

Thomas — The Apostle

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John 20:19-24

Thomas' name occurs 12 times in the New Testament.

Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; John 11:16; John 14:5
John 20:24; John 20:26; John 20:27; John 20:28; John 20:29
John 21:2 Acts 1:13.

“Thomas” is Aramaic for “the twin”. In three of the passages John mentions him as “Didymus” which is Greek for “the twin”. Many believe that was his nickname because he was a twin, others think that may have been his actual name. He was called Didymus.

In Matt 10:3, Thomas is paired with Matthew. In Acts 1:13, he is paired with Philip.

- Matt. 10:3, “*Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus,*”
- Acts 1:13, “*And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.*”

In John 21:2-6, we see him listed second to Peter.

John 21:2-6, “*There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, *I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*”*

Thomas may have been a fisherman.

Perhaps 7 of the 12 apostles were.

Thomas is never mentioned apart from the 12 in the other gospels, but John gives him a very prominent role.

He may have been a much more important apostle than we usually consider him.

He definitely shows us some traits that we need to consider and shows to us something about his character.

When we mention Job, we immediately think of the “patience of Job”

When we mention Thomas, we immediately think of “doubting Thomas.”

But this may not be a correct or proper way we should think of him.

Let’s look briefly at the passages that reveal some things about Thomas.

A “Courageous Thomas”

John 11:16, “*Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*”

Jesus wants to go to Bethany, near Jerusalem. Jesus’ life has been threatened and all the apostles know of the danger to Jesus if he returns to that area.

- John 10:22, “*And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.*”
- John 10:31, “*Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.*”
- John 10:39-40, “*Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand, And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.*”

From the time in the 9th chapter of John after Jesus healed the blind man in the temple, the Pharisees and Sanhedrin sought to kill him (9th & 10th chapters of John).

After this, Jesus hears the news about Lazarus.

John 11:1-8, “*Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had*

heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?

Courageous Thomas recognizes the threat to Jesus if he goes back to that area, but he becomes a TOWER OF STRENGTH, and leads the way, saying, **“Well, if they are going to kill him, let us go and die with him!”**

Such courage and leadership.

A “searching, seeking, and learning Thomas”

John 14:5, “Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?”

Note the context of the famous, comforting remarks make by Jesus,

John 14:1-4, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”*

But Thomas says to him, “Lord we don’t know where you are going, [so] how can we know the way?”

Thomas is not the only one puzzled.

None of the apostles grasped what Jesus was talking about.

Some people, when they don’t get it, remain silent and look puzzled, but Thomas again leads the way in wanting to learn just what Jesus was talking about, and just where Jesus was going.

So we see Thomas as a diligent student, inquiring and searching for the truth, wanting to be sure he understands his teacher.

Isn’t this a remarkable and commendable trait?

A “Slow-to-be-Convinced Thomas”

John 20:19-24, *“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace*

be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”

Instead of calling him “Doubting Thomas”, we should look at him from a different prospective.

Thomas was not present at the first appearance — we don’t know why!

But instead of calling him “Doubting Thomas,” let’s think of him as being one who was not going to be deceived, or who didn’t want to be misled; he is not gullible.

He was not any more “doubting” than the other apostles had been before Jesus appeared to them.

He is one wanting proof!

He wanted to see the evidence with his own eyes!

And while we admire his position of wanting proof, and wanting evidence and not being deceived — **he is mistaken in one very important way!**

The mistake of Thomas was not that he wanted proof, but that he failed to realize the value of eye-witnesses.

If Thomas did not want to trust the eyes of others, how could he be sure he could trust his own eyes?

It becomes a matter of what kind of evidence one is going to accept.

Jesus, however, provided the exact proof Thomas asked for.

Jesus did not scold him, but did remind him that the evidence he had rejected should have been enough. He should have believed the others, who were eye-witnesses.

Jesus gave his blessing and commendation to all those who should believe because of the testimony of these apostles who were eye-witnesses!

John 20:29-31, “Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

And Jesus was talking about us today who read their inspired testimony!

John makes Thomas a very real person; and the passage in John 20:25 reveals another great characteristic.

“A loving and committed Thomas”

John 20:25, *“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”*

We know Thomas spoke of putting his fingers in the wounds of Jesus, and Jesus showed him the wounds, but we are not told if Thomas put forth his hands and touch him.

It is apparent, though, that all of the apostles did touch Jesus — he was real.

1 John 1:1-3, *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

John knew the importance of this confession of faith — and of this commitment to Jesus.

This may be why John has been giving Thomas the recognition before this of the important role he played in the apostleship of Jesus.

Where he reveals us the courage of this Thomas.

John 11:16, *“... Let us also go, that we may die with him.”*

And the honest searching, seeking Thomas.

John 14:5, *“...Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?”*

The key passage here however is Jesus, reply to Thomas in vs. 29.

John 20:29, *“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”*

Jesus says that the testimony of trustworthy eye-witness should be sufficient to make believers, and that such would be blessed.

If we can't trust this great number of reliable eye-witness, it is not likely that we would even trust our own eyes.

This is almost parallel to Jesus' statement in Luke 16:31.

Luke 16:31, *“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”*

John tells us his own purpose in writing this gospel in the next verses:

To make believers, John 20:31, *“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”*

And from the Lord's own statement, those who believe the written testimony of the credible, trustworthy testimony of these eye-witness apostles can have eternal life.

John 20:30-31, *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”*

