



Who is this Jesus???

April 16, 2017

Scripture: John 20:24-29

Introduction:

Finding Jesus series in CNN! All kinds of skeptical theories about Jesus! Was He real or a mythical figure? Why should the Christians lay down their lives in the first century if He was mythical? That would be really foolish.

Was He actually crucified?

Did He actually resurrect?

People differ in their opinion over who is this Jesus! People thought that He was a teacher or prophet, but later on, they started wondering if He was the Messiah. It was a journey for the disciples to finally recognize Him as the Son of God who came down from heaven. Every believer goes through these stages.

The story of Thomas is one such story. Many of us have a special interest in Thomas, especially the Indians, because we believe that Thomas came to India and was killed in Chennai, India. CNN ran a good documentary on Thomas. It went deep into scholarly research about proving if indeed Thomas went to India. After much research, it all came down to a coin. Did this coin really belong to the first century or not? But the carbon dating test pointed more toward the second century rather than the first century. So, the bottom line is there is no academic proof at all that Thomas went to India. Such a story we just have to take by faith alone.

A similar attempt has been made to prove if Jesus was a historical figure or not. But Historical Jesus has a lot of evidence that He was real, and He lived in Palestine. Josephus Flavius, a Jewish historian who lived in the first-century records that there was such a powerful person who performed many miracles, and He was crucified ultimately. But His disciples went out and proclaimed that Jesus is indeed the Lord of Lords and king of kings. We get a taste of how the disciples proclaimed through John's Gospel and his letter.

1 John 1:1-4 1What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

Finding historical Jesus as a man is too easy! But finding Jesus as God who became flesh requires divine help and His Holy Spirit. Only if God opens our eyes, we will see!



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Thomas lived with Jesus for 3 1/2 years, yet he had a tough time understanding who Jesus was.

I. Thomas' progression!

John 20: 24-25 24But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

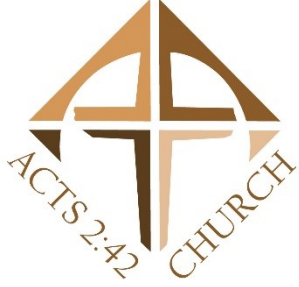
Thomas represents our intellectual friends! Everything must fall in line with, logic, natural law, and verified thoroughly. Thomas was no different from our modern scientists! To him, everything looked like an April fool joke!

Thomas refused to believe what he heard. He not only wanted to see Jesus with His eyes and verify those imprints of those nail-pierced hands, he also wanted to insert his hands into those nail-pierced hands, and Jesus' hip side! Did it ever strike to you, if Thomas wanted to insert his fingers into those nail-pierced hands, that hole must have been really big. If those holes were so big, the nails that went into the hands of Jesus might have been much bigger than the fingers of Thomas. Just imagine, somebody pounding such a big nail on our hand! We would indeed writhe in pain. Our Lord Jesus went through excruciating, unbearable pain from every part of His body. And it was all for me, and all for you. But what must be hurting Him most is that despite all His shame and suffering for us, people refuse to believe in Him! Imagine how much our Father in heaven must be feeling toward every unbeliever who rejects Jesus! Our countries become so upset if our ambassadors or dignitaries are not treated with respect or ignored. How much more the wrath of God will be revealed for those who reject the Lord of glory as a mere story or myth? Think about it.

Now let us see how Thomas believed Jesus' resurrection.

John 20:25-29 26After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." 27Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

Thomas did not believe the resurrection of Jesus for 8 long days. He was a strong-willed lone rider. He was honest about his conviction. He did not see Jesus after Jesus' death, therefore He would not believe the resurrection. He would not be swayed or convinced by group pressure, He did not care about what others would think about him. On the other hand, all the disciples and their families must have rejoiced over Jesus' resurrection because they saw Jesus personally. Even though Thomas was like an odd ball among their midst, they still accepted him as their own! Anyone who comes to us we must receive, and we must **strive to breathe hope and faith** in them. But if they still do not want to believe, let us still love them and pray that God will open their eyes someday. I am sure, that is the way the disciples must have handled Thomas. They did not push him out or excommunicate him.



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I personally do not like excommunication. If someone is rebellious or sinful, they themselves cannot stand the heat here. They will go away themselves. Let us strive to include people as much as possible! Let us avoid chasing people away.

While the disciples were gathered together, there was a sudden surprise! Jesus Himself entered the house miraculously, even though the door was shut.

When Jesus came, He said immediately "Peace be with you! Jesus is still doing it to us also. When chaos and confusion and sorrows multiply in our life, He comes to us and says, peace be with you! **He not only says peace be with you, he also holds our heart, and floods our heart with peace that surpasses all our understanding! What a mighty Lord we serve!**

He immediately rebuked Thomas' stubborn unbelief!

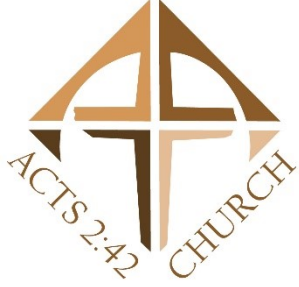
27Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Jesus basically said, go ahead Thomas. Go ahead, verify everything scientifically and understand that I am indeed risen! Jesus is telling the very same thing to our atheists, and agnostic friends. Go ahead, verify everything scientifically and find out beyond doubt that it is I who created the earth and heavens! I caused the Big Bang explosion, I caused the life, I caused the mutations, I am the cause behind everything!

Jesus seems to tell us also, don't go on unbelieving. Believe, when your friends sincerely proclaim about my death and resurrection. Believe in me, because I am the alpha and omega, I am the beginning, and I am the end. I have conquered sin, death, and Hades. Do not doubt or be unbelieving, Thomas! Be believing. It is a present continuous tense. It is not that you believe officially when you were young and then you go your way. We must keep on believing every day!

Thomas' spiritual eyes opened wide now. He could see who Jesus was very clearly! He could not say much. He just made a heartfelt confession! Literal Greek translation is more beautiful. Lord of me, kurios, God of me! Theos! In other words, you are my Lord and my God! For others, Jesus may be just a teacher, or a wise man, or a prophet, or a miracle producing person, or even a Messiah! **But for Thomas, Jesus was his Lord, and his God!** Thomas redefined and personalized his relationship with Jesus. Christianity is all about relationship. Jesus is not just our Lord, but He is **my Lord**, and **my God**. We do not know about others, how they want to view Him. As far as I and my house are concerned, He is my Lord and my God. This personalized relationship is powerful. Who can separate us from the love of our Father and His Son Jesus Christ?

Romans 8:38, 39 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 NASB)



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Neither death, nor life, nor principalities....nothing can separate us from His love. We will always be His children, and He will be always our Lord and God forever!

John 20:29 29Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”

In this verse, Jesus gives a special blessing to you and me who have not seen Jesus face to face! **Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed!** Why are they blessed? Because they believed in the promises of the Old Testament and they believe the reports of eye witnesses of Jesus, such as Apostles! Also, they truly believe that Jesus Christ our Lord came down from heaven, and His kingdom is above, and He is the Word of God, the life, and truth!

Conclusion:

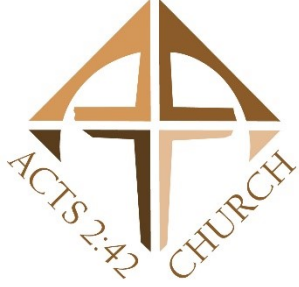
We can see Jesus and get to know Him only through the eyes of faith! We cannot understand everything about Him but we must accept and believe every Word that Jesus talked about Himself, who He is! Who He was, and who He will be! It can be a pretty simple leap of faith.

Faith comes by hearing, and the hearing by the Word of God.

Our intellectual Atheists and Agnostic friends raise valid questions about Jesus, and just like Thomas, they want to validate.

Even our kids have too many questions. It is a healthy sign. That means they are really searching for truth! Here are some questions from a 16-year-old boy who wrote to me recently:

1. If God loved me, why does He make my past life, present life, so hard? **Because of our own bad choices, or parents' negligence, or bad decisions.**
2. Why did God have to make humans and not put them in heaven? **Adam and Eve were literally in a perfect paradise, but they were given choice to make a bad choice, and they did fall for the bad choice.**
3. What is the purpose of this life, if you die anyway? **The purpose of our life is to know our creator, connect with him, and have fellowship with Him, honor Him, worship Him, and abide in His plan and will.**
4. Why does God send people to hell if they were good, but not saved? **We make the choice of not believing in Him, and we perish because of our unbelief. It is like swimming. Those who know Him personally, travel in the boat of salvation of Christ, but others just perish in the ocean of death and keep destroying themselves without Christ. Our choices lead to our destinies.**
5. Why is there pain in this world? Need Ravi Zachariah to answer this question!



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6. Why does God let Satan live? And not just destroy him? **To test us, and strengthen us in our trials. If you are in Christ, Satan cannot come near you. He can victimize only those people who want to flirt with sin.**
7. How can I start having more faith? **Faith comes by hearing God's truth, and Living Word**
8. I suffer so much, why me and not anyone else? **We are sometimes victims of our own circumstance and environment.** (Please refer to question 1)
9. How do you know God is 100 percent real? **The probability of coming into accidental life is almost zero. But the probability of our creation by an intelligence being is almost certain if the accidental creation is false.**
10. Why can't God just save us now? **He wants to save everyone if they are willing to invite Him rather than reject Him. Revelation 3: 20**
11. How do you know that Christianity is real out of all the religions? **Read my article, is Jesus the only way? From www.acts242church.org**
12. I care for people who are not saved and want to save them but I don't even know if I am. **First, focus on yourself, and then go after others who are confused like you. First you try to see better, then strive to open the eyes of others.**

Too many doubts! We cannot answer every question

Christian faith is all about experiencing God personally,

We cannot, cannot know God intellectually.

John 20:30. 30Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

We ought to not only embrace the bridegroom, Jesus, but we ought to love the bride also, His church. It is very common among people to say, I love Jesus, but not the church.

Honor the bridegroom! Honor the bride also! You cannot look down on the bride, push away the bride, and expect to go close with the bridegroom like Hamaan tried in Esther's story!

Pastor Daniel Israel