

10/7/18

The Apostle Thomas

As we continue in our series of the twelve apostles, once again we are going to be reminded of God's mercy to use every kind of individual.

1. Those who are impetuous, energetic, inconsistent, impatient and proud men like Peter.
2. Peaceful, stable, focused men like Andrew.
3. Aggressive, zealous, sectarian, ambitious that cannot be held back, like James the brother of John.
4. Aggressive, zealous, sectarian, ambitious that can learn by being a good listener, observer and yield to the love of God, like John the beloved.
5. Pragmatic, prejudiced, perceptively slow individuals, like Philip.
6. Full of faith, meditative, prayerful, insightful into the things of God, like Bartholomew, also named Nathanael.
7. Corrupt, dishonest and greedy people who care only for themselves, like Matthew.

* All these various individuals God can and will use, if they yield to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit!

Thomas is our next apostle and John again will be the key to unveiling the life of one more apostle because the other three gospels tell us nothing of Thomas. Jn. 11:16; 14:5; 20:24, 26, 27, 28, 29; 21:2

The name of Thomas appears four times, once in each of the list of apostles. Matt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13

1. In Matthew Thomas is seven in the list, preceding Matthew. Matt. 10:3
 2. In Mark and Luke Thomas follows Matthew. Mk. 3:18, Lk. 6:15
 3. In Acts Thomas follows Philip. Acts 1:13
- * Thomas is in the second circle of four apostles!

Thomas has come to be known by the title "Doubting Thomas", but hopefully we will be able to dispel and correct our view of Thomas to a more Biblical one, as we study him by a three-fold picture.

- I. Thomas the committed apostle.
- II. Thomas the un-intimidated apostle.
- III. Thomas the convinced apostle.

I. Thomas the committed apostle.

- A. The location is beyond the Jordan where John the Baptist was baptizing at first. Jn. 10:39-42
 1. The reason Jesus was present beyond the Jordan was due to the increasing hostility of the Jews to seize against Him, but He escaped. Jn. 10:39
 2. The Lord Jesus was residing there for the time, it says, "there He stayed". vs. 40
 3. The people came to Jesus, telling Him John performed no sign, but confirming all that

John the Baptist had said about Him were true and many believed. vs. 41-42

B. The news came to Jesus that Lazarus was sick. Jn. 11:1-3

1. The man was, “Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.” vs. 1
2. “Mary who had anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, her brother Lazarus was sick.” vs. 2
3. The sisters sent Jesus a message, “Lord, behold, he who You love is sick”. vs. 3

C. The proclamation of Jesus to His disciples. Jn. 11:4; 7-8

1. The hearing of the news Jesus said, “The sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” vs. 4
2. The Lord announces for them, “Let us go to Judea again.” vs. 7
3. The disciples all remind Jesus of the impending danger, “Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?” vs. 8
 - a. Not one of the eleven were courageous enough to go with Jesus instantly but they focused on the danger.
 - b. They were willing to reign with Jesus, but not to die with Him.

D. The faith proclamation of Thomas. Jn. 11:14-16

1. Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.” vs. 14
2. Jesus declared, “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.” vs. 15
* This announcement was a suicide mission.
3. The response of Thomas, “Then Thomas who is called twin says to the other disciples, “Let us also go that we may die with him.” vs. 16
 - a. Thomas is not focusing on the danger.
 - b. Thomas acknowledges and accepts the danger as an inevitable thing.
 - c. Thomas was ready to die with Christ.
 - 1) Thomas is his Hebrew name and it signifies twin as stated.
 - 2) There was another one like him, either a sister or brother.
 - 3) Whether identical or fraternal, we are not told.
 - d. Thomas was the most courageous man among the twelve.
* Yet we are told nothing else about this courageous man!
 - e. Thomas was deeply in love with Jesus.
* He is the one responsible for moving the other eleven to faith and go also.
4. He was a pessimist who dealt with reality and did not shirk from the inevitable fatal end.

- a. He is of such temperament that he sees the negative but is not discouraged, instead fully committed.
- b. He is totally committed in the midst of the situation or circumstances out of his faith and love for Christ.
- c. He being a pessimist was more faithful than an optimist, knowing and expecting the bad outcome, while an optimist is committed hoping for the best outcome and when things turn, he may get discouraged or quit.
- d. He was willing to die with Jesus.
 - 1) For Thomas to live with Jesus is expectable.
 - 2) For Thomas to die with Jesus is also acceptable.
 - 3) For Thomas to live without Jesus is not thinkable.

Illustration

A young Chinese convert whose given name was Lo became greatly excited when he read Matthew 28:20. As a newborn babe in Christ, he took the word 'lo' to apply to him personally. A glow with the joy of his newly discovered partnership with God, he exclaimed, "Look, missionary, it says, 'Lo, I am with you always!'" #3485

Application

1. Are you a committed disciple of Jesus only when things are going right or even through the greatest disappointments in life, dying with Jesus?
 - a. The times of trials is guaranteed. Acts 14:22
 - b. They will be of a wide variety. 1Pet. 1:6
 - c. They will be of the severest testing, fiery. 1Pet. 4:12
 - d. They will be for the revealing of the genuineness of your faith, which is more valuable than gold that perishes being found to the praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1Pet. 1:7
2. Are you one to step forwards in times when most others sidestep the challenge?
 - a. Are you a faithful soldier to endure hardship? 2Tim. 2:3-4
 - b. Are you a faithful athlete regardless of what you have to sacrifice. 2Tim. 2:5
 - c. Are you a hard working farmer, being nourished from the harvest you are involved? 2Tim. 2:6
3. Are you committed to Jesus, if so, then you will be committed to the church, for you cannot separate one from the other.
 - a. Jesus is the head of His church. Eph. 5:23
 - b. Jesus has appointed every believer as part of the body with various gifts. Rom. 12:1-8, 1Cor. 12-14
 - c. Jesus expects you to be there to be serving and being nourished, not forsaking the gathering of the saints as some. Heb. 10:25

This was Thomas the committed apostle!

II. Thomas the un-intimidated apostle.

A. The location is the Upper Room. Jn. 13

1. The disciples were engaged in their usual conversation about, who was the greatest in the Kingdom. Lk. 22:24
2. Jesus said nothing and gave all twelve an example of a servant, as He washed their feet, but Peter objected. Jn. 13:4-15
3. Jesus told them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” Jn. 13:16-17

B. The shocking news Jesus declared was that He was leaving to go to the Father. Jn. 14:1-4

1. Jesus told them not to allow their hearts to be troubled, if they believed in God they were to believe in Him. vs. 1
2. Jesus told them that in His Father's house were many mansions, if it were not so, He would have told them. vs. 2a-b
3. Jesus told them that He was going to prepare a place for them. vs. 2c
4. Jesus told them if He went to prepare a place for them, He would come again and receive them to Himself; that where He would be, there they may be also. vs. 3

5. Jesus told them that where He went they knew, and the way they knew. vs. 4

C. The sincere unpretentious honesty of Thomas is declared. Jn. 14:5

1. Thomas said to Jesus, “Lord, we do not know where You are going.” vs. 5a-c
 - a. Thomas is again a pessimist, but unpretentious and speaks for all the twelve.
 - b. Thomas was not a yes man, if he did not understand something, he said he didn't.
2. Thomas also said, “And how can we know the way?” vs. 5d
 - a. Thomas does not understand all this going away business.
 - b. Thomas states the plain question, “How can we know the way?”
 - c. Thomas is neither embarrassed nor intimidated by the other twelve.
 - d. Thomas is committed as we have seen, but he needs to be clear in his understanding.

D. The secret to heaven is proclaimed by Jesus to Thomas. Jn. 14:6

1. Jesus said to Thomas, “I am the way”. vs. 6b
 - a. There is no other person that can get you to heaven or God, apart from Jesus Christ.

- b. There is no other name you can call upon, not Mary, Buddha, Ala, etc.
 - c. There is no umpire or arbitrator, between God and man, but the man Christ Jesus.
2. Jesus said, "I am the truth". vs. 6c
 - a. He is the truth about the things of God and man.
 - b. He is the truth about sin and salvation.
 - c. He is the truth about judgment.
 3. Jesus said, "I am the life". vs. 6d
 - a. He is the giver of life.
 - b. He is the source of life.
 - c. He is the taker of life.
 4. Jesus said, "No man comes to the Father except through Me". vs. 6e
 - a. He in this one statement destroyed all religious ways apart from Jesus.
 - b. He in this one statement destroyed all philosophies that present another way to God.
 - c. He in this one statement Jesus silenced all the atheist, agnostics and philosophers, who profess that there is no God or heaven.

Illustration

The naturalist J. Henry Fabre once conducted and experiment with pine processionary caterpillars. He set a group of them on the edge of a flowerpot. They followed one another around the sterile rim for seven days, without deviating, even though a branch

of pine-- their favorite food--lay right beside the pot.
#778

* Conformity for conformity sake keeps people from the most obvious and holds them back!

Application

1. Are you one who just goes with the program pretending to know and remain in the dark?
 - a. Just repeating what others say.
 - b. Or repeating because you are persuaded that it is the truth?
 - c. If you have a question about a some doctrine or subject, probably there are other who also are in the dark.
2. I am not advocating questions that merely question the authority of the church or leaders, though these type of people are ever present within the church.
 - a. They are people who cause divisions over various issues. 1Cor. 1:11-13
 - b. They are self serving, desiring to be seen of men, not caring for the flock, drawing disciples to themselves. Acts 20:29-30
 - d. They are carnal, operating in the works of the flesh. Gal. 5:19-21
3. Make sure your questions lead to Jesus, not a mere doctrinal argument.
 - a. There is no other way to get to heaven or God, apart from Jesus Christ. Jn. 3:16; 14:6
 - b. There is no other name whereby man must be saved. Acts 4:12

- c. There is no other mediator, between God and man, but the man Christ Jesus. 2Tim. 2:5

This was Thomas the un-intimidated apostle!

III. Thomas the convinced apostle.

- A. The Lord Jesus appears to the eleven. Jn. 20:19-23
 - 1. The Lord appeared Sunday evening to the eleven. vs. 19
 - a. They were gathered together for fear of the Jews.
 - b. The doors being shut, Jesus appeared and stood in their midst.
 - c. The word spoken were most appropriate, "Peace be with you".
 - 1) Jesus had told them how they would be scattered at His arrest, the purpose so that they might have peace. Jn. 16:32
 - 2) Jesus also told them that in the world they would have tribulations, but they were to be of good cheer, for He had overcome the world. Jn. 16:33
 - 3) Jesus had already distinguish the difference between His peace and the world's, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your

- heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Jn. 14:27
- 2. The Lord showed His hands, feet and side, the disciples were glad. vs. 20
 - a. The very presence of Jesus once again gained their composure.
 - b. The physical evidence of His bodily presence satisfied them.
- 3. The Lord commissioned them to take the gospel to the world. vs. 21
 - a. Jesus once again declared, "peace to you."
 - b. Jesus compared His being sent by the Father into the world, to His sending of them, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."
- 4. The Lord enabled them for the commission. vs. 22-23
 - a. Jesus gave them the power by breathing on them and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." vs. 22
 - 1) Some have a difficult time reconciling these words with the experience at Pentecost.
 - 2) The most plain sense is usually the correct interpretation, the eleven received the Holy Spirit, to make it say anything else is to make it say nonsense!
 - b. Jesus gave them the authority, the message of salvation. vs. 23

- 1) Jesus said, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.” vs. 23a-b
 - a) This does not teach the apostles had power and authority to forgive sins in and of themselves.
 - * This verse is used by the Catholic Church as the basis for the priests to forgive sins through hearing confessions but it is wrong and out of context!
 - b) This rather teaches that they were vested with the authority to proclaim that on the basis of the finish atonement of Jesus, sins could be forgiven to those who put their trust in Jesus as their Savior by faith.
- 2) Jesus again said, “If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” vs. 23c-d
 - a) This does not teach that they could refuse to forgive any person’s sins, if they chose to.
 - b) This teaches that they could tell any person, that if they refused to receive the forgiveness of their sins by not repenting, then their sin would not be forgiven by God

B. The response of the apostle Thomas as he is told of the Lord’s appearance. Jn. 20:24-25

1. Thomas had not been present with the other eleven when Jesus appeared. vs. 24
2. They told Thomas, “We have seen the Lord.” vs. 25a-b
3. The response of Thomas was usual and consistent, “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”. vs. 25d-g
 - a. Thomas the pessimist by his reality that Jesus was gone had not been present, life was not worth living and most likely the reason why he was not present in the first appearance.
 - b. He probably just went somewhere to deal with the reality of it and was a bit down!
4. The usual label given to Thomas is that of a doubter which is not fair nor is it accurate to the Scriptures.
 - a. I myself have in the past labeled him, the doubter but lets examine him to others.
 - b. Jesus rebuked the eleven for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen, namely the women. Mk. 16:14
 - * Luke confirms this by saying, “And their words seemed to them, the disciples, like idle tales, nonsense and they did not believe them, the women. Lk. 24:11”

- c. The women certainly did not believe or they would not have taken spices, but rather to see Him resurrected.
 - d. The two on the road to Emmaus were unbelieving for Jesus said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Lk. 24:25-27
 - e. As the two on the road to Emmaus were telling the eleven, Jesus appears in the midst of them and it says, “They were terrified and frightened and supposed they had seen a spirit”, at which time Jesus presented his print but they still did not believe and He asked for food to prove the reality of His presence. Lk. 24:36-43
- C. The reasonable evidence the Lord gave to Thomas. Jn. 20:26-27
- 1. “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!” vs. 26
 - 2. Jesus then told Thomas, reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach you

- hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believe.” vs. 27
- a. Jesus did not rebuke Thomas any more than the other disciples.
 - b. Jesus gave him the same proof that He gave to the other eleven apostles
 - c. Jesus does not refuse to reveal and prove certain things to substantiate our faith, all the time, even though we live by faith and not by sight.
- D. The consistent response of Thomas is the climax of John’s gospel. Jn. 20:28-29
- 1. Thomas said to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” vs. 28
 - a. Thomas knew this as far back as when he made his pessimistic commitment, “Let us also go that we may die with him.” Jn. 11:16
 - b. Thomas the pessimist in his reality that Jesus was gone, no longer thought life was worth living!
 - c. Thomas gives to us the absolute confession of faith, Jesus is Lord, the One who rules our lives and God, who knows all things, even the motives of the heart!
 - 2. Thomas was told by Jesus the evidence of greater faith. vs. 29

- a. Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed.” vs. 29a-c
- b. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” vs. 29d
* This speaks of all who would come to Christ in the future age of Grace!

Illustration

There is an old Arab proverb that reads as follows:
He that knows not and knows not that he know not;
He is a fool--shun him!

He that knows not and knows that he knows not; He is simple--teach him!

He that knows and knows not that he knows; he is asleep---wake him!

He that knows and knows that he knows; he is a wise man--follow him! #7371

Application

1. Do you have certain doubts?
 - a. Take them to God in prayer, thanksgiving and He will answer them. Phil. 4:6-7
 - b. The Lord does not mind any sincere doubts that press us on in our spiritual progress, for we have not already attained. Phil. 3:12
2. Once God dispels your doubts, answers your questions and provides what is necessary, then make sure you give proper response to Him, even as Thomas.

- a. Acknowledge Him as your Lord, in very area for Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven”. Matt. 7:21
 - b. Acknowledge Him as your God, Who is a faithful Creator. 1Pet. 4:19
3. If you are a pessimist make sure you are one like Thomas.
 - a. Loyal to Jesus, unto death.
 - b. Loving Jesus so much, that he could not stand the thought of living without Him.
 - c. Looking to Jesus to reveal the truth personally to him.

This was Thomas the convinced apostle!

Conclusion

This was Thomas, hopefully we have been able to dispel and correct our view of Thomas to a more Biblical one, through this three-fold picture.

- I.** Thomas the committed apostle!
- II.** Thomas the un-intimidated apostle!
- III.** Thomas the convinced apostle!