

Introduction

The story of Thomas is famous, but it is perhaps often misunderstood. While Thomas is often called "doubting Thomas", he was prepared to believe if he saw hard evidence. He was a "hard-nosed bloke". He would not be convinced by second hand evidence and would not listen to gossip. In verse 24, he was not with the 12. We do not know where he was. Perhaps he wanted to be alone after Jesus died. When some people are sad and upset, they do not want to be with other people. They want to be alone. However, Thomas missed out on the good news of Jesus resurrection. When the disciples saw Jesus with their own eyes, they went through a dramatic change. They were no longer afraid and confused. This was not a ghost or an illusion. Then they slowly grasped the *significance* of what they were seeing. Jesus is risen. He showed them his wounds. Later, Jesus appears to Thomas and shows him his hands and side. Thomas however does not actually need to touch Jesus. His eyes have seen Jesus and now he is totally committed in faith. He says "My Lord and my God!" The purpose of the resurrection and the recording of his miracles is not to show Jesus as some kind of star attraction and powerful healer. He is the "Christ" and the "Son of God". He has come that we might have life in his name. "In His Name" means with the authority, power and approval and of Jesus himself. However, we must always make sure that what we are doing is in God's will.

Notes

1. Jesus "*breathed on them*"; reminder of God breathing on Adam in Genesis 2:7
2. The disciples have the authority to announce the forgiveness of sins. This is different from actually forgiving the sins themselves.
3. "*My Lord and my God!*" Word relating to deity. A shout of praise and devotion.
4. *Christ*. The Greek word for Messiah, the one who fulfils all the prophesies of God.
5. The body of Jesus is clearly his – and yet it is changed. He can walk into locked rooms.

Questions

1. When we are sad and upset, what do you usually do? Be alone or seek company?
2. Do you like Thomas? What are his good and perhaps weak points?
3. How do you think the disciples were feeling in verse 24? The doors are still locked in v.26. What does this suggest?
4. When we become Christians, there is not necessarily a dramatic change in our lives. It takes a while for us to recognise that Jesus is risen. Why is this?
5. What is the essential message of the gospel in one sentence?
6. How have we "seen" Jesus and believed in him? *Where* do we see him?

Conclusion

There is a special blessing for those who have not seen but believe. If we open ourselves and accept Jesus, we will be blessed *even more* than Thomas. The essence of the Gospel is summarised in v.31. Jesus is the one we have been waiting for. He gives life to those who believe in him. Thomas refused to say that he believed something when he didn't, even when his friends did so. However, when he was convinced that Jesus had indeed risen, he gave him his whole heart and life. We should not be gullible and believe everything we are told. However, when we are committed we should not hold back our loyalty to Jesus. Jesus does four things. He assures them that he is risen. He gives them peace. He then sends them on the mission of announcing the good news that he is risen. Easter is not the end. It is the beginning of the era of the risen Christ.