

# THE GOSPEL

BELIEVE AND HAVE LIFE IN JESUS' NAME



... THESE ARE WRITTEN SO THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD,  
AND THAT BY BELIEVING YOU MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIS NAME.

(JOHN 20:31 ESV)

1. Thomas' *absence at the first appearance* was used specifically by God to serve his sovereign purpose in teaching us what it means to truly believe in and have life in Jesus' name, 20:24-25.

- (John 20:24–25 ESV) Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

A. By the sovereign will of God Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus first appeared to them.

- (Proverbs 16:33 ESV) The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.
- (Lamentations 3:37 ESV) Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?
- (Romans 11:33 ESV) Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
- (Romans 9:21 ESV) Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?
- (Job 42:1–2 ESV) Then Job answered the LORD and said: 2 "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."

B. The stated facts in the text ...

- Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them the first time.
- The other disciples informed him that they had seen the Lord.
- Thomas responded that he would never believe without clear evidence of the crucifixion wounds.

C. The facts surrounding the text ...

- Thomas' absence was the sovereign will of God.
- The unstated, unfounded speculations regarding Thomas' absence are the result of reading insights into the text that are not there.

*We need to take note* of God's sovereignty in Thomas' absence *and also take note* of the fact that the Spirit compelled John to record both Thomas' absence and presence in his Holy Word. This should direct us to

understand the events more in the context of God's providence than in the context of Thomas' perceived personality. And this in turn will hopefully neutralize our biases so that we have a more solid basis on which to focus on God's intent in what is actually written.

- The popular notion of casting Thomas as a doubter has no evidence in Scripture.
- This is important because seeing the text through the lens of "doubting Thomas" distorts the picture and we miss the main point.

D. So let's look at Thomas through the lens of Scripture.

- Thomas was appointed as one of the twelve by Jesus himself.
  - (Mark 3:16–18 ESV) He [Jesus] appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter) ... and Thomas.
- Thomas was a passionate, loyal, courageous follower of Jesus.
  - (John 11:14–16 ESV) Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, 15 and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."
- As a faithful, passionate follower of Jesus Thomas exhibited humility, courage and a desire to get the facts straight.
- It was his admission of ignorance that prompted Jesus' powerful "I am" statement in John 14:6.
  - (John 14:2–6 ESV) In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going. 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- When Thomas requested confirmation regarding Jesus' crucifixion wounds, he was, in effect, asking to see the same evidence that Jesus had shown the other disciples eight days earlier.

- (John 20:20 ESV) When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

2. Thomas' presence at the second appearance was used specifically by God to serve his sovereign purpose in teaching us what it means to truly believe in and have life in Jesus' name, 20:26-29.

- (John 20:26–29 ESV) Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

- A. Thomas had been hand-picked for this moment.
  - i. Eight days later the disciples were gathered and Thomas was with them and Jesus came.
  - ii. Jesus prompted Thomas in telling him to examine the evidence by touching his wounds.
  - iii. Jesus prompted Thomas again to ... not not believe ... but to believe.

*So what did Jesus mean?* I believe there was an overwhelming, rising consciousness in Thomas ... that he was beginning to realize that he was on the cusp of something beyond himself ... that the truth of who Jesus was had begun to overflow the finite limits of his humanity ... and that he was indeed standing on holy ground in the presence of the one who would soon sit down at the right hand of Majesty on high ...

And I believe that when Jesus exhorted him to "*not disbelieve, but believe*" that he was prompting him to speak the reality of what was before him ... "*Thomas, who do you see standing before you? Yes, you see your risen Lord. So do not not believe but believe*" ...

So he answered him – "My Lord and my God" ...

- (Hebrews 1:3 ESV) He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

- B. Jesus then attributed Thomas' confession as a statement of genuine, saving belief.
- C. Thomas had believed because he had seen Jesus, but Jesus pronounced his blessing on those who have not seen and yet have believed.
- D. The common element was the recognition of Jesus as Lord and God.

3. Purpose Statement: These signs were written in this Gospel so that the reader might believe and by believing have life in Jesus' name, 20:30-31.

- (John 20:30–31 ESV) Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- A. Many other signs were performed which were not written in this book.
- B. These signs were written with the specific purpose of producing in the reader an explicit belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing in this Jesus in this clear and exact way the reader may have life in his name.

Explicit means stated clearly and in detail, leaving no room for confusion or doubt; leaving nothing implied, definite. The intent was that the reader would believe in the accurate, correct, precise, exact, specific, detailed, clear-cut, unerring revelation of Jesus in the holy Scriptures ... and that by believing without a doubt that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God that he would have, hold fast to and possess life in his name.

- C. Probably the most significant sign was the sign of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

- (John 2:18–22 ESV) So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Our lesson: We must be crystal clear and accurate in our presentation and proclamation of the gospel.

**D. Belief that is true and effectual is evidenced in the one believing having life in Jesus' name.**

Effectual means successful in producing a desired or intended result. The result of effectual belief in Jesus is having life in Jesus' name.

20:31 ... "*by believing you may have*" – ἔχω [echo] – to have, i.e. to hold; to have (hold) in the hand, in the sense of wearing, to have (hold) possession of the mind; to hold fast keep; to have i.e. own, possess.

**E. Having life in Jesus' name means ...**

- i. A changed life ... a life transformed by belief in Jesus, characterized by a commitment to following his teachings.
  - (John 8:31–32 ESV) So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "**if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**"
- ii. A submitted life ... living under Jesus' authority, by his power, aligning with his will, submitting to his will, and doing all for his glory.
  - (John 14:15 ESV) If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
  - (2 John 6 ESV) And this is love, **that we walk according to his commandments;** this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.
- iii. A new life ... a new identity expressed by turning from our old ways and living according to our new identity in Christ.
  - (2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV) Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away;** behold, the new has come.
- iv. A hopeful life ... focusing on eternal significance rather than earthly matters.
  - (Romans 15:13 ESV) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, **so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.**
- v. A maturing life ... growing in an intimate, personal relationship with God that is built on our love for and trust in God.
  - (John 14:23 ESV) Jesus answered

him, "**If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.**"

- vi. A serving life ... directing one's thoughts, words, and deeds towards serving God and others,
- vii. A holy life... living in such a way that we reflect the name of God—his holiness, power, authority, love, light, majesty, wisdom, etc. in every aspect of our daily lives.
  - (Isaiah 46:8–10 ESV) Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, 9 remember the former things of old; **for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,** 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "**My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.**"
- viii. A worthy life ... a life that honors our calling.
  - (Colossians 1:10 ESV) **So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him:** bearing fruit in every good work and **increasing in the knowledge of God.**
  - (1 Thessalonians 2:12 ESV) We exhorted each one of you and **encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God,** who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.
  - (Philippians 1:27 ESV) **Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,** so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you **that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.**

**CONCLUSION: Do I have that? (See above)**