

Without Doubt (John 20:19-31)

Jesus is risen! That's what we celebrate on Easter Sunday. But to people in the world it seems so impossible. Dead men don't rise. But Jesus is risen. It's what I believe and the resurrection is one of those facts of history that have been impossible to refute, however unlikely that may be.

But in one sense I'm surprised that Thomas was so doubtful. He had seen Jesus raise people from the dead. But was seeing a crucified man raised a step too far?

Jesus appears to His disciples on the day He rose from the dead but Thomas wasn't there. Where was he? We can only speculate. What we do know is that Thomas doubted what the other disciples were saying to him.

Why did he doubt? After all he knew the amazing things surrounding Jesus. He had heard the prophecies Jesus Himself made. Why on earth did he say:

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

Before you say - silly old Thomas, you may find that you would have done the same.

What was the problem?

🕒 Thomas may have been too rational

It was a case of belief. Thomas was just uncertain that what he was hearing was true. he wouldn't really believe it until he could examine Jesus for himself. Are you like that? It doesn't matter whether you are already a Christian or someone exploring faith. Somehow because you have not experienced something yourself, you just can't believe that it's actually true. And sometimes we have doubts - and I know that there have been Christians that have had problems with many aspects of what is claimed in the Bible. Is it history or is it too good to be true?

In his mind. I'm sure Thomas was trying to put things together. Here was testimony from the disciples, the women and in the intervening week, talk over Jerusalem that Jesus' body had disappeared. He knew what Jesus had promised. But was it really true? He just couldn't bring himself to believe it for sure.

Is that you this morning? You'd like to believe it's true. Here's the historic claim that has never been refuted - Jesus is risen! Can it really be true? Because if it is true it places a question mark over your life.

🕒 Thomas was a victim of his own mood

Another source of unbelief besides not having experienced something yourself is that measure of faith is often determined by mood. If things are going well, then you are more likely to take steps of faith and be bold than if things are a disaster. I'm sure that as we recalled the story of Palm Sunday last week, that Thomas was one of those shouting Hosanna - blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

But the events of the Friday maybe had dashed him. He was changed from being an bold disciple into a man wracked with doubt. Is that you? Maybe you have been happy to believe things in the past but maybe personal experience of life has meant that you have been driven into the ground and you are no longer sure that God is interested in you. And when you hear of the way that God works in other people's

lives, or you hear of amazing stories of the power of God you just think "Oh yeah - and the rest"

You see it isn't only our society that does not believe in the presence and power of God any more. The people of God don't either. It's OK for things to happen in Russia or Eastern Europe or Brazil or Argentina. But here. Nothing happens in Norfolk. And we live in doubt and lack of expectation of what God can do? That was Thomas, that is us.

Of course that all changed as soon as Thomas saw Jesus. *Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

Thomas saw and believed. He had to go all that way before he would believe fully. We don't have that opportunity to see Jesus in that way but Jesus left this promise: *Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

I've said before that the thing we need to know about the ways of God is that they are usually the opposite to the way of man. We see that God blesses those who have not seen and yet believed. They've heard the message from someone else. They've heard about what Jesus has done in someone's life. They've read the Bible and they have believed. And what happens - they discover the blessings of God.

And it takes a step of faith. Take this chair for example. How do I know it can take my weight? I can examine it, I can recall my past experiences of similar chairs, I can assume the Swaffham Baptist Church would have repaired or thrown out defective chairs. But it's only when I sit that I come into all the benefits of sitting on the chair.

It's the same with trusting Jesus. I can tell you all about Him. You can read it in the Bible, but unless you actually trust in Him, that His death on the cross was sufficient to forgive your sins. Unless you trust His word that He came to bring you eternal life - then you don't come into the blessings that God wants to bring you in Christ.

God is calling to you this morning to trust Jesus, to follow Him, to let Him make sense out of your life and the difficulties of life that you face. To give you that assurance of eternal life. All you have to do is to trust Him - just like sitting on this seat. It's as easy as that. So how do I do it. We suggest that you pray with us a prayer.

Father God

I want to know you. I need you. Thank you that you have always loved me. Thank you for sending Jesus for dying on the cross for me. Please forgive me for all the sins I have committed. I accept Your gift of eternal life. I turn from all the things that displease you and to desire to follow You in newness of life. In Jesus' name, Amen



*Preached by Mark Reid, Swaffham Baptist Church, 4/404.
Scripture Quotes NIV
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