

Jesus and 'Believing Thomas': My Lord and my God!

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GLADEWATER, Texas—I have been intrigued from time to time by the story of the apostle Thomas, the *twin*, who was one of the original 12 apostles of Jesus. I think that Thomas in some respects is like many of us. We are skeptical by nature. We don't really believe everything we see and hear. We are guided by the unspoken axiom of "If it is too good to be true, it probably is not!" The Scripture doesn't tell us about Thomas's other twin brother or sister. But we do know that Thomas wanted to make sure where he stood. He would not automatically believe the reports he had heard. Thomas was a healthy skeptic.

Now Thomas, called the *Twin*, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" [John 20:21-31].

If somebody were to tell me "I have seen the Lord" or one of the two witnesses or a wonderful vision of heaven, I would not be inclined to believe it. Thomas had spent time with Jesus and the other apostles—as a matter of fact quite a bit of time—since Matthew and Thomas were called together. Three of the Gospels group these names together. See Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18 and Luke 6:15.

John 11:16 shows us that Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." This happened on the occasion of the resurrection of Lazarus.

There is an interesting point to be observed here before we go on. John recorded this incident to show us that Thomas loved the Lord and was ready, at heart, to die with Him. We are weak, but He throws the testimony of His grace over the feeblest of His servants. Thomas knew that Jesus had resurrected Lazarus.

Jesus told His disciples that He would prepare a place for them. Thomas wondered about Jesus' promise and asked the question that would have been in my mind as well:

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him" [John 14:5-7].

Jesus' answer is most reassuring. Follow Him. Through Him you will know the Father. To know Jesus and to have seen Jesus is to have seen the Father. If we recognize deep within us that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, then we are reassured of seeing the Father. Jesus is pointing us to the Father.

Eight days later Thomas is with the other apostles. John tells us the story:

And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" [John 20:26-29].

Jesus addresses the disciples with the common greeting "Peace be unto You." The word *peace* is an amazing word in scripture: *Strong's* No. 1515. Greek: *eirhnh* (*eirene*).

Paul uses the expression "the God of peace" in many places throughout his writings (Romans 15:33; Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; and Hebrews 13:20).

He is, as God, always in *peace* and never up and down as we are. Christ now brings peace; He has made absolute peace, perfect peace, and He brings it. *We have this peace* now as we recognize that we have been reconciled to God because Jesus Christ has paid the penalty of our sins. One of the fruits of the Spirit is *peace*.

Thomas sees Jesus in the flesh. He witnesses how the Lord came into the disciples' midst without bothering to knock. The Lord challenges Thomas. Thomas reaches toward Jesus, and his hand now feels the spear wound on His side. Thomas examines both hands and sees the holes left by the nails. Thomas realizes that all his doubts have vanished. This is the *Real Jesus*, the One who died 10 days ago and the One who now lives! Thomas is now *Believing Thomas*. Thomas looks directly at the Son of God and acknowledges Him directly: *My Lord and My God!*

In John's passage the name *God* is expressly given to Christ in His own presence and by one of His own apostles. This declaration has been considered as a clear proof of the divinity of Christ for the following reasons:

- There is no evidence that this was a mere expression, as some have supposed, of surprise or astonishment. Thomas knew what he was saying.
- The language was addressed to Jesus himself. "Thomas said *TO HIM*."
- The Savior did not reprove Thomas or rebuke him as using any improper language. If Jesus had not been divine, it is unthinkable that He would not have rebuked the disciple for referring to Him as "God." If Jesus were an angel or mere man, Thomas's statement would have been against the First Commandment; in other words, pure *blasphemy*. No pious man would have allowed such language to be addressed to him.

Check out Acts 14:13-15 for a case of mistaken identity. Paul and Barnabas were thought to be gods by the priest of Zeus and by the multitudes in Lystra. They immediately and vehemently denied their supposed divinity.

Check out Revelation 22:8-9, another case of mistaken identity. John thinks that the angel is a god and attempts to worship him. The angel does not mince words in his stern rebuke: "See that you do *NOT* do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. *Worship God*." God alone is worthy of worship.

- The Savior proceeds immediately to commend Thomas for believing, but what was the evidence of his believing? It was Thomas's declaration and this only. If this were a mere exclamation of surprise, what proof was it that Thomas believed? Before this he doubted. Now he believed and gave utterance to his belief that Jesus was his Lord and his God.
- If this was not Thomas's meaning, then his exclamation was a mere act of profaneness, and the Savior would have rebuked him for taking the name of the Lord his God in vain. The passage proves, therefore, that it is proper to apply to Christ the name *Lord* and *God* and thus accords with what John affirmed in John 1:1 and which is established throughout this Gospel. See Psalm 118:28, John 5:23 and 1 Timothy 3:16.

The Gospel says not merely that Thomas said these words but that he said them to his Master. Thomas's words were not merely predicative, not a mere assertion. The emphatic form of the sentence is evident from its combining an exclamation with a confession directed, in fact, to the Lord Jesus Christ.