

WHERE WAS THOMAS?

In John 20:19-29 we find the well known "Doubting Thomas" account. On the day that Jesus arose from the dead, we see that the faithful apostles gathered together in the evening and Jesus was there in the midst of them. But we also see that one apostle was missing. Where was Thomas? We will probably never know where Thomas was, but we can learn a great lesson from his absence.

First of all, let us see what we can find about the character of Thomas. In the 11th chapter of John, we find that Jesus plans to visit Lazarus. In verse 16 Thomas said, *"Let us also go, that we may die with him."* Thomas is referring to the situation mentioned in verse 8 that reads, *"His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"* Thomas was so certain that Jesus would be slain as soon as Jesus reached Judea that Thomas proposed to the other apostles that they share in Jesus' fate. This shows that Thomas was a man of courage and he was willing die with Jesus. But it also shows that he was a pessimist. He always saw the worst side of things and now he saw evil things ahead for Jesus, that Jesus would be killed.

Most of our knowledge of Thomas comes from his statement in John 20:25, *"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."* This is why Thomas became known as "Doubting Thomas." He was a man who could not believe until he had seen. But once he saw it himself, he became a man of devotion and of intense faith. He made the greatest confession of faith in John 20:28 when he said, *"My Lord and my God."*

We are not told why Thomas was not present at that gathering of the apostles in the evening on that first day of the week. Maybe it was because he was a pessimist and an unbeliever. Maybe he was discouraged. Maybe he didn't care and thought it was all useless. Either way, it is evident that he did not expect Jesus to be there or he would have been there with the other apostles.

Is it really that bad that Thomas missed ONE Sunday night?... Yes, it is, if you consider what Thomas missed on that Sunday night. He missed the fellowship with his brethren, who could have encouraged him. He missed seeing with his own eyes the risen Lord. Of course he did see Christ eight days later, but

what if Thomas had died before then? He would have missed a sight that very few people in the world have witnessed - Christ risen from the dead! Thomas missed hearing the wonderful words as recorded in John 20:19 when Jesus said unto the group *"Peace be unto you."* He missed the commission that Jesus gave to the Apostles in John 20:21, *"as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."* And finally, he missed receiving the Holy Ghost when the other apostles did, *"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."* (John 20:22)

Because Thomas missed that one Sunday evening, he lived in unbelief and possibly jeopardy for a whole week. I think we can learn a lot from the lesson of Thomas. If any of us ever miss just one church service, be it Sunday morning, Sunday night, or midweek Bible studies, we could be missing out on things just like Thomas. We could miss a message that could save our soul or we could miss encouragement from fellow Christians.

In the Bible we will find many reasons why a person should try to attend every service of the congregation. In Matthew 6:33 we read, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."* Notice the kingdom of God, which is the church, should be sought after first, not second or third. A survey taken on the priorities of Americans showed food, finance, security, family, and entertainment coming before religion. What things are most important to us? Do you choose a good television program over the church service? In Hebrews 10:24-25 we read that we are to consider our brethren and to provoke them toward love and good works and not to forsake the church service as some already do.

Another reason for going to church is so that our influence may be counted for Christ and not for sin or Satan. *"Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* (Matt. 5:13-16) Somebody may be watching our every move and will follow our example. Most of you know this is especially true if you have children or grandchildren. What are the children going to think when they see that we don't care enough to come to Sunday night services? When we don't try to make many of the

Church's meetings? Is that how we fulfill our duty to nurture our children in the admonition of the Lord as is commanded in Ephesians 6:4, *"...And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."*

Another good reason for attending the church services is that we may find and associate with the finest friends we will ever have here on earth, Christians. *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?"* (2 Cor. 6:14) The Christians you see at church are the same spiritual brothers and sisters with whom you will spend eternity. Think about it, the kind of people with whom you spend most of your time is probably the kind with whom you will spend eternity, good or bad.

We should go to church because most people in our society agree it is a good thing. If we truly feel that going to church is "good" and we don't go to church, then it is a sin. *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* (James 4:17) Unfortunately, most Christians do not see any good at all in going to the church services more than once a week. You get out of the services what you put in. That holds true for every facet of the service. During service you should lift your voice and sing to God, actually pray to God yourself, study the Word being preached and most importantly be at the services. The early Christians met together every single day. *"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* (Acts 2:46, 47) By going to church services, we may be better prepared to preach the Gospel to those who don't know the Truth and who don't have the opportunity to go to church like we do. Our soul may find new strength in the messages we hear to endure temptation; our heart may be warmed by the spiritual songs of worship; we may find peace of mind by communing with God through prayers, and we may become better acquainted with the world's most beautiful character, Jesus Christ our Savior.

In the Book of Titus we find a few more words written about "good works". *"They profess that they know God: but in works they deny him, being abominable (evil), and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (worthless)."* (Tit. 1:16) As Christians, we should profess to know God. But if we don't

attend services on a regular basis (i.e. if we neglect this good work), then our works deny God because we are being evil, disobedient and worthless "unto every good work."

Christians are known as a peculiar people. In Titus 2:14 the scripture reads, *"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."* One characteristic of such a people is that they are "zealous of good works". What that means in a nutshell, is that Christians will be eager and excited to do good works, like going to church. Are you eager and excited to attend church services or are you constantly looking for ANY excuse to not go to church?

Something is dreadfully wrong in the churches of Christ today. I believe it is the work of the devil. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"* (1 Pet. 5:18) Satan knows he cannot get to you as easily when you are in the blood-purchased church, among fellow Christians. So he tells us things such as, "There's no need of baptism", "He's not a good speaker", "You've already heard that lesson", "You've got something better to do", "It's a pretty day outside for...", "You won't be missed, they didn't miss Thomas, did they?" That's the way Satan works!

Nobody can force you to go to church services. That is something only you can decide for yourself. Don't let Satan hinder you. If you have been neglectful of the services of Christ's church, repent and start coming.

Originally a sermon by RAY MCMANUS (deceased)

A SUGGESTED RESOLUTION

which each one might make in his own heart

BELIEVING THAT Christ founded the Church; That the Church exists to propagate Christ's Influence; That the Church's method of doing this is Meeting Together frequently in Christ's name; That God himself planned the frequency, Weekly; And gave us a Day for it, Sunday, the Lord's Day; And, inasmuch as Common Usage recognizes Sunday Morning as Church Time; **I HEREBY PLEDGE MYSELF THAT** as long as I live, wherever I may be, unless hindered by sickness or necessity, **ON SUNDAY MORNING I WILL GO TO CHURCH,** trying to do it with One Motive only: for Christ. **I WILL TRY TO**

**GO ON TIME, AND, I WILL BE REVERENT IN THE CHURCH and ALL MY
LIFE I WILL BE A READER OF GOD'S WORD.**

-COPIED-

Halley, H. H. (1965). *Halley's Bible Handbook* (24th ed.). Zondervan
Publishing House

It matters not how long you live,
It's the quality of your time,
It's the friends you make,
The lives you touch,
And the love you show mankind.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Where did Jeremiah instruct Baruch to put the deed he gave him?
2. After punishment from God for continued disobedience, what sound will send the Israelites fleeing even if no one is chasing them?
3. What will turn to joy, according to John 16?
4. Who had Jeremiah beaten and put in stocks?
5. What did Moses command in Deut. to be read at the end of every seven years?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. According to Exodus 24, what position did Joshua hold with Moses? HE WAS MOSES' SERVANT (Exo. 24:13)
2. What nation does Hosea predict will rule over Israel? ASSYRIA (Hosea 11:5)

3. To whom did the Lord show a basket of ripe fruit? AMOS (Amos 8:2)

4. What should be one's attitude towards regulations of the government? HE SHOULD OBEY THEM (1 Pet. 2:13)

5. In Zechariah, what does the Lord call Jerusalem? THE CITY OF TRUTH (Zech. 8:3)