

THOMAS - The Apostle

1. Thomas' name occurs 12 times in the New Testament.
 - 1) Matt. 10:3; 2) Mark 3:18; 3) Luke 6:15; 4) John 11:16; 5) John 14:5
 - 6) John 20:24; 7) John 20:26; 8) John 20:27; 9) John 20:28; 10) John 20:29
 - 11) John 21:2 12) Acts 1:13
2. Aramaic for "the twin". Three of the 4 passages John mentions him as "Didymus" which is Greek for "the twin." Most believe that was his nickname because he was a twin, some think that may have been his actual name.
3. In Matt 10:3, Thomas is paired with Matthew. In Acts 1:13, he is paired with Philip.
4. In **John 21:2-6**, we see him listed second to Peter; perhaps in prestige and influence.
 - a) Thomas may have also been a fisherman.
 - b) Perhaps 7 of the 12 apostles were.
5. Thomas is never mentioned apart from the 12 in the other gospels, but John gives him a very prominent role.
 - a) He may have been a much more important apostle than we usually consider him.
 - b) He definitely shows us some traits that we need to consider and shows to us something about his character.
 - c) When we mention Job, we immediately think of the "patience of Job"
 - d) When we mention Thomas, we immediately think of "doubting Thomas."
 - 1) But I'm not sure this is a correct or proper way we should think of him.
 - 2) Let's look briefly at the passages that reveal some things about Thomas.

1. A "Courageous Thomas" – John 11:16

1. 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.
 - a) cf. John 10:22 at the feast of Dedication in Jerusalem
 - b) cf. John 10:31 the Jews took up stones to stone Jesus
 - c) cf. John 10:39-40 Jesus eluded them and escaped to the east side of the Jordan River with his apostles.

From the time in John 9 after Jesus healed the blind man in the temple, the Pharisees and Sanhedrin sought to kill him– (John 9 - 10)
2. Now Jesus hears the news about Lazarus – John 11:1-8; esp. note verse 8.
3. 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!"
 - a) Courage and leadership.

2. A "Searching, Seeking, and Learning Thomas" – John 14:5

1. Note the context of the famous, comforting remarks made by Jesus, John 14:1-4.
2. But Thomas says to him, "Lord we don't know where you are going, [so] how can we know the way?"

- a) Thomas is not the only one puzzled.
 - b) None of the apostles grasped what Jesus was talking about.
3. 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.
- a) So we see Thomas as a diligent student, inquiring and searching for the truth, wanting to be sure he understands his teacher.
 - b) Isn't this a remarkable and commendable trait?

3. A "Slow-to-be-Convinced Thomas" – John 20:19-24

1. Instead of calling him "Doubting Thomas" I want us to look at him from a different perspective.
2. Thomas was not present at the first appearance – we don't know why!
 - a) Many good lessons can be given on what Thomas missed when he missed meeting with the disciples on that first Sunday.
 - b) I'm not going to try to accuse or excuse Thomas. We just don't know why he was not there.
 - 1) Many good people have to miss some services today, sick, or some family member desperately sick, etc.
 - 2) We shouldn't try to find fault with him, but it is true that because he was NOT there, he missed a good many things that could have blessed his life.
3. 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.
 - a) He was not any more "doubting" than the other apostles had been before Jesus appeared to them.
 - b) He is one wanting proof!
 - c) He wants to see the evidence with his own eyes!
 - d) And while we admire his position of wanting proof, and wanting evidence and not being deceived – **he is mistaken in one very important way!**
4. The mistake of Thomas was not that he wanted proof, but that he failed to realize the evidential value of eye-witnesses.
 - a) If Thomas did not want to trust the eyes of others, how could he be sure he could trust his own eyes?
 - b) It becomes a matter of what kind of evidence one is going to accept.
5. Jesus, however, provided the exact proof Thomas asked for. Question: Who told Jesus what Thomas had said?
 - a) Well, Jesus had been there all the time. Jesus knew.
 - b) Jesus did not scold him, but did remind him that the evidence he had rejected should have been enough.
 - c) Jesus gave his blessing and commendation to those who should believe because of the testimony of these apostles who were eye-witnesses! (20:29-31)
 - d) And Jesus was talking about us who read their inspired testimony!

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

4. “A Loving & Committed Thomas” – John 20:25

1. 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.
 - a) We believe the apostles did touch Jesus – he was real – 1 John 1:1-3.
2. This passages is one of the great climactic passages in John.
 - a) John has been systematic leading his reader through a series of seven witness who bear their testimony to Jesus (you can outline the gospel of John just that way!)
 - b) And this passage is the great climax!
3. John knew the importance of this confession of faith – and this commitment to Jesus.
 - a) I think this is why John has been giving Thomas the recognition before this of the important role he played in the apostleship of Jesus.
 - b) Where he reveals us the **courage** of this Thomas (11:16)
 - c) And the honest searching, **seeking** Thomas in 14:5.
 - d) His important position among the apostles in given in 21:2-6 when he is linked with Peter himself as one of the leaders.
4. The key passage here however is Jesus, reply to Thomas in vs. 29....
 - a) Jesus says that the testimony of trustworthy eye-witness should be sufficient to make believers, and that such would be blessed.
 - 1) If we can't trust this great number of reliable eye-witness– it is not likely that we would even trust our own eyes.
 - 2) This is almost parallel to Jesus' statement in Luke 16:31 . . .
5. John tells us his own purpose in writing this gospel in the next verses –
 - a) ... to make believers, **20:31 READ**
 - b) 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. (20:30-31)

Conclusion:

1. Tradition of Thomas' ministry in India and death as a martyr there for Jesus.

– Windell Gann