

John Lau Doubt?

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[0 : 0 0] As we read from John chapter 20, during the very first Easter, about a week after Jesus resurrected, Jesus appeared among his disciples in a house behind a locked door, and he singled out Thomas.

It reads in verse 26 to 27, A week later, his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the door were locked, Thomas called. Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. Then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here. See my hands.

Wish out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe. Why did Jesus single out Thomas? What can we learn from this man?

We had celebrated Good Friday and Easter just about two weeks ago. I hope you still remember from those sermons of the true meaning of Easter, how the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ had dealt with the ultimate problem of human, the human ultimate problem of sin, and given us the hope of being right with God, being accepted by God as his children once again.

It's easy for us in this modern day to sit around eating our chocolate eggs and point on the meaning of the Easter event. I don't think it's as easy for those people at the very first Easter.

[1 : 3 1] John chapter 20, 19 tell us that on that day of Jesus' resurrection, that evening, the disciples were together behind closed doors for fear of the Jews.

They were fearful that they may be next on the list to be crucified, just like what happened to the teacher Jesus. They had just lost someone very close to them, the person they thought may be the promised Messiah that would help them to overturn their government.

Then Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. And he showed them his hand and his side and gave them their blessing.

I'm sure if we were there, it would be such a mixed feeling. John in his gospel tells us that the disciples were overjoyed, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tells us that the disciples were still doubting, filled with unbelief.

Some thought they were seeing ghosts. However, there was one man that did not experience any of this feeling. He missed all the commotion. John tells us in verse 24, Now Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

[2 : 5 2] Why wasn't he there? What would he possibly have gone to? The Bible didn't tell us that, where he went, but it tells us that the overjoyed and excited disciples were trying to convince Thomas that Jesus is alive and had resurrected.

It must be terrible to have missed the chance to see the resurrected Christ, but it would be worse to be reminded over and over again that he has missed out.

And so Thomas stubbornly replied to the others, maybe also as a way to shut them up. He laid down a condition for him to believe. Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my fingers where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.

Jesus singled out Thomas after about a week to answer this exact request. He almost repeated what Thomas had said. Put your finger here, see my hand.

Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe. Jesus singled out Thomas because he knew what was going on within Thomas.

[4 : 02] Jesus wanted to restore Thomas' faith in him and in his resurrection. It was important for Thomas to stop being an unbeliever because if one of the twelve apostles had remained a doubter, it would have cast disbelief on the integrity of other disciples and witnesses and the ripple effect would have passed down through history.

It was also very important for Thomas to come to terms with what is happening so he can fulfill Jesus' plan for him and for us. Let's take a closer look of who Thomas really is and how Jesus interacts with him.

The method that Jesus used with Thomas is not unusual in his dealing with us because just like Thomas, we often have questions and doubts. All four Gospels tell us that Jesus carefully chose his disciples to come and learn from him, to bring the good news of the kingdom to everyone.

Thomas was chosen and appointed by the Lord Jesus to be one of his followers. They will follow Jesus through all the ups and downs, through all the glories and shames, through all the acceptance and rejections.

On many occasions, Jesus had to face the possibility to be stoned to death for what he claims and preached. And Thomas was there with Jesus.

[5 : 36] And he did not back down or run away. He stayed right by Jesus' side. John in chapter 11 tells us that after Jesus had stayed away from Jerusalem for a while, words of the health of his friend Lazarus reached Jesus.

And he intended to go back to Judea to see him. And his disciples replied, But teacher, a short while ago, the Jews are there trying to stone you.

And why are you going back? Thomas was there with Jesus when Jesus told them that Lazarus was already dead.

In verse 14 to 16, Jesus said, Lazarus is dead, and for your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let's go to him.

Then Thomas said to the rest of the disciples, let's also go that we may die with him. Thomas is willing to go back to Jerusalem with Jesus, to die with him there.

[6 : 42] He knew perfectly well of the attitude and intention of the religious leader at that time. There was every possibility that they would arrest Jesus and put him to death.

Thomas was concerned about Jesus' death, but Jesus was more concerned that his disciples would believe in him. Jesus said, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.

Thomas was with Jesus when Jesus raised Lazarus from death. He came to Jerusalem to die with Jesus, and witness the master of death called the dead man back to life.

Thomas was just as prepared as the other disciples to believe in the resurrection. But along with the other disciples, he never really understood Jesus was talking about his resurrection when he said, I am the resurrection and the life.

Thomas was with Jesus the night before Jesus' death, as Jesus prepared his disciples for his crucifixion. John chapter 13 to 17 tell us that Jesus demonstrates his love for his disciples by washing and drying their feet.

[7 : 55] And with many words, he encourages them. Chapter 13, verse 19, Jesus said, I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am who I am.

Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sends me. Later, Jesus said again, I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe.

As Thomas listened to the encouraging words of Jesus about heaven, that Jesus is going there to prepare a place for them, Jesus said, You know the way to the place where I am going.

Thomas said to Jesus, Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way? This allowed Jesus to reply, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. Thomas listened intensely, who reflected on his own knowledge, and quickly acknowledged it is not where Jesus said it was.

[9 : 07] This allowed Jesus to explain his teaching further, and it is a good, healthy way of interruption. To this point, the Thomas that Jesus has chosen seems a great guide, bold, honest, ready to have a go, ready to follow Jesus to the end, even to death.

But it comes to chapter 20, as we have read. Thomas missed his chance at the first appearance of Jesus after his resurrection. And when other people want him to experience that same sense of emotional relief and peace, knowing that his Savior was alive, he demanded more evidence.

Just like any one of us, often when in our unbelief, we take pride in demanding more evidence than that was given by a group of creditable, faithful friends. As Jesus said earlier in 13:20, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sends me.

Thomas, in his arrogance, had refused the testimony by his friends, which in fact was rejecting Jesus and God. What had happened to the chosen Thomas the Apostle?

Why wasn't he there the first night after Jesus' resurrection? To his defense, maybe, perhaps it was his emotional reaction to the outcome of his agony and disappointment.

[10 : 41] Death was very real to Thomas. He had been filled with the horror at the sight of the beating ruins of Jesus. The person that he could touch and feel, the person that he ran while they dodged all the throwing stones, no longer there.

The person of his focus, the reference of his life, that person he can rely on is no longer in his sight. And he did not want to be with anyone.

He just wanted to be alone to face all the pain and suffering by himself. What Thomas had asked for when he got back with the disciples seems arrogant because he rather trust his own eyes, ears, and hand than the combined testimony of more than ten men who had seen with their eyes, heard with their ears, and touched with their hand.

But it was an honest request of his heart at that moment. He wanted to see his Jesus, hear his Jesus, touch his Jesus again.

He needed something to deal with his emotional state. And he was simply asking for the same thing that those disciples say they have experienced. They are unbelievers.

[12 : 04] They thrive on doubt. They like it, enjoy it, live by it. They nurture the evil heart of unbelief. They have a deep sense of reluctance to be convinced by the objective truth.

They are more irritated when they are faced, when they are faced to the facts, sorry, they are more irritated when they are faced to the facts, forced to the facts, forced to face the facts, sorry.

They are preoccupied with their own views. They get provoked instead of being thankful when any doubt is removed. It doesn't seem to be the Thomas that we're saying here.

An honest doubter will expressly, honestly seek the truth regardless of the outcome. They will not eagerly cease on a new objection when the outcome is not what they were expecting.

In fact, I would say if someone is honest with their doubt, they will not remain a doubter for too long. They are not very far from becoming a believer. Jesus let Thomas reflect on what the disciples had testified to him for a whole week before he appeared to them again.

[13 : 28] He let those haunting words of the eyes' witnesses sink deep into Thomas' heart. I'm sure Jesus was observing the interaction of the disciples because he told them at his first appearance that if you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven.

If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. I could imagine the reaction of the other disciples when Thomas rejected their testimony.

There may be cutting words of blame for Thomas' disappearance. They might say to him, if you have not run away, we don't have to try so hard to convince you.

They may even start to challenge his stubbornness and disbelief. believe. I'm sure the overjoyed disciples was not very helpful to Thomas.

They have all the good intention but most likely using the wrong method to convince him. But that was not the good excuse for Thomas to remain stubborn and refuse to believe.

[14 : 34] Jesus suddenly appealed among them and provided Thomas with exactly what he has asked for. Jesus did not scold him. He swore breathed forgiveness and encouragement to Thomas' faith.

He brought Thomas to assurance, just as he did to the other disciples. Thomas' faith was restored with the appearance of his recent Lord.

At this point, Thomas said to Jesus, my Lord and my God. Then Jesus told him, because you have seen me, you have believed it.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Jesus agreed exactly to Thomas' demand for evidence. Jesus met every one of the outrageous demands of Thomas to the letter.

And not just Thomas, but all eleven apostles. He also offered many convincing proof that he was alive. In the book of Acts, chapter 1, verse 3, it reads, After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave them many convincing proof that he was alive.

[15 : 48] He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. Jesus not only answered Thomas' doubts, but every Thomas in the future.

There will be many more Thomases done through history who wrestled with the same question of the resurrection and who Jesus really is. Jesus had given a decisive bow to all doubt and unbelief.

We should be thankful that Thomas expressed his doubt about the resurrection of Jesus because in answering his question, Jesus answered ours too. When Thomas confessed and declared, my Lord and my God, it tells us who Jesus really is.

Jesus truly is both Lord and God, and he speaks of us when he says, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

Whoever at any time, past, present, or future, believed without seeing is pronounced blessed. We are called to walk by faith and not by sight, but our faith has solid creditable historical evidence of the recent savior.

[17 : 06] So, who is Thomas, and what can we learn from him? Thomas lost an opportunity. Thomas was chosen by God to be his witness, and his biggest mistake was he withdrew from Christian fellowship at the site of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion.

In his isolation, he missed the site of Christ. He wanted to be by himself in his own suffering and pain. As a loyal disciple, he was willing to die with Jesus.

His intentions were good, however, his action didn't follow. Thomas fled with the rest of the disciples and left Jesus there, all by himself, in the hands of his oppressors.

He was probably full of guilt and remorse. and he did the worst things. But also a very common thing that he could have done is to be alone by himself, hugging and nurturing his unbelief.

How many of you try to go alone when God has provided others who have made the same difficult journey through hurt, grief, and suffering?

[18 : 23] That is the exact time when we should be in the company of our fellow believers. believers. Thomas would have been better off if he had been in the company of the other disciples and would not miss the blessing of the resurrected Christ and spend eight more days wallowing in his unbelief.

Does that mean Thomas is a failure? Or are there things we can still learn from him? Thomas was a practical disciple of Jesus and he is intellectually honest.

He calculated the situation carefully. He was not going to pretend to understand something that does not make sense to him.

There are a lot of things in our life that we must ponder and think through for ourselves, especially when it is about our relationship with God. Jesus patiently worked with Thomas and strengthened him at the point of his weaknesses.

Jesus will patiently wait and guide us in our life to a full acceptance of God because he is the way, the truth, and the life.

[19 : 36] And no one comes to the Father except through Jesus. If you truly want to be a follower of Jesus, if you really want to have a close relationship with God, be bold and stay your case with God in your prayer.

ask God to show him to you in the most practical way you can think of. Be honest with your questions and doubts and be prepared to have Jesus call on you to put your finger into his hand.

Thomas looked carefully into things determined to inquire as their deepest meaning. He refused to say he understood something when he did not.

He refused to say he believed something that he really didn't. A yes from Thomas is always a yes. A no is always a no. And when Thomas was sure, he went the whole way.

He declared my Lord and my God and he meant every word of it. And by that declaration, he put his faith into what he believes. So why are we talking about Thomas this morning?

[20 : 47] Thomas was the last of the twelve apostles to believe in the resurrection of Jesus because he was not there on the Sunday evening that Christ rose from the dead.

So he had to wait for a full week. When he saw Jesus, there was no need for pulping fingers. He declared, you are my Lord and my God, and he worshipped the resurrected Jesus.

He has the courage to admit his weaknesses and admit that he has been preoccupied by himself and his own view.

And he was willing to face the facts and change his view. He courageously accepted the absolute truth that Jesus is the Lord and God. When Jesus told Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Jesus is also talking to you and me. Believing is directing your heart's attention to Jesus.

[21 : 53] Unbelief, put yourself where God should be. Jesus helped Thomas to get his eyes off himself and look upon him.

Jesus wants you to do the same, to look upon him and worship him as your Lord and your God. God's peace will be with you and you are blessed.

As you direct your heart's attention to Jesus, you will see all the awesome blessings that God has set aside and prepared for you. Don't be unbelieving, believe.

Believe. Believe. Amen. Believe. Believe. Believe. Believe. Believe. Believe. Believe. Believe.

Oh.