

### Thomas Had His Doubts Removed

#### John 20:24-31

John 20:24-31: *"Now Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> 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."*

<sup>26</sup> *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!"*

<sup>27</sup> *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."*

<sup>28</sup> *And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"*

<sup>29</sup> *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."*

<sup>30</sup> *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> 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

Jesus came to the disciples who were gathered behind closed doors, in fear for their lives. Then the Lord suddenly and unexpectedly appeared in their midst - and they rejoiced when they saw the Lord!

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came (v23). (Didymus means "the twin.") Why wasn't Thomas there? We don't know. But Thomas wasn't with the other disciples, and so he missed out on the Lord's appearance.

When the other disciples told Thomas that they had seen the Lord, his response was that of a typical skeptic: "Don't give me that resurrection talk. You're just gullible and emotional! You've been taken in by an illusion induced by wishful thinking..." Thomas wanted solid, material evidence that the Lord was alive: *"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. The Lord Himself invited Thomas to touch the nail prints in His hands, and put His hand in the Lord's side. Thomas didn't need to ask to see and touch the Lord, because the Lord already knew how Thomas had voiced his doubts. The Lord knows all about our doubts, and He is ready and willing to answer our questions and dispel 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**. The Lord was not a "spirit" taking on the "appearance" of having a body. No. He had a glorified body, but it was a material, tangible, real body.

Now this question always comes up: will our resurrected bodies have the scars of our earthly bodies? After all, the Lord had the scars of the nails and the spear. I believe we will not retain scars. I think 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 His crucifixion – the marks of His great sacrifice for us!

The purpose of John's Gospel is found in verses 30-31: "*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 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.*"

The Lord Jesus did many miracles during His earthly ministry, but John chose to write about seven of the Lord's miracles in his Gospel. As we've discussed in earlier Talks, these specific miracles are called "Sign Miracles" because they point to the deity of Christ. That is the great theme of the Gospel of John. And the goal of John's Gospel is: "*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. He even challenged Thomas to test that evidence and believe! At the end of verse 27 the Lord told Thomas to "*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 a doubter - become a believer!"

**The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Christian faith.** If the Lord Jesus was not resurrected from the dead, 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 discard or get around), there is plenty of *extra-biblical* evidence as well. (*Extra-biblical* evidence is evidence from sources other than Scripture.) We could do a whole series of lectures on the extra-biblical evidence that's available to show the truth of the resurrection, but let me just present just two of those evidences for you.

#### a. The writings of Josephus Flavius.

Josephus was a non-Christian, Jewish historian who lived and wrote in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The following quotation is from his history, 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 those words are not original to Josephus' writings. The early Christians *inserted* this into his writings!" Well, there's **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 in Arabic - **all** of them include this quote! This quote from Josephus is outstanding extra-biblical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## **b. Sunday.**

How did Sunday become the Christian day of worship? How did that get started? The early Christians were Jewish. They worshiped on the seventh day - Saturday. But as far back as we can trace, Christians have always worshiped on **Sunday**. Now why would Jewish Christians 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? Nothing in the teachings of the Lord Jesus even remotely suggests that Christians were to change their day of worship. So why didn't Christians, particularly Jewish Christians, continue to make Saturday the day of worship?

When we study the New Testament we find that the early Jewish Christians argued about many things, such as whether Gentile Christians should observe almost everything in the Mosaic (Jewish) 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 – and we know what it was! 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 a statement of worship - and it's a proclamation of the deity of Christ, the very theme of this Gospel.

Then the Lord said, "*Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*" (v29). 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 1<sup>st</sup> century so that you could have seen the Lord when He was here on earth, think of this verse. You have a special blessing because you have believed in Him without seeing the Lord Jesus in bodily form!

"*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" I believe this blessing enhances a picture of the Church in this passage. The Lord was present in the midst of His disciples who were gathered together. This certainly reminds us of the fact that the Lord is in the midst of His followers today as we gather together in His Name. The Church is not part of Judaism, and it is not part of this world. We are set apart. When we are gathered together in His Name, He is present in our midst. Do you see the picture?

Thomas was not there the first time the Lord appeared in their midst. I believe that Thomas may represent the future "remnant" of the Jewish people. 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, the Jewish believers of that future 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? That special blessing is given to the Church, 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!

Have you ever had doubts about the Christian faith? Maybe you can't figure out a theological question, and that leads to doubts here and there? What do you do when these doubts crop up? You should follow the biblical pattern for having your doubts removed.

What's the pattern? I think we see it here: Thomas' doubts were cleared up when he **got back together with the other disciples** – when he was back in fellowship with God's people! That's the biblical pattern for having your doubts removed.

When doubts arise, don't stay away from Christian fellowship! Don't say, "I'm not going back to church until the Lord clears this doubt up for me." If you take that position, your doubts will probably continue.

Stay in the fellowship of God's people. Study God's Word with them. Ask mature believers for godly wisdom on difficult passages. Stay in fellowship with the Lord'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. His doubts weren't removed the instant he voiced them. Thomas' doubts were cleared up when he got back together with the Lord's people.

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