

**The Word Became Flesh**  
**Week 63**  
**John 20:24-31**  
**"From Skeptic To Saved, So That We May Believe"**

**Introduction**

**The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness.** **Isaiah 9:2**

I have heard several sermons on this particular passage, as I am sure that many of us have. And I am also certain that most of us have heard the phrase "Doubting Thomas" more than a few times in our lives. Ever since childhood I have heard many preachers speak with obvious disdain for poor Thomas, (also called Didymus). Both of his names mean "twin", for the record. So apparently Thomas had a twin sibling that we know nothing about from The Scriptures. It is probably just as well, for I suppose we would hear twice as many sermons that would cast aspersions on both of them, if we *had* heard about his twin.

So, I want to go on the record today to say that I am "Pro-Thomas". I think that this poor disciple has been vilified enough. After all, Christ chose Him for a reason. And I believe in the sovereign selection of Almighty God. Jesus' calling of Thomas was no mistake. For God doesn't make mistakes. His ways are perfect (**Ps. 18:30**), and He doesn't make His choices based upon any kind of human reasoning.

**God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world — what is viewed as nothing — to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, so that no one may boast in His presence. It is from Him that you are in Christ Jesus, Who became wisdom from God for us — our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption — in order that, as it is written: Let the one who boasts, boast in The LORD (Jer. 9:24).**

**1 Corinthians 1:28-31**

So, let's keep in mind that Jesus had a specific reason in mind when He chose *this* particular disciple. I could make the argument that no one loved Jesus any more than Thomas. After all, it was Thomas who was willing to follow Jesus to Jerusalem to raise Lazarus, even if it meant the death of all them.

**Then Thomas (called "Twin") said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go too so that we may die with Him."** **John 11:16**

I cannot help but wonder if Thomas took the death of His Master extremely hard. He was so upset the night before Jesus went to the cross. He didn't understand why Jesus was leaving them (**John 14:5**). And when Jesus was arrested later that evening, Thomas had run away with the rest of the disciples. Perhaps he felt ashamed for being so disloyal, when the One that he loved had needed Him the most. Guilt is a powerful crushing force, and once a person has become overwhelmed by it, faith can be hard to come by.

We will never know, this side of glory, what exactly was going on in the mind of Thomas, when he could not bring himself to believe that Jesus had risen. It would seem that no one was able to convince him of the truth, even when he was told over and over again by his most trusted companions. So what was it that kept Thomas from believing their testimony about the resurrection. Perhaps he felt unworthy of such good tidings. Whatever the reason, I find this man to be the most honest of all the disciples. And being honest about one's doubts and fears is never a bad thing. And it certainly wasn't like all those other disciples had exactly been stalwarts of faith themselves! Jesus has come to save the weak and helpless, and unless we are all willing to admit that we fall into this category, our situation will remain hopeless.

I am convinced that all the events following Jesus' resurrection were ordained by God and happened for a specific purpose. And it is with this thought in mind that we look together to the story of "Doubting Thomas". This sermon is entitled (appropriately I believe), *From Skeptic to Saved, So that We May Believe*.

**From Skeptic (vs. 24-26)**

**But Thomas (called "Twin"), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were telling him, "We've seen the Lord!"**

**But he said to them, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe."**

**A week later his disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."** **John 20: 24-26**

John doesn't say that Thomas had not gathered with the disciples that evening. He says that Thomas wasn't there when Jesus came. I personally think that Thomas had actually been there that evening and left. Luke's gospel tells us that the two disciples, who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus, ran back to Jerusalem, and **"They found the Eleven and those with them gathered together." (Luke 24:33b)**. So I am under the personal opinion that Thomas had been there and left before Jesus came.

We can only speculate as to why the distraught disciple had left the gathering early. The possibilities are endless. Perhaps with Judas gone, Thomas had been entrusted as the group's treasurer, and as such, he may have went out to buy all those gathered something to eat. Only God knows why he wasn't in the room, when Jesus showed Himself to the others. But I do not believe this was not done by some accidental happenstance. I believe that Jesus knew Thomas was not there, and He picked that very moment to reveal Himself to the others. For you see, our LORD doesn't make mistakes.

Remember the story of Lazarus? Jesus knew the Lazarus was sick. In fact, He knew that Lazarus was dying. But instead of rushing in to the rescue, The Savior delayed His coming on purpose. When He decided to go, Lazarus was already dead, and Jesus knew full well that he was! Why? Because The LORD had a greater purpose in mind. He intended to show His followers that He was indeed The Resurrection and The Life. And allowing Lazarus to pass away was all part of the process.

The disciples knew all too well how dangerous it was for Jesus to return to the region of Bethany where Lazarus lived, for it was right next door to Jerusalem. And there, waiting for Him, were the Pharisees who wanted Jesus dead. The disciples wanted Jesus to simply heal Lazarus from a safe distance. But it was 'ol Doubting Thomas who spoke up in faith and was the first to say that he was going with Jesus no matter the risk. So there can be little dispute as to this man's devotion to Christ. So why would Jesus wait until Thomas was not in the room to reveal Himself to the other disciples after His own resurrection? That is a very good question, and I believe it is worth investigation.

For you see, Thomas wasn't the only one who didn't believe Jesus had risen from the dead. None of those guys believed it! John was the first one to be convinced after he saw the grave cloths in the empty tomb (**John 20:8**). But absolutely none of the rest of the disciples believed, even after hearing the testimony of Mary Magdalene and the others. So, we can rule out that Christ showed Himself to all of them before He came to Thomas on the basis of their superior faith. They were all just as unbelieving as Thomas, until they saw Jesus with their own eyes!

As I have previously stated, I believe that Jesus waited for Thomas to be absent, just as He waited for Lazarus to die before He showed up. And I believe this to be an *intentional act* for the purpose of what we preachers call "a teachable moment". Jesus picked just the right time to appear to the other disciples. And one week later, He again chose the perfect time to reveal Himself to Thomas. You cannot believe in the sovereignty of God and arrive at any other conclusion!

Thomas was skeptical about the resurrection, and he had made that plain. I personally love how he doesn't pretend to believe something, when he does not. Many would have pretended to believe, rather than risk being alienated or even ridiculed by the group. But not Thomas. He wasn't a believer in the resurrection. And he said as much. And herein lies the problem, for not to believe in the resurrection of Christ is to remain in your sin. You cannot be saved, if you do not believe in the resurrection. It's as simple as that! And Thomas, at this point in time, certainly was not a "believer". He loved Jesus, but his

faith in Christ was incomplete. Then The Savior made a special appearance just for Thomas. And it is in this wondrous event, that we find the “teachable moment” I spoke of earlier. We will witness first hand a living example of just how a lost soul goes from skepticism to salvation. When Christ comes to reveal Himself to us, we are never to be the same again!

### **To Saved (vs. 27-29)**

**Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don’t be faithless, but believe.”**

**Thomas responded to him, “My Lord and my God!”**

**Jesus said, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”** **John 20:27-29**

It was exactly one week after His first post resurrection appearance, when Christ appeared again to the gathering of the disciples. Once again, it was a Sunday (The LORD’S day) when they had assembled. Jesus appeared out of nowhere, and this time He went straight to Thomas. He offered the doubting disciple the opportunity to touch the nail prints in His hands and the wound from the spear in His side. It is worth noting that there is no record of Thomas ever doing so. I would assume that seeing his Master and hearing His voice was sufficient. No further evidence was necessary. Jesus revealed Himself to Thomas; Thomas believed, and that was that!

Jesus’ words to Thomas are important. “Don’t be faithless but believe.” A better translation would be “Stop becoming faithless, but become a believer.” It was a personal invitation for Thomas to decide exactly Who he believed Jesus to be. It will be required of every man to make the same decision. What you decide will determine your eternity. This is the most important question that shall ever be asked of us:

**“But you,” He asked them, “who do you say that I AM?”** **Matthew 16:15**

Peter had answered that question in a powerful way when he claimed that Jesus was “**...The Messiah, The Son of The Living God.**” (Matthew 16:16b). But Thomas answered the call with an even more powerful response.

**Thomas responded to Him, “My LORD and my God!”** **John 20:28**

In case you are wondering, it is the strongest statement of faith made by any of the disciples up to this point in The Scriptures. When Thomas saw Jesus as He truly is, he humbly worshipped Him as The Great I AM. For a Jew to bow down and proclaim a man of flesh and blood to be God is a powerful thing indeed. So let’s stop calling this man “Doubting Thomas”, shall we?!

Now, here is the “teachable moment” for us in this story. Thomas got saved the same way that you and I are saved. Jesus revealed Himself, and Thomas believed in His resurrection, and when this happened, look at how Thomas responded. For his response tells us everything that we need to know about salvation. And to be honest, this is the whole point of my message today. When Thomas believed in the resurrection, he cried out, “My LORD and my God!” If this sequence of events doesn’t sound familiar, if it doesn’t strike a chord within your heart, my friends, it should. For what we are seeing here is a living breathing example of **Romans 10:9**.

**If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is LORD,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved!”** **Romans 10:9** (exclamation added)

Thomas wasn't a Believer. But when Jesus revealed Himself *personally* to Thomas and gave him the proof that God had indeed raised Him from the dead, Thomas confessed with his mouth that Jesus is LORD! When The Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us, we are saved in exactly the same way! We have not seen Jesus with our eyes, but The Spirit takes the Word of God and reveals the resurrection to us. As we believe the message, we confess Jesus as LORD. In that moment, a person stops becoming faithless and becomes a Believer! Thomas' conversion is a living, breathing example of **Romans 10:9** on display for all to see. And that is why I am convinced that The Savior made it happen for a reason. Thomas' doubts became a teachable moment for the Savior. Christ demonstrated in this doubting disciple His wondrous gift of salvation with a living, breathing example. When we believe and confess, we go from skeptic to saved! And this is why Jesus went on to say, **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."** **John 20:29b**. *If you are a Believer today, He was speaking of you, when He said that!*

### **So That We May Believe (vs. 30-31)**

**Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this Book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.**

**John 20:30-31**

Every time I have read this passage in the past, I always thought it seemed out of place here. It sounds more like a great ending passage to a book. Does it not? But now, I believe that The Holy Spirit wasn't trying to give John a great ending here. I believe that He is taking the illustration that we just saw and letting us know that if we, like Thomas, will believe and confess, we too can have this very same salvation! After all, these things were **"written so that we may believe"**. What a message of hope for every Believer in Christ! For just as Jesus made a special trip to reach Thomas, God has given us His Word to reach us with the salvation that He offers. **For God so loved... the world.**

John goes on to say that when we believe as Thomas did, we too can have **"life in His Name"**. To completely understand this, we must understand what God's Word is saying, when it speaks of **"life"**. For you see, in the Garden of Eden, man's sin separated his spirit from the spirit of his Creator. In reality, the very thing inside of us, that was given to connect us to God, died as a result of sin. Jesus died to restore this connection. Through believing in Christ, our dead spirits are resurrected by The Spirit and reconnected to The One Who made us. In Christ, we literally are brought from death to life!

**And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the lives of the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. BUT GOD, Who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!**

**Ephesians 2:1-5**

Just one last thought here. Thomas had said that he would not believe unless he saw for himself the **"mark"** of the nails in Jesus' hands. The word that he uses for **"mark"** is an interesting choice. The word in the Greek is **"tupon"**, and it was used to describe a stamped impression, much like the way we would see a stamp upon leather goods to certify their genuineness. Paul used this same word, when he described the effective gospel witness of the Thessalonian church. What the nail prints in Jesus' hands did for Thomas, the Thessalonians were to everyone who saw them. They carried in their very nature the marks of the cross. Everyone who saw them could see the **"tupon"** of Christ stamped upon their lives! Jesus has called us to carry His gospel to a lost and dying world. When others see our testimony, may they see the marks of the cross upon us, so that they may **confess with their mouths that Jesus is LORD and believe in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead**, so that they like Thomas, and like us... **shall be saved!**

Let those who have been permanently stamped with the mark of the cross of Christ say... TRUTH!