

The Blessing of Believing John 20:24-29

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read Vs. 19-23

B. Set the Scene

1. The sun was setting on Sunday evening.
 2. The disciples were huddled in hiding because word had reached them the Jewish authorities were looking for them.
 - a. With their success in executing Jesus a couple days before,
 - b. They were determined to make an end of the movement He'd started & were searching for His followers.
 3. As they were hiding out, suddenly Jesus appeared in their midst.
 - a. Their reaction was what *ours* would have been – terror!
 - b. So He spoke a word of comfort; giving the typical Jewish greeting of peace – “Shalom!”^[1]
 - c. A ghost would shout something like “Boo!” not “Hey guys!”
 - d. Jesus was no ghost. He was newly risen from the dead in a new but different.
 - e. There was a *correspondence* between this new body & His old one –
 - f. It still bore the marks of the crucifixion – affirming that this really was Jesus & not a double.
 4. When the disciples realized it *really was Jesus*, & when the fact of the resurrection registered, their fear & despair turned to delight.
 5. Jesus then breathed on them, imparting the Holy Spirit just as He'd promised at the Last Supper, and in that instant, they were born again.
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6. The problem was, one of them was missing.
 7. There were only 10 disciples there, not the full 11.

II. TEXT

A. V. 24

24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

1. Why not? Where was he?
2. Not only doesn't the Bible tell us, it neither commends nor condemns his absence – it just states the fact.
3. Commentators have suggested a bevy of different reasons for Thomas' absence.
 - a. Some say that he'd gotten separated from the rest of the disciples when they ran away at Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane, & didn't know where they'd gone to hide.
 - b. Others suggest he was out rounding up some food for their meal that evening.
 - c. A few suggest that after Mary's report earlier that day that she'd seen Christ risen, he was out looking for Him.
 - d. One idea that's found some support is that instead of *hiding*, Thomas was out wandering the streets *hoping* to run in to some of the Jewish officials so

he would be caught.

- 1) In John 11:16, when Jesus said they were headed to Bethany where it was dangerous for Him to go, Thomas said to the other disciples, "Let us go with Him that we may die also."
- 2) In 14:5, when Jesus said He would soon be turned over to those who would kill Him, Thomas asked about how he could follow.
4. Because of what we're about to read, Thomas gets a bad rap & is often stuck with the label "Doubting Thomas."
 - a. That's unfair.
 - b. For Thomas demonstrates a courage lacking in most of the other guys.
5. While we can't say exactly where Thomas was or what he was doing – what we *can* say is he **WASN'T** with the rest of the disciples & because of that, he *missed out* on this special moment of revelation.
 - a. Jesus appeared where His followers were *gathered*.
 - b. They got to experience Him in a new & wonderful way.
 - c. Thomas missed out *because* he wasn't there.
6. Heb. 10:24-25 is a passage that speaks with special relevance to us today. Here's a paraphrase –

24 As believers, let's put a priority on each other, giving serious attention to how we can make our love for one another tangible; for how we can do good to one another, ²⁵not giving up on gathering together for worship nor neglecting the regular renewal of our fellowship with one another, as some of us in fact have. Rather, keep encouraging one another to all this; and as you see the Last Days approaching, turn it up even more.

7. The author of Hebrews does something we find no other place in Scripture;
 - a. He speaks a word of instruction to the people of his own time,
 - b. Then adds a postscript that says – "You who will see the prophecies about the Last Days being fulfilled in *your* time, pay SPECIAL ATTENTION to this and make sure you're being even more diligent to get together to worship the Lord and love one another in practical ways."
8. The writer of Hebrews was divinely inspired to pen that word because the Last Days would be marked by a pace of life & culture that would conspire to keep believers *apart*, separate from & indifferent to one another,
 - a. And weak in the expression of the fervent love that marked the Early Church.
 - b. Jesus said such love would be the *distinctive badge* of our identity as His people.

9. Something quiet but significant & wonderful is happening here at Calvary.
 - a. There's a sweet sense of the presence of God in the services.
 - b. People are sitting closer to one another,
 - c. And as we do, our worship is infused with a sense of the delight of the Lord.
 - d. It's as though, as the distance between us shrinks, God Himself comes closer.
10. I'm getting similar reports about some of the home groups; as people open up & share their lives with one another, they sense God's smiling approval & His

Spirit brings renewed strength & purpose.

11. Because Thomas wasn't with the other disciples, he missed out on the first appearance Jesus made to them.

B. V. 25

25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "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."

1. When Thomas joined them, they immediately reported what had happened.
2. But Thomas was incredulous. He didn't buy it!
 - a. His lack of faith wasn't just because he was skeptical by nature.
 - b. His refusal to accept their report was because of the *absolute certainty* of Jesus' death.
 - c. This is what Thomas meant by seeing & feeling Jesus' wounds.
 - d. He wasn't being maudlin or gross in his demand.
 - e. He was saying that people who've endured what Jesus had gone through, don't just get up & walk away.
 - f. The cross doesn't negotiate with its victims. No one escapes the inevitable end of crucifixion.
 - g. And just as John, who'd been there had reported, one of the guards had thrust a spear into Jesus' body to make sure He was dead.
 - h. The blood and water that flowed from the wound *proved* He was long gone.
3. In v. 20, Jesus invited the disciples to see the wounds & know *it really was* Him.
4. All Thomas is saying is, "To believe as you guys do, I'll need *the same kind of* encounter you had."

5. Take careful note of this – specially those of you who *aren't* followers of Christ.
 - a. Thomas declared what it would take for him *to believe*.
 - b. He'd need to have both visual & tactile evidence that Jesus was really alive after having been crucified.
 - c. If that evidence was delivered, Thomas would know the truth & *follow where that truth led*.
6. What about you - what *criteria* do you need to believe?
 - a. What's standing in the way of faith in Jesus Christ?
 - b. Why *aren't* you a Christian? Be honest now.
 - c. This ought to be an issue of utmost concern to you.
 - d. You see, if the Christian faith is true, then what you decide about Jesus is **THE** most important decision in your entire existence because it determines *where* you spend eternity.
7. Some people, like Thomas here, have *honest* doubts.
 - a. They have a basic problem that stands in the way of faith.
 - b. It would be dishonest & a lack of integrity for them to believe while that obstacles exists.
 - c. But once that doubt has been answered & the obstacle removed, they know

- the only proper response **IS** faith.
8. Others use doubt as a smoke-screen for *determined unbelief*.
 - a. For these people, they don't believe because they see where belief *leads* and they don't want to go there.
 - b. When you talk with these people, they give some objection to faith.
 - 1) You answer it, but instead of thanking you & saying this brings new light they have to consider, they jump to *another* issue.
 - 2) You answer that one as well, and they move to a third objection, then a fourth, and fifth.
 - 3) When you've answered *all* their questions, they're *no closer* to faith because doubts were never the problem; **Unbelief** is.
 - 4) They don't believe because they've chosen **NOT TO**.
 - c. Such people refuse to consider the answers we provide because they know where those answers lead, to God.
 - d. And that is PRECISELY WHERE THEY DO **NOT** WANT TO GO!
 9. So, if you're NOT a Christian, let me encourage you to consider this all important issue – Why not?
 - a. What's standing in the way of faith?
 - b. Is there some *evidence* you need that if provided would remove that obstacle & see you draw the right conclusion, which is faith in Christ?
 - c. If so, then do what Thomas does here – state your case!
 - d. Identify what you need – then watch how God works to provide it.

C. Vs. 26-28

26 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!”** **27** Then He said to Thomas, **“Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”** **28** And Thomas answered and said to Him, **“My Lord and my God!”**

1. According to how they reckoned time, 8 days was exactly 1 week later – So this was the next Sunday. And this time Tom was present.
2. Just as before, Jesus materialized among them with a friendly greeting – “Shalom ya'll!”
3. Then **with the same words** Tom had used a week earlier, Jesus invited him to go for it.
 - a. “Here ya' go, Tommy boy. You wanted to see & feel my wounds? Go for it.”
 - b. “Then, just as you said you would, follow through, draw the conclusion the evidence points to, & believe!”
4. With these words, Thomas realized something;
 - a. The whole time he'd been rebutting the disciples' report of Jesus' resurrection,
 - b. The whole time he'd been declaring the evidence he'd need, Jesus was there – He'd heard it all!
5. Like gears clicking into place one after another, Thomas moved from doubt to

full-on-faith.

- 1) This really *was* Jesus - the wounds proved it.
- 2) He was no ghost; He'd really risen from the dead in a new body.
- 3) He was present even when unseen.
6. All of this pointed in one unmistakable direction.
7. Like adding a column of figures, Thomas drew the line & gave the sum –
“My Lord and my God!”
8. With the evidence in hand, Thomas speaks forth the words that both yield & prove he's now born again.
 - 1) Jesus is his Messiah-Savior.
 - 2) But He's *more* than that – He is Thomas' God!
9. The evidence hasn't just led him to an intellectual conclusion; It's resulted in a *personal choice*. Thomas trusts **IN** Him for eternal life.

D. V. 29

29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

1. Because seeing was the requirement for faith Thomas set, Jesus met him there.
2. Jesus looks *past* Thomas & the disciples to all those they would carry their testimony to, & says the very same faith would be distilled in them *without* seeing.
3. It would not be sight, but *hearing* that would produce faith.
4. As we look carefully at vs. 27-28, we find that while Jesus *invited* Thomas to touch the wounds, he never did.
 - a. Really, it was the sight & **WORD** of Christ that was enough to spark the fire of faith in him.
 - b. It was the Word of Christ that brought conviction to Thomas' heart.
5. Paul says in Romans 10:17 that faith comes by *hearing* the Gospel.
6. It was crucial the original disciples SEE the resurrected Christ because they were the ones charged with the task of carrying on His ministry and laying the Foundation of the Faith.
7. But now that the foundation is laid in their testimony, it's up to us to building on IT with lives of Faith in the Resurrected Christ.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Witnesses

1. Our court system is devoted to the administration of justice.
 2. The most important element in determining justice is the evidence provided by *witnesses*.
 3. The more eye-witnesses to an event, the better.
 4. Each is put on the stand & describes what he/she saw.
 5. From these multiple witnesses, the jury determines the *truth* of a case.
 6. With truth in hand, they render a verdict, a sentence is passed or a judgment is made, & carried out in the lives of those concerned.
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7. In 1 Cor. 15, the Apostle Paul tells us that following the resurrection, Jesus appeared to over 500 people.

8. These went *everywhere* proclaiming the risen Christ.
 - a. So sure of the resurrection were they, many of them went to their deaths rather than recant.
 - b. They were so confident of their *own* resurrection because of His they faced martyrdom, not with regret or fear but with a holy joy that bordered on *eagerness*.
9. It's their faith, their testimony of having SEEN the risen Lord, and the impact this had on the rest of their lives that provides the foundation for *our* faith today.
10. We don't **NEED** to see Jesus because **they DID** & passed on their testimony to us here in the Scriptures.
11. Reading & hearing this is all that's necessary for a faith that can transform our lives and bring untold blessing.

B. I Need to See!

1. Someone today might say, "No, to believe, I *have* to *see* Jesus."
2. Really? Do you have to *see* George Washington to believe in the American Revolution?
 - a. The science of how we know what took place in the past, called *history*, makes it clear that George Washington lived & served as leader of American forces during the War for Independence.
 - b. We have lots of eye-witnesses of those events & documents that come from that time.
 - c. No one today says, "I refuse to believe in George Washington or the War for Independence unless I see him."
 - d. The Declaration & Constitution, as well as the existence of the United States are sufficient evidence.
 - e. Even so, the Bible and the Church are sufficient evidence to the truth of the Resurrection.
3. Do we have to *see* Alexander the Great to believe he conquered the world by the time he was 30?
 - a. There is actually very little evidence that's survived from ancient times documenting his career.
 - b. But the little there is, no one questions – because the rules historians use to verify the past are clear & sufficient to validate what we know about that period of world history.
4. Now – don't miss this: If we use the same set of criteria on the life, death, & resurrection of Jesus as is used on ANY OTHER historical event, then we can say with absolute certainty that the Gospel is **THE most credible** & substantiate fact of ancient history.

C. The Blessing of Believing

1. As Jesus said in v. 29, there's a blessing inherent in faith in Him.
2. When the truth came into focus for Thomas, everything changed.
3. He went from despair & doubt to faith & hope.
4. Faith in Jesus brings confidence because we know death is *not* the end.
 - a. It's just the doorway to heaven.
 - b. Faith in Christ brings hope & purpose to our lives.

- c. It teaches us nothing can separate us from the love of God.
5. As Thomas recognized, the resurrection proves the deity of Christ.
6. And if Jesus is our God, then we can know that all things really are working together for our good.

[1] Literally –“Shalom aleikhem”