



I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS
UNIT 28 • SESSION 2

DOUBTS ARE OVERCOME

MAIN POINT

While all are invited to believe in Jesus, not all are willing to place their faith in Jesus so that they might be saved.

JOHN 20:24-25 • BELIEF IS PASSED DOWN BY FAITHFUL WITNESSES

24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.
25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his 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 never believe.”

JOHN 20:26-27 • BELIEF IS BASED ON THE HISTORICAL RESURRECTION OF JESUS

26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”
27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

JOHN 20:28-29 • BELIEF IS GROUNDED IN CONFESSING JESUS AS LORD

28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” **29** Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

INTRO OPTION 1**THAT'S DOUBTFUL****SUPPLIES LIST****NONE**

Say the following statements (all true) and allow students to vote on whether they believe them (thumbs up) or doubt them (thumbs down). Feel free to add more.

- Mosquitoes can smell which blood type you are.
- Your heartbeat will sync to the rhythm of music.
- The average cloud weighs one million pounds.
- Giraffes and humans have the same number of neck bones.

While many students felt doubtful, it didn't change the truth of these statements. Our doubts also don't negate the truth of God's Word, either.

INTRO OPTION 2**UNBELIEVABLE****SUPPLIES LIST****NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing students time to discuss and share their answers.

HAS SOMETHING AWESOME HAPPENED TO YOU THAT WAS SO CRAZY OTHERS REFUSED TO BELIEVE IT (LIKE MEETING A FAMOUS PERSON)?

DID THEIR UNBELIEF STOP YOU FROM TELLING OTHERS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

HOW DOES IT FEEL FOR PEOPLE TO DOUBT YOU WHEN YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH?

We've all had people doubt something we've experienced. It can be really frustrating to know something is true, yet the people around us won't accept it. Imagine how the disciples felt as they tried to convince those who doubted Jesus's resurrection, especially Thomas. He required more proof to settle his doubts.



SCRIPTURE READING

MAIN POINT

While all are invited to believe in Jesus, not all are willing to place their faith in Jesus so that they might be saved.

1. BELIEF IS PASSED DOWN BY FAITHFUL WITNESSES

READ JOHN 20:24-25

Scholars aren't sure why Thomas wasn't present when Jesus first appeared to the other disciples after the resurrection. He missed out, and it greatly affected his acceptance of the truth. Thomas refused to believe based on others' testimonies, but the other disciples faithfully shared what they had seen. We have real testimony from firsthand witnesses of the resurrection!

IS IT WRONG TO NEED PROOF BEYOND SOMEONE ELSE'S WORDS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Jesus understood Thomas's need for proof and offered it without Thomas having to ask Him. Jesus knew Thomas's heart, and He wanted Thomas to believe. Is it good for us to trust faithful testimony? Yes. But God is kind to us. In His Word, God gave us proof of Jesus's resurrection—eyewitnesses.

MANY PEOPLE WOULD SAY THOMAS DISPLAYED A LACK OF FAITH. WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH BELIEVING IN GOD'S TRUTH DUE TO LACK OF PHYSICAL PROOF?

Thomas struggled to take his friends' word. Maybe some of us still struggle with doubting the resurrection, but many of us struggle with other doubts. We hear that God can heal or forgive or make us new, but we struggle to believe it. When we see how God moves in other people's lives, it can encourage us when we doubt. This is why it's so critical for us to share all the ways Jesus has healed us, forgiven us, and made us new—our testimony can help others when they doubt too.

2. BELIEF IS BASED ON THE HISTORICAL RESURRECTION OF JESUS

READ JOHN 20:26-27

Think about how news spreads and how quickly we are to believe it. Someone shares something on TikTok or Instagram, and within seconds, this news travels all over the world. We weren't present for this event, but we are quick to believe what we're told. Jesus's resurrection wasn't just a rumor—we have proof through the testimony of the men who were there to touch Him and see His scars.

WHY IS IT EASIER TO ACCEPT NEWS WE HEAR TODAY OVER WHAT WE ARE TOLD IN BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS ABOUT JESUS'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION?



JOHN 20:24-25

20:24. “Why he was not present that first Easter day is not told us, but in the providence of God his absence and subsequent coming to faith have generated one of the great Christological confessions in the New Testament.”⁷

20:25. “Thomas is not merely a pathetic doubter. He is a paradigm of many Christians who are capable of great possibilities as well as hesitations in faith.”⁸

JOHN 20:26-27

20:26-27. “Again, in spite of locked doors, Jesus appeared and greeted them exactly as he had a week earlier. But rather than showing his hands and side to the entire group, he turned to Thomas and invited empirical investigation. Sincere Christianity has always welcomed sincere research. Jesus did not scold Thomas or condemn his hesitation. He provided the evidence. Only then did he say to him, Stop doubting and believe.”⁹



BIG QUESTION

IS IT OKAY FOR BELIEVERS TO STRUGGLE WITH DOUBT?

Doubt didn't begin with us. Scripture shares many examples of people who struggled with doubt. Doubt simply means to feel uncertain about something. Adam and Eve doubted God's command to stay away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (see Gen. 3:1-6). When Job felt uncertain as to why God allowed his suffering, he asked questions and sought answers. In Mark 9, a father begged Jesus to cast a demon from his son. He told Jesus, “I do believe; help my unbelief!” (v. 24). In other words, the father said, “I have faith, but if it isn't enough, please help me have greater faith.” And guess what? Jesus healed his son. When we struggle with doubt, we can ask God for greater faith. We aren't alone in this struggle.



SCRIPTURE READING

MAIN POINT

While all are invited to believe in Jesus, not all are willing to place their faith in Jesus so that they might be saved.

News today just feels closer to us, doesn't it? With much of our news—even the stories we may hear at school or from family members—comes video evidence. This can make the news easier to believe, despite the fact that these videos are often edited or slanted. We may not have video proof of Jesus's resurrection, but the tomb is empty. His body was never discovered. Jesus really did rise, and we have the accounts of those who were there to witness it all.

WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT JESUS THAT HE WAS WILLING TO SHOW THOMAS THE EVIDENCE HE NEEDED TO BELIEVE? WHAT DOES JESUS CARE ABOUT?

Jesus cares about our hearts and our souls, but He cares about our minds too—about us as a whole. He understands we are finite, or limited, in our understanding. While Jesus challenges us to have greater faith, He also longs to show us how real He is. When Jesus did this for Thomas, He didn't scold him or put him down, but He did call Him to greater faith. He wants to do this for us as well.

3. BELIEF IS GROUNDED IN CONFESSING JESUS AS LORD

READ JOHN 20:28-29

When Thomas exclaimed, “my Lord and my God” (v. 28), he confessed Jesus as God. Seeing Jesus in resurrected form transformed Thomas's mind. Minutes earlier Thomas was considered a doubter, but he was now one of the first to rightly acknowledge who Jesus is—God. We are blessed when we also claim who Jesus is—even more so than these men because we believe without seeing.

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU “SEEN” JESUS? HOW HAS SEEING JESUS TRANSFORMED YOU?

While we can't physically see Jesus, we see Him in many ways—in God's Word and fulfilled prophecies, in God's creation, in how He works in our lives, and in the witness of others. Seeing Jesus and knowing Him transforms us and makes us new creations. If we haven't changed in our minds, hearts, and actions, then it's possible we haven't truly encountered God.

CAN YOU REALLY CLAIM TO HAVE FAITH IF YOU DON'T CLAIM JESUS AS “MY LORD AND MY GOD” (V. 28)? WHY IS THIS NECESSARY?

Faith is more than head knowledge. It's a deep trust and belief in something even without physical proof. It moves us from unbelief to belief. It takes faith to claim Jesus as Lord and God. Without the transforming power of faith, we are just speaking meaningless words.



JOHN 20:28-29

20:28. “Thomas confesses Jesus as God when he sees that the crucified one is alive. It is in the crucifixion that God himself is made known, for he is love, and love is the laying down of one’s life (see 1 John 4:8; 3:16). But God is also life. In John, this God is revealed perfectly in the death of the Son, but this death would be nothing without the life. When Thomas finds death and life juxtaposed in Jesus he realizes who the one standing before him really is.”¹⁰

20:28. “The confession of Thomas is not unlike the attribution to ‘my God and my Lord’ in Psalm 35:23 and to a lesser extent is somewhat similar to Psalms 29:3 and 86:15. But more pointedly it also touches directly upon the daily Jewish reciting of the Shema, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one’ (Deut. 6:4). The early Christians thus claimed for Jesus attributes akin to Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament. To suggest that such a confession might go unnoticed by the Jews would be highly naive.”¹¹

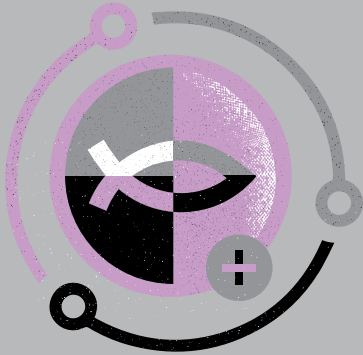
20:29. “But this question, rather than being a rebuke of Thomas, provides the evangelist with the opportunity to call for believing that is not based on sight or touch but on the message of the witnesses. The Gospel and this pericope itself is intended to engender such believing that is parallel to that of the early witnesses without the benefit of tangible evidences.”¹²



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE

PRESERVATION OF SCRIPTURE

God has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through the text of Scripture, having inspired it and directed it to be free from error. God has also acted providentially throughout the course of history to ensure the biblical text is faithfully preserved for future generations. Our belief in the preservation of Scripture is supported by investigation into how the canon of Scripture was formed and how manuscripts were faithfully transmitted throughout the centuries.



CHRIST CONNECTION

While Jesus's resurrection can be supported with evidence, ultimately, belief in the gospel comes by faith. All who place their trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus by faith are blessed with eternal life.



HEAD



HEART



HANDS

HOW CAN KNOWING YOU HAVE FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS OF JESUS'S RESURRECTION ENCOURAGE YOU WHEN YOU STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE?

Eyewitness testimony carries tremendous weight in a court case. In fact, many criminals are convicted solely on witness testimony. God asks us to have faith, but in His kindness, He left us with proof. The tomb was empty. Jesus really did appear to over five hundred people (see 1 Cor. 15:6). When we struggle with doubt, we can rely on those who had the privilege of seeing something we can't. We can ask God to help us in our unbelief, and He will be faithful to do it.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER GOD CAN HANDLE YOUR DOUBTS? WHAT DOUBTS DO YOU NEED TO CONFESS?

It's normal to struggle with doubt. Along the way, believers adopted the idea that to struggle with doubt means we aren't saved. While we have to listen to the Holy Spirit and use discernment about whether or not our salvation is genuine, we also must remember Satan would love to cause us to doubt who God is even if we are saved. It's the same tactic he used on Adam and Eve in Eden. If Satan can plant doubt in our minds, then he can wreak havoc on us, crippling us in our walk with the Lord. If you have doubts, confess them to God and to a trusted spiritual leader. Ask God to reveal truth to you.

DOES YOUR LIFESTYLE CLAIM JESUS IS "MY LORD AND MY GOD" (V. 28)? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO OTHERS SEE THIS TRUTH IN THE WAY YOU LIVE?

For Jesus to be Lord means He is your Ruler and your Master. It means you are faithful and loyal Him, and you seek to represent Him in all you do. To claim He is your Lord and your God is one thing, but your actions should be visible proof of your words. If others can't see Jesus in our actions, then we must ask if He is our Lord and God.