

'THE HAPPIEST LORD'S DAY EVER!'

2020 Resurrection Day Series

John 20

'Shadow of a Doubt'

"*There's a sucker born every minute*" is a disparaging remark usually attributed to PT Barnum, originator of the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Gamblers, con-artists, and scammers use the insulting comment to refer to gullible audiences wowed by clever, slight-of-hand tricksters promoted as amazing feat performing magicians. From carnival freak shows to card trick performances, people pay big money to be amazed by illusions they know can't be true or real. Clever showmen depend on there being an endless succession of *suckers being born every minute* willing to pay for their *smoke and mirrors* entertainment. We should never disrespect fellow Christians, but observing all the religious sideshows and spiritual charlatans on earth today whom they've made famous and rich, it's hard not to think *there really are lots of born-again sucker-saints* in the world today (**2 Timothy 4:3-5**).

About these last days in which we live, Jesus warned His disciples: "*...false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand...*" (**Matthew 24:23-27**). Apostle Paul predicted that many gullible and weak church members will be led astray just before His return, "*Now the Spirit expressly says that in the last times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy having their own conscience seared with a hot iron ...*" (**1 Timothy 4:1-2**).

In a second letter to Timothy, Paul further warned Christians then and now: "*...in the last days perilous times will come...people will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. From such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households to make captives of gullible women ...*" (**2 Timothy 3:1-9**). And the Apostle Peter later concurred in **2 Peter 2:1-3** that all deceivers' objectives are to get your confidence and your money. It is truly sad to see piles of money that could have gone to Christ-honoring, Bible teaching ministries and missionary work, but was just frittered away on phony miracles for sale, religious gimmicks, and waste-of-time religious fluff literature to finance the ostentatious lifestyles of imposter media preachers and preacherettes (**2 Corinthians 11:13-15**). True Christians MUST stop being *sucker saints* and obey God's Word by **'not believing every spirit (unholy spirits working through false teachers), but test the spirits to see if they are of God'** (from the Holy Spirit / **1 John 4:1,6**). Smart saints always insist that whatever is being promoted by a preacher clearly passes the test of Scriptural agreement (**1 Corinthians 2:16**) and inner peace from God (**Colossians 3:15-16, Romans 14:23**). Only when someone, or something has passed the biblical *beyond a shadow of a doubt* test, can it be accepted as from the Lord.

Although the Apostle Thomas is criticized for his *holy skepticism* regarding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, his example of *show me biblical proof first* is a desperately needed trait among God's people today (**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**). Thomas didn't have the best attitude, but he does provide the best example of *sanctified spiritual skepticism* that will help believers not waste their time and God's money on religious imposters and their superstitious junk in the last days before Christ returns. Every obedient disciple of Jesus will test everything by praying for Scriptural wisdom about it, searching God's Word concerning it, seeking wise counsel of mature brethren and then allowing the Holy Spirit to control their response. Thomas demanded biblical proof of Christ before believing and the Lord gave it to Him. Then with biblical evidence and a repentant heart Thomas believed and committed his life to the Savior.

In the world today there are many claiming to have miracle cures for the corona-virus flu and other maladies. Ken Copeland angrily yells defiantly at the plague to go away. Jim Baker sells what he calls *The Silver Solution* to ward off the flu. Others strut about in front of their mega church audiences *binding, casting, and rebuking* the plague in the Lord's Name. Based on what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:21-23**, what and who, are we to believe is truly of God. The wise Christian will insist first, with *holy skepticism*, that correctly interpreted biblical references be prayerfully consulted. He or she carefully critiques what is being promoted - is this truly Christ-honoring, of clear biblical origin, and Holy Spirit inspired? Then, and only then, when anything or anybody passes the biblical *beyond a shadow of a doubt* test (**1 John 4:1**) should it be seen as of the Lord. True seekers are *sanctified skeptics* in search of God's will; they aren't gullible *spiritual suckers* in search of a religious sideshow (**2 Thessalonians 2:9-16**).

PtL

'Happy Resurrection Night!'

(The Savior & Disciples (with Thomas) the Next Sunday After Dark)

John 20:24-31

Thomas: The Skeptical Seeker

'Thomas' = Grk; 'toma' or 'teom' / Hebrew/ Aramaic – 'didamus' twin, likeness, double) (John 11:16, 14:5, 20)

"Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." "So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." **20:24-25**

- Were you a *doubting seeker* prior to trusting Christ as Savior? Do you know someone who was (is)? What do you think causes a someone to be skeptical person?
- What's it like to still be an unbeliever but your friends have come to faith and are sharing Christ with you?
- Talk about how you can be like the 10 with Thomas in your relationship with unbeliever friends. How should you pray for and relate to a defiant skeptic?

Thomas: The Submissive Saint

Early church/ Pentecost = paired with Philip Acts 1:13 (see John 14:5-11); earlier with Matthew (Matt. 10:3)

"And after eight days His disciples were again inside and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and look at My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" **20:26-28**

- Discuss what kind of week Thomas must have had after the first Resurrection Day. What kind of week do you have after going to church but leave feeling that God didn't really manifest Himself to you like He did to others?
- Are you surprised Jesus didn't rebuke Thomas for his bad attitude? What does this teach us about the Savior and us when we fail?
- It seems that seeing wasn't believing at first for Thomas – his stubborn unbelief clouded his spiritual vision – Jesus had to first cure unbelief before He could install faith. How can knowing this help you when the Lord's presence and His Word is obscured by your attitude?
- Talk about how real faith empowers us to believe and confess that 'Jesus is Lord and God'.

Thomas: The Steadfast Servant

AD 50 – India; in North then to Kerala Coast for 20 years; 7 churches; China(?), martyred AD 72

"Jesus said to him, "Thomas because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." **20:29**

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name." **20:30-31**

- Thomas' name means 'double', 'twin' or 'likeness' – how appropriate for Thomas! In the beginning he followed Jesus, but was double-minded with a negative, doubting kind of attitude. But in the end after fully trusting Christ was transformed into the likeness & image of Him (*Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18*) and went on in great missionary work.
- How do you think Thomas' strong faith and skeptical nature helped him as he confronted ancient idolatry and superstition, and eventual martyrdom in India?
- How is the risen Lord preparing you to bear His likeness, test all things and accomplish much with your life for His glory?