiority of those who have faith without physical evidence, he was nonetheless willing to show Thomas his wound, and let him feel it. This was used by theologians as biblical encouragement for the use of physical experiences such as [pilgrimages](#), veneration of [relics](#) and ritual in reinforcing Christian beliefs. Quoted from Wikipedia.

Do people see Jesus physically since his Ascension? There may well be visions or dreams (waking and sleeping) of Jesus that some have but I have not met any person who claims to have seen the resurrected Jesus. But I have met hundreds of people who like me believe Jesus bodily rose from the dead and that we meet with Jesus on a daily basis and experience him as a friend and LORD. And yes, we are blessed to believe without seeing – full of great joy.

The Genuiness of our Christian Faith in Jesus and his resurrection will be proved in the long run ***on the Day when Jesus is revealed. 1 Peter 1: 7 – 9.***

You love him, although you have not seen him. So, you rejoice with a great and glorious joy which words cannot express, because you are receiving the salvation of your souls, which is the purpose of your faith in him.

To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for – to be certain of the things we cannot see...No one can please God without faith. (Hebrews 11: 1& 6)

Walk by faith not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5: 7)

God is invisible (clear teaching of scripture that no one can see God and live – Gen 32: 22-30; Ex 24: 9 – 11) but also scripture teaches that the invisible God was and is made visible in Jesus). God is Spirit John 4: 24 and worshipped in Spirit and in truth.

Jesus was well aware that human beings prefer physical sightings to operating faith and trust in God. *Unless you see signs and wonders you won't believe. John 4: 48.*

So what is my faith based on? How can my faith in God grow?

- The reliability of the Bible witness as to how the disciples were changed – *John 21: 31 These things have been written so that you may believe that JESUS is...*
- The testimony of others over 2,000 years and even today of the experience and power of Jesus
- My own experience of the reality and power of Jesus – is historical evidence even if not scientific proof

There is a clear need to **examine the scriptures** carefully especially the Gospels as a way of knowing Jesus. On the Emmaus Road (*Luke 24: 45*) “*Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...continued to v49 about a suffering Messiah*). *John 20: 9 They still did not understand the Scripture that said he must rise from death. The help of God is needed to see and understand spiritual things.*

“**Behold the man**” – take time to look closely at the life and person of Jesus. Learn to contemplate Jesus – spiritually – in prayer and meditation on Jesus of Scripture. “In Spirit” – reflect on his glory – **Revelation of the glory of risen and ascended Jesus. Holy Spirit leading us into all truth.**

- Fellowship around the **LORD's Table at Communion** considering the sacrifice and victory of Jesus is essential in understanding Jesus and making him known to others. As Christians who are Baptists we eat Communion together and around the Table we recognise Jesus as the bread is broken and the wine drunk. We contemplate the emblems as symbols of the BODY OF CHRIST – today we will hold the bread and the cup in our hands and take time to let the Spirit speak to us. (Prayer from *Gathering for Worship pp40 – 42*)

Roman Catholics and some High Anglicans reflect upon the “consecrated wafer” held within a MONSTRANCE. Some Christians would see a danger of idolatry here in worshipping the wafer/ monstrance but those who contemplate would suggest they look beyond the wafer in their contemplation and reflect upon Jesus Christ – his life and suffering. Personally, I find it powerful to hold the bread and wine in my hands and



reflect using those symbols rather than something I cannot touch.
Monstrance picture.

