

At the Crossroads: Belief - Thomas

P: Crossroads. During the past Lenten season, we spent several weeks focusing on crossroads. Although the Lenten season has passed, it seemed appropriate, even necessary, to make one more stop at a crossroad event. We'd like to think that this crossroad moment, the moment we focus on today, is foreign to us, unnecessary, and a crossroad that only other people face, never a crossroad in our lives because, well, because we are Christians and Christians aren't supposed to face the crossroad of doubt versus belief. Therefore, we'd like to believe it's unnecessary to make this one last stop at a crossroad event.

We may try to fool ourselves with such thinking, but everyone else knows better. Our crossroad expert today could have been you or me. It could have been anyone because we all face the crossroad of doubt, the crossroad of doubt versus belief.

P: Aware of that reality, we've asked the expert in doubt versus belief to join us this morning, to shed some light on this crossroad. Please welcome Thomas, or perhaps we should use his more common name, Doubting Thomas.

P: Good morning, Thomas.

R: Good morning to you and I can already see where this conversation is going to go. Doubting Thomas - the name tells me all you want to know. Sorry for my frustration but it's frustrating when people fail to look at the big picture, fail to step into my shoes and see what I saw.

P: So, what did you see? What happened that we are missing?

R: To start out, it's not really fair that I've been dubbed with the name, "Doubting Thomas."

P: Why is that?

R: If you look at the information, you will quickly realize that the other disciples were no different. Where were they when Jesus appeared to them the first time?

P: It says that they were behind locked doors for fear of the Jews.

R: Behind locked doors. Doesn't that seem a bit odd to you? If they believed in this Jesus, if they believed that He would rise as He said, why were they behind locked doors? Shouldn't they have been standing at the tomb waiting for Jesus to come out or on the streets telling people about what they were convinced was going to occur?

P: I guess you have a point. I hadn't thought about the locked doors in that way before.

R: They doubted just like I doubted. The only real difference is that they were behind those locked doors when Jesus arrived and I wasn't. They believed because they saw Him and touched Him. I questioned because I didn't have the same opportunity.

P: But you could have believed what the other disciples said. You could have accepted their word as truth.

R: I could have, but, at the moment, I didn't. They had seen Jesus, listened to Him speak. They had proof and I wanted that proof. Haven't you done the very same thing?

P: Well, I suppose so, but it's different.

R: Different in what way?

P: You were one of His disciples. You had walked with Him, prayed with Him, ate meals with Him. You had so much evidence.

R: And you don't have just as much evidence?

P: No, I don't have that kind of evidence.

R: But you actually do.

P: What do you mean?

R: You have the entire event recorded in the Bible, right? You can read the event, study the event, reread it. You have more evidence than I had.

P: But it's a different kind of evidence, don't you see? You saw Jesus. I can't see Him. You walked and talked with Jesus. I can't do that. So, that makes my situation much different. You doubted because you weren't there at the moment. My doubts occur because I never had the opportunity to see Him.

R: So, you believe that seeing is believing, that if you could only see Jesus, all your doubts would vanish?

P: It makes sense to me.

R: But it's not accurate. How many people around me saw Jesus, yet still didn't believe. If you need to see Jesus to believe, if you need to walk with Jesus to relieve your doubts, then where is your faith? Faith believes what it does not see. It stakes its life on facts because they are facts. After Jesus appeared to me, He said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

P: But that's getting off the subject.

R: Not really. The subject is doubt, right? You call me the expert in doubt, but once I saw, I believed and continued to believe long after Jesus had ascended into heaven. Tell me, why do you doubt when you have the proof?

P: Because I don't have the proof you had.

R: And you think you need my kind of proof? Faith says that you don't need my kind of proof, that you can believe without seeing, that you can set aside your doubts simply because Jesus tells you to do so.

P: That may sound easy to you, Thomas, but you don't live in my world. Things are different now.

R: Different. Maybe in some respects, but not in other respects. The same Jesus who appeared to me behind locked doors as risen, isn't He still the risen Lord today? Doesn't He offer to relieve your fears, to walk beside you, to forgive you, and to be with you as He was with me?

P: I suppose so, but...

R: But your doubts get in the way, don't they? In your tough times, you question where God is at and why God doesn't fix what appears broken. You want Him to step onto the scene just like He did for me and then you think everything would be okay.

P: It would be okay.

R: Or do you merely think it would be okay? You can allow doubt to hinder you, to crash into your life, to leave you standing in place when you could be on His mission. Or you can take the route of faith, believe He is working for your benefit, that He loves you, cares about you, and will always do what is best. You can choose to step beyond your doubt just as I did.

P: I can understand what you are saying, but where is my security? What if I step out in faith and I fall on my face? What if I trust and God doesn't come through for me?

R: Could that happen? It might feel like it has happened in the past, but that's feeling versus fact. Feelings create doubt. They fuel doubt just like they fueled my doubt. But I'm here to tell you that you can't allow feelings to override fact. The facts are the same facts I encountered. Jesus is risen just as He said. Believe it and live your life by those facts.

P: Thomas, I must say that this conversation has gone down a path very different than the one I intended. I wanted to point out your doubt, to make you the spectacle for others, to use you as the example of what not to do. But that's not how things have worked out.

R: And is that a bad thing? I know I'm best known as Doubting Thomas, but when Doubting Thomas met Jesus, the doubt disappeared and the doubt did not reappear after Jesus was no longer walking visibly in front of me. I learned to trust in One I could no longer see and that's what I'm asking you to do today. Set aside those doubts, those doubts that are fostered by feelings and how you think things ought to be. Put them aside and focus on the facts. Christ is risen and because He is risen, nothing is impossible, nothing.

P: And because nothing is impossible, I have no reason to doubt when He doesn't act or move as I think or feel He should, no reason to doubt, and every reason to trust He will step in at the exact moment He knows is best, that He has and will watch over me in the same way that He watched over you.

R: He is the same Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and forever. His words to me then still ring true today, "Stop doubting and believe."

P: Thank you, Thomas, for being with us. I'm glad our conversation took a different direction, the direction that now enables each of us to understand more fully the crossroad of doubt versus belief.