

My Lord and My God

John 20:24-31

B.I: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

LTS: Psalm 80

From the very first chapter of the Gospel of John the apostle has been trying to help us come to a firm conviction that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. Can anyone deny that this was John's intent from the very first verses?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being (John 1:1-3)

Later in that same chapter he writes (1:14), "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Throughout the Gospel John points to other witnesses that Jesus is God.

- (1:34) John the Baptist announced, "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.
- (1:49) As soon as Nathanael meets Jesus he declares, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!"
- (6:69) Peter said, "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."
- (11:27) At the tomb of Lazarus Martha said to Jesus, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."
- (3:17 & 17:5) God the Father twice announce from heaven, "This is my beloved Son."

From the very beginning and throughout his Gospel John wants us to understand that eternal life is found only in the Christ of God and Jesus of Nazareth is that Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. It's fitting, then, that John should finish his gospel the way He began, by helping us see that the men who were closest to Him, who walked with Him for three years, who saw Him die on the cross, who witnessed His resurrection, all had come to believe that Jesus was not merely a great teacher, but that He was the Messiah, the Christ, the Lamb of God, the Savior of the world.

As we come to the end of John's Gospel John tells us a story that none of the other authors mention. It's the story of the apostle Thomas, who eventually would be known as "Doubting Thomas." Because of the nature of this narrative and the fact that it puts Thomas in a bit of negative light, it probably was not published until after he was dead.

I think we can break this passage down into three parts.

I. Thomas' Unbelief in the Son of God

II. Thomas' Resurrected Faith in God the Son: (26-29)

III. John's Invitation to Trust in God the Son: (30-31)

Let's begin by reading the story.

Read John 20:24-31

I. Thomas' Unbelief toward God the Son: (24-25)

1. You will remember that the Sunday previous to the one in our text was Easter Sunday. That was the day it was discovered that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb and Jesus's body was no longer inside. It was the day that angels appeared to announce Jesus' resurrection. It was the day – all throughout that day – when Jesus repeatedly revealed himself to various disciples; first to Mary, then to a group of women, then to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and somewhere along the way even to Peter. But the most significant appearance took place Easter evening.

2. It was the first day of the week and the doors were locked when suddenly Jesus appeared in the room declaring "Peace be to you." This was an amazing event in the Gospel story! Jesus was demonstrating that He was in fact alive and well. His hands, feet, and side still possessed the scars carved into His body by crucifixion. This was not merely a spiritual Jesus (a ghost) but the real Jesus. He not only spoke to them but ate a piece of fish in their presence to prove He was not a spirit. It was a fantastic event! It was a life-altering moment!

3. It was on this night that Jesus renewed the disciple's mission to the world, and it was on this night that He breathed on them and said "Receive the H.S." so that they were suddenly able to understand all that the prophets had said concerning Him in the O.T. But not all of the disciples

were present that night. For some reason, Thomas wasn't there. And because He wasn't there, He didn't see the Lord when He appeared. And that brings us to the question, Who is this Thomas?

4. We don't know much about this disciple because there is not much written about him in the Gospels. Nevertheless, there are two or three verses that together paint an interesting picture of this man. We know from our text this morning that Thomas was a twin. Perhaps the reason we know nothing of his sibling is because she may have been a twin sister and would not have been closely associated with Jesus' ministry. Nevertheless, we just don't know.

5. What else do we know about Thomas? One author writes,

Thomas was the eternal pessimist. Like Eeyore in the Winnie the Poo stories, he was a melancholy person, with an uncanny knack for finding the dark cloud in every silver lining. Thomas first appears in John's gospel in connection with the story of raising Lazarus. Aghast that Jesus planned to return to the vicinity of Jerusalem, where the Jews had recently tried to kill Him (11:8), Thomas exclaimed fatalistically, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him" (v. 16). But Thomas's pessimism should not be allowed to obscure his courage; though he thought the situation was hopeless, he nevertheless was willing to lay his life on the line for the Lord. His love for Jesus was so strong that he would have preferred to die with Him rather than to be separated from Him.¹

5. On another occasion Thomas is in the upper room with the other disciples when Jesus is instituting the Lord's Supper and telling the group that He will be leaving them and that they knew the way He was going. To this Thomas retorts (Jn. 14:5), "Lord, where are you going and how can we know the way?" This sets Jesus up to offer the famous reply, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me." Once again, it seems that what provoked the question was that Thomas does not want to be separated from his Lord.

6. But what Thomas is best known for is his skepticism. There was no doubt in his mind (or anyone else's, for that matter) that Jesus had truly died. This had been devastating to Thomas. He loved the Lord and had loyally followed Him. He, like the rest of Jesus' band of followers, had been convinced that Jesus was the Christ of God, but now such faith had evaporated.

Perhaps that explains where Thomas was when the Lord appeared the first time. In the depths of his grief he may have just opted to go away by himself for a time. In any case, when he finally met up with the disciples in the upper room the other disciples began telling him that Jesus had actually appeared in bodily form in that very room! Nevertheless, Thomas was unmoved. People don't just come back from the dead. It's going to take more than words to convince him otherwise. So He throws down the gauntlet, so to speak, and says (20:25), "Unless I see in his

¹ John MacArthur, *MacArthur N.T. Commentaries - John 12-21*, (Moody, 2008), 384

hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I WILL NOT BELIEVE!”

7. Thomas demanded personal physical proof that Jesus was alive. He insisted on touching Jesus, and specifically His crucifixion wounds, not just seeing Him. No one else in the N.T. made demands like these before believing. Don't misunderstand. It wasn't that Thomas was unwilling to believe. As Hendriksen says, Thomas will indeed believe, on certain conditions.

The mysterious Person about whom the others have been saying so much must submit to certain tests which Thomas will apply. Hearing about Him (even from those who have both seen and heard Him) is not enough.²

8. Thomas was not merely asking for a sign. He was asking for hard evidence. This is the moment that this young man earned the name “Doubting Thomas.” But let us not be too hard on Thomas. The Lord has His purpose for this skepticism at the end of John's Gospel. You see, the story of Doubting Thomas provides strong internal evidence for the honesty of the inspired authors. If imposters had written this as a fictitious account they would never have told the world about the doubts of one this new religion's first founders. Not only that, but this story presses home to truth that Jesus had been truly dead in the flesh and had been resurrected in the flesh – the very things the docetists denied.

9. Since Jesus previous appearing in the upper room it had been a full week. Thomas had stood strong on his skepticism for a week and he would not give it up easily.

10. This was Thomas' unbelief toward the Son of God.

II. Thomas' Resurrected Faith in God the Son: (26-29)

1. According to verse 26 it had been eight days since the resurrection. Once again it's Sunday evening, the disciples are once again in the upper room with the doors locked, but this time Thomas is among them.

2. Once again Jesus appears and says to the group, “Peace be with you.” But then He looks specifically at Thomas and says (27) Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side.”

² William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John Vol. 2*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1953)

3. Here is another proof of Jesus' deity. He had not been physically there when Thomas stated his hardened skepticism, but He knew exactly what He had said. It reminds us of Psalm 139, "Where can I go from your presence?... Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, oh Lord, You know it all..."

4. Why did Jesus appear a second time? Because He was concerned about Thomas' unbelief. He was concerned about Thomas' soul. And notice once again the Jesus does not come with a harsh rebuke. He apparently makes a special appearance just for Thomas. He wants him to believe. So Jesus not only appears, He even goes so far as to meet Thomas' stated conditions for belief. "Come, Thomas, touch my touch my scars. Put your hand into my side. Give up your doubting and believe!

5. Now comes the climax that John has been driving to since the very first chapter. Thomas responds by saying (28), "My Lord and my God!"

6. John begins the Gospel with "The Word was made flesh," and concludes with "My Lord and my God!" This is a wonderful climactic moment in the Gospel of John. But Jesus is not finished. Before the narrative ends Jesus has a word for you and me. He says, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have NOT seen and yet believe!" Who is he talking about? Not the disciples! They had all seen Him. No, He was speaking of you and me. He was speaking of those who would come after the apostles and believe that Jesus is the Messiah because of the testimony of those who had seen Him.

7. And notice the blessing Jesus pronounces on believers like you and me who believe without seeing. He says, "Blessed are those..." This is the language of the beatitudes. This is the last beatitude –the final blessing. Jesus is saying that Real favor with God (being blessed) does not depend upon being able to see Him, but on trusting the words of the apostles. Further signs or revelations are not necessary, for these words alone are sufficient to bring someone to eternal life.

8. And that leads us to the last point,

III. John's Invitation to Trust in God the Son: (30-31)

Read 30-31

1. My friends, we have been studying the Gospel of John for the better part of three years. But this has not been merely an academic exercise. These 20 chapters of revelation about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ has a single purpose – namely; that you would conclude the Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life (Eternal Life) in His name.

2. You have seen the evidence. You have heard His teaching. You have heard the testimony of many of His closest followers, and even from God Himself. Now, what have you concluded about Jesus? Have you concluded that He is the Christ, the Son of God? If you do, you WILL have live – eternal life – in His name.