

# An Absence, An Attendance, An Appearance, An Affirmation

---

John 20:24-29

Jesus arose on “*the first day of the week*”—Sunday (vs. 1). On that evening, the disciples were assembled together for the first Sunday evening church service (v. 19). They were discussing “the empty tomb.” They listened to Peter and the Emmaus disciples testify they saw the Lord. Suddenly, Jesus appeared out of nowhere right in the middle of their Sunday evening church service.

But the Scripture inserts this comment—“*But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came*” (John 20:24). Typical of some Baptists, Thomas missed this Sunday night church service.

In this message we’ll look at five things about Thomas’ absence and Christ’s subsequent appearance to Thomas.

## I. The DISPOSITION of Thomas.

➡ His NAME (v. 24). Thomas (Heb.) = “twin” / Didymus (Gk.) = “double”

- Did Thomas have a twin brother or sister?
- APPLICATION: Every believe has an “alter ego” of two conflicting natures. An old nature is fleshy/carnal—Contrary to faith. The divine nature is spiritual and walks by faith.
- During the emotional stress surrounding the crucifixion of Christ, Thomas gave into his carnal disposition. His carnal nature manifested itself in two ways:
  - A. His SOMBERNESS.
    1. He had a melancholy temperament—sullen. Probably didn’t smile very much. Do you know anyone like Thomas?
    2. He was somewhat of a pessimist always looking on the dark side of things. Every time he said something in the Bible it was tainted with negativity (John 11:16; 14:5; 20:25). The

only positive thing Thomas ever said was his confession after Jesus showed him the nail prints in His hands.

3. A “gloom and doom” attitude. When the Lord Jesus would go to Jerusalem to raise Lazarus, Thomas, looking on the dark side, said to the other disciples, *"Let us also go, that we may die with him"* (John 11:16). Who said anything about dying?
  4. At least Thomas wasn't a coward.
- B. His SKEPTICISM. He is often referred to as “Doubting Thomas.” I would rather call him the apostle who wanted to be sure. He was the “apostle from Missouri” (show me).
1. In John 14 Jesus said, *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions ... I go to prepare a place for you ... And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know"* (vs. 1-4).
  2. But Thomas contradicted the Lord by questioning, *"Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?"* (v. 5). Thomas never accepted anything unless he could fully understand it and “see it.”
    - Thomas is like the guy that if you tell him there are 581,678,934,341 stars in the universe, he'll believe you. But if you show him a sign that reads "Fresh Paint" he must make a personal investigation before he believes it!

## II. The DELINQUENCY of Thomas.

- ➡ Why was He missing? Did he know about the meeting? Was he too busy doing other things? Was he afraid? Scripture doesn't say.
- A. He wasn't absent because he lost his love for the Lord. At heart, Thomas was extremely loyal to Christ—He would die for Jesus.
1. He followed Jesus for 3½ years. He pinned all his hopes and future on Jesus being the Messiah.
  2. However, the crucifixion of Christ took him by complete surprise. All his aspirations were nailed to the cross. His world was shattered, leaving him disillusioned ... despondent... discouraged... and depressed. Isolation is linked to depression.

3. Thomas couldn't get past the horrors of Calvary. He was completely devastated by the death of Christ.
- B. Understanding Thomas' pessimistic attitude, he was probably wallowing in "the slough of despond." He just didn't believe Jesus was alive! Because, if Thomas believed Christ was going to show up at the meeting, he would have been there.
1. One of the main reasons people miss a church service—They don't really believe Jesus will be present in the service.
  2. On the other hand, none of the other disciples expected Jesus to show up either. They were assembled together trying to figure out what happened at the tomb.
- C. Thomas not only missed the meeting and the testimonies, he also missed the Lord and His bestowal of peace! **Whatever** he was doing was not worth it.
- It is sad that those who fail to attend church services miss the opportunity of meeting with the Lord Himself!
  - How do you spend your evenings on the first day of the week?

### III. The DOUBT of Thomas. There are two kinds of doubters:

- A. An honest doubter wants to believe. Thomas really *wanted* to believe Jesus was alive, if it could be shown to him.
- B. Most atheists will not believe even if God could be proven to them (see Luke 16:31). They don't have an intellectual problem. They have a moral problem. It's not a problem in the mind—It is a problem in the heart (Ps 14:1).
- C. Thomas was honest. He admitted his doubt, but said he needed verifiable proof. He demonstrated his willingness to be convinced by showing up at the next meeting (v. 26).
  - God knows if someone is an honest skeptic or if someone is using their doubt as an excuse not to believe. If Thomas wasn't honest, Jesus would have never appeared to him.

### IV. The DISPLAY to Thomas.

To Thomas' credit, he didn't make the same mistake of missing church the next Sunday evening service eight days later.

- A. The DAY. Eight days after Christ's first appearance (v. 26).
  1. Counting the first day of the week (Sunday), the seventh day after would be Saturday; the eighth day would be Sunday.
  2. This gives further evidence that the church began meeting on "*the first day of the week.*" [Pentecost; the collection (1 Cor. 16:1-2); preaching (Acts 20:7).
- B. The DEMONSTRATION.
  1. The Lord's display of His hands and His side boldly revealed of the sacrifice He had made on Calvary.
  2. If you need proof of God's love for you, just look at the nail prints in the hands and feet of Jesus who died in your place on the cross!

**V. The DECLARATION of Thomas** (vs. 26-28). Thomas made one of the greatest confessions of faith in all the Bible—Even greater than that of Peter who said Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

- A. He declared Christ's AUTHORITY—"My Lord..."
- B. He declared Christ's DEITY—"...my God." Jesus accepted Thomas' profession!
- C. He expressed his PERSONAL SURRENDER—"My Lord and My God."
  - Thomas went from doubt to devout.
  - From wavering to worshipping.

*Fox's Book of Martyrs* rec13 136.0239 0 Tm /ss.-0.3 (n) 0.TT5 1 1

- Those who saw and believed not, were *scarcely* blessed.
- Those who saw him and believed, were *surely* blessed.
- Those who have not seen, and yet believe, are *supremely* blessed.

Peter emphasizes this truth about our faith in Christ—“***Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.***” (1 Pet. 1:8).

***“Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord”*** (John 20:20). Not everyone will be glad to see Jesus when He appears at His coming. The unsaved will not. The backslider won’t. Only those looking for Him will be glad. Are YOU looking for Him? Does it show in how you are living?