

Jesus Appeared to His Apostles

Luke 24:36-43 and John 20:19-25

About 8 pm Sunday the seventeenth of Nisan

DIG: Why were the apostles fearful at that time? How is **shalom aleikhem** a good summary of the Gospel? How does this relate to being sent? Why are the talmidim having such difficulty believing: Not using their eyes? Not enough evidence? Not enough faith? Too much joy? Why was it necessary for them to see Jesus and not a ghost? How does Yeshua help them believe He had risen?

REFLECT: How do you need to have Yeshua's **shalom** in your life? In some relationship? In some inner fear? In your work? Why is it important to you that Christ's mission was anticipated far beforehand in the TaNaKh? What hopes in the TaNaKh for Messiah are especially significant for you? How would you live differently if the Good Shepherd was not currently reigning in heaven, but was only another noble martyr? In light of your circumstances, where is the "mission field" the Lord has sent you to? Who are the "Ten Most Wanted" on your prayer list?

Before the day of Jesus' resurrection had ended, His followers began to congregate in what was probably a familiar meeting place (Luke 24:33). The doors were closed and locked in anticipation of persecution from the Sanhedrin. John includes this detail to illustrate for the first time the different nature of Christ's resurrected body. Unlike Lazarus - who after his resurrection lived with the same limitations, suffered illness and injury, and eventually died again - Yeshua's resurrected body, while still completely human, possessed supernatural qualities. He was raised to a new kind of life, never to die again. And one day we will also have resurrection bodies (see my commentary on Revelation Ff - **Blessed and Holy are those Who Have Part in the First Resurrection**).

On the evening of that first day of the week, the apostles were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders. The Church began with a group of frightened men in a second-floor room in Jerusalem. They were concerned that the Sanhedrin would not be satisfied with the death of their leader but would pursue them as well. Though they'd marched with Jesus for three-and-a-half years, they now sat . . . afraid. They were timid soldiers, reluctant warriors, speechless messengers. Daring to dream that the Master had left them some word, some plan, some direction, they came back. But just as someone mumbles, "It's no use," they heard a noise. Jesus Himself suddenly came and stood among them. Then they heard a voice. He said to them: **Shalom aleikhem** or **peace be with you** (Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19)! **This was His fifth appearance after the resurrection.**

The One betrayed sought His betrayers. What did He say to them? Not "What a bunch of losers!" Not "I told you so." No "Where-were-you-when-I-needed-you?" speeches. However, simply one phrase: **Peace be with you.** The very thing they didn't have was the very thing He offered: **Shalom.**¹⁶⁷⁵

Luke tells us that His appearance was so inexplicable by conventional means, the apostles were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. To prove to them that He was not a ghost, He said to them: **Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at My [wrists] and My pierced feet. It is I Myself! Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.** When He had said this, He showed them His [wrists] and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, He asked them: **Do you have anything here to eat?** They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their presence (Luke 24:37-43). Then they believed it was Him and the talmidim were overjoyed when they saw the Lord (John 20:20). Apparently people in the first century had trouble believing in a physical resurrection from the dead. Heretics solved the problem by coming up many alternatives to the resurrection. Rabbi Sha'ul dealt with this problem in **First Corinthians 15.** But Yeshua dealt with it by demonstrating that He was not merely a ghost, or a vague "spiritual" entity, but fully present physically, with special capacities not available to people who had not been resurrected, such as becoming invisible (Luke 24:31) and passing through walls (Luke 24:36-37; Yochanan 20:19-20).¹⁶⁷⁵

At this point Yeshua gives them the first of three final commissions. Again Jesus said: **Peace be with you!** He tells them three things. First, He gives them authoritative ministry, sent by Jesus Himself. **As the Father has sent Me, I AM sending you** into the world with My message of Good News.

Secondly, He breathed on them and said, **"Receive the Ruach HaKodesh"** (John 20:21-22). They did not receive the Holy Spirit in the B'rit Chadashah sense because that will not happen until the festival of Shavu'ot (Acts 2:1-4). Up until the birth of the messianic community, Shavu'ot commemorated the anniversary of the day ADONAI gave the Torah to the entire nation of Isra'el assembled at Mount Sinai. But from Acts 2 onward, believers commemorate the birth of the Church. So when Messiah breathed the Spirit on them, they received Him in the sense that the righteous of the TaNaKh did (Psalm 51:11) so that they could comprehend the Lord's teaching in the next forty days before Jesus ascended back to heaven (Acts 1:9).

Thirdly: **If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven (Yochanan 20:23).** This verse has been used by the Roman Catholic Church as the biblical basis for the priest's authority to forgive sins. But nothing could be further from the truth. This is an important verse, but it is greatly misunderstood. It does not mean that the power to **forgive sins** was ever given to any individual or group; it means that the power to proclaim the Gospel was given. And along with it, the power to warn that forgiveness is not open to lost sinners who refuse to repent.

So **the apostles** were granted authority - the same authority given to all believers who are indwelt with/by/in **the Holy Spirit**. **Yeshua** commissioned and empowered believers to proclaim **His** message of forgiveness. The phrases translated **their sins are forgiven** and **they are not forgiven** are in the passive voice and the perfect tense, describing an action already taken by **ADONAI** with continuing results. In other words, **God** has *already* **forgiven the sins** of believers. **If anyone** responded in faith to the Gospel message (**First Corinthians 15:3-4**), **the talmidim** had the authority to pronounce them **forgiven** of **their sins**.

Nowhere in the book of **Acts** or in the letters of Rabbi Sha'ul, **Peter** or **John** do we find any instance of an **apostle** forgiving the **sins** of **anyone**. **They** do, however, go everywhere proclaiming the forgiveness of **sins**. What is the forgiveness of **sins**? Even **Ha'Shem** cannot arbitrarily **forgive sins**. Forgiveness of **sins** comes only through the blood of **Jesus Christ**. Before the coming of **the Expected One**, forgiveness of **sins** was based on the fact that **Yeshua** would come and die. **God** saved "on credit" for the righteous of the TaNaKh until **Messiah** could come and pay the penalty. In the present day, **ADONAI** **forgives** our **sins** when we believe that **Christ** died for **them**.

How can you and I **forgive sins**? By telling the Gospel story! This is a great ministry that has been given to us. When someone turned from their sinful lifestyle and believed on **Jesus** while the earth . . . that was wonderful. But what is amazing is when you or I simply give out the Word of **God** and someone is born again (see **Bv** - **Jesus Teaches Nicodemus**). That person then becomes a **new creation in Christ**. **The old has gone and the new is here (Second Corinthians 5:17)**. What an awesome responsibility we have!¹⁶⁷⁶

Now **Thomas**, also known as **Didymus** or *the twin* (see **Cy** - **These are the Names of the Twelve Apostles**), one of the apostles, was not with them when **Jesus** came (**John 20:24**). **Thomas** may have returned to his home in Galilee. Upon his return to the **City of David**, the other talmidim told him, "**We have seen the Lord!**" But he refused to believe their testimony - including that of **Peter** and **John**. This earned him the nickname "doubting **Thomas**." It's more accurate, however, to call him pessimistic or melancholy - better yet, reflective **Thomas (Yochanan 11:16, 14:5)**.

But Thomas wanted concrete proof, not to satisfy **his** doubt but to overcome **his** hopelessness. **He said to the rest of them, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).** He said, in effect, "Risen? This is too good to be true. I will not allow **myself** to hope until **I** can be sure **my** hope will not be dashed."¹⁶⁷⁷

In our world of budgets, long-range planning and computers, don't we find it hard to trust in the unbelievable? Don't most of us tend to scrutinize life behind furrowed brows and walk with cautious steps? It's hard for us to imagine that **God** can surprise us. To make a little room for miracles today, well, it's not sound thinking.

We make the same mistake **Thomas** made: we forget that "impossible" is one of **ADONAI's** favorite words.

How about you? How is your imagination these days? When was the last time you let some of your dreams elbow out your logic? When was the last time you imagined the unimaginable? Has it been a while since you claimed **God's** promise to do **more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)**?¹⁶⁷⁸