

EPISODE 14 • PART II

Dr. John Hilton III



EASTER

- John Bytheway: 00:00:02 Welcome to part two of this week's podcast.
- Hank Smith: Let's move forward now, Dr. Hilton. I've heard you say this before that we often jump from Friday, crucifixion, to Sunday, resurrection, and we skip Saturday. But you like to talk about Saturday. Why?
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:00:21 I love Saturday because it's in the middle. So you've got yesterday's tragedy and tomorrow's triumph, but now we're in the middle. And I feel like so much of our lives, metaphorically speaking, is Saturday. Something bad has happened. Maybe it's going to be resolved. We hope it's going to be resolved, but it hasn't been resolved yet. So I love lingering for a moment with the women at the tomb.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:47 This is huge. This is not a little thing because so often when people are going through tragedy, we talk about the future. It's going to be okay because such and such. And I know we mean well. But for me personally, who has seen a lot of difficulty over the last six months, I'm not overly concerned about the future. I believe, too. I'm with you. I believe that the future is going to be great. My concern and my pain, and along with I know many others, is not that we don't believe. It's in the right now. The right now is hard. And if we don't stop and say, "The right now is hard," I think we can be too quick to just tell people it's going to be okay. It's going to be okay. Is that what I'm hearing?
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:01:36 Yeah, exactly. So, I mean, think about moments that we almost gloss over entirely, like taking Christ's body down from the cross. What did that look like? What did that feel like? Mary Magdalene's there. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is there. What's

in their hearts? They go to the tomb. He's buried. What's running through their minds? And I think a key is that they don't leave town. They stay near the tomb and they come back Sunday morning.

Hank Smith: 00:02:03

So is it okay if we move to Sunday now, John?

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:02:07

I was hoping we just have five minutes of silence on the podcast and just let us all kind of let it just marinate. No. So as we go to Sunday, I don't know exactly how everyone wants to approach this, but I do want to kind of throw out a resource that's changed the way I view the resurrection. And it's doing a side-by-side study of what Matthew, Mark, Luke and John teach about what happens at the garden and beyond, the garden tomb and beyond. And I know that you both have studied this quite a bit. And it's interesting that although the core message is the same in all the accounts, the tomb is empty. Women are the first witnesses. Jesus is alive. There are subtle differences that maybe when you start to notice them, bring out these great insights and spiritual nuggets that at least I had never noticed before.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:02:57

So again, in the show notes, I'll give you a side- by-side handout that you can use it. I think this would be a great family home evening or a good Sunday afternoon study time to just kind of carefully read what are the little subtle differences and similarities in these accounts and what do I learn from them? Because there's so much I know we'll spend some time unpacking it right now. But even if we had three hours devoted to the segment, we couldn't really unpack all there is to offer in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John's teachings of the resurrection.

Hank Smith: 00:03:28

In fact, let's start unpacking because one of my favorite things to show my students is that in the gospel of Mark, in the original gospel of Mark, you never see a resurrected Lord. If you go to the end of the gospel of Mark and you see the women that are there at the tomb. Now I've heard something, John, and you can tell me if this is incorrect or not. But in Jesus' day, women could not be legal witnesses.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:03:57

Yeah. So there are restrictions on women in terms of their ability to testify in public court settings.

Hank Smith: 00:04:04

And here the savior, I think, does it on purpose maybe to show, "Listen, here are going to be my first witnesses." I think Elder Talmage said that Jesus Christ is the greatest defender of women to ever live. And this is one indication that he doesn't care about the legality of a woman's witness. Those are going to

be his first witness is a group of women. But when you get all the way down to 16:8, it says this, "And they went out quickly and fled from the sepulcher for they trembled and were amazed. Neither said anything to any man for they were afraid." You can look right there. That is the original ending of the gospel of Mark. It just ends right there. Talk about a bad ending. And it might be a good ending for some. I've heard a lot of New Testament scholars say, "No, this is good because of dah, dah, dah, dah, dah."

- Hank Smith: 00:04:58 But for me personally, I like a nice tie the bow ending, and this is a leave you hanging ending where you're going, "What happens? What happens?" And almost as if Mark, if you had read Mark or heard Mark read to you, you might say, "I got to know what happens." It was almost left as a cliffhanger. I've always thought what if we did this as missionaries. We did a kind of a gospel of Mark approach and said, "Joseph prayed. And in the light he saw... " To find out more, please go to Jesus Christ [crosstalk 00:05:31]
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:05:31 We'll come back next week and [crosstalk 00:05:32]
- Hank Smith: 00:05:34 Because what did he see? What did he see? So it's almost as if Mark is kind of leaving them hanging there. Anything on the gospel of Mark, John, that you want to talk about?
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:05:41 So one thing that I think really is interesting, and I don't know if this is intentional or not, but throughout the gospel of Mark, there's several times where Jesus does a miracle. And then he'll say, "Don't tell anybody about it." And now here at the end, the young man at the tomb tells the women, "Go tell about Jesus." And they don't tell. It's a reversal. And I wonder if it's meant to be sort of a literary irony. And now it comes to you and I, the reader, we are left in the tomb. That's where we end in Mark. We're there. And it's kind of like, okay, well, if the women don't go tell, who's going to tell? Who's going to share the message? Who's been along for the ride the whole time? Me. So am I going to now keep the secret or am I going to go spread the good news of Jesus? So I love that short ending.
- Hank Smith: 00:06:30 Yeah, it does seem to not be a... I would say, John, I don't think this is a Mark condemning these women. He's using a literary device here. Because I'm sure these women eventually told a lot of people.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:06:45 Matthew's going to highlight that for us. Yeah. So you're right, every gospel is going to give a slightly different portrait. But I think, especially in Mark, and I like how you said that it was

probably heard. Mark was most likely a performance. People are hearing Mark, not reading it. And so now that dramatic note, I think, actually is a powerful witnessing moment for me as a disciple to say, "Okay, what am I going to do?"

- Hank Smith: 00:07:09 It is. If I watch a movie with a bad ending, it leaves me uncomfortable. Maybe that's the whole point, to leave you a bit uncomfortable and say, "You better go find out more. You better... Yeah. There's more to this than you realize." Instead of tying it all up nicely. Mark was most likely written first, right John? So let's go to the Matthew account, which has its basis most likely in the gospel of Mark.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:07:34 One little subtle difference, so we were just talking about the women at the tomb. If you look in verse eight, Matthew 28:8, it says, "They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy and did run to bring his disciples word." I love that phrase, they did run. Hank, you're a runner. John, I don't know if you're a runner. I only run if I'm being chased, which is rarely. So...
- Hank Smith: 00:07:57 You're a swimmer.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:07:59 But think about, I mean, if I had this kind of news to share, how fast, how far could I run? And I can almost feel the adrenaline in these women as they're running to share the good news of Jesus Christ. And maybe that's just something for me. Metaphorically speaking, am I running to tell people about Jesus Christ? Am I hiding my light in a bushel? And I'm like, "Oh yeah, well, this weekend, I did this on Friday, did this on Saturday." And I don't talk about church because I'm not running metaphorically speaking to tell people the good news.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:33 Yeah. Do you feel like you have good news? Because this is good news.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:08:36 This is good news.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:38 This is change your life news. And I have got to tell you. And then it seems like the author of the gospel of Matthew is saying, "Let me give you a little bit more than Mark gave you." Would you agree that he's saying, okay, those of you who are reading my account of things, I'm going to give you a little bit more, which to be a first century reader, would be really fun to get a second account. It says that Jesus meets these women and tells them that he is going to meet his brethren which I assume to be

the apostles, in Galilee, which is a three-day journey away from the tomb.

- Hank Smith: 00:09:18 And that's how Matthew is a little bit different in my point of view, in that you have him appearing... We're going to go ahead and look at Luke and John here in a second, but he's in Jerusalem. He's around that area appearing. Here. it's go to Galilee, go back home and I'll see you there. So I don't know. They're going to go back home anyway, but to go back home, having the anticipation of he's going appear is a beautiful idea. Let's go home then. Let's take the journey.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:09:49 As we think about the fact that they came and Jesus tells the women directly, "Go tell my brethren," it's interesting that the message to the apostles is coming from these women that Christ is commissioning. And oftentimes we think that revelation always comes from the top down. And it is true that we are led by a prophet and we need to follow the prophet's counsel and teaching 100%. at the same time in the history of the church, sometimes great ideas have come from other sources. [Orelia 00:10:18] Rogers has the inspiration to start the primary program. And she takes her ideas and shares it with the president of the church. And then it becomes the primary program that eventually we know and love today.
- Hank Smith: 00:10:29 The welfare program also started as a steak program. And then it came up and came to the whole church. So this has happened.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:10:39 So, and I just think it's okay for us to pause and reflect for a moment that Christ's original message as a resurrected savior is to women and that's important. And he's calling them to be witnesses to his apostles.
- Hank Smith: 00:10:53 I think that's a beautiful idea. And I oftentimes, I think we like to take latter day principles and ideas and kind of force them onto the past when we can be comfortable that things weren't exactly the way we have them today. The end of the gospel of Matthew, it doesn't seem to be focusing on, wow, he's resurrected. It seems to be focusing on the apostles, go. Go teach. Almost as if this fact that this person came back from the dead, it's just a side note to the commission to these apostles. In fact, I think in the MTC, as it was redone a few years ago, there is now a beautiful big sign in the MTC with the Great Commission of Matthew 28, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." Do you think the author of the gospel of Matthew has this in mind because the first century Christians needed to get out there and spread that message and so he's kind of telling them that?

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:11:53 Yeah, that's a clear emphasis. We've got to spread the good news. And right after that, so as you call it the Great Commission there in verses 18 and 19. And then in verse 20, at the very end, he says, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." And I think that's a powerful message to go along with the idea that when, as we're sent out to preach the gospel, Jesus is with us always. And he's saying that even as he's bidding them farewell. All right, get out of here, go teach the gospel, but I'm always with you. And actually, if you remember the very beginning of Matthew, in Matthew chapter one, when it talks about Christ being born, Matthew refers to a prophecy from Isaiah saying that his name shall be Emmanuel, meaning God with us. So here now at the beginning and end of Matthew, there is this message Jesus is with you. And I love that to think about us on the Great Commission, sharing the gospel. We're not alone. The master of the vineyard is laboring with us.

Hank Smith: 00:12:58 Oh yeah. That's that great Jacob 5 reference. And you guys both know my personality and how odd I am, but I often tell my students, well, when I was on my mission, people would ask, why can't you just leave us alone? Great. Believe what you believe. I'll believe what I believe. Why do you got to come knocking on my door? And I think as a 19 year old, I was, "Oh, I'm so sorry. Didn't mean to disturb you. We'll go our separate..." But I think now, as an old man, I would say something like, "Listen, I don't want to be here either, but you take it up with him because he asked me to." Matthew 28, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." So if you have a problem with this... I honestly wouldn't say this. But in my mind, I would be thinking, if you have a problem with this, take it up with him because it's his commission to his followers. Go and teach, go and spread the gospel.

Hank Smith: 00:13:50 So I think as a missionary, if a missionary is maybe hearing this, they might have confidence in what they're doing, that you are following the master's commission to go and teach. And yes, some people might be bothered, but he didn't say that. He didn't say, "Go and teach all nations. But don't disturb anyone."

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:14:10 And apologize when you bother [crosstalk 00:14:12]. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:14:14 This is a straightforward message.

John Bytheway: 00:14:16 I love where this is going. Now I'm excited to see, when I saw And They Did Run, I don't know. It just reminded me of in the Book of Mormon when Jesus was with them. And then he said I'm coming back tomorrow. It says there were people who were up all that night to gather others to be in the place where Jesus

said he would appear on the morrow. And I think if you knew he's going to be here tomorrow and you didn't have a phone or telegraph. All you had was your cureloms and cumoms or your horse, how hard would you work?

Hank Smith: 00:14:51 Get on the cumoms, kid. Let's go. We got to go tell everybody.

John Bytheway: 00:14:54 I love just the idea of how hard would you work to make sure your family was there? So I like that.

Hank Smith: 00:15:00 Yeah, that John, that is such a good idea. It reminds me of Luke 2. And the shepherds made haste.

John Bytheway: 00:15:06 Yeah. Right.

Hank Smith: 00:15:07 Let's go. Let's go tell everybody. Okay, let's turn our sights on the third account. Let's go to the gospel of Luke, where Luke adds a story. He says something very similar to both Matthew and Mark. If you read in Luke 24, he talks about the angels, the tomb, the women. He adds a little piece of information that we don't get in Matthew and Mark. And that's in verse 12 about Peter himself going to the sepulcher. But then we get a whole new story that we haven't heard before.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:15:37 Before we go to the new story, if I can just highlight one little question in verse five that's also unique to Luke. It's the phrase, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" is the question that the angels ask the women. And I know that you both have been to Jerusalem several times and we all enjoy going there. When I was living in Jerusalem, I would love to go to the traditional place of Christ...

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:16:04]

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:16:03 I would love to go to the traditional place of Christ's death and resurrection. I remember the last day I was so sad and I was like, "How am I going to keep coming closer to Christ when I'm back in America, and it's not the same as living in Jerusalem?" And this was the line that came to my mind. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Jesus has risen. I hope that we all get to go to Jerusalem. It's a fantastic experience, but we don't have to walk where he walked to walk closer to him now. And just that idea that he's risen and we don't need to seek him in Jerusalem per se. Great if you get the chance, but we can seek him now in our lives. I think that's a little powerful question that the angels bring out here in Luke.

- John Bytheway: 00:16:45 Oh, John you've really touched my heart there. My father passed away this last month, and one regret I have is I never got to take him to Jerusalem. We'd always talked about it. And he was a caretaker for my mother. So you just healed my heart a little bit there that we don't need to see Jerusalem. It is a beautiful experience, but we don't need to see Jerusalem.
- John Bytheway: 00:17:13 It reminds me also of a woman who said that she was sitting at her young daughter's grave side, and she felt the Holy Ghost speak in the voice of her daughter to her, "I am not here. Don't seek me here. If you want to be closer to me, go to the temple. Go to the temple, that is where I am." So I like that. I like that. This idea that Christ is very much alive and very active in our lives and in the church.
- Hank Smith: 00:17:51 So Luke tells us this story that we don't get anywhere else. It's one of my absolute favorites in scripture. I say that a lot about scripture, but it really is. It really is one of my absolute favorites, and that's the road to Emmaus. What do you want to talk to us about? Both of you?
- John Bytheway: 00:18:05 This is an important one to me personally because we have this... One of the biggest pieces of art in our house was Jesus on the road to Emmaus. My dad loved to show us what the artist did and then tell us the story, how he drew near to these two men walking and, "Their eyes were holden," it says. They didn't know who he was. And they were, "You a stranger around here? Have you not heard what's been going on?" And then Jesus opens up the scriptures and tells them everything. And when he leaves, he is like, "Well, come and eat with us." I can't remember exactly what they said, but they say abide with us. And I've always thought, does the hymn Abide With Me come from that verse? Abide with us to eventide. And so we sing that, but Jesus leaves.
- John Bytheway: 00:18:55 And then they say, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he walked and talked with us by the way?" And we love that in our family for that reason alone. But I love when that recognition comes, "Hey, wait a minute. Who was that? And our hearts burned. We felt something while he talked with us." And I don't know if we even know who those two disciples were. Is there another gospel that speaks of these two and gives them names?
- Hank Smith: 00:19:22 No, there's only one named here. His name is Cleopas and then the other one, some new Testament scholars have said it's got to be Luke. I don't see any evidence for that. But I have heard that the other one might be Luke. What say ye, John Hilton?

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:19:37 Yeah. Same as what you said. We don't know who the second person is. Some people have maybe speculated that it's a female disciple as well. We just don't know for sure.

Hank Smith: 00:19:46 I love this story. As John said, they are walking and it's a long walk, right? We're talking... If you have your footnotes with you, it used to be in kilometers, but then someone said, "Why don't they just speak American?" And I think it says, what now? Seven miles. Is that what it says?

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:20:04 Something like that. Six or seven miles. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:20:06 Seven and a half miles? That's a long walk. I don't know about you guys, but that's... In steps, I guess we're now talking in steps. We're talking... This is going to be 20,000 steps. So it's going to take a couple of hours. And Jesus is there with them. They don't know that it's Jesus. I love that. I hope it's a standard feature in all resurrected bodies, the ability to have other people's eyes holden.

Hank Smith: 00:20:34 I've joked with my students. I hope this just isn't a Jesus upgrade because that would... I would spend the first half of the millennium just scaring my friends, right? You two. I'd be, "So what did you think of your friend, Hank?" Right? And then they say, "Well, he wasn't my favorite." "See. It was me the whole time. I told you." But my favorite is that, he says, "Why are you both so sad?" And they say, "Do you live under a rock?" right? Jesus of Nazareth...

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:21:05 That's the Greek, right? The Greek is that.

Hank Smith: 00:21:07 Yeah.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:21:08 It's a loose translation from the Greek.

Hank Smith: 00:21:09 I've read the papyri. And yeah, it is.

John Bytheway: 00:21:11 Do you live under a petros?

Hank Smith: 00:21:13 Yeah. John... There are some jokes that only we will get, but they said... And this tells me that everybody's talking about Jesus, right? They're saying, there's not a person-

John Bytheway: 00:21:30 "Are you the only stranger that doesn't know about this?"

Hank Smith: 00:21:34 Yeah. "You don't know about this? This is a big deal." And then they make this statement and maybe you guys... Stop me if I

skip something you want to look at, but they lost their faith. In verse 21, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Right? And to me, this just speaks volumes. And I'll ask my students, "What's wrong? Why did they lose their faith in Jesus?" And usually the students will say something like, "He didn't do what they assumed he would do."

John Bytheway: 00:22:13

The political deliverer thing.

Hank Smith: 00:22:15

Right. They had made some assumptions or had some expectations of him that he did not meet. And when he did not meet them, instead of challenging their expectations, they doubted him. And I see this happen so often with friends, students and others who lose their faith because they set up an expectation for God or for even Joseph Smith. They have an expectation and who knows where they got it? These men probably got this from tradition. They were probably taught this at some point. Maybe even they had read the scriptures and had made this assumption from reading scripture. I don't know, but it was a bad assumption. And my favorite part about this is that the savior takes... He says, "The beginning at Moses." I assume they mean Genesis. He takes what we would call the old Testament and opens it up to them. And he corrects their assumptions using scripture.

Hank Smith: 00:23:18

And I have asked my students, "If you ever feel so inclined..." And I have done this. I'll say something in my own prayers, "Lord, if I have an assumption or an expectation that is just false. Will you help me correct it as I study the scriptures?" And I'll tell you both that it's happened. There have been times where my own personal expectations for things... I remember one student said, "I just don't know if I believe in God anymore, because I'm not married." And I said, "Where did you get that ex..." He said, "Don't you think if God loved me, I'd be married by now?" And I said, "No." Where does that say in the scriptures, "When thou reaches the age of 20 and six, if thou art beloved, thou shalt be wed." Right? It does not say that anywhere. And I said, "Where did you get that expectation?" And he was really great about it. He said, "I don't know. I guess I just made it up."

John Bytheway: 00:24:18

Well, I think John has already talked to us about it. There is the law of retribution in the old Testament, the law of the harvest in the new and we talk about those all the time, but there's a Saturday in between. And concerning the marriage thing, just talk to me about it. I was way into menace to society territory before I got married. And I'm thinking about the beatitudes were so interesting because it was, "Blessed are the," present

reality, "for they shall be," and there was a future possibility. And he sent them all home in the middle of their Saturdays because... And so I liked that idea. And I think that we all have that idea of law of the harvest, but there's some patience required in the middle and that expectation... I know that our friend Sherry [Do 00:25:14] said once that if all that were required for getting a husband were fasting and praying and going to the temple, "I would have [knee fies 00:25:21] lined up at my door," she said. So there again is an expectation. So I like that idea of we're in the Saturday. I'm going to remember that for a long time.

- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:25:34 And I think just a helpful quick expectation reset is to go through our scriptural heroes, right? So [Abededi 00:25:41], super faithful, burned at the stake. Mormon works his whole life to protect his people, he's murdered. Merona lives the vast majority of his life completely alone. So there should be no expectation that if I'm righteous, everything's going to work out.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:55 Jesus himself?
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:25:57 Right.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:57 Jesus himself. Look at his life. There should be no expectation of, "I lived the gospel and I get everything I want."
- John Bytheway: 00:26:04 Right?
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:26:05 So speaking of Jesus though, this is one of the things I think is so cool about that verse you pointed out in verse 21, "We had hoped he was the one, but I guess he wasn't." And they're losing hope in the very moment Jesus is with them. And how often maybe is that true for us? Right? I'm giving up. I don't feel like connected to God.
- John Bytheway: 00:26:26 He's like, "I'm right here. I'm right here, right now."
- Hank Smith: 00:26:28 Yeah.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:26:28 So if any of our listeners are feeling that we had hoped, maybe not, I testify Jesus is walking with you now. He's there. And maybe we can't feel him. Maybe heaven feels distant sometimes, but that does not mean he's not there.
- Hank Smith: 00:26:44 So many times. And I don't want to say this is an all the time thing, but whenever I have talked to a friend, a student, who is struggling, has doubts, often... I'll say often, not all, but often it

is based on some sort of expectation they have. They'll say something like, "I just found out that the book of Mormon has had changes in it." And I said, "Yeah, I knew that too. That's awesome. Right?" And they had an expectation that somehow if the book of Mormon had changes, it wasn't true. A woman said to me once, and it really was a soccer mom. We were at a soccer game and she was a mom and she came up to me and she said, "Brother Smith, don't you think if the church were true, it would be bigger." And I said, "What do you mean?" And she kind of thought it through and explained to me and she said, "Don't you think it'd be bigger?" And I said, "Well, that's not what I see in the scriptures." And I talked about Nephi saying, "I saw many are called, few are chosen. I saw the saints of God and they were few."

- Hank Smith: 00:27:42 Just so often, we're basing our faith on bad expectations. And I think when president Uchtdorf said, "Doubt your doubts..." I don't want to put words in his mouth, but to me, I hear, "Analyze your expectations." Right? Analyze those first, before you doubt your faith. And it's been something that's worked for me. And I think I am so typical of these guys. When it all gets worked out, they say, "We knew it the whole time." Right? "Did our hearts not burn within us? Of course. I never doubted for a second. I had it with me the whole time." By the way, Jesus vanishes. Again, I hope that is standard resurrection body ability, don't you guys? If I can change my appearance and vanish, I will have a wonderful after life. I will spend the first few millennia just doing those things.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:28:41 I want to highlight it in chapter 24, verse 36. So as the disciples are now eating, as you mentioned earlier, Hank, in Jerusalem, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be unto you." And you can look at these next few verses as far as a proof of Jesus having a physical body in the resurrection and that's a powerful point. I also just love that, at least in English, we see the first word Jesus says is, "Peace." And when the angels announce Christ's birth to the shepherds, they say, "peace on earth." So from the beginning, his birth, here in the resurrection, everywhere in between, Jesus wants us to be at peace. And I love that message.
- Hank Smith: 00:29:24 Why is John so different than the other three gospels? Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and then you have this, well, here's all brand new stuff.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:29:32 Yeah. So I think 93% of the gospel of John is unique to John. And so you're right. There is a difference and early Christian fathers were talking about this and suggesting that John was aware of

the earlier details being recorded. And so John wanted to write a spiritual gospel, kind of having a different focus. In the gospel of John, we see Jesus portrayed a little bit differently. He's more divine. He always knows what's going on. For example, in the garden of Gethsemane, if we are watching a video, that we almost always see Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss. And that happens in Matthew and Mark, but in John, Jesus takes control of the situation. And as the guards approach, he says, "Who are you looking for?" And we see a Jesus who's in complete command. And I think John wants to maybe highlight some of the divinity of Jesus Christ that maybe isn't as fully fleshed out in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

- Hank Smith: 00:30:30 Yeah. I've also noticed that you get a lot of up close and personal accounts of Jesus in the gospel of John. Where you get a lot of sermons in both Matthew and Luke, you get Jesus in one-on-one conversations with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, with his own mother, with pilot, here in the resurrection. A lot of one-on-one conversations. Let's jump into the resurrection then as told by John. And since we have two Johns here, now we're on a third John. This is overwhelming for me, but what do you both see in the resurrection account as given in the gospel of John?
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:31:06 In Luke chapter eight, we see that Mary Magdalen has seven devils inside of her and Jesus cast them out. And I don't know exactly what it means to have seven devils inside you, but it's clearly not good. Right? And I'm definitely not saying it's Mary's fault. Right? And it could be something spiritual, emotional, it could be a physical ailment. Who knows? But the point is, it's not good.
- Hank Smith: 00:31:27 I like this. Having seven devils in you is not good.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:31:32 Not good.
- Hank Smith: 00:31:32 A message from the church of Jesus. Right? I think we're safe.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:31:38 We're safe on that one.
- Hank Smith: 00:31:38 I think they are on the safe side on that one.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:31:40 So then jumping ahead to John chapter 20, as Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene, and it's John chapter 20 verse 16, she's remained at the tomb after Peter and the other disciple have left and Jesus sayeth unto to her, "Mary," and she realizes it's

Jesus. And so to me, that is a great message of hope. So if here's Mary...

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- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:32:03 To me, that is a great message of hope. Here's Mary with seven devils in a low, difficult state, now she's the first human witness of Jesus Christ. It's hard to think of a higher spiritual state, or calling, or opportunity than to be the first human witness of the resurrected Jesus. That's amazing. I love that story to see Mary Magdalene go from a dark place to a beautiful place, and that's a message of hope for those of us who are feeling like we're in a dark place right now.
- Hank Smith: 00:32:35 Oh, that is really nice. John, teach us about Verse 17. Jesus says, "Mary." She turns. She knows who he is. Her whole life changes in one word, and it's her name. I've always had, I shouldn't say I've always had, when I was in primary, I just really hated the fact that Mary could not touch Jesus.
- John Bytheway: 00:32:58 Don't touch me. Don't touch me.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:00 In fact, I remember pressing my primary teachers on this. Why? Why can't she touch him? We don't know Hank. Just don't ask any more. I'm like, "No. This is a problem. What is he like a cake, that if you touch him, he might collapse? What's the problem? Why can't she touch him?" We don't know Hank. We just know that she can't. John, teach us, become my primary teacher from long ago, and tell me about Verse 17.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:33:24 Well, we can first look at footnote 17a, the Joseph Smith translation changes it from touch me not to hold me not, which has a really different connotation. It would be interesting to be a filmmaker. I love The Chosen series. I can't wait until we get to this part in The Chosen. I wonder how they'll choose to film it. For all we know they've embraced for some time. Now Jesus is saying like, "Okay, don't hold on to me. I've got to go." Actually I think we can tie this back to what you said of expectations. Mary has maybe some type of expectation in her mind, "Jesus, you're back. You're going to stay with me now." Jesus says, "Well, don't hold on to me." In fact, if you think about it, in John, this is the first post-resurrection teaching that Jesus gives. "Don't hold on to me." Maybe we can see in that I've got a different vision. Don't put me in your box. Right? I've got a bigger plan. I've got some ideas, and it's going to be amazing.

Hank Smith: 00:34:22 Yeah. Have you ever, I asked my students this, have you ever been in a hug where you're hugging someone and they say, "Hey, I got to go now," and you say, "Okay," and then you just keep hugging them. Right? You're going off on a mission, or going away to college, or something, and your mom is just hugging you, and you're saying, "Okay, I got to go." Okay, right, and they don't let go.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:34:45 We don't know for sure what the image is, but we don't know for sure what the image is, but what you just said, Hank, that resonates with me. I feel like that's more what we're seeing rather than a can't touch this.

Hank Smith: 00:34:55 Yeah. "Hey Mary, you got to let me go. I know you don't want to, but you got to." Okay. Let's keep going. John gives us a lot on the resurrection. Tell me more what you see in this last chapter and a half.

John Bytheway: 00:35:09 One of the things about John 20, I feel like we've had so much fun in this podcast talking about, "Hey, can we be a little bit easier on Martin Harris? Can we be a little bit easier on Sidney Rigdon? Can we be a little bit easier on Thomas?" It's almost like this is too good to, I really want this to be true, but until I see him ... I mean, that's how I'm feeling. Maybe the poor guy, oh, it's doubting Thomas for the rest of eternity. I mean, for rude. That's not the JST. We call him doubting Thomas now. I mean ...

Hank Smith: 00:35:47 We don't talk about denying Peter. It's just somehow poor Thomas.

John Bytheway: 00:35:52 In John 11, Thomas says he's going to go to Jerusalem. He's going to die. Let's go die with him. How come we don't call him, die with him Thomas?

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:36:02 Brave Thomas. Courageous Thomas.

John Bytheway: 00:36:04 Courageous Thomas. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:36:06 Maybe we identify with the doubting side instead of the I will go and do side. I don't know. I wonder with people, if we remember them for their highest moments or their lowest?

John Bytheway: 00:36:20 What would we like to be remembered for? If we're going to do onto others, let's remember onto others as we would like them to remember unto us, to massacre an old phrase.

- Hank Smith: 00:36:32 This goes, I think, for me personally, it goes with people in the past, that we love, oftentimes we love to judge the people in the past for their lowest moments. They're not even here to defend themselves, right? They can't even make a case for themselves. We can choose to say, "You know what? I'm going to remember you for your high moments." I'm going to at least try to be charitable in that way.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:36:56 One other quick thing. If we were to go back to Luke, Chapter 24:11, when the women come back and say, "Hey, Jesus has risen." All the disciples are saying, "Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believe them not." Thomas isn't really unique, right, in saying like, "Oh, I'm not going to believe." I mean, everyone else was also. It's like what you said with the people that have asked like, "Oh yeah, our hearts burn within us." We knew the whole time, right? Here we're seeing in John, this highlight that Thomas doesn't know, so he's singled out in a way.
- Hank Smith: 00:37:25 Yeah. When Jesus says, "Thomas, blessed are they that have not seen and yet believed," Jesus probably isn't talking about the rest of the apostles there, right, because they're like, "Oh, that was me. That was me the whole time." He's going. "No, none of you," right, "you all thought it was idle tales." Thanks for bringing that up, John.
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:37:45 Yeah. One little thought before we go on to 21 is, so Jesus says, "Thomas, blessed are they who have not seen and yet believed." Then the narrator says, "The things that I've written, these things are written that you might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life through his name." I think a lot of us have heard Elder McConkie's last testimony where he says, "I won't know any better than in a coming day when I kiss the Lord's feet, than I know now of who Jesus is." Maybe we thought like, "Wow, that's Elder McConkie. That's that's an incredible level. I could never get there."
- Dr. John Hilton...: 00:38:25 Recently, President M. Russell Ballard said that every member of the church can have an apostolic-like witness of Jesus Christ. In Doctrine and Covenants, Section 46, we'll be there in a couple of weeks, the very first spiritual gift listed is to know through the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world. I hope that as we read John 20 and hear these experiences that we don't just think, "Oh yeah, that's for them, or, "That's for the super high level people." President Ballard said, "We can all strive for an apostolic-like testimony of Jesus Christ." I mean, the author of

John is telling us that, right? These things are written so that you'll see and believe.

- John Bytheway: [00:39:09](#) Hmm. That is just absolutely beautiful, John. I love John's admission. I think it is back in Chapter 20 where he admits we did not know. Look at Chapter 20, Verse 9. "For as yet, they knew not the scripture that he must rise again from the dead." What seems so obvious to us was not so obvious to them. Probably even in writing it after the fact, they make it even more obvious in their writing than it probably was. I find in my New Testament class, I have a frequent guest speaker by the name of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. He joins us via video of general conference. He tells this wonderful story of adding some backstory to this maybe, and of Peter saying, "It's been great, but I go a fishing." They say, "Okay, we'll go with you." If you haven't seen that, go find Elder Holland talking about that.
- John Bytheway: [00:40:11](#) He says there, I think he said at the beginning, "There's not a group I identify more with than these apostles, or that I feel more sympathy for trying to figure out, "What are we supposed to do now? I don't know. That was amazing. I go a fishing. Okay, we'll go with you." Then he says, "and they caught nothing." He says something no fishermen ever wants to admit, "They caught nothing." Then he calls them children in Verse 5 and repeats an event that had happened when he first met Peter. I love that. Find the talk so we can share the reference because ...
- Hank Smith: [00:40:49](#) The first great commandment, I want to say, October 2012.
- Dr. John Hilton...: [00:40:55](#) One little paraphrase that he does in there is he basically says, "Peter, why are we having this conversation again?" Right? "I've already called you one time." The message is if you've had an encounter with the risen Lord, your life is never going to be the same. I think that's true for us on other levels, right? If I'm doing church right, or if I have a powerful spiritual experience, I can't just go back to how things were. My life has to be different. Jesus is calling us to do something new.
- Hank Smith: [00:41:25](#) I can't tell how you often I've shared this with my students who've returned from missions and sometimes just go back to old habits, and old ways, and old music ...
- John Bytheway: [00:41:35](#) Back to their nets and back to the boats and yeah.
- Hank Smith: [00:41:37](#) I think the Lord would stand at the edge of the sea going, "What are we doing? What are we doing?" I think it's Elder Holland in the same talk who says, "Listen, you're going to leave these nets

a second time and go change history. Don't act as if that didn't happen or if it's over now. These," what does he say, " these 11 fishermen go on to change the world in which we now live," and they do. They are the messengers from here on out. What do you think about this conversation between Jesus and Peter? He asks him three times about, "Do you love me?" What do you think, John?

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:42:21 Well, one of the things that we often will focus on is the three times Peter denies Jesus. Now, these three times, he's affirming his faith in Jesus. I mean, I love that idea. It's also amazing for us to just step back and say, "This is so cool that they're even having this conversation." Back in Mark, Chapter 16, where we began, one of the things that the young man specifically says to the women is, "Go tell Peter." We're just thinking like, of course, Peter is going to be the chief apostle. Of course, you got to tell Peter. Imagine that you're hearing this story for the first time. The last time we heard about Peter before the resurrection is when he denies Jesus three times, and then he's out of the storyline. You and me, as the original readers, if we've never heard the whole story, we were probably thinking like, "Wow, too late for Peter. He's kicked off the Lord's team." Right? You deny him, like you're gone.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:43:14 How amazing that Jesus is saying to Peter, I think in essence with these three questions, "You're still on my team." I love that for me because I'm Peter. Right? I'm a disciple who's trying, and I'm nowhere near as good as Peter is, but I'm still failing all the time. Jesus is still saying, "Hey, don't worry. You're on my team. I need you. Come feed my sheep. Come work with me."

Hank Smith: 00:43:37 I love this. I love this because there are people who feel like a major, major mistake disqualifies them forever. Peter's mistake, sometimes people say, "Oh, it's a commandment. Oh, it's a mistake." We don't to go there. We can do that at some other time, but if it is a mistake, it is a big one. You might think that's it. Right? I remember President Hinckley talking about this. He said, "Those of you who have fallen by the wayside, or made a bad decision, or done something you never thought you would do, I hope you'll take comfort from Peter who rose above this and became a mighty witness of the risen Lord." I think another message from this is you cannot be disqualified from the Lord's work. If you want to come back in, how forgiving and wonderful is he to welcome you back in and let you move forward.

John Bytheway: 00:44:35 The very last Verse in the book of John, many other things which Jesus did which if they should be written everyone, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books

that should be written." In that, can you make room for another testament of Jesus Christ? That's what I want to say. Could it be possible to make room for another one? I also know that we have what's critical and essential, and we have enough to exercise our faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. I like that, and I wish we had more at the same time.

Hank Smith: [00:45:17](#)

I have a question for both of you just about Easter. We've been just diving into the scriptures here for the last few hours, and I have loved it, but I'd love to just sit back for a minute and talk to me about what, in the Come Follow Me manual, the very first principle they list is just three words long, Jesus Christ lives. It talks about the witnesses, the many, many witnesses of his resurrection that we've had, including Joseph Smith's in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 76. What in your lives has the knowledge, the witness of the risen Jesus done for you? I like to tell my students, this is a big deal. A belief in the resurrection is a game-changing belief. It's not a, well, I believe pineapple belongs on pizza. That's not a game-changing belief, but a belief in a resurrection of Jesus Christ, this Jesus of Nazareth, this man from a history, that is a life-changing belief, and it's a big one. This isn't a little belief.

John Bytheway: [00:46:27](#)

I heard you teach a class on the resurrection one time, and you pointed everyone to the Bible dictionary entry under miracles, where it basically says, "If you believe in the resurrection, then every other miracle ceases to be improbable." If someone who believes in Jesus said to me, "You really think God flooded the earth," or "You really think Jonah spent three days in a whale?" I'm not sure whether those are symbolic or not, but the idea that they would say, "Well, that's outside the realm of scientific explanation." I'm going, "Wait, wait, wait. Do you believe in Jesus?" Yeah. "Do you believe Jesus was resurrected?" Yeah. Okay. Once you believe in the resurrection of Jesus, a 14-year-old boy, having a vision, receiving gold plates, that's nothing. Right? That's actually right in line with that belief. Right?

John Bytheway: [00:47:19](#)

The guy walks on water. I think it was Dr. Mike McKay, who gave me this great statement. He said, "If you look at all the scriptures, you should never look for Jesus in the likely. You should look for him in the unlikely, because everything he does is unlikely." The story of Joseph Smith and the other things we've talked about this year are all in the realm of unlikely, but not for him.

Hank Smith: [00:47:48](#)

Tell me what the belief in the resurrection has done for you both.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:47:52 For me, the first thing that comes to my mind is my grandfather, John Hilton, the first, who passed away about a month before I was married. I was close to him. He lived in Provo. I was going to school.

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Dr. John Hilton...: 00:48:03 Where I was married, and I was close to him. He lived in Provo. I was going to school at BYU. He met my then girlfriend, now wife, Lonnie, before my parents did. We were just close. And tears were shed and there is sadness at the passing of a loved one. At the same time, I realized that I did know that the resurrection is a true principle. I did know that I was going to hug my grandfather, John, again. And for me, a knowledge, a deep seed of knowledge of the resurrection is one of the best things in our lives to bring peace, that we know at the out-front, Jesus wins. We don't have to worry about everything that's going to happen between here and the end of the game, because ultimately, Jesus wins and it is going to work out. And for me, that just brings so much peace.

Hank Smith: 00:48:48 John, I know your mother passed away recently, just in January, right?

John Bytheway: 00:48:53 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hank Smith: 00:48:55 Talk about the resurrection and Easter for a minute, if you would.

John Bytheway: 00:49:00 Yeah, sure. I was saying mm-hmm (affirmative) to, she passed away. It was in December. So, it was just another aspect of 2020 that in my personal history, that I'll think of, along with earthquakes and everything else. But yeah, it was one of those times when, do I have a testimony or don't I? And coming from deep inside me was, I do, because I'll have my mom again. And she was one of the most saintly people ever. And it'll have my dad again. And so, we would not be here, we wouldn't be talking about any of this if it weren't for that event. If Jesus had remained in the tomb, would we be here having a podcast? What would we even... It would just be another person in history that maybe said some interesting things like other philosophers, but look what happened.

John Bytheway: 00:50:09 He actually appeared again for the first time ever and take all the philosophers and great thinkers of the world. But did any of them ever come back and have many people see them? And then you see, you start reading the Book of Acts. What

happened to these apostles? Because they are... I don't know, to me, it's like, they are different people. They are fired up. They are fearless after this and you see, what happened? Well, what happened was, the savior was resurrected. And I thought if we could reset the holidays, I think Easter would be bigger than Christmas. And that's not up to me, but Easter should be a lot bigger. Christmas is, oh boy, it's coming. But Easter is, look, he did it. He did everything he said he was going to do. And so, yeah, I do have a testimony that, that tomb was empty. And because of that, I'll have my mom again, I'll have my dad again. We will all have our loved ones again, because Jesus rose from the dead.

Hank Smith: 00:51:17 John, I don't think you can overemphasize what you said about the apostles. I remember listening to a New Testament scholar. He was a believing New Testament scholar. And as you all know, not all New Testament scholars are believers.

John Bytheway: 00:51:32 Are believers.

Hank Smith: 00:51:33 But they're very brilliant people who we love to learn from. But this believing New Testament scholar said, "Give me another explanation for the lives of these apostles." Right? If Jesus hadn't been resurrected, why in the world did they go back to Jerusalem? The very place where everyone would know he wasn't, to teach. Go to Galilee, go to India, go somewhere else, if you want to go and profess this fake event, don't go to the very place where he died, where people could actually produce a body, where they could they could produce witnesses. So, I just think this is... The lives of the apostles, to me, as someone who loves to just think logically at times is, the lives of the apostles is to me, a massive evidence of the resurrection that there is no other explanation for, right? You might say, well, they did it for fame. They all died. They all were martyred. They all left their families to teach. Right? There's no fame in this.

John Bytheway: 00:52:42 As John said before, would you want to stay in Jerusalem, where the chief priest have people killed that believe like you do? Right, and the government, did you want to go back there? And they were fearless. And as we see there in John, Peter got a hint of the kind of death that he would have.

Hank Smith: 00:53:01 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:53:02 And yet, he's a fireball after this and he is the rock. Jesus called him, the rock, along before all of this happened. But boy, he lived up to that, didn't he?

Hank Smith: 00:53:15 To me, this tie so well, and you guys can help me with this. This ties so well to the story of the Book of Mormon. My friend, Corey Andrews and I, we were on a church history tour once and we started just talking about the comparison between the savior coming out of the tomb and the Book of Mormon coming out of the stone box. And there are so many comparisons that you can make, but just like the savior coming out of the tomb and the Book of Mormon coming out of the stone box, both have 11 witnesses. We have the 8th and the three and we have the alisted 11 apostles. We have a woman named Mary who sees Jesus. We have Mary Whitmer who tells her story. Right? There's just so many... Just fun parallels that you can make with that story. But both are a game changing belief. A belief in the resurrection changes your life. The next one is a belief in the Book of Mormon and the restoration changes everything. They're both really game changers. And I think we can tie this together beautifully that they are both... Yeah, unlikely, but they're both true. And to me, it's absolutely... Not just wow, but it's also, it touches my heart as someone who's been, like you said, John, just losing someone. Before losing someone I love to the other side, Easter to me was candy and it was springtime, which I love, the weather gets warm and... But now, Easter to me has taken on a new, just an all new meaning.

Hank Smith: 00:55:09 It's not a holiday, it's now a Holy day because of what it represents that will happen for all of us. The Christian doesn't just say, 'Christ lives.' He says, 'I shall live.' Right? And just to me, what did... I think of a Stephen Harper or Tony Sweat who told us with just a couple of swipes, Joseph Smith cut-through theological Gordian knots, right? And to me, this is one of those. One of the questions through all the ages of time is, Job's question.

John Bytheway: 00:55:50 Yeah, if a man die, will he live again?

Hank Smith: 00:55:53 Does he live again?

John Bytheway: 00:55:54 And then Job awesomely says, what did he say? " Worms destroy this body in the flesh."

Hank Smith: 00:56:03 I will see God, though.

John Bytheway: 00:56:05 He had a testimony of the resurrection before it had happened.

Hank Smith: 00:56:09 We've had a long discussion today and it has been just so uplifting. I am grateful that those who had not heard of the name, John Hilton III before now know it because I've known it

and had that friendship and just that strength of character and testimony in my life for a long time and now a lot of people do. John, as a scholar, you don't only write to Latter-day Saints, but you write to what is called the Academy, and you're prolific at both. Everyone at BYU knows that John Hilton can produce scholarship and devotional work unlike anybody else, really, unlike anybody else. Someone is as brilliant as you and you believe, I just want to know more about that.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:57:04

For me, I think it really goes back and is deeply rooted to the Book of Mormon. My grandfather, that we've talked about a little bit, John Hilton I, he did word print studies after he retired. He became a statistician at Brigham Young University. Some of you may have heard of word prints, it's basically statistical analyses that show that the Book of Mormon was not authored by Joseph Smith. I definitely would not base my testimony of the church on word prints, right? But I grew up hearing about word prints and chiasmus from my grandfather, and it was all really interesting. And I actually found that there's a lot of intellectual basis for a testimony, right? The Lord will speak to us in our minds and in our hearts. But much more than word prints and chiasmus and other little kind of intellectual proofs of the Book of Mormon.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:57:51

I remember when I was 18 years old, my what were then called home teachers came to my house and they shared a quote from President Benson, where he said, "If you seriously study the Book of Mormon, a power will flow into your life." And so, I decided to take that invitation up and to seriously study the Book of Mormon and my life did change. I felt the power from God flow into my life. And so, the intellectual proofs are nice, but ultimately it's a testimony of the Book of Mormon as the word of God that has fueled it.

Dr. John Hilton...: 00:58:23

And it's kind of a cliché, but it's really been the key stone of my testimony, because if the Book of Mormon is true, then you know Joseph Smith is a prophet because why would you have a false prophet translate a true book? That just doesn't make sense. And if Joseph Smith is a prophet, then the church he started is true, because why would a true prophet start a false church? And if the church he started is true, then it's led by a living prophet today. And so for me, everything then is centered on the Book of Mormon. And because it's the word of God, I can have confidence in everything else that cascades from that.

Hank Smith: 00:58:56

John, by the way, another episode of Come Follow Me is in the books. Tell me how... I just like to know how you feel at the end. You always make me feel good.

John Bytheway: 00:59:06 I feel great. I was thinking, we had some pretty tender feelings, close to the surface, all of us, surrounding recent deaths and things. And when I was in the Holy land of just a really fine, I believe Protestant gentlemen said something so interesting outside the Garden Tomb. He said, "You can go in there. You won't find Jesus in there." He said, "But if you come out, bring him out with you and introduce him to some of your friends." He said, "A lot of people want to leave him in the tomb."

John Bytheway: 00:59:40 And I just remember thinking, that is what a lot of the world has done, that, oh, the whole resurrection thing. That was a myth. He was a great moral teacher, but he's probably still in some tomb somewhere. And I liked way that he said... I mean, it reminds me of something similar. A lot of people want to leave the baby Jesus in the manger and leave him the baby Jesus, instead of the one who grew up and started to teach and then someone will leave him in the tomb. And I don't know, I just... It's been a fun couple of hours to talk about. As you said, this game changer that he's not still in the tomb and he's risen as he said. I just love it.

Hank Smith: 01:00:22 My friends. Thank you for joining us on this episode. Thank you to Dr. John Hilton III and thank you to our producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen. Thank you to our production team, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson. Thank you all so much for your help. We hope you come back next week and join us on another episode of followHIM.

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