

CHAPTER 6

THOMAS

In the list of disciples found in Matthew 10:2-4, which name appears seventh on the list?
_____ This disciple was also called by another name as we learn in John 11:16. What was this other name? _____ Both of these names mean the same thing. The name "Didymus" means "double" or "twin." The name "Thomas" means "twin" also. Thomas must have been a twin, although the Bible does not mention anything about his twin brother or sister.

The Character of Thomas

The Bible does not tell us very much about Thomas. In fact, it is only the Gospel of John which really gives us information about this man. The other Gospels mention his name but do not tell us anything about him.

The Gospel of John teaches four things about the disciple named Thomas:

1. Thomas was slow to believe. Because of his unbelief he has been called "DOUBTING THOMAS." His attitude could be expressed in these words: "Unless I see it, I won't believe it!"
2. Thomas was a man subject to despondency. He could become easily discouraged or depressed. "Gloomy" is another word that describes his personality.
3. Thomas saw the darker side of things. He was the kind of person who on a partly sunny day looked at the clouds and never saw the blue sky. Instead of looking ahead and seeing the blessings, he saw only the difficulties that were involved. He was a pessimist which means he did not usually think things would turn out very well.
4. Thomas was a disciple who was full of ardent and fervent love for his Master. He was a fearless and loyal follower of Christ.

Thomas is Mentioned in the Gospel of John

The first real mention of Thomas is found in John chapter 11. In this chapter the Lord suggested to His disciples that they return to Judaea (John 11:7). Bethany, the town of Lazarus, was located in Judaea (see John 11:1). Also Bethany was located right next to Jerusalem where many of the Lord's enemies were. Were the disciples concerned that Jesus wanted to return to this region (John 11:8)? _____ They knew that the Jews had tried to kill Jesus before (see John 10:31-32, 39) and that they would probably try to kill Him again.

In John 11:15, Jesus said to the disciples, "...let us go unto him (Lazarus)." Which disciple spoke right up and said to the other disciples, "Let us also go" (John 11:16)? _____ Was

Thomas afraid to go? _____ Was he willing even to die with Christ? _____ We can see something of the courage that Thomas had as well as his loyalty to his Master. What did Thomas think would happen to Jesus and to all the disciples (John 11:16)? _____ His devotion to Christ was stronger than his fear of death. Thomas tended to see the darker side of things. He thought things would turn out for the worst. Death filled his vision. Thomas was wrong, of course. Even though the disciples did go with Jesus to Bethany, not one of them was killed! Thomas was all gloomy and concerned over something that never even happened.

Was Thomas' outlook good or bad? Was it right or wrong? Was it right for him to have death as his outlook? Thomas failed to pay attention, and he missed what the Lord had just said: "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may _____; nevertheless let _____ go unto him" (John 11:15). In this verse Jesus did not say "to the intent ye may die," but He said, "to the intent ye may _____." What was the intent of God? Jesus wanted to take them to Bethany so that they might _____, not so that they might die! Jesus was not bringing them into a "DEATH" situation. He was bringing them into a wonderful situation in which God would be G _____ (John 11:4). Thomas failed to pay attention to what the Lord was saying! Do *you* sometimes fail to hear what God is really saying in His Word? Do you sometimes miss the whole point? Do you sometimes think that God's intent for you is something terrible when it is really something wonderful?

Are you like Thomas? Do you tend to see the darker side of things? Do you always think things will turn out for the worse? Do you worry about things that never even happen? Do you always see the clouds and never the blue sky? Remember, God Himself is in charge of this world and all that happens in it. God is not in heaven trying to make everything turn out terrible. God is an Expert at making things turn out for His glory and for man's good. The believer needs to realize that God works all things together for _____ (Romans 8:28) and not for bad. The believer does not need to grumble or complain or become gloomy. Instead, what are we told to do (Ephesians 5:20)? _____ What are we told to do in Philippians 4:4? _____

How does worry and unbelief and grumbling and gloominess affect us? Can such things affect a person PHYSICALLY? In what ways? Can such things affect a person MENTALLY? SPIRITUALLY? How?

We learn more about Thomas in John chapter 14. In verse one, Jesus said, "Let not your heart be _____." The heart of Thomas was probably very troubled at this time. This night was the very night that Jesus would be arrested. The situation did not look very good, especially to Thomas. What wonderful promise did Jesus give His disciples in John 14:3?

Jesus wanted to bring these men through the dark clouds of gloom so that they could see the bright skies of hope. It is true that Jesus would leave the disciples and be killed, but it is also true that He would rise again and someday COME AGAIN! Jesus said, "And where I go ye know and the way ye know" (John 14:4). In other words, "You know I am going to heaven and you know the way to get to heaven!"

Which disciple was all confused about these words that Jesus spoke (John 14:5)? _____ Once again Thomas was not paying close enough attention, and he missed the whole point. In spite of what Jesus had already said (John 14:1-3), Thomas saw very little hope. He just saw the darkness of the tunnel and failed to see the bright light shining at the end of the tunnel. At least Thomas was honest enough to tell the Lord that he did not understand.

Jesus helped Thomas, and the answer that the Lord gave to Thomas is one of the most important salvation verses in the Bible:

"Jesus saith unto him [Thomas], I am the _____,
the _____ and the _____ no man
_____ unto the Father but by _____" (John 14:6).

Have you memorized this verse? What does this verse mean? How can a person get to heaven?

Thomas is also mentioned in John chapter 20 and also in John 21:2. He was one of the seven disciples who went on this fishing trip. Let us now consider the very important passage found in Chapter 20 of John.

Doubting Thomas

On the first Easter Sunday evening, the Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples (John 20:19). Were the disciples blessed by this appearance of their risen Lord (John 20:20)? _____ Which disciple was not present on this occasion (John 20:24)? _____

The Bible does not tell us why Thomas was absent. Maybe he had a good reason for being away, or perhaps he did not. All we know is that for some reason he did not join his fellow disciples at this gathering on this first Easter Sunday evening. Because of his absence he lost out on a real blessing! He did not share in the "gladness" which the other disciples experienced (John 20:20). For a whole week he was in a state of gloom and unbelief while the other disciples were rejoicing.

God does not want believers to lose out on the blessings that He has for them by not assembling together. In Hebrews 10:25 we are told not to be "forsaking the _____ of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." When God's people come together, we need to be there lest we lose out and miss out! It is never wise to be absent without **very good** cause. How is your church attendance? Are you missing out on what God has for you?

What did the other disciples tell Thomas (John 20:25)?

_____ Were they lying to him? Were they trying to fool him or deceive him? _____ Were they telling the truth? _____ Did Thomas believe them? _____ Thomas rejected the testimony of ten faithful brethren who were his true friends! He refused to take them at their word. He refused to believe their witness.

According to Thomas, what was the only thing that would convince him of the truth of the resurrection (John 20:25)?

Thomas refused to believe until he could see (and touch)!

Let's think about the words of Thomas here in John 20:25. Thomas must have seen Christ's dead body on the cross. He knew all about the nails and the wound that Christ received from the spear (see John 19:34). The picture of Christ's dead body must have burnt itself into his mind. In his gloom and unbelief all he could think about was the lifeless form of his Master as he had seen Him hanging on the cross. For Thomas it was as if the whole universe collapsed when Jesus was crucified. In Thomas's mind he had a picture of a dead Jesus, and not even the glad words of the

disciples could erase that picture. Even when the sun was shining brightly, Thomas still saw the dark clouds of gloom--clouds that were not really even there!

We should also note that the Lord's wound which He received from the spear must have been very large! It was large enough for a man to put his _____ right into it (John 20:25 and compare verse 27). Keep in mind that when the Lord received this piercing by the spear, He was already dead (John 19:33-34).

Thomas' sin of unbelief was very great, but the Lord was so very gracious to him. One week later ("after eight days") the disciples were again gathered together, again on a Sunday evening, and this time _____ was with them (John 20:26). Who came right through closed doors to appear to these men? _____

Who was the first individual whom Jesus spoke to (John 20:27)? _____ Notice how Jesus gave Thomas **just what he had asked for**:

<p>The Demands of Thomas (John 20:25)</p>	<p>The Commands of Jesus (John 20:27)</p>
<p>1. Unless I see in his hands the mark or the nails,</p> <p>2. And put my finger into the place of the nails,</p> <p>3. And put my hand into his side,</p> <p>4. I definitely will not believe!</p>	<p>1. See (behold) my hands,</p> <p>2. Bring here your finger,</p> <p>3. And bring your hand, and put it into my side,</p> <p>4. And no longer be unbelieving, but believing!</p>

For each demand of Thomas there is a command of Christ, although the order in which the commands are uttered is not exactly the same as that in which the demands were made.

Something else quite amazing is that the Lord had perfect knowledge of everything Thomas had said even though the Lord was not physically (bodily) present at the time (see John 20:25). This is an important reminder to every believer. The Lord Jesus Christ is OMNISCIENT. He knows all things. He knows everything we say or even think. We may fool others, but never Him!

Notice what Thomas said: "My _____ and my _____" (John 20:28). Apparently Thomas did not even need to do any touching. Sight was enough. In an instant, DOUBTING THOMAS became CONVINCED THOMAS. He was FULLY PERSUADED! Never again did Thomas ever doubt the fact of the resurrection.

Thomas only said five words (John 20:28), but they were wonderful words. It was the language of amazement, delight, repentance, faith and adoration, all combined in one sentence! Was Thomas correct when he called Jesus "GOD"? There are many religious groups and cults today who do not believe that Jesus is truly God. Did Thomas believe this? _____ We should also notice that Jesus

did not correct Thomas. The Lord did not say, "Thomas, you should never call Me 'GOD.' I am not God, so please be sure to never call Me this again." The Lord did not say this because **He is** everything that Thomas said He was!

According to the words of Jesus, why did Thomas believe (John 20:29)?

_____ He should have accepted the word of his ten friends who told him the good news of the resurrection a week earlier (John 20:25), but he refused to believe. He believed only after he had **seen**.

Faith Not Based On Sight

We all need to learn a lesson from Thomas. Jesus said these important words for all of us: "Blessed (happy) are they that have _____ and yet have _____" (John 20:29).

Those of us living today will never be able to see what Thomas saw. Can people see the risen Christ today (compare John 16:10)? _____ Today if a person refuses to believe until he sees the Lord, then he will never believe! He will not see Jesus until it is too late, that is, in the next life! Jesus will not and does not appear to people today.

Even in New Testament times there were many people who never saw the risen Lord (see 1 Peter 1:8). Did these people love the Lord (1 Peter 1:8)? _____ Did they believe (1 Peter 1:8)? _____ Were they blessed with joy and gladness (1 Peter 1:8)? _____

Today what do we have to base our faith upon? Actually we have the same thing that Thomas had. Thomas had the word and the testimony of those men who actually saw the Lord (John 20:25). The sad thing is that Thomas refused to believe their word. Today we also have the testimony given to us by those men who saw the Lord. For example, the Apostle John was among those who saw the risen Christ. He has given to us the Gospel of John in which he tells us about the resurrection. Should we believe John's word? _____ Was John trying to fool us or deceive us? _____ Was John a liar? _____ Were the things which John wrote true or false (John 21:24)? _____

The Bible says, "We walk by _____ (taking God at His Word) not by _____" (2 Cor. 5:7). God has given us His written Word so that we might know about Christ and believe on Him: "But these are _____ that ye might _____ that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that _____ ye might have _____ through His name" (John 20:31). Blessed are they who BELIEVE! Blessed are those who simply take God at His Word! Blessed are those who say, "**GOD SAID IT! I BELIEVE IT! THAT SETTLES IT!**"

In Matthew 8:5-10, we learn about a centurion. Did this man need to *see* his servant healed before he would believe? _____ What did Jesus say about this man's faith (verse 10)? _____

_____ In John 4:46-54 we learn about a certain nobleman. Did this man need to see his son healed before he would believe? _____ Blessed are they that just believe the W _____ (verse 50)!

If people refuse to hear and believe God's Word, then it is doubtful that anything else will convince them. We learn this from reading Luke 16:19-31 (see especially the last verse).

Today people have the same problem. Here are some of the things that people might even say today. These may be discussed in class:

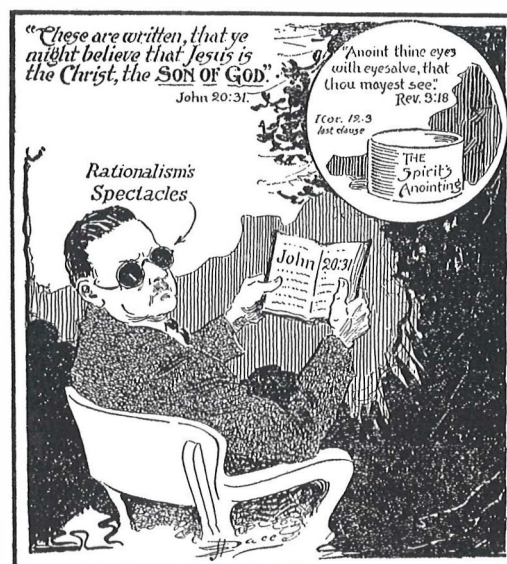
1. I refuse to believe the Bible unless someone discovers Noah's ark. If they discover Noah's ark, then I'll believe.
2. I refuse to believe in the resurrection unless I can see the "shroud" with my own eyes. (The shroud is an interesting piece of cloth that some believe was the actual cloth that Jesus was buried in.)
3. I do not believe the Bible, especially this nonsense about Christians being removed from the earth. My Christian friends call this "The Rapture." I will never become a Christian unless I see the rapture take place with my own eyes.
4. I do not believe that the miracles in the Bible ever really happened. I have lived a long time, and in all my life I have not even seen one miracle! Miracles must not be real because I have never seen them!

Can you think of other things modern day "unbelievers" might say? What does 1 John 5:9-12 tell us about believing and not believing?

The Later Life of Thomas

Not much is known about the later life of Thomas. We are sure that he served the Lord faithfully, but we are not sure where or how. Some say that he labored for Christ in Parthia, Persia and India. One tradition says that he suffered death as a martyr as his enemies used a lance or spear. We cannot be sure about these reports. We can be quite sure that Thomas was loyal and faithful to his Master until the very end (compare John 11:16).

Peter denied His Lord, and Thomas refused to believe in the resurrection. The Lord was gracious to both of these men and used them in a great way. Each of us has his own problems and sins, but God is bigger than these things. He wants to use your life also. By His transforming grace, He can help you to overcome whatever problems you may have.



He declares he cannot see it – but is it any wonder?