



# Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## 'Doubting Thomas' gets a 'Bad Rap'

Bible Reading: John 20:24-31

### 'Doubting Thomas'? *"Thomas gets a bum rap."* –Paul Metzger

#### A. Thomas' Negative Caricatures

- "The traditional picture of Thomas as *the doubter* is a *caricature* of the role he plays in this scene." –Dorothy Lee B. The Danger of 'Doubting Thomas'
- "*To focus narrowly & negatively on Thomas' doubt* in...this text *is to miss the point* of this story." –Gail O'Day No "Doubting Thomas" in John 2
- "*This Gospel does not deal with doubt.*" –Karoline Lewis
- "The Greek word meaning *doubt* (*distaz?*) *never appears in this story* (despite... NRSV & NIV in Jn. 20:27). *Distaz?* is found in Mt. 28:17, but it is completely absent in John 20." –Richard Carlson

### Prior Glimpses of Disciple Thomas (11:16; 14:5)

A. *Let's go too...to die with him* [Jesus]" (11:16)

B. "*Lord, we don't know...*" (14:5)

### Thomas Rejects his fellow-disciples' Witness (20:24-25)

A. Thomas was Absent on Easter Sunday

B. Thomas Rejects the Disciples' Testimony – "We've seen the Lord!"

C. Thomas gathers with the disciples a week later (20:26a)

D. Thomas demands Tangible Physical Proof

- "*Jesus does not disdain Thomas' need for empirical verification.*" –Lidija Novakovic Thomas wants the same experience as his peers

- *"Thomas simply demands what the others got – a first-hand experience of the risen Jesus, but he does so with striking bluntness & drastic clarity."* –Ben. Schliesser

## Thomas at the Turning Point

- A. The Turning Point—40-day Transition between Jesus' Resurrection & His Ascension (Acts 1:2-3)
- B. The Spirit-Paraclete replacing Jesus' Physical Presence
- C. From Believing based on Jesus' Appearances to Believing Eyewitness Testimony
  - *"Because you've seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who haven't seen & yet believe"* (20:29)

## The Role as an Eyewitness

- A. Two kinds of Believers — those who've seen & those who haven't (Jn. 17:9, 20; 20:29)
  - *"The 4th Gospel knows two kinds of believers: [1.] those who have seen & believe (eyewitnesses) and [2.] those who have not seen & yet believe (non-eyewitnesses) (20:29-31) ... The latter coming to faith by means of the former [eyewitnesses] (Jn. 17:20-21)." — Charles Talbert*
  - *"The blessing...[in] 20:29 is predicated upon the fact that Jesus' own disciples, including Mary Magdalene, have seen the risen Jesus & believed in him. In every case their seeing results in belief."* –D. Moody Smith
- B. Thomas as an Eyewitness
  - *"Thomas... not only sees the wounds, but is invited to touch them in order to experience the identity of the Crucified & Risen One by means of physical verification (20:24–9)." —Ben. Schliesser*
  - ? John's Eyewitness Testimony—we've 'heard' & 'seen' & 'touched' (1 Jn. 1:1)
  - *"What was from the beginning, what we've heard, what we've seen...what we've observed & touched with our hands, concerning the word of life...we've seen it & we testify & declare to you the eternal life"* (1 Jn. 1:1-2)

## Was Thomas Justified in Demanding Physical Proof?

- *"Jesus does not censure Thomas...but...makes available to him exactly what he needs for faith."* –Gail O'Day
- A. Jesus promised the disciples they would (physically) see him again (Jn. 16:16-22)
  1. ? *"In a little while, you will no longer see me; again in a little while, you will see me."* (16:16)
- B. Jesus responds to individual needs: e.g. Thomas
  - In the NT...Jesus ministers to many individuals, responding to each one's needs...After his resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples with concern for them also as individuals... *g., Thomas.* –Craig Nesson
  - *"Jesus "does not... cast off weak believers, but bears with their weakness, proceeds gently...with them, & does not scold them... He demonstrates this in the case of "* –Martin Luther

## The Meaning of ??????? [Pistos] in Jn. 20:27 –**"Don't be unfaithful, be faithful!"**

- A. The Meaning of ??????? [Pistos]
  - *"God is faithful [Pistos]; you were called by him into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."* (1 Cor. 1:9)
  - *"His master said, 'Well done, good & faithful [Pistos] servant! You were faithful [Pistos] over a few things; I'll put you in charge of many things..."* (Matt. 25:21, 23)
  - *"A better rendering of ...[20:27b] would be "Don't start being unfaithful, be faithful!" – Chris. Seglenieks,*
- B. Jesus Challenges Thomas to be Faithful (20:27b)
  - ? *"Rather than 'doubting Thomas', we ought to remember 'faithful Thomas,' who took up his commission as a witness."* – Chris. Seglenieks
- C. Thomas as a Faithful Witness – "My Lord & My God"

D. Jesus' Word for the Future (20:29)

- "Because you've seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen & yet believe." (20:29) John's Word for the Future (20:30-31)
- "Jesus performed many other signs [before] his disciples that aren't *written in this book*. But these are *written so ...you may believe*...Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, &...by believing... life in his name. (20:30-1