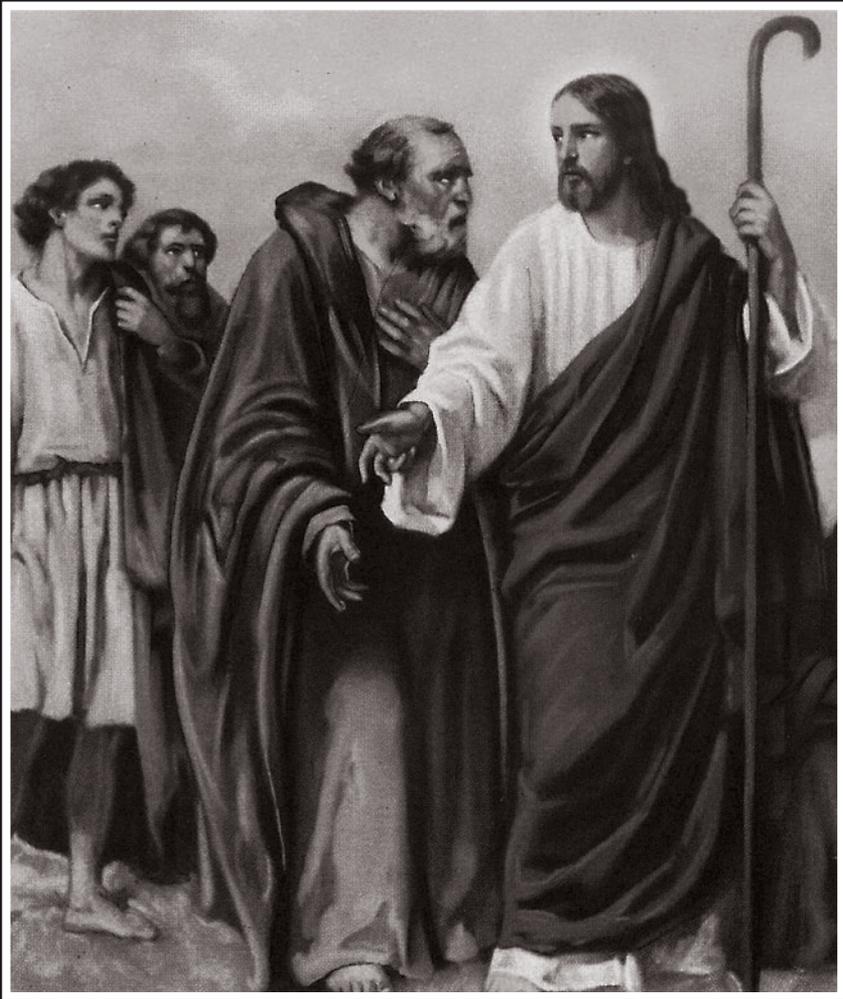


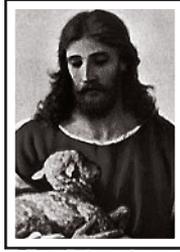
The Twelve Apostles of the Lamb



The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God ... Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand. John 10:33 & 39

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

Chapter Eight



The Apostle Thomas

Thomas, like the other faithful Apostles, was a Galilean. It is thought that he must have been a fisherman at the time Jesus called him to be an Apostle. Thomas was also called Didymus which means “*a twin.*” It is quite possible, then, that Thomas had a twin brother or sister, but the Scriptures do not say who this was.

The most interesting thing about Thomas was his character. He was a man of great faith and courageous zeal for his beloved Lord. He was willing to oppose all others if he thought his ideas were right. The Scriptures provide two examples of this strong-mindedness which illustrate two very important points. One example shows how Thomas was strong-minded in a correct decision, and one example shows how he was strong-minded and wrong in his idea of the truth.

In the first example, the Apostle Thomas opposed the other Apostles when they warned Jesus to avoid danger. Jesus and the Apostles had just escaped from Jerusalem where angry Jews wanted to stone Jesus for saying he was “*the Son of God.*” *John 10:33, 36-39* They fled to a quiet place out of harm, but soon followed news of the death of Jesus’ dear friend, Lazarus. Jesus said, “*Let us go to Judea again.*” But all of the Apostles except Thomas said, “*Master, the Jews just tried to stone you, and yet you want to return there again?*” Jesus explained the importance of returning, and Thomas, knowing well of the danger, spoke out, “*Let us also go, that we may die with Jesus!*” *John 11:1-16* This was certainly an admirable character trait displayed in Thomas. He willingly

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and promptly obeyed his Master and encouraged his brethren to do the same, even though they were all shrinking from fear of persecution. In this instance of strong-mindedness, Thomas was sincere and his decision was the right one. It is also a good lesson to the Christian that just because most of our friends believe something, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is right.

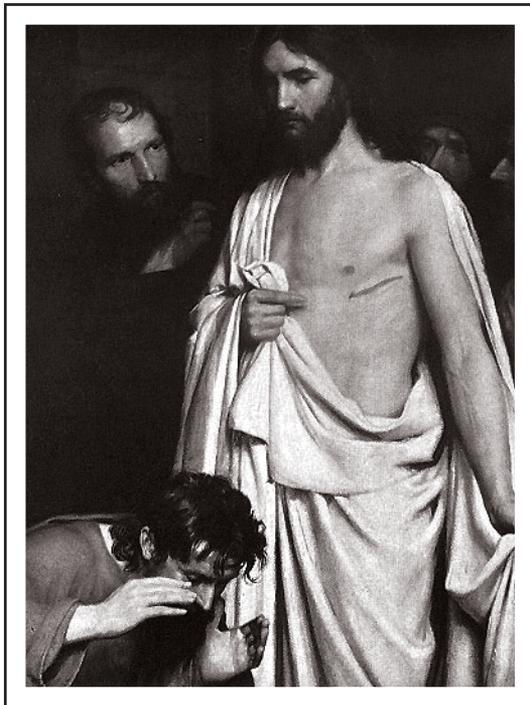
In the second example of the Apostle's strong-mindedness, Thomas again opposed the popular ideas of his brethren, but this time he was wrong. One evening after the resurrection of Jesus, ten of the Apostles were meeting in "*the upper room*" sharing in their joy over the many appearances of their resurrected Lord. Thomas was not with them there that night. Perhaps he couldn't believe all these reports of the resurrection appearances of his Master, and he didn't want to be encouraged in what he thought was a deception. *Reprint 2804* That night, Jesus appeared to the ten assembled in the upper room. The doors were locked and windows closed, yet he appeared before them with the nail wounds in his hands and feet and the spear wound in his side. Filled with excitement that surely Thomas would believe now, the Apostles went to him and told him of this wonderful appearing. But Thomas said, "*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.*" *John 20:25* He didn't think he could trust his own eyes for this may be a deception. He needed to touch the wounds of his Lord.

In this case, Thomas was wrong in his decision to oppose the other Apostles. Here were several of his respected companions who actually saw their resurrected Lord, yet Thomas distrusted their reports. We can only suppose that Thomas sought the Lord in prayer to seek his will in the matter, while he still held to his cautious opinion. This is good advice to every Christian, for the Scriptures assure us that the Lord will direct our path if we seek him in sincerity and truth. *James 1:5,6* Thus, Thomas was being put to a test. Would he stubbornly defend his wrong course out of pride when he was proven wrong? Jesus lovingly and patiently gave Thomas

The Apostle Thomas

the very evidence he needed to help him believe. He knew that Thomas had not as yet received the help of the holy Spirit at Pentecost to understand this difficult idea of the resurrection. Jesus also knew what a confusing time it was for his beloved followers, and so he had compassion upon Thomas in this time when additional proof was needed.

It was one week after the appearance in the upper room that the Apostles again assembled there. This time Thomas was with the other ten. Perhaps he had prayerfully considered the possibility of these appearances and was ready to be proven wrong if the Lord chose to do so. Suddenly before them stood their resurrected Lord. Jesus immediately went to Thomas and asked him to come forward and not only see, but touch his wounds. How humbled Thomas must have been when he cried, "*My Lord and my God!*" Jesus was not trying to reprove Thomas, but to show him and all Christians since then that he most certainly was alive forevermore! He said to



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Thomas, *“Because you have seen me, you believe. Blessed are those who have not seen me, and yet they believe.”* John 20:29 Jesus was trying to show that there are two ways to believe in him. Some believe only when they see clear evidence, which is good. But Jesus says that a more excellent faith is one based upon true faith in the testimony of the Scriptures and Jesus’ word. *Reprint 2802*

So, in this lesson, Thomas was almost deceived by his own lack of faith in Jesus’ promise to return. This example was important to the entire Church throughout the ages, for if no one had ever doubted the resurrection, the Lord would not have had the opportunity to provide convincing proof to his followers of the fact. Doubts would have appeared sooner or later and they might have ended in disastrous results.

The lessons in Thomas’ experience are more than proof of the resurrection. They show how, if Jesus was not angry with one who was overly cautious, but was patient and provided proof of important truths, we should also be patient with others who are not easily convinced of the message of God’s beautiful plan. We should follow the Lord’s example and lovingly work with them to help them see the truth. There is a saying, *“Be patient with me, God isn’t finished with me yet!”* If we would want this patient love extended toward us, we should certainly extend it to others. Sometimes it is better if one requires extra proof to believe, for they are more thoroughly convinced of truth in the end. Some actually are too quick to believe and their faith becomes easily shaken later. Each of us has different abilities to learn, and we should be thankful that God provides sufficient evidence of truth for everyone who truly seeks Him. He is patient, but He does expect us to grow once He has clearly shown us the truth. Thomas did believe when he was given the proof needed. *Reprint 5236, 5237*

There is only one more mention in the Scriptures of the Apostle Thomas. It was on the shore of Galilee when, after Jesus’ resurrection, he appeared to Thomas and six of the other Apostles and performed the miracle of the great catch

The Apostle Thomas

of fish. *John 21:1-6* We can be sure that Thomas was given added strength of faith by this experience.

Bible commentators say “*Thomas doubted that we might have no doubts.*” It is often the case that those who require greater evidence to convince them of truth become the greatest supporters of it. This was certainly true of the Apostle Thomas, for the traditional history of the missionary journeys of Thomas shows him to be a most active and convincing defender of the Gospel of Christ. Historians report that he fearlessly entered such Godless lands as India, Babylonia and Persia to preach boldly for his Lord. Because of this bold witness, it is commonly thought that Thomas was put to death for his love of Jesus and of God’s plan. He was indeed a firm foundation for the Church and an able minister as one of the *Twelve Apostles of the Lamb*.

