

## The Gospel of John - #65 - 05/01/2022 - "There's No Bout of 'Doubt It!'"

John 20: 24-31 \*We don't have to let doubt win the day- we can trust OUR Risen Lord...

**Introduction: IL-** Family surnames- mine (Bagley) comes from burlap bag makers in London in the 16th century. I often wondered how I got the nickname "bagman" in High School! Spend time getting to know a disciple of Christ who has carried, for two thousand years, the nickname "doubting Thomas"! That name in Hebrew means "twin" and so does the Greek version, Didymus. Let's follow his journey to full trust in Jesus as his Lord and his God...

**because there is proof of Jesus' resurrection!-** vs. 24 and 25 Before we start into the text, let's check our hearts to see if we are Thomas' twin when it comes to doubt- it is NOT unique to Thomas! Thomas was absent on that first Easter Sunday and a week later he is with his fellow disciples. But when they urge him to believe in the Resurrection, he demands proof before he will believe. He would only believe what he could experience and process on his own. Thomas knew as much about Jesus over the past three years of following Him as any other disciple, but he missed His presence and the obvious proof- scars in Jesus' hands and a wound from the soldier's sword while hanging on the cross. Thomas has had a great deal of negative press for his strong demand, but when we read other passages in John about him, he shows himself to be a committed follower no matter what circumstances may occur along the way. See John 11: 14-16- Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Thomas had a passionate desire to follow Christ, no matter what was ahead! Many professing Christians fall WAY short of the example of "doubting" Thomas! Why was Thomas missing on Easter Sunday? Grief is hard and he may have simply wanted to be alone in his sorrow with his master dead and buried. **IL-** Doubt is not unbelief, but it is not faith either. It wavers between faith and unbelief, unable to make up its mind what it wants to be. [Kent Crockett, The 911 Handbook, Hendrickson Publishers.] Thomas struggled with trust with his Savior gone and so, in this next encounter Jesus said, in effect, "Here's proof!" This was the final "upper room" gathering before the disciples returned to their Galilean homes, so it had special significance for all the followers gathered there and for the Lord to speak to Thomas! When that meeting took place Thomas was present and got to see his master in person, alive and in a glorified body that still carried the marks of crucifixion. Jesus knew that this special time and place and the people in it would prove life-altering for "doubting" Thomas especially!

**because Jesus knows that we doubt at times and is still gracious to us!-** vs. 26 to 29 It is vital that we recall the fear and reactions of all the disciples individually when Jesus was crucified so that we can see that Thomas is not much different in HIS reactions than the rest of his colleagues. In Mark 14: 50 we read- And they all left him and fled." And even after the Resurrection when, at that time, Jesus had appeared alive only to Mary Magdalene, when she shared her excitement and wonder at seeing Jesus alive, then reporting her joy to the disciples, Mark 16: 11 says- But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it." So, with the proper assessment of doubt or lack of faith in all those men, let's see Thomas interacting with the Lord Jesus. When Jesus entered the locked room, and said, as before, "Peace be with you!", the very next thing He did was speak directly to Thomas. He not only knew

Thomas would be there but knew exactly what Thomas had told his fellow disciples the week before- "I will never believe" - without powerful proof focused on Jesus' hands and side. Jesus knew Thomas had doubted that He was alive and not some mere ghost or apparition. So often with us, things must be proven before we will grab hold and not let go! One commentator writes- "Honest doubt is one thing, but stubborn hearts of unbelief, resistant to the facts is another!" Jesus said, in short- "Welcome Me, prove Me, trust Me and I'll give you the proof you desire!" He gives us today the proofs we need in the pages of His Word! Once Thomas "got it" he was ready to commit to the Lord! **IL-** William Bright, history professor at Oxford in the nineteenth century. "How oft, O Lord, Thy face hath shone on doubting souls whose wills were true. Thou Christ of Cephas and of John, Thou art the Christ of Thomas, too." My mind goes back to John 14 where Jesus revealed "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life- no one comes to the Father but by Me". And when Jesus had told them, "You know the way I am going", Thomas asked, "we do not know where you are going and how can we know the way?" In the context of Thomas' lifestyle as a disciple of Jesus, I understand Thomas as asking, "I don't know the way, but I am willing to follow." Like the week before when Jesus showed His hands and side to the 10 disciples and other followers in that Easter evening, Jesus specifically held out His hands to Thomas and, like the disciples the previous week, Thomas believed! He didn't need to put a finger in one of those scars in Jesus' hands or put his hand into that gaping hole from a soldier's sword. He could see Jesus was not a ghost or a mere vision on the wall! Jesus was gentle with him, not stern in rebuke. He simply said, "Believe, don't doubt!" Thomas joyfully spoke to Jesus in terms of strong faith and no more doubting! Jesus met every need of Thomas to believe. Listen to Acts 1: 3- "He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God." Thomas' powerful statement of faith is the first post-Resurrection comment on Jesus as God. In this chapter and verse 16 Mary Magdalene calls Jesus "Rabboni" which, according to the text, means "teacher". Thomas went further in his submission to the Lord Jesus calling Him both "Lord" and "God", but what makes it even more special from a human point of view is the word, "MY" in both cases- MY Lord and MY God. And the significant point I want to make here in that Jesus is GOD in human form. But there is so much more to know about our Savior...

**because everything about Jesus is revealed in His Word and to know Him is to trust Him!-**

vs. 30 and 31 Like Thomas, Jesus would have us know that He knows us intimately- every detail of our lives- every word fitly spoken or yet in our hearts and minds unsaid. John wrote these two verses to say, in effect, "Here's what I give as proof that Jesus is the Sovereign God of the universe and wants to invite you to an eternal relationship of trust in Him- and you can trust Him for everything life throws at you and more. Jesus offers you salvation and eternal life with Him in Heaven. Do **you** believe it?" Thomas would be thrilled to tell us, without doubt- "I know Jesus is alive, that He is MY Lord and My God, that He knew me and knows me now, that He had a plan for my life- a plan that took me to other lands to share the Good News- and He has a plan for YOUR life too. If you trust and not doubt, He will reveal that plan through the pages of the Bible and through the indwelling Holy Spirit. But it all starts with believing the message of hope and confidence that when He says, "Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved",

He means every word of it! Some people come to believe it on their own through God's Word. **IL-** Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ." Former atheist and journalist with the Chicago Tribune who found new life in Jesus on his own through the study of the Bible! For many people moving from doubt to faith is a battle of the will, yes or no, now or never. But the walk of faith is NOT a walk of physical sight- we can't SEE Jesus in the flesh today, yet He is as real as anything we can see and, once we've put our trust in Him for eternal life, we can interact with the Master moment by moment for the rest of our lives! Listen to 1 Peter 1: 6-9- "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." And this quote from John Calvin is worth so much in its Scriptural meaning- "Today we behold Christ in the gospel *no less* than if He stood with us. Therefore, if we decide to see Christ, what will make us happy and blessed, let us learn to believe where we do not see."

**Conclusion-** What would it take for you to "See" with the eyes of faith and be drawn to Jesus away from doubt? This message is a challenge to investigate truth through the Bible and believe it! What things do you **not** need to doubt at all? That God is real, that the Bible, every word of it, is true, that God is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do, that Jesus knows you just like He knew Thomas and He loves you- and has a beautiful plan for your life if you'll walk hand in hand down life's road with Him as your Guide. It all starts when we fall in love with Jesus and claim His offer of life in His name- for all eternity! **IL-** Crown Him/Majesty- verse 4: "Crown Him the Lord of life, behold His hands and side! Rich wounds yet visible above, in beauty glorified!"

Those scars reveal **how much He loves you and me**, and in Heaven they are what one commentator writes, "Trophies of victory!"

Do we need Him? YES! Do we need to doubt Him- ever? NO!

Closing Song- "Lord, I Need You!"