



Disciple-Ship

Week 4

Tonight's Text: John 20:24-29

Disciple Focus: Thomas

²⁴Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵The 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."

²⁶And 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!" ²⁷Then 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."

²⁸And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹Jesus said to him, ^{la}"Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed."

What's in a name?

The name “Thomas” and “Didymus” are synonymous in the Bible and refer to the same person. Thomas means “the Twin” in Hebrew, while Didymus means the same in Greek. Even though most would assume that Thomas had a twin brother or sister, we cannot claim this as fact because the Bible doesn't tell us that fact specifically. In addition, “the Twin” could be symbolic as well as an actual fact. It might be that he looked very similar to another person known to his parents, possibly a friend or an uncle for instance.

Q. Pastor, is Thomas one of those “lesser known” apostles that we do not know much about?

A. Yes and No. Yes, he is one of the apostles that the Bible does not provide a biography of his life before Christ. He is however one of the few apostles that the Bible gives insight to his personality.

Q. Does the Bible call this Apostle “Doubting Thomas”?

A. No. As a matter of fact, the Bible doesn't condemn Thomas for asking questions. But Jesus simply answering Thomas' questions, He reveals to us His nature as Heavenly Father, Teacher, and Savior. Although “Doubting Thomas” is commonly heard mentioned in church, it is not found anywhere in the Bible.

Q. Did Thomas sin by asking to see proof that Jesus was who He said He was?

A. Not according to John the Revelator (John the Beloved) in I John 4:1... Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

In addition, notice that Jesus Himself complied with Thomas' request to touch the Lord's wounds. Many times in His ministry, Jesus would rebuke people (especially Pharisees) who would ask Him questions that Jesus knew came from an un-pure heart. By granting Thomas' request and answering the question of "If it's really you..." Jesus recognized our need as humans for reassurance.

Q. What personality traits does the Bible tell us Thomas possessed?

A. For starters; **Boldness.** Godly boldness is a personality trait that all believers should perfect in their own lives. Paul, without doubt one of the boldest witnesses for Christ the world has ever seen gives us this encouragement in Philippians 1:20... **"according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."** Notice how the New Living Translation transcribes this passage... **"For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die."** The Webster's Dictionary defines "boldness" as; *not hesitating or fearful in the face of actual or possible danger or rebuff. Courageous and daring.* Biblical boldness is never rude or rough and is governed by love (1 Corinthians 13).

We see this type of boldness in Thomas in one of the most intense stories in the Bible (John 11). Jesus' friend Lazarus was sick and dying in the region of Judea. Jesus approaches his disciples and tells them that he intends to go and heal Lazarus. 11 of the disciples try to dissuade Jesus by saying, "He will be ok if he gets some sleep!" They were not saying this for Lazarus sake, as a matter of fact, they failed to realize the true meaning of Jesus' words was that in actuality Lazarus was already dead. They said this because they were fearful of going to Judea because the Jewish people

there wanted to kill Jesus. It was in fact Thomas who boldly declares to the rest of the disciples in John 11:8... **“Let’s go too and die with Jesus!”**

*Does this sound like a doubter of Jesus to you?*⁹ Thomas was all in. He was willing to go anywhere with Jesus and do anything for Jesus, including giving his own life.

Another proof of his boldness is that when Jesus finds the disciples in John 20:19 and verse 24, the Word gives us an important fact... *“That Sunday evening¹⁰ the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said... ¹¹“One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came.”*

Thomas refused to hide. Again, does this look like a doubter to you?

Secondly, Thomas was not a **doubter**, he was a **student**.

Let’s think about our main text for a minute. Listen to the words of the scripture but this time instead of thinking of Thomas as a skeptic, think of him in terms of a student. Let’s go back to the private teaching session Jesus had with the disciples on the Mount of Olives. Jesus tells all 12 in Matthew 24:4-5... **“And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”**

What instruction do you give to children who are home alone about opening the door?

Now, thinking of Thomas as a “good” student... how does this change the story of John 20 when the disciples say “We have seen Jesus!”

Q. What did Thomas accomplish as one of the Disciples?

A. He evangelized what is now the norther region of modern day Iran.

Apostles Challenge- In what area of your spiritual life could you be bolder? What is the difference between godly boldness and arrogance? Read the account of Thomas for yourself in John 20. Focus on the interactions between Jesus and Thomas, recognize that this is the same relationship He desire with us.