

“A Desiring Doubt” (Jn. 20:24-31)

1. Absence (24-25)

a. Absence of Presence (24)

No doubt Thomas wished he'd been present with the Disciples when Jesus appeared to them the previous Sunday so as to observe what they reported.

b. Absence of Presentation (25)

- i. His statement cannot be taken hyper literally cf. vv. 27-28. Each of us have expressed sincere doubt about a claim and proclaimed that unless “_____” I refuse to believe. What we are really saying is that we need more than just a claim to “hang our hat” so to speak on a claim. I have heard both good news and bad holding my lament or celebration before reacting to particular claims.
- ii. It should be obvious that Thomas' hope was to see the evidence, not hoping to prove them wrong. He'd already continued to follow Jesus with the few when the multitudes had abandoned Jesus – even when he thought that following Jesus meant their demise (cf. Jn. 11:16).
- iii. Furthermore, Jesus knew that such signs (seven or eight on which John framed his account) were necessary in order to establish a belief in His person and work (see Jn. 4:48; 5:36; 14:11).

c. Absence of Preaching (Application Today)

- i. There is a void of Christian faith in our culture due to a vast void of preaching faithfully the Jesus of the Scripture.
- ii. A pertinent hobby horse: 2 Great Awakenings (GA) in the 18th century. 1st was rooted in Puritans, finishing with the greatest of them viz. Jonathan Edwards. This was a biblically prompted revival promoting righteous living and sound theology; whereas the 2nd was a more emotionally charged. The first awakening the people came to be educated, and the second awakening people came to be inspired and have an experience. It was a contrast of education vs experience, or discipline vs sensationalism. It may not surprise you to hear then that the fathers (and mother) of/from the 2nd GA were as follows: Charles Finney, William Miller, Edward Irving, John Nelson Darby, Joseph Smith, and Ellen G. White. In fact, it was when Darby heard Edward Irving shared about an ecstatic utterance by a teenager (Margret McDonald) who was in a two hour trance a year prior when she said there would be a removal of the church before the final days of judgment that his systematic began. Therefore, like it or not, what we see birthed in the 2nd GA is Dispensationalism (from Darby), Mormonism (from Joseph Smith), Seventh Day Adventism (Ellen G. White), and Pentecostalism (spun off from Irving).
- iii. Apologetics i.e. offering evidence that Jesus lived and that the Bible is accurate is a natural result of properly preaching the Word.
- iv. Scripture is its own best attestation. We preach the foretold Christ crucified having fulfilled the OC completely.
- v. Isn't it a blessing and necessary that we know that our eternal hope is verified and that our eternal hope is Jesus – who has revealed Himself, conquered all, and confirmed He will return, righting all wrongs with both glory and justice in His wings?

2. Accommodations (26-27)

- a. Another Appearance (26) I'm not sure if we ought to read into the locked doors re: their lack of faith. Do we lock our doors today?

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- b. Dual Doubts (27)
- i. Jesus provides the evidence hoped for by Thomas thus instructing him to be “believing.”
 - ii. What should be intuitive is that honesty matters. Jesus would not suffer fools who looked to disprove, be charmed, be appeased, nor the self-righteous etc. See Mat. 16:4; Lu. 23:9; Jn. 9:39; Mk. 2:17; Mat. 11:12-19. “Suffering fools” qualified: It’s not that Jesus didn’t make wise some of the foolish. It is that He did not play games with those who tried to mold God in their image (Mat. 23), nor the fools who say in their heart that there is no God (not being atheistic but as if God wasn’t concerned nor just).
 - iii. So when Jesus spoke of those who are never satisfied with truth e.g. Mat. 11:16-17; 16:4, He had in mind those doubting to appease themselves and their comfortable lifestyles.
 - iv. But then there are those who want to believe but understandably need the evidence to do so. E.g. Lu. 24:36-43ff. & 1 Kin. 10:1, 7. In fact, the Bible ubiquitously charges us to test such claims for validity. Test the prophets, spirits, nature (observe), etc. in fact, C. K. Barrett appropriately noted, “indeed, but for the fact that Thomas and the other apostles saw the incarnate Christ there would have been no Christian faith at all. Cf. 1:18, 50f.; 2:11; 4:45; 6:2; 9:37; 14:7, 9; 19:35.”¹
 - v. Jesus, in fact, testified that others (including us) would believe because of the testimonies of the eye witnesses of Him cf. Jn. 17:20.
 - vi. Because Thomas’ doubt was coupled with an earnest desire for truth and a seeking of such (Mat. 7:7-8), he was afforded affirmation.
3. Apprehension (28-31)
- a. Affirmation (28) Thomas certainly didn’t start prodding Jesus’ body but immediately found faith’s affirmation.
 - b. Confession (28)
 - i. His confession serves as the end bracket of an inclusio and testimony of John’s Account viz. Jesus is God (see Jn. 1:1, 14 and 20:28). Note also “with” and “was” God with 20:17, 28. →
 - ii. Optional: Carson. “The thoughtful reader of this Gospel immediately recognizes certain connections: (1) Thomas’ confession is the climactic exemplification of what it means to honour the Son as the Father is honoured (5:23). It is the crowning display of how human faith has come to recognize the truth set out in the Prologue: ‘The Word was God ...; the Word became flesh’ (1:1, 14). (2) At the same time, Jesus’ deity does not exhaust deity; Jesus can still talk about his God and Father in the third person. After all, this confession is set within a chapter where the resurrected Jesus himself refers to ‘my Father ... my God’ (v. 17). This is entirely in accord with the careful way he delineates the nature of his unique sonship (5:16–30). (3) The reader is expected to articulate the same confession, as the next verse implies. John’s readers, like Thomas, need to come to faith; and this is what coming to faith looks like. Clearly this has critical bearing on how vv. 30–31 are interpreted.”²

¹ Barrett, C. K. (1978). *Gospel according to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Second Edition, p. 573). SPCK.

² Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 659). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

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- iii. Oh, to have physically apprehended Jesus (e.g. hug/embrace)! Yet our apprehension (grasp) of Jesus is no less significant – because we believe unto eternal life cf. 1 Pet. 1:8-9.
 - iv. The purpose of the Account is so that we “may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (31).
 - v. Christ = Messiah and Messiah = God!
- c. Application: Bruce Milne wrote, “It is not beside the point that when John wrote his gospel the province he resided in was a centre for emperor-worship. It is likely that John and his readers were familiar with processions of devotees through the streets of Ephesus chanting their slogan, ‘Caesar is Lord, Caesar is God!’ Over against that deluded paganism Thomas articulates the cry which arises in the heart of every true Christian, ‘Jesus is Lord, Jesus is God!’ Such is the glory of faith. And the challenge is ours today to make the same fearless witness in face of the ‘lords many and gods many’ of our generation. For Caesar-worship is not dead—the false deities are still chanted in our streets, the gods of state and nation, and all the other traditional religions or their amalgam, of New Age and satanism, and selfism in its multiple forms. In face of these false claimants we exalt in our worship the one who alone is worthy, ‘our Lord, our God’—Jesus Christ!³

³ Milne, B. (1993). [*The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide*](#) (p. 307). InterVarsity Press.