

# Doubting Thomas

## John 20 v 24-31

### Context:

In the last few weeks, during this Easter season, we have been exploring some of the resurrection appearances of Jesus. After discovering the empty tomb early on that first Easter Day, Jesus' disciples began to see him alive! First a weeping Mary Magdalene met him outside the tomb and ran back to tell the other disciples, who didn't believe her testimony. Then Peter, having seen the empty tomb for himself and having walked away puzzled, had a private, personal encounter with Jesus, the exact details of which are not made public in the Bible. Then later that afternoon Cleopas and his companion met Jesus unawares as they walked home from Jerusalem – only as he broke bread at their dinner table did they recognise him. They ran back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples the good news and, as they breathlessly shared their story, Jesus himself appeared among them and they shared a fish supper together. Unfortunately, one of the twelve apostles wasn't present that evening, and we are going to pick up his story in today's study. So, let's dive in!

### Observation:

1. Who was absent when Jesus appeared to the disciples on the Sunday evening (v 24)?
2. What did the other disciples tell him (v 25a)?
3. What was his response in v 25b?
4. How much time had elapsed by v 26?
5. Who was gathered in the house (v 26)?
6. Who appeared despite the doors being locked, and what did he say (v 26)?
7. What did he say in v 27 and to whom did he say it?
8. What was the response in v 28?
9. How did Jesus reply in v 29?
10. What does John state was his aim and purpose in writing about Jesus's signs (v 30-31)?

### Meaning:

1. Why do you think Thomas wasn't with the disciples on the first Easter Sunday evening (v 24) – NOTE: the Bible doesn't give us the answer, so we are in the land of speculation! You may like to look for any clues in the other references to Thomas in John's Gospel – John 11 v 16, 14 v 5.
2. Why do you think Thomas reacted to the disciples' testimony so sceptically in v 25?
3. At the end of v 25, Thomas literally says: '**Not, not, will I believe**'. In the English a double negative usually makes a positive, but in the Greek language of the NT, a double negative means a very strong, emphatic negative! What do Thomas' words tell us about his state of mind and heart, and about his faith at this point?
4. Despite all this, why do you think Thomas was with the disciples when they gathered together a week later (v 26)?

5. How could Jesus enter the room if it was locked (v 26b)? What does this tell us about the nature of Jesus' resurrection body, and what other examples of this physical transformation can you think of from the Gospels?
6. It is clear from v 27 that Jesus knew exactly what Thomas had said to the disciples a week earlier, even though Jesus hadn't been present at the time. What does this tell us about Jesus and how do you feel about the fact that Jesus knows everything you say and even think?
7. Are you surprised that Jesus met Thomas' demand for evidence in the exact form he had demanded (v 27)? What does this indicate about Jesus?
8. Jesus' final word of command to Thomas at the end of v 27 is literally: '*Do not be unbelieving but believing.*' Do you think, therefore, that calling him Doubting Thomas is an accurate way to describe him? Is there a difference between doubt and unbelief?
9. Thomas goes from zero to hero in the space of one verse – v 28. Why do you think receiving cast iron proof of Jesus' resurrection convinced him that Jesus was and is both Lord and God – how does the resurrection prove Jesus' identity as God?
10. Who is Jesus referring to in v 29 and what does it mean for them to be blessed?
11. The final words of John's Gospel, in 21 v 25, John states that if the everything Jesus did were written down there wouldn't be enough space in the world to contain the books that would be written! So, when John sat down to write his Gospel, he had to choose which material to include and which to omit. Looking at 20 v 30-31, what criteria do you think governed John's selection and to what extent do you think he was successful in his stated aim and purpose?
12. What does it mean to have life in Jesus' name (v 31)? – see also 17 v 1-3, 11 v 25-26, 1 John 4 v 9-16, 1 John 5 v 1a & 11-12.

#### **Application:**

1. Do you ever have doubts about aspects of your faith? How do you deal with them?
2. Do you ever find yourself making demands of God/Jesus like Thomas did?
3. Thomas' faith was based on seeing the risen Jesus, whereas ours is not. So, what is our faith based on – how can we be sure of our faith in Jesus and therefore be blessed as Jesus promises in v 29?

#### **Pray:**

- For God's grace to strengthen our faith and dispel our doubts.