

THE GREAT CONVICTION: THOMAS' CONFESSION JOHN 20: 24-29

Introduction

This is an excellent study on conviction and confession. It is the great conviction and confession of Thomas.

- I. Thomas' frustrated, reactionary spirit (vv. 24-25).
- II. Thomas' false picture of Jesus (vv. 25-26).
- III. Thomas' critical confrontation and confession: Jesus appeared, and He challenged and convicted him (vv. 26-28).
- IV. Thomas' great lesson for all men: the person who believes without seeing will be far more blessed than those who demand proof (v. 29).

John 20:24-29 Another Outline

Conviction — its signs, results or reactions.

- I. A frustrated reactionary spirit (v. 24).
- II. A false picture of Jesus (v. 25).
- III. A persistent doubt (v. 26).
- IV. A critical confrontation (v. 27).
- V. A strong confession (v. 28).
- VI. A great lesson for the church (v. 29).

I. John 20:24-25 Cause of Unbelief in Thomas

Thomas' frustrated, reactionary spirit. Thomas had not been with the disciples when Jesus first appeared to them. Like so many today, he staunchly refused to believe that Jesus had actually risen from the dead. The disciples *testified* and *bore witness* to the glorious truth. The Greek means they "kept on telling him," but Thomas became stiff-necked and obstinate in his unbelief. He even argued against their testimony, and he argued with deep intensity. He was deeply aggravated and frustrated, feeling great disappointment and guilt. The depth of his aggravation and guilt is seen in his repulsive shout, "Unless I see...put my finger ..[and] put my hand into his side, I will not believe it" (Jn. 20:25).

What was it that frustrated Thomas so much and caused him to sense such intense guilt and react the way he did? Evidently...

- Thomas *had forsaken* the Lord, and that was enough to frustrate any man's spirit.
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- Thomas had also *withdrawn* from the disciples; consequently he was *not present* when the Lord first appeared (Jn. 20:24). He missed another opportunity to be identified with Christ.

Of course, this caused Thomas to become aggravated with guilt all over again. He became critical of the body of believers. It was his own fault, but as human nature so often reacts, he blamed others through his aggravated spirit. He argued against their experience with the resurrected Lord. Having taken all he could bear, in utter frustration he shouted out, “Unless I see...put my finger...[and] put my hand into his side, I will not believe it” (Jn. 20:25). It was eight days more before the Lord ever appeared to Thomas (Jn. 20:26). What a loss he experienced!

Thought 1. Persistent doubt always delays the blessings.

Thought 2. Guilt, frustration, disappointment, and exclusion often result in a...

- haughty spirit
- denial of facts
- reaction
- fierce outburst

1 John 3:20 *Whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.*

Mark 4:40 *He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*

Luke 24:25 *He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”*

Heb 10:38 *“But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”*

Rev 2:4 *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.*

Prov 14:14 *The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good man rewarded for his.*

II. **John 20: 25–26** *Misconceptions about Jesus Christ*

Thomas' false picture of Jesus. Thomas had always thought in terms of an earthly Messiah or Saviour who would make things better upon this earth and in this life. He had become a follower of Jesus thinking that an earthly kingdom was to be set up and that he was to be a leader in that kingdom. He saw Jesus as the promised Messiah who was to be the Son of David, that is, to come from David's roots. (See *Christ, King of Israel*, Jn. 1:49.) He refused to see beyond the human and physical things of this world. Therefore, he could see Jesus only as the man who was nailed to the cross and had a spear thrust into His side and was now dead. (See Jn. 13:1-17; Lk. 22:24-30.)

Thought 1. False pictures of Jesus lead to unbelief. Jesus is more than...

- a great teacher
- a great prophet
- a great man
- a great founder of a religion

He is even more than the greatest man who ever lived. All such beliefs — no matter how highly they esteem Jesus — are false beliefs, for they see Jesus only as a man. They see Him as one of the greatest men who ever lived, but they still see Him only as a man.

Thought 2. Men prefer to see Jesus only as a man because it brings Him down to their level. It makes Him less than Lord. They believe it means...

- that man is not totally depraved, not wicked through and through; that man is not so bad that Jesus had to sacrifice His life for them.
- that man can do what Jesus did, the best he can, and God will accept him.
- that man does not have to follow Jesus in every little detail and teaching. Why? Because as man, they believe that Jesus was not absolutely perfect. He was wrong in some things. Where? Each person has to decide the best he can where Jesus was right and wrong. Then that person must do the best he can to follow Jesus where Jesus was right. Men believe it is doing the best they can that God accepts. (Note how this allows each man to *form* God in his own mind and after his own likeness. Man can make God as he wishes God to be. Man can do what he wishes and then say that it was allowed by God.)

Mat 16:13-14 *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”*

Mark 6:3 *“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.*

Rom 1:21-23 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

Rom 1:25 *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.*

JOHN 01:49 JESUS CHRIST, KING OF ISRAEL

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." John 01:49

Jesus was declared to be the Messianic King. God had given to David and his seed (the Messiah) the promise of eternal government (2 Sam. 7:12; Psa. 39:3f; 132:11).

Note how often Jesus was called the son of David. (Mt. 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; Acts 2:29-36; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 22:16.) It was the common title and popular concept of the Messiah. Generation after generation of Jews had ached and looked for the promised deliverer of Israel. The people expected Him to be a great general who would deliver and restore the nation to its greatness. In fact, they expected Him to make the nation the centre of universal rule. He would, under God, conquer the world and centre the glory and majesty of God Himself in Jerusalem; and from His throne, the throne of David, He would execute *the Messianic fire of judgment* upon the nations and peoples of the world. □

III. *John 20:26–28 The Confession*

Thomas' critical confrontation and conviction. Jesus appeared and challenged and convicted Thomas.

1. Note the confrontation. The doors were again shut and locked (Jn. 20:19). Suddenly, unexpectedly, without notice, Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples. Again He eased their shock by giving the normal greeting: "Peace be with you." But then note what He did: He turned immediately to confront Thomas.
 - a. Jesus revealed that He knew all about Thomas' unbelief and demands. He used the very same words that Thomas had demanded: "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (v. 27).

Thought 1. Jesus knows every man's heart: his despair, doubts, fears, hope, love. He knows where and when to strike at a man's heart. However, note a crucial factor: Thomas was where Jesus could reach him. He was in the presence of believers listening to their testimony. He had not shut them out despite his questions.

John 2:25 *He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.*

1 Cor 3:20 *And again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."*

1 Sam 2:3 *"Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed."*

Jer 17:10 *"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."*

Dan 2:22 *He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.*

- b. Jesus warned and called for belief. Thomas had been walking down a dangerous road. The disciples had testified to him time and again, but he had refused time and again to accept their testimony.

=> *Stop doubting* (me ginou apistos): stop becoming an unbeliever. You are running the risk of *becoming faithless* and unbelieving, beyond the point of believing. You have carried your unbelief too far. It is now time to stop the foolishness. The others have been repeatedly testifying the truth to you. Stop the stiff-necked, obstinate unbelief. You are in danger.

John 3:18 *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

John 8:24 *“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

Heb 2:3 *How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.*

Heb 3:12 *See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.*

Jude 1:5 *Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.*

=> Believe (See *Saving Faith*, Jn. 2:24).

John 3:15 *“That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”*

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.”*

John 12:46 *“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”*

John 20:31 *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Rom 10:9 *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Thought 1. To doubt is to be Christless, “separate from Christ ... without hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

2. The strong confession. This is one of the great confessions in Scripture. Most likely dropping to his knees, Thomas exclaimed, “My Lord and My God!” He now knew five great things.
 - a. That Jesus is truly the risen Lord. All that Jesus had said was true.

The disciples finally understood that Jesus had meant exactly what He was saying. When He had said that He was going to die and arise from the dead, they had spiritualized His words. But Jesus had meant exactly what He was saying: He was to literally die and arise from the dead and, by such, He was to usher in the Kingdom of God. Of course, this was far more meaningful than the earthly kingdom they had desired. It was the most glorious news in all the world, for man could now live beyond a few short years in an earthly kingdom; man could live in the very presence of God forever. Sin, death and hell were now conquered. Jesus constantly shared His death and resurrection. This fact is often overlooked.

Acts 2:36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Rom 1:4 And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 Cor 1:9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

1 Cor 8:6 Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

- b. That Jesus is both Lord and God, the Sovereign majesty of the universe. Christ is eternal. (Jn. 1:1-2).

Christ was *preexistent*. This means He was there before creation. He has always existed. “In the beginning [en archei]” does not mean *from* the beginning. Jesus Christ was already there. He did not *become*; He was not created; He never had a beginning. He “was with God in the beginning” (Jn. 17:5; 8:58).

Christ was *coexistent*. He was and is face-to-face with God forever. The word *with* (pros) has the idea of both *being with* and *acting toward*. Jesus Christ (the Word) was

both with God and acting with God. He was “with God”: by God’s side, acting, living, and moving in the closest of relationships. Christ had the ideal and perfect relationship *with* God the Father. Their life together — their relationship, communion, fellowship, and connection — was a perfect eternal bond. This is exactly what is said: “*He was with God in the beginning*” (Jn.1:2).

Col 2:9-10 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.*

1 Tim 3:16 *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

Heb 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

- c. That Jesus is the One who has come to truly reveal God, that He is the Mediator between God and man. The way to God is through Jesus Christ Himself (Jn. 14:6). This is a critical verse, for Jesus said that no man could reach God unless he approached God through Jesus Himself. Jesus made three phenomenal claims.
1. I am the Way
 2. I am the Truth
 3. I am the Life

Jesus claims that He is from above (Jn. 3:31). Jesus came *out of* (ek) the spiritual world into the physical world, out of the heavenly dimension of being into the earthly dimension of being. Jesus came out of...

- the incorruptible and imperishable world into the corruptible and perishable world.
- the glorious world into the dishonorable world.
- the powerful world into the weak world.
- the spiritual world into the natural world. (1 Cor. 15:42-44.)

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

1 Tim 2:5 *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Heb 8:6 *But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.*

Heb 9:15 *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

Heb 9:24 *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

1 John 2:1 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

- d. That Jesus accepts no half-way commitments. Jesus expected to be his Lord and his God: “My Lord and My God.” Therefore, he must personally bow and worship Jesus as his Lord and his God.

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Rom 14:9 *For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.*

Col 1:18 *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

Rev 5:12 *In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!”*

- e. That Jesus expected an open and public confession of Him as Lord and God (Mt. 10:32; Lk. 12:8).

Mat 10:32 *“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.”*

Luke 12:8 *“I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.”*

1 John 2:23 *No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

1 John 4:15 *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.*

JOHN 02:24

SAVING FAITH: BELIEVE, COMMIT, ENTRUST

The word commit or entrust is the very same word “believe” (see Jn. 2:23). This gives an excellent picture of *saving faith*, of what *genuine faith* is — of the kind of faith that really saves a person.

1. Saving faith is not head knowledge, not just a mental conviction and intellectual assent. It is not just *believing the fact* that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. It is not just believing history, that Jesus Christ lived upon earth as the Saviour just as A J Abdul Kalam lived upon earth as the President of India. It is not just believing the words and claims of Jesus in the same way that a person would believe the words of Abdul Kalam.
2. Saving faith is believing in Jesus, *who* and *what* He is, that He is the *Saviour* and *Lord* of life. It is a man giving and turning his life over to Jesus. It is a man casting himself upon Jesus as Saviour and Lord.
3. Saving faith is commitment — the commitment of a man's total being and life to Jesus Christ. It is a man's commitment of all he *is and has* to Jesus. It gives Jesus everything; therefore, it involves all of a man's affairs. The man trusts Jesus to take care of his past (sins), his present (welfare), and his future (destiny). He entrusts his whole life, being, and possessions into Jesus' hands. He lays himself upon Jesus' keeping, confiding in Him about his daily necessities and acknowledging Him in all the ways of life. He follows Jesus in every area and in every detail of life, seeking His instructions and leaving his welfare up to Him. It is simply commitment of a man's whole being, all he is and has, to Jesus.

There are three steps involved in faith, steps that are clearly seen in this passage.

1. There is the step of *seeing* (Jn. 2:23) or *hearing* (Rom. 10:16). A man must be willing to listen to the message of Christ, the revelation of truth.
2. There is the step of *mental assent*. A man must agree that the message is true, that the facts of the case are thus and so. But this is not enough. Mere agreement does not lead to action. Many a person knows that something is true, but he does not change his behaviour to match his knowledge. For example, a man knows that eating too much harms his body, but he may continue to eat too much. He agrees to the truth and knows the truth, but he does nothing about it. A person may believe and know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and yet do nothing about it, never make a decision to follow Christ. This man still does not have faith, not the kind of faith that the Bible talks about.
3. There is the step of *commitment*. When the New Testament speaks of faith, it speaks of *commitment*, a *personal commitment to the truth*. A man hears the truth and agrees that it is true and does something about it. He commits (entrusts) and yields his life to the truth. The truth becomes a part of his very being, a part of his behaviour and life. □

IV. John 20:29 Unquestioning Belief

Thomas' great lesson for all men. What is the lesson?

=> To believe without having to see evidences and proof.

John 20:29 *Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

=> To believe because of tenderness and warmth.

Eph 2:4-5, 8-9 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.*

=> To believe because of love and care and because of the need and nature of the human heart.

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

=> To believe because of the need for morality and godly character.

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (see vv.19-21)*

=> To believe because godly witnesses say so.

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

=> To believe because of the inner witness of the heart.

Rom 2:15 *Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.*

=> To believe because of the outer witness of nature.

Rom 1:20 *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

Note that Thomas ceased being obstinate and rebellious when he saw Jesus and after Jesus had rebuked him. Thomas had been at fault; he had been doubting, and his unbelief was inexcusable. The men who had proclaimed the truth to him were not liars. Neither could they all have been deceived. Thomas had just refused to believe because he did not want to believe. He had acted intellectually superior and had been about to lose his soul.

The point is this: the person who believes without seeing demonstrates...

- a strength of character
- a tenderness and warmth of heart
- a sensitivity to the witness of the Holy Spirit
- an awareness to the order and beauty of all the world

Therefore, that person will be blessed with a very special joy, an inexpressible and glorious joy.

1 Pet 1:8 *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.*

Thought 1. When a man truly sees what Jesus has done for Him, or when a man is rebuked by the Spirit of Christ, he must cease his unbelief. He must turn to Christ, for the Lord's Spirit will not always strive and contend with men.

Gen 6:3 *Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years."*

Prov 28:14 *Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.*

Prov 29:1 *A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy. ■*