

TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

John 20: 24-31: How Thomas Had His Doubts Removed

"Now Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." 26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas,[a] because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." 30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Background Notes

In verse 23 we read that Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. Didymus means "the twin," so Thomas had a twin brother or a twin sister. The disciples had gathered together in fear for their lives. The Lord appeared to them, and they rejoiced when they saw the Lord! Apparently Thomas was not there. Why not? We don't know! In any case, Thomas missed out on the Lord's appearance. When Thomas was told by the other disciples that they had seen the Lord, his response was that of a typical skeptic: "Don't give me that resurrection talk -- you're gullible and emotional! You have been taken in by an illusion induced by wishful thinking..." Thomas wanted material evidence: *"Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."*

One week later Thomas got his wish when the Lord appeared again to the disciples. Thomas was invited by the Lord Himself to touch the nail prints, and put His hand in the Lord's side. The Lord had heard Thomas when he voiced his doubts. The Lord knows all about our doubts. The Bible doesn't tell us whether Thomas actually touched the Lord or not, but once again, we see evidence that the Lord was resurrected bodily; He was not a distant "body spirit" taking on the appearance of having a body. No. He had a glorified body, but it was a material, tangible body. Now the question always comes up as to whether our resurrected bodies will have the scars of our earthly bodies, since after all, the Lord had the scars of the nails and the spear. I don't think so. I believe that the Lord's resurrected body is unique in this respect. Forever, as we worship our Savior, we will be reminded of His death for us as we see the marks of the crucifixion.

In verses 30-31 we have the purpose of John's Gospel: *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."* John chose to write about seven of the miracles of Christ. They're called "sign miracles" because they point to the deity of Christ, the great theme of

the Gospel of John. *"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."*

Doctrinal/Teaching Points

1. Because of the resurrection of Christ, there is evidence for those who have doubts.

Thomas had doubts about the resurrection. The Lord confronted Thomas with overwhelming evidence and challenged him to test that evidence and believe. At the end of verse 27 the Lord said to Thomas, *"Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."* That verse could be translated, "Stop being an unbeliever, and become a believer!"

The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of the Christian faith. If the Lord Jesus was not resurrected, then our faith is futile. In I Corinthians 15:19, the apostle Paul wrote, *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."* Because the resurrection is so **essential** to salvation and the Christian faith, we can be sure that God has left plenty of evidence for the resurrection of Christ -- especially for those who have doubts. Besides the biblical evidence (which, by the way, is very hard for the skeptic to throw out or get around), there is plenty of extra-biblical (evidence outside the Scripture) evidence as well. We could have a whole series of lectures on the extra-biblical evidence that's available to show the resurrection of Christ, but let me just present two.

First of all, the writings of Josephus Flavius. Josephus was a non-Christian, Jewish historian who lived and wrote in the first century AD. The following quotation is from his "Antiquities of the Jews": "Now about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call Him a man, for He was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men who have received the truth with pleasure, He drew over to Him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned Him to the Cross, those that loved Him at the first, didn't forsake Him. For He appeared to them alive again on the third day as the divine prophets had foretold these (and ten thousand other things) concerning Him. And the tribe of Christians so named from Him are not extinct at this day."

This piece of evidence is **so** heavy and **so** good that you might ask, "What have the skeptics done with this?" They try to get around this quotation by saying, "Of course the early Christians inserted this into the writings of Josephus!" However, there is **not a shred** of evidence for that explanation! All the early copies of Josephus' writings that are available, in the Greek language, as well as the Arabic --they **all** have this quote. Here is outstanding extra-biblical evidence for the resurrection of Christ.

A second piece of extra-biblical evidence would be **Sunday**. How did the Christian Sunday get started anyway? As far back as we can trace, Christians have always worshiped on Sunday. And we know that the early Christians were Jewish -- now why would Christian Jews change their day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday, or from the last day of the week to the first day of the week? There was nothing in the teachings of the Lord Jesus that even remotely suggested that Christians were to change the day of worship. Why didn't Christians, particularly Jewish Christians, continue to make Saturday the day of worship? In fact, the early Jewish Christians argued about many things, such as whether Christians should observe almost everything in the Mosaic Law: dietary laws, feast days, even whether to observe the Sabbath as well as Sunday. But they never argued about Sunday! That was special -- no questions asked! Why? Something of great importance must have taken place on that day! It was the resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

Try to logically explain the Christian Sunday in any other way. It can't be done. Because of the resurrection of Christ, there is evidence for those who have doubts.

2. Because of the resurrection of Christ, there is blessing for those who have faith.

In verse 28 we see the faith of Thomas. After seeing the evidence, he said to the Lord, "My Lord and my God!" What a statement! It's not only a statement of worship -- it's a proclamation of the deity of Christ, the very theme of this Gospel. Then the Lord said to Thomas (v29), "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." That's us! If you have come to faith in Christ, then this blessing is pronounced upon you: Blessed are those who have **not** seen and yet have believed. So if you're a believer who is wishing that you had lived back in the 1st century so that you could have seen the Lord when He was here on earth, think of this verse. You have a special blessing!

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." I believe this blessing, that was pronounced upon those who have not seen, enhances a picture of the church that we have in this passage. The Lord appeared in the midst of His disciples behind closed doors. This certainly reminds us of how the Lord is in the midst of His disciples today as we gather in His Name. The church is not part of Judaism, and it is not part of this world. We are set apart. We are gathered together only in His Name, and He is in our midst. Do you see the picture?

Thomas was not there the first time the Lord appear in their midst. I believe that Thomas represents the future "Jewish remnant." They are unbelievers now, but they will become believers when the Lord comes the second time, just as Thomas believed when the Lord appeared to the disciples the second time. Romans 11 makes it clear -- that day will come for the Jewish people! In the prophecy of Zechariah 12:12, we read that the Jewish believers of that day will "look upon Him whom they pierced." In that day, the believing remnant of Jewish people will, like Thomas, bow down and worship their Messiah and say, "My Lord and My God." What a beautiful picture!

In that context, do you see this special blessing that's pronounced upon Christians today? Upon the church, which is the body of Christ, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Because of the resurrection of Christ there is blessing for those who have faith.

Practical Application

Let's follow the biblical pattern for having our doubts removed.

Did you ever have doubts concerning the Christian faith? Some theological question that you can't figure out and it leads to a doubt here and there? What do you do when these doubts come up? Follow the biblical pattern for having your doubts removed. What's that pattern? I think we see it here: Thomas' doubts were cleared up when he was back with the other disciples -- in the fellowship of God's people! That is the biblical pattern for having your doubts removed.

When doubts arise, don't stay away from Christian fellowship and say, "I'm not going back to church. I'm not going back until the Lord clears this doubt up for me." If you take that position, your doubts will continue. Stay in the fellowship of God's people and in due time, God will remove those doubts. Notice that the Lord took care of Thomas' doubts a week later. It wasn't immediate -- but Thomas did have his doubts cleared up when he followed a biblical pattern and was back with the Lord's people.

Let's follow the biblical pattern for having our doubts removed.