



Thomas

Transformed People: The Twelve Apostles
(B.L. Newberry, Spring 2020)

Thomas within the Twelve



Luke 6:14-16

Peter
Andrew
James
John

Philip
Bartholomew
Matthew
Thomas

James (the less)
Simon
Thaddeus
Judas Iscariot

- Thomas is the last member of the second group of four apostles. The name Thomas is Aramaic for “twin”. He is also called Didymus three times in the Gospel by John [**Jn 11:16, 20:24, 21:2**]. Didymus is Greek for “twin”.
- Scripture records nothing of his family (including his twin). We also do not know his exact occupation, but it is possible he was a fisherman from Galilee [**Jn 21:2**].
- What we know of Thomas comes entirely from the Gospel of John. The synoptic gospels only list him as one of the twelve.

Thomas' Character

Pessimistic, but Bold



- Most of us have likely heard Thomas called “Doubting Thomas”. It would likely be more accurate to say “Pessimistic Thomas”.
- In John 11. Jesus and the Twelve receive word that Lazarus is ill. Lazarus lives in Bethany near Jerusalem. The last time Jesus was in Jerusalem, the leaders tried to stone him. After waiting two days, Jesus declares He will go to Lazarus. The apostles try to convince him to not go, but He explains that Lazarus is dead. It is at this time we learn a powerful truth about Thomas.
- **John 11:16**
Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”
- Thomas could see only the negative, but that didn’t stop him from faithfully following.
Understanding is not a requirement for obedience!

Thomas' Character

Devoted for Life



- **John 14:2-6**

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

- Thomas is speaking from the heart. I suspect these words are said from a place of fear. He will gladly die with Jesus [**Jn 11:16**], but to be without Him ... that is unthinkable. The result of his honest question is one of the most powerful truths of scripture.

- **Are our priorities as well aligned as Thomas'? Is EVERYTHING second to losing Jesus?**

Thomas' Character

Defeat Transformed to Victory (1 of 2)



- The crucifixion must have been the ultimate terror to Thomas; Jesus was gone and he was left behind. Scripture doesn't tell us what Thomas did in the days after the crucifixion, but it seems he likely went into isolation. He didn't, immediately, continue to grieve with the apostles.
- In **John 20:24-29** we read of Jesus appearing to the apostles, minus Thomas, in the locked room (likely the upper room used at passover). They immediately tell Thomas the good news, but he can't overcome the gloom that has filled his life and doesn't believe them. We should be clear that the other apostles also doubted until they saw Jesus [**Luke 24:11, Mark 16:11-13**].

Thomas' Character

Defeat Transformed to Victory (2 of 2)



- Eight days later, Jesus appears in the locked room again and this time Thomas is present.

John 20: 27-29

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.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

- It is important to note that Jesus doesn't fault Thomas for seeing, but praises those that need not see to believe. This statement from Thomas is likely the most powerful proclamation made by any of the twelve ... “My Lord and my God!”
- **Thomas is proof that God can use anyone, regardless of their hang-ups!**

Stories of Thomas' Late Life

(Mix of historical and Biblical sources)



- Traditions differ somewhat on the life of Thomas, but the majority agree and form a tradition that is generally accepted.
- It is suggested that Thomas ministered east of Syria, reaching as far as India. It is said that he started multiple churches during his journeys and some Christian groups in the east still revere him as their founder.
- The general consensus of historical writings is that he was martyred in A.D. 70 in Madras (India) by being stabbed with a spear.