

# A Closer Look at Thomas the Twin

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. Thomas the Apostle called Didymus which means "the twin" was informally called doubting Thomas because he doubted Jesus' resurrection when first told, followed later by his confession, "My Lord and my God," on seeing Jesus' wounded body.
  - 1. The name Thomas (Koine Greek: Θωμᾶς) given for the apostle in the New Testament is derived from the Aramaic or Syriac: Toma, from Hebrew Teom, meaning "twin." Didymus is koine Greek for twin
  - 2. According to Syriac translation, his actual first name was Judas or Jude, not the traitor Judas Iscariot nor Jude the brother of Jesus
  - 3. Tradition records that Thomas may have been the only apostle present at the passing of Mary
  - 4. Thomas is believed to have sailed to India in AD 52 to spread the Gospel, and is purported to have landed at the port of Muziris, where there was a Jewish community at the time, as reported by Ephrem the Syrian of Edessa.
  - 5. According to tradition, Thomas was killed by being run through with a soldier's spear in 72 AD and his body was interred in Mylapore.
    - a. It is a powerful coincidence that the same disciple who was told to touch the wound created by the thrust of a soldier's spear in Jesus side, was himself pierced by a soldier's spear
- B. Thomas speaks only in John's Gospel
  - 1. Thomas first speaks in John 11:16, when Lazarus had recently died, the apostles do not wish to go back to Judea, where some Jews had attempted to stone Jesus. Thomas says: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."
  - 2. He speaks again in John 14:5. There, Jesus had just explained that he was going away to prepare a heavenly home for his followers, and that one day they would join him there. Thomas reacted by saying, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"
  - 3. John 20:24-29 tells of Thomas' doubt and conviction
- C. We tend to see only Thomas' doubt; Thomas exhibited other characteristics that merit our consideration
  - 1. "Doubting Thomas" might be better viewed as "Willing Thomas."

## I. THOMAS WAS WILLING TO RISK HIS LIFE

- A. John 11:5-16 - Thomas was willing to die for the cause of Christ.
  - 1. There was something Thomas had seen in Jesus that made him willing to surrender his life in order to stand by the Lord's side.

## II. THOMAS WAS WILLING TO ASK QUESTIONS

- A. John 14:1-11 - Thomas was willing to challenge the Lord's statements in order to get to the heart of the truth

1. Our view of the words of Jesus are clear to us, but in the disciples' day, revelation was incomplete
2. Thomas didn't understand, so he asked an honest question.
3. Jesus didn't chide Thomas for his question, as it appeared that He did to Philip.
4. Genuine questions are not wrong; they are a great resource in acquiring growth, knowledge, and spiritual maturity.

### **III. THOMAS WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT THE TRUTH**

- A. John 20:24-29 - Notice that the text does not say that Thomas touched Jesus, as most artists' conception paint it; the scripture only speaks of Thomas' exclamatory confession
  1. Thomas wasn't the only disciple who had to see to believe; other disciples doubted the resurrection - Mark 16:11, 14; Luke 24:9-12 Peter had to go see for himself.
  2. Thomas wanted to be sure, just as the other disciples wanted to be sure. However, Jesus used Thomas' doubt to teach a timeless lesson
- B. Pay close attention to Thomas' reaction when presented with the truth.

#### Conclusion:

- A. We may be more like Thomas than like any of the other apostles. We all wrestle or have wrestled with doubts from time to time, but that doesn't keep us from being willing to do the Lord's will
  1. If someone ever says to you that they have not doubts or have never had doubts, watch them; they will lie about other things, too.
  2. Next time you are tempted to speak disparagingly of Thomas, hold up the mirror of God's word and gaze at your own reflection for a moment
- B. "Jesus' willingness to accommodate Thomas' unbelief is a reminder that God can handle our doubt. And that the rationalist doesn't need to see, touch, or run a lab test in order to believe in the resurrected Christ. Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me" (John 20:29) This is not a plea to accept what goes against reason, but it is an invitation to discover a faith that goes beyond it. The example of Thomas is for the stubborn skeptic in us all." (David D. Flowers)