

## John 20:24-29          “Doubting Thomas Is Convinced”

Intro. This morning we will learn some truths and lessons from Jesus’ appearance to Thomas. Thomas is commonly known today as doubting Thomas. He had a simple motto: “Seeing is believing.” Thomas believed his doubts, and doubted his beliefs. Now Thomas is mentioned in this Gospel 3 different times, and on each occasion he evidenced a gloomy disposition.<sup>1</sup> He was a man who looked on the darker side of things. In chapter 14 Jesus gave some wonderful promises and assurances concerning the future. But Thomas questioned how they could follow Christ to the Heavenly Father’s house, when they did not know the way. In fact, he contradicted the words of Christ, for Christ just said that they *did* know the way. Christ Himself is the way.

But on the other hand he had his good qualities. In chapter 11 we read that Jesus had received news that Lazarus was sick. After a purposeful delay, Jesus determined to go back to Judea to His friend Lazarus. The apostles objected, reminding Jesus that the Jews were out to kill Him. To go anywhere near Judea would run into the very jaws of death. They were probably afraid for their own lives. But after Jesus clearly insisted upon going, Thomas said, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (11:16). What courage, loyalty, and love for Christ we see in that statement! The only problem is that, true to his character, he anticipated the worst to happen. He is the proverbial pessimist. Thomas saw every glass as half empty, rather than half full.

Today, increasing numbers of Americans do not believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. About 25-35% either do not believe in the resurrection of Christ, or have doubts.<sup>2</sup> There are many doubting Thomases among us today. Thomas had another name, Didymus, which literally means “twin.” I believe Thomas has many spiritual twins. Some may be here this morning.

What do you believe about Jesus? Do you believe that He rose from the dead, or do you have doubts about it? Up to 75% of Americans *say* they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but only three out of ten have chosen to accept Him as Lord and Savior. If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are either a doubter, or you simply do not want to submit your life to the Lordship of Jesus. Either way, I want to help you deal with your doubt and help you go from being a doubter to a disciple of Jesus Christ. And I hope to show why you, like Thomas, should regard Jesus as Lord and even as God.

Now let’s begin with the fact that:

### I. LIKE THOMAS, SOME HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT JESUS

It’s likely that Thomas had received word that first Easter that Jesus had been seen alive by the women. But when the disciples gathered that evening, v.24 says, “Now Thomas... was not with them when Jesus came.” Why was he not there? Was he too preoccupied that night? Was the road too long, the wind too cold, his own fireside (cf. Mark 14:54) too comfortable? No, not that. I believe he did not gather with the others because he was vexed with doubts about these stories of the resurrection. He said in the last of v.25, “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.” So he saw no point in gathering with the other disciples. Jesus was dead, and it was all over as far as he was

---

<sup>1</sup> In the other gospels he is only mentioned in the lists of the disciples.

<sup>2</sup> Based on a 2013 Harris poll. A 2016 Rasmussen poll showed results closer to 25%.

concerned. He was done with following Jesus.

Now as we think about his doubts this morning, I want to share with you first of all:

A. The Reason for Doubts about Jesus – I do not believe his doubts were intellectual. I believe his doubts were fueled by the tragic events that had just transpired. His universe collapsed when Jesus was crucified. As a result, he cannot think it possible that the Lord Jesus, who was nailed to the cross, and whose side was pierced, *could* have really risen from the dead.

Do you realize that great problems tend to bring on great doubts? Jesus was such a good man. How could God have allowed Jesus to be arrested, abused and executed in such a cruel fashion?

Even so, when something tragic happens in your life, you may be inclined to say in your heart, “God, why did you let this happen? God, this tragedy leads me to doubt if you are really all-powerful and loving.” I can imagine that Thomas felt that way. Perhaps on that first Easter night Thomas was walking somewhere alone, kicking the dust in anger each time he thought about what had just happened. Perhaps he visited Calvary that evening, and fell at the foot of the cross where Jesus had died, clasped the rough wood, and just cried. Perhaps he was upset at himself for not dying with Jesus as he had previously claimed he would. In fact, he fled when Jesus was arrested and did nothing to defend Him.

So he was in no mood to believe that Jesus just might be alive. He was in no mood to gather with the other disciples. He was even slower of heart to believe than the others, so he remained for a whole week in darkness and gloom. So it was not intellectual difficulties that breed such skepticism. It was the strain of life, the stormy gust of trouble that blew out the lights in the soul of Thomas, and left him in darkness.

The fact is the more emotional you are, the more the reasoning and rational part of your brain is not going to work properly. I believe Thomas was very despondent and depressed. He was not about to be persuaded was alive, even by eye-witness testimony.

We not only see the reason for his doubts and unbelief, but also:

B. The Consequences of Our Doubt – When we yield to our emotions, and allow the flame of faith to die, we will suffer the consequences. Again, one consequence of his doubt is stated in v.24, which says that he “was not with them.” Out of fellowship with Christ through unbelief, he failed to assemble with the others on that first Easter night. And what a blessing he missed by not gathering with his fellow believers at the appointed time! How much he lost! Had he been there, he too would have seen the Lord and rejoiced. Instead, he missed Christ’s presence, the Holy Spirit’s power (v.22b), and great joy of heart (v.20b).

Even so, unbelief robs you of God’s blessing. If unbelief causes you to miss gathering with others for prayer and worship, you will miss a blessing. How many times have you missed a church service only to find out that you had missed a great blessing? You never know what the Lord is going to do in a church service, where God’s people are praying, where there is vibrant worship, and where the Word of God is preached, or where God’s people stand up to testify of the Lord’s goodness and power.

We are like coals or wood. As long as we are close to other believers, we are red hot for Christ. But when we stay away from other believers, our fire will die out. That is why Heb. 10:25 says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is....” Don’t miss out on experiencing the presence of Jesus!

Now in v.25 we also see:

C. The Persistence of Thomas’ Doubt - The Ten were not callously indifferent to the

welfare of their erring brother. They did not say, “If he had been in his proper place, he too would have seen the Savior. But he was not here, and it only serves him right. Let us leave him alone.” No, they went and found Thomas, and told him what they had seen (v.25a). Yet, in spite of the efforts of the other apostles, Thomas remained in unbelief. So he said to them in v.25, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails,<sup>3</sup> and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” He presumes to prescribe the conditions which must be met before he is ready to receive the good news of the resurrection. We have a tendency to want to put God in a little box and insist that He do things to prove Himself. The doubts and unbelief of Thomas are deeply entrenched and persistent.

Something is seriously wrong with Thomas at this point in his life. In fact, we marvel at the unbelief of Thomas. After all, only recently Thomas had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus. He had heard the Lord’s promises that He would rise again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. In his mind the testimony of not one or two, but *ten* apostles was no proof. Is there any hope for Thomas? Is there any hope for us when we fall into a state of doubt and unbelief? There is a famous sermon entitled, “It’s Friday, but Sunday’s Coming!” When you go through times of doubt and despair, just hold on to your faith, for the day is soon coming when the risen Christ will dispel your doubts if you give Him the opportunity.

How do you think Jesus would respond to such callous unbelief? Will He not be provoked by such obstinacy? Will He rebuke him sharply, like He did to the hypocritical Pharisees? Well, we can take comfort in the way Jesus dealt with Thomas.

Somehow Thomas is convinced to gather with the other apostles that 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday night.<sup>4</sup> It is probably correct to say that his presence at this occasion was the result of the work of witnessing by the other apostle.<sup>5</sup> They kept encouraging Thomas to join them. So beginning in v.26 we see the disciples gathered together for another Sunday night prayer meeting.

By the way, this is one reason for the long-standing Baptist tradition of having a Sunday night service! Did the Lord wait until *Sunday* evening to appear once again, in order to encourage His disciples to observe that day – and not some other day – as the day of rest and worship? That would seem probable. Yet so few attend Sunday evening worship services anymore.

Now as they gathered that Sunday night, we see the next step in resolving Thomas’ doubts, and that is my second point:

## II. JESUS MINISTERS TO OUR TIMES OF DOUBT

Jesus certainly had the right to expel Thomas from the apostles due to his unbelief, but He did not. Instead, Jesus Himself sought to restore the faith of His wayward disciple. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He will leave the 99 if necessary to seek the one who is lost. If Thomas is the most unbelieving, then Thomas will receive the most care. 2 Timothy 2:13 says, “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”

So when you go through times of doubt, God will meet you at the point of your weak faith and lift you again because He can’t deny His own. So just take your doubts and questions to the

---

<sup>3</sup> This verse, and Col. 2:14, are the only verses in the Bible that specifically mention the nails that were used in crucifixion.

<sup>4</sup> For the expression “eight days later,” we must keep in mind the practice of employing the inclusive method of time-computation — the method according to which, for example, Tuesday would be three days later than Sunday — John states that eight days later the event of the preceding Sunday-evening was repeated [Hendriksen]. This also affirms that Jesus died on Friday, and rose on Sunday as the 3<sup>rd</sup> day.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, this is not certain. It is also possible that Thomas rejoined the group for the simple reason that he had no other friends, no other place to go [Hendriksen].

Lord. He'll understand. The Lord is always ready to restore us.

Why is God so compassionate toward our lapses of faith? Psalm 103:14 says, "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." O, how graciously He bears with the waywardness and infirmities of His people. Our Lord has many weak children in His family, many dull pupils in His school, many raw and undisciplined soldiers in His army, and He has many lame sheep in His flock. Yet, He bears with them all. Oh, see how Jesus condescends to the weaknesses and even to the doubts of His people.

Notice what Christ did to restore Thomas' faith.

A. He Appeared to Him – Look at v.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!'" The following week Jesus graciously appeared to the apostles again. This time Thomas was among them. Now keep in mind that v.26 notes that the doors to the room were locked. Yet, Jesus was able to get into the room. Only God could accomplish that. Surely, the manner, majesty and presence of the Lord were convincing. No doubt, Thomas recognized Jesus.

Surely this tells us something of the character of the resurrection body. This argues strongly that our personal identity will survive the great transformation of the resurrection and rapture. As grand and glorious this transformation will be, yet it seems clear from several scriptures that our personal identity will be so preserved that recognition will not only be possible but certain.

B. He Spoke to Him – Christ addressed him with the same word of "peace" as He had previously saluted the Ten apostles (v.26b). Then in v.27 He speaks directly to Thomas and deals with Him so tenderly and lovingly. At the end of v.27 His words to Thomas are literally, "Stop becoming unbelieving, but believing." This is a rebuke and an exhortation at the same time. The use of "becoming" seems to point to the fact that unbelief was a state that he only recently entered into. He had believed in Jesus, but he had *become* a man of doubt.

I wonder if Jesus would speak the same words to some here today. Stop disbelieving. Don't allow the problems of life to dim your faith. Begin today to renew your faith in Jesus, or believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior for the first time!

C. He Showed His Wounds and Invited Him to Touch Him<sup>6</sup> – Jesus said to Thomas in v.27, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side...." Thomas saw the nail prints in the hands of Jesus. He saw the wound that remained in Jesus' side. It was large, more than sufficient to have caused death if Jesus was not dead already. This was clear and convincing evidence that Jesus was truly dead. If He is standing as a living person before Thomas, it must be a resurrection. And Jesus must not be just a spirit taking on the appearance of a man. Jesus invites Thomas to touch the wound in His side.

But not only did the wounds appeal to Thomas' mind, they appealed to his heart. Again, his main problem was not intellectual but emotional. So it was the sight of the Savior's wounds that scattered all of Thomas' doubts and brought him to the feet of Jesus as an adoring worshipper. How could he any longer doubt the love of God, when Christ had offered Himself as a sacrifice in our place?

Isn't this a lesson for us? The pathway to belief is not just with your mind, but also with your heart. When you doubt in despair, just take another look at the Cross, and see if God doesn't

---

<sup>6</sup> The question has been asked, "Did Thomas actually do as Christ commanded him?" Though the answer is not specifically stated, it is probable that he did. In fact, the question might be asked, "Did he have any choice in the matter?" Was he not obliged to do as instructed? Besides, there is Luke 24:39 and especially I John 1:1 [Hendriksen].

warm your heart once again. If you have grown cold and worldly, and out of fellowship with Christ, how can you get back what you once had in your relationship with the Lord? Go back to what won your heart in the first place. Was it not the sacrificial love of Christ? There is only one person who has ever lived that you should accept as your Savior, and that is the One who, by the nail-prints in His hands, and the wounds in His side, has proven His love for you. And what a lesson for us; the most effect way of dealing with backsliders is to tenderly remind them of the dying love of the Lord Jesus!

Dr. Stephen Olford was brought up as the son of a missionary in South Africa. He tells the story of an African village where the chief had died, and it was time to elect a new chief. Well a man by the name of Dowzi was running to be the new chieftain. Yet some of his opponents and enemies had raised questions concerning his qualifications and his love for the tribe. So on the day of the election Dowzi stood before his tribesmen and said, "Some of you have doubted my love." Then he began to recount the story of the day that the leopard had invaded the village. He reminded them of how many lives had been taken that day, and it seemed as if the leopard would go unhindered, until finally he alone ran to that leopard and killed the leopard, but in the process his arm was injured. Then this man, Dowzi, said to them, "If I didn't love you, I would not have faced death for you." Then rather dramatically he lifted his mangled arms and said, "In the name of my wounds, I plead the right to be your leader." As one man, the tribesmen began to shout, "Dowzi is our leader! Dowzi is our leader!" I tell you, by the nail-scars in His hands, and by the wound in His side, Jesus deserves to be your Lord, Jesus deserves to be your God, Jesus deserves to be your Savior.

Now we reach the climax of the story with my final point. We have moved from doubt, to Jesus ministering to that doubt, to the fact that:

### III. CHRIST SEEKS FAITH IN US

Thomas was hesitant to believe that Jesus was alive. His death evidently had caused him to doubt that He was even the Messiah. But now, look at v.28. Notice how Thomas responds. He says to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" I imagine that he said those words as he fell on his knees before Jesus. So in a moment the doubter was transformed into a worshipper. Because of the way Jesus ministered to him, doubts melted away, and faith must have flashed through the heart and mind of Thomas.

I believe this is the true climax of the Gospel of John. In fact, look at v.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." So I want to call upon you to:

A. Believe in Who Jesus Really Is – In telling this story, it is clear that John is seeking to lead us to believe in Jesus, just as Thomas ultimately believed. Notice two truths about Jesus we see here.

1. Jesus Is Lord – Thomas did not just call Him Savior, but Lord. Clearly, Jesus has conquered the greatest enemy, even death itself! So now, Thomas is no longer making demands that must be fulfilled before he will believe. He submits to the Lordship of Christ by faith and an act of His will.

If you want to be saved from your sins, Jesus must be your Lord. The Bible says, "If you will confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

2. Jesus Is God! - Here Thomas confesses that Jesus Christ was not only a man, but God as well. This is amazing when we realize that this statement was coming from the lips of a

Jew. No Jew would call any man God. But he realized that Jesus was no ordinary man. He must be the Son of God in the fullest sense of the word. This is the only time in the Gospels that anyone addressed Jesus Christ as “God.” Others gave expressions of His divinity, but the words of Thomas are the strongest affirmation of faith to be found. This confession was also amazing considering the expressions of doubt that he uttered the same day. Such an amazing turn-around can only be explained by the resurrection appearance of Jesus!

How marvelous are the ways of Divine grace. Doubting Thomas was the one who gave the strongest and most conclusive testimony to the absolute deity of Jesus which ever came from the lips of man! As Paul wrote in Rom. 5:20, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

This clear expression of faith is yet another reason to believe in the deity of Christ. Notice that Jesus Christ did not rebuke Thomas for his superior statement of faith. If Jesus had been just a man, or even an angel, He would not have allowed Thomas to worship Him or to call him “God.” Furthermore, Jesus *accepted* his worship. Only God is to be worshiped. Peter refused to be worshiped by Cornelius (Acts 10:26). Paul refused worship from the people of Lystra (Acts 14:15). Even an angel refused the worship of John, as we read in Rev. 22:9 where he said, “See that you do not do that.” Furthermore, Thomas is a most convincing witness to the reality of His resurrection. Are you skeptical about the story of the resurrection of Christ? So was Thomas! He was only convinced by irrefutable proof. He was so overwhelmed by the evidence that he was compelled to believe. If even Thomas believed, then surely Jesus is alive, He is Lord, and He is God! We cannot have a better witness to the fact that the Lord is risen than by the testimony of the former doubter called Thomas.

If Jesus is God then He can handle any problems you face!

B. Believe with a Faith that Is Personal - Notice Thomas says in v.28, “My Lord and my God.” He seems to take hold of the Lord Jesus with both hands, by those two blessed “my’s.” What a thrill to know that Jesus is mine. He is my personal Savior and God. Jesus is Lord whether you accept Him or not. Jesus is God whether you acknowledge Him or not.

Have you come to the place in your life where you have confessed Jesus as *your* Lord, and *your* God? Your parent’s faith will not save you. You must personally trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

C. Believe in Jesus without Seeing Him - Jesus said in v.29, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Christ accepted Thomas’ confession, but reminded him that it was occasioned by outward signs and the appeal to sight. Thomas had insisted upon seeing the risen Christ, and the Lord graciously granted his request for His own reasons. But the greater blessing rests on those who have never seen Christ in the flesh, and yet believe that He is Savior and God. That is true faith. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

What a warning this is for those who crave for signs and miracles. And how it condemns the “seeing is believing” mentality of our materialistic age. Scientific reality is not the only reality. So don’t expect Jesus to appear to you, or speak to you in audible tones in order to make you into a believer. He had special reasons for doing that with Thomas, to shore up his weak and broken faith. But that is not His normal procedure.

Since the time of Thomas, there have been literally millions who have believed in Jesus without ever seeing Him. I have never seen Jesus. I have never heard Jesus. I have never touched Jesus. But friend, I believe in Jesus and I love Jesus. Therefore, I know Jesus and I have Jesus in my heart. My testimony is that of Peter who said in I Peter 1:8, “whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of

glory.” Here, then, is a promise for us. Jesus promises a special blessing on us when we believe without seeing Him. We are blessed because our sins are forgiven. We are blessed because God gives us peace in our hearts. We are blessed because we have new life in Jesus, as stated in v.31.

You may be saying, “How can you believe in somebody you’ve never seen?” Well, I’ve never seen George Washington, Christopher Columbus, William Shakespeare, or Abraham Lincoln, but I believe in them. You say, “But you have history books to tell you about them.” Well I also have a reliable history book to tell me about Jesus. It’s called the Bible. Add to that my personal experience with the transforming power of Jesus Christ. He has changed my life. I have seen Him change the lives of many others.

I read about an atheist who came up to a Quaker one time and he said, “Do you believe in God?” He said, “Well, of course, I do.” He said, “Well, have you ever seen God?” He said, “Well, no.” He said, “Have you ever touched God?” He said, “No.” He said, “Have you ever felt God?” He said, “No.” He said, “What makes you think there is a God?” Well, the Quaker looked at the atheist and said, “Let me ask thee a question. Hast thee ever seen thy brain?” He said, “No.” He said, “Hast thee ever felt thy brain?” He said, “No.” He said, “Hast thee ever touched thy brain?” He said, “No.” He said, “What makes thee think thou hast any brains?” The Bible says, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psa. 14:1).

Conclusion: I wonder if we have any doubting Thomases here today. At one time you came to believe in Jesus as your Savior, but something happened in your life, and you became filled with doubts, and you quit attending church with God’s people. Listen to Jesus as He speaks to your heart this morning. Stop disbelieving. Instead, turn back to Jesus, and renew your faith in Him.

Or you may have never come to believe in Jesus. There are many skeptics and doubters today. Can you hear of the overwhelming evidence that Jesus is alive from the dead, and not believe in Him? Can you consider the fact that Jesus suffered and died for you, and yet not believe in Him? Trust in Him today.

Sources: William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955); John MacArthur, Jr., *Crucifixion & Resurrection: Study Notes on John 18-20* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1984); Alexander Maclaren (read again and add in), *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Dr. James Merritt (notes from his sermon on this text, 1992); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 4:23] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2012); Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 491-502; James S. Stewart, *River of Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 47-55; Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

#### ABOUT THESE SERMON NOTES

© Dr. Stephen Felker. These notes may be used and even shared for personal study or ministry, but not for commercial purposes. The author credits the sources listed above and footnotes for much of the content. The “live” recording of this sermon will be more completely in the author’s own words. To obtain an audio recording of this message, you may listen free at [www.sermonaudio.com/pastorFelker](http://www.sermonaudio.com/pastorFelker). A video of this sermon may be available at <http://swiftcreek.church/>. Dr. Felker’s email address is [S+Felker&2@aol.com](mailto:S+Felker&2@aol.com) (remove signs).