

# Thomas Encounters Jesus

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now, Thomas, also known as Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, We have seen the Lord.

But he said to them, Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.

A week later, his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Through the doors, though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

Then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here. See my hands? Reach out your hand and put it into my side.

Stop doubting and believe. Thomas said to him, My Lord and my God. Then Jesus told him, Because you have seen me, you have believed.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

This is the word of the Lord. Good morning, everybody. Good, you remember my name. That's good. There's a song by Fairport Convention called Where Does the Time Go?

And I was reminded of that when we had William and Kate come up, because that was 11 years ago.

And I think I was leading when their births were announced. And there was a ripple of laughter when they were named as William and Kate. And they've grown up together, and that's lovely.

[ 2 : 2 7 ] Where does the time go? It reminds me, I was just thinking, sitting there, that my youngest son is 45 years old. I won't tell you how old my oldest son is, but he's older.

So where does the time go? I don't know. Have you ever doubted? I know I have. I doubt whether I would be able to run a marathon.

In fact, I don't doubt. I'm sure I won't be able to run a marathon. Or waiting for the results of exams, doubting whether I have passed.

I'm still at the age. I'm still actually doing exams. So I'm mad. And when I was at work, whether I would get that promotion.

Whether Charlton will ever get to the premiership. Another big doubt. Whether I should have been an elder here at Hearn Hill Baptist Church.

[ 3 : 3 3 ] Whether I'd be a good enough father to my children or husband, to Sylvia. Whether I would ever get this sermon done. We all have doubts over many things in our lives.

But it's not wrong to doubt. It's a good thing to doubt whether you should touch a live electric wire. Or whether you should walk a tightrope between two high buildings.

There are good reasons to doubt those things. Now I wonder if you ever had one of those days. I did the other day when things go wrong.

The boiler stops heating the water. You drop a pan of peas on the floor. And let me tell you, peas on the floor are not an easy thing to get rid of.

Or the car will not start. Things that go wrong. And if you watch Bake Off, you'll know they have a signature bake.

[ 4 : 34 ] Now my signature bake is rock cakes. And though I say so myself, they are rather good rock cakes. But things do not always go to plan.

And one day my rock cakes are more rock than cakes. I had forgotten to turn the oven down after I heated it up. So it was up 220 rather than whatever it ought to have been.

So they were good for throwing at people, but not much for eating. Now Thomas had not had a good few days. He had seen the one he loved and followed die in an inhumane way on a cross as a criminal.

We don't know how close Thomas was to the crucifixion. John in his Gospel tells us that Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were at the cross together with the beloved disciple John.

We're not told any others were that near. But Luke does mention that all his acquaintances, which means the ones who are known to him, stood at a distance and watched these things.

[ 5 : 47 ] So I think we can believe that Thomas has seen Jesus taken down from the cross and taken away to be buried. And he thought that was the last he was going to see of his beloved Jesus.

With the other disciples, he had scattered, scared of what the Jewish authorities would do to them. A little bit about Thomas. The first we hear of Thomas is in the list of disciples we read in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

John doesn't give us a list of the disciples. Thomas is Aramaic for twin, and Didymus is a Greek equivalent. He's known, Thomas, known as Didymus.

And we don't know whether that was a nickname, or whether in fact he did have a twin. There's nothing in the Bible that suggests we know anything about his twin.

And the next we hear of Thomas is in John's Gospel. It's in the story of Lazarus. Jesus had been told by Mary and Martha that the one you love is sick. Clearly, they wanted Jesus to come and heal him.

[ 7 : 00 ] But this would mean going to Judea, where the Jews had already tried to stone him. So it would have been a dangerous journey for Jesus. So he might have well been going to his death.

So the other positive, Thomas, said to the rest of the disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him. We may say that doesn't sound exactly hopeful, but it is someone declaring that he would follow Jesus no matter what.

He would follow Jesus even if it meant his death. We next hear of Thomas when Jesus was teaching his disciples about where he was going away, where he was going to, and he was going away to prepare a place for them.

At this, Thomas said, probably what all the others were thinking, but too scared to say, Lord, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way? But if Thomas had not asked this question, maybe you would have had one of the most well-known and quoted sayings of Jesus.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Thomas was therefore a faithful follower of Jesus, someone who would follow Jesus no matter what.

[ 8 : 27 ] But Thomas was following a long line of people who doubted. And let us be clear that although Thomas was the one who said, unless I see, the other disciples were not exactly giants of faith at that time.

And when the women went to the tomb, just as in brackets, it's remarkable to note how women were involved in every key event in the life of Jesus.

Mary was told of the birth of Jesus and, of course, gave birth to him. Mary was the instigator of the first miracle in John's Gospel, asking Jesus to help her neighbor to turn water into wine.

It was women who went to the tomb, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, and discovered that it was empty and then went and told the disciples.

And it was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who was the first to see and speak with the resurrected Jesus. Women were very important in the life of Jesus.

[ 9 : 36 ] Back to the women who went to the tomb and discovered it was empty. And they'd met Jesus and they said, Jesus told them, go back and tell your disciples.

So these women ran back to the disciples and told them what they had seen. They'd seen the empty tomb, the angels, and the message that Jesus had given them and that he had risen. But the disciples did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

Yes, I'll leave it there. Jesus himself had some doubts, though. Christ spent an anguished night in prayer. Jesus fell with his face to the ground and prayed, my father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me, yet not as I will, but as you will.

Or these words from the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? So if Jesus can have doubts, surely Thomas, we are also permitted doubt.

It seems to be poor old Stephen, who's the one who gets it in the neck for the one ever, forever to be known as Thomas, the doubter, doubting Thomas. The one who would not believe unless he was given concrete proof unless he could see Jesus himself with the wounds in his hands, feet and side.

[ 11 : 06 ] Thomas was not with the disciples the first time Jesus showed himself to them. Probably that was on the day of the resurrection itself, the first days of Sunday. We do not know where Thomas was.

Perhaps he was on an errand. If he was doing that, he was probably very courageous because the others were behind the locked door for fear of the Jews. But when Thomas returned to the disciples, they were very excited.

They said, we have seen the Lord. The one who died on the cross came and spoke to us. Their friend, their teacher, their Lord, their Saviour, being raised from the dead.

But Thomas, being Thomas, was not quite so excited. He did not say, that's great. I'm so happy and pleased that my Lord is alive.

Instead, he said, unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe. So what does Jesus do in this case?

[ 12 : 06 ] This case of extreme doubt. He does what he always does. Meets us where we are at. So Jesus comes to see the disciples again a week later.

What Jesus was doing that week and what the disciples were doing, we don't know. So I'm going to have a few questions when I get to heaven. The door was locked, but locked doors cannot stop the man, risen Jesus, from entering the room they were in.

Jesus enters the room and says, as he had said the previous week, peace be with you. But then Jesus immediately turns to Thomas and addresses Thomas.

He clearly knew what Thomas had said and that doubt had filled his mind and heart. So he showed Thomas his hand and side and said, touch them, stop doubting and believe.

Notice what Jesus did. For every demand of Thomas, Jesus gives a command. Thomas says, unless I see the nail marks in his hands, Jesus said, see my hands.

[ 13 : 21 ] Thomas said, and put my fingers where the nails were. Jesus said, put your fingers here. Thomas said, and put my hand into his side. Jesus, reach out your hand and put it into my side.

Thomas, I will not believe it. Jesus said, stop doubting and believe. Martin Luther King said, faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.

C.S. Lewis said, I gave in and admitted that God was God. Going further back, Spurgeon said, faith goes up the stairs that love was built and looks out the window which hope has opened.

This is what Thomas did. I don't think he touched Jesus. The Bible doesn't say whether he touched him or not. But he simply says, my Lord and my God.

Two things that a Jew would, could never say to a man because that would make that man God. And Jews couldn't cope with that.

[ 14 : 29 ] Previously, the disciples had addressed Jesus as Lord, Messiah, Son of God. What Thomas realized was that this man standing before him with his wounds for all to see was God.

Was who, was who he had said he was. The one who was at one with his Father in heaven. The one who was the Son of God. Thomas had moved from the greatest doubter to giving the greatest confession.

My Lord and my God. This great statement of faith by Thomas shows that Thomas had realized two things. First, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus is alive and remains alive. The great message of Easter. But also, who Jesus is. He is not only the Son of Man, but he is also God living on earth as man.

The last we hear of Thomas is when he was with the other disciples waiting for the Holy Spirit to come at Pentecost. He was still following his master, Jesus, still waiting to do what Jesus wanted him to do.

[ 15 : 44 ] So I think Thomas may be a good model to follow. Tennyson said, there lives more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds.

We all have doubts, times when we wonder, can God be in this? Can God be here? The story of Thomas tells us that Jesus will meet us in our concerns, in our doubts, in our troubles.

As I said, we all have doubts and have had doubts with the things that have happened to us and our loved ones where we think, why God? And on a personal note, I have to say, life hasn't been easy since Sylvia was diagnosed with MS and hasn't got better or worse.

So, you know, there have been doubts, there have been problems, but a verse I always turn to and is actually a verse that I use the first talk I ever gave which was to a children's club at Bessemer Grange.

So, it must have been nearly 60 years ago and the verses I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded and he is able to keep that which I have committed under him against that day.

[ 17 : 27 ] Jesus will be with us through our doubts and we will be able to say with him, through him, my Lord and my God. John wrote his gospel so that we may believe and have life in his name.

May all of us here today realise that he, Jesus, is able to keep us in each and every situation we may find ourselves in.

He may not be able but he is able. Amen. Amen. Amen.