

Believe: Benefit of the Doubt

The resurrection is the basis for all of our beliefs, doctrine theology, etc. We will not understand the Old Testament or any scripture unless it is seen through the lens of the resurrection. It alone is the foundation of everything, without the resurrection it is all a “house of cards”, it all comes down. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 if there is no resurrection, then our faith is futile.

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living though some have died.”

(1 Corinthians 15:3-6)

“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith...your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”

(1 Corinthians 15:14, 17)

The truth of the resurrection is of “first importance” (the most important thing) with these essential connecting elements:

- “He died for our sins”
- “He was buried”
- “He was raised on the third day”
- “He appeared to more than five hundred...”

*“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and **believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)*

The resurrection re-frames everything; it is the foundation of all we stand on:

“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30-31)

If you were to chose which signs and stories to share to convince unbelievers, you probably wouldn’t have picked:

- That a Messiah who would come not to rule, but to die, especially for those in Judaism.

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- Rome did not respect a “weak” leader, who was humiliated, stripped naked and crucified along side of thieves.
- In this culture you would not pick out a woman to be your first and most important witness of the resurrection. Her testimony would not even be accepted in court.
- And you certainly wouldn’t share the story of one of the twelve with severe doubts about the resurrection

*“Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, **was not with the disciples when Jesus came.** 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” 26 **A week later** his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though 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; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” 28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:19-29)*

1. Thomas said to the disciples:

“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

Thomas wanted to believe but was honest about his doubts.

In our current culture Thomas is seen in a very negative light, implying that if you have doubts you can’t have faith. The truth of the matter is that on our journey of faith we will have doubts. However, every thinking Christian will have doubts, but the important question is what will you do with your doubts. Maybe the wisest thing to do is by following Thomas’s example and take them to Jesus.

- Doubts come in all shapes and sizes.
- Doubt is often a motivator to discovering truth.

“*Doubt*” in the Greek alludes to the fact that you’re at a crossroads. There is a hesitation, not sure which way to go, a person in limbo.

Belief is often influenced by desire.

- Doubt is often rooted in disappointment.

Doubt: *I can’t believe* > **Unbelief:** *I won’t believe.*

Skepticism is about asking the questions > **Cynicism** is about assuming the answers.

2. **Thomas said to Jesus:** “*My Lord and my God!*”

Faith is trust based on sufficient evidence.

- Thomas intentionally placed himself in an environment where he was more likely to discover truth.
- Thomas objectively examined the evidence and made a decision to believe.

“For we live by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:8–9)

“Whoever hears my word and believes it has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24)

“Doubt is not sin and it is not the opposite of faith, the opposite of faith is unbelief”

Ultimately, even though we wrestle with our doubts, God is calling us to commit, to take a step of faith. Thomas took that step and became the first to share the Gospel in India. Many who still live there today still tie their faith back to Thomas.

“Faith is the action we take to overcome doubt”

Discussion Questions

- 1) Look back to the first page of our notes and 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 and discuss why the resurrection of Jesus is so important.
- 2) In John 20:30-31, John tells us that Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples after his resurrection. Discuss if you were going to perpetuate a myth or just attempt to share the story of his resurrection why you wouldn't use the incidents that the New Testament writers used. (The “weak”, non-king like Messiah, the crucial female witness and now Thomas best known for his doubting)
- 3) Please discuss the *first statement* of Thomas found in John 21:25, *“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”* Was Thomas seriously flawed or just being honest? Today in our culture

nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” Was Thomas seriously flawed or just being honest? Today in our culture Thomas is seen in a very negative light, does his story tell us if you have doubts you can’t have faith? When we as Believers have doubts what should we do with them?

4) Looking back at page 3 of your notes discuss several areas that were highlighted:

- “Belief is often influenced by desire”
- “Doubt is often rooted in disappointment”
- “Doubt: *I can’t believe* >Unbelief: *I won’t believe*”
- “Skepticism is *about asking the questions* >Cynicism is *about assuming the answers*”

5) Consider Thomas’s second and last statement, “*My Lord and my God!*” on these points:

- “Faith is trust based on sufficient evidence”
- “Thomas intentionally placed himself in an environment where he was more likely to discover truth”
- “Thomas objectively examined the evidence and made a decision to believe”

6) Lastly discuss these last two thoughts:

- “Doubt is not sin and it is not the opposite of faith, the opposite of faith is unbelief”
- “Faith is the action we take to overcome doubt”