

Developing Godly Character Pt 5: The Virtue of Doubt

The importance of being Thomas.

Doubt is a virtue. That is difficult for anyone to swallow who has grown up singing The Hymn of Joy lyric “drive the dark of doubt away” and has listened to countless slurs against one of my favorite apostles – Thomas. You know, the one they call “doubting Thomas.” But when I teach about Thomas, I don’t teach about doubt, I teach about trust and the importance of knowing exactly who it is you are following.

It seems that assuming the worst of Thomas has become established church doctrine, but this was a man who was chosen by Yeshua (Jesus) to be a disciple. This was a man who willingly walked into a situation he knew might mean death when Yeshua went to raise Lazarus even though there were men waiting and scheming to kill Him, and he encouraged the other disciples to follow Him to Bethany too.

John 11:16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

And yet, we are told not to be like Thomas, we are told not to doubt, not to question. But what are the reasons we are told not to doubt and not to question? Moses told us to doubt. In Deuteronomy 13, he said that even if a person says things that come to pass, and even if they perform signs and wonders but they depart from the Word of God in telling people to worship

contrary to it, that they are not to be believed. That is a commandment to doubt even when faced with the evidence of signs and miracles!

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Yeshua spent chapter 24 of Matthew telling His disciples to doubt, because false prophets and false messiahs would rise up. Paul warned of false teachers and false doctrines. The prophets warned of false priests and false teachings. Throughout the scriptures we are actively taught to doubt for one important reason – to make sure that we are following the correct Messiah, the correct God. The scriptures exist to teach us His character (and by extension, what our character should be) – what God approves of and does not approve of, what we are to believe and what we are not to believe, what to put our faith in and what not to put our faith in, what to run towards and what to run from. Scriptures tell us what to doubt, which is why it is vitally important that we do not downplay any portion of scripture. The Word is eternal, and the LORD, YHVH does not change (Mal 3:6). He was, is and is coming (Rev 1:8). He is the same today, yesterday and forever (Heb 13:8).

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Thomas had undoubtedly learned the Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) growing up in the synagogue each Sabbath, as well as the Prophets. From Moses he knew the dangers of following a false prophet, a false Messiah. Thomas had also been taught Torah and the prophets by Yeshua, day after day, as they ministered to the Jews. He knew Yeshua, he knew His voice, he knew His teachings. He knew the sound of His footsteps, and very possibly the sound of His snoring. He knew what Yeshua sounded like when He laughed and when He cried and when He was angry. Thomas was there when Yeshua said this

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Matthew 24:26 So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them

So when the other disciples came to him saying, "We have seen the LORD," don't you think Thomas remembered what Yeshua Himself had warned? Was it not simply obedience to doubt when people started telling him exactly what he had been warned they would tell him? In light of that, his pronouncement of "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," is not to be taken as a lack of faith, but instead as an indication that this disciple who had walked and talked and eaten and suffered with Messiah for so long was not willing to risk believing and following anyone except Yeshua!

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Thomas knew Yeshua, and once we truly come to know Him, we are not so willing to follow anyone else. We doubt, we question, we push and strive to find out if it is really and truly Yeshua we are following – instead of simply believing and therefore following our Pastor, our denomination, the "Church Fathers," or our favorite Christian author. We cannot afford to make the mistake of following after mere men, because we were afraid to doubt. In the garden Eve doubted. She should have doubted the snake, but instead she doubted what God had said to Adam. Doubt in its proper context is life. Unfortunately, snakes will always try and get us to doubt all the things we should not doubt so that we won't doubt the things we should. And sadly, not all snakes know that they are snakes. Therefore we must never be afraid to doubt, to test everything so that we can hold on to what is holy (I Thess 5:21). Test what is being preached, test the doctrines, test the traditions. Yeshua is the Living Word of God, and therefore He is the Living embodiment of every single Word of

scripture – to follow Him we must follow the Word, we must know it. Those who do not desire to know the Word even though they have ready access to it, do not really desire to know Him.

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But Thomas knew the Word of God, and he was only willing to believe and follow that Word. Thomas knew intimately the character of Yeshua and Thomas knew he could not afford to follow anyone **but** Yeshua.

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So we have heard Preachers slur Thomas in an attempt to get us to shut up and accept what they teach. But what did our Master say in response to Thomas' doubts?

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John 20:27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless (apistos), but believing (pistos). 28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Thomas was not rebuked, nor was Thomas called faithless (I hate it when KJV takes the negative of the same greek word and makes an entirely different word out of it) – he was simply invited to do something that would remove his disbelief. The other disciples had already believed **because** they saw and verified, and now Thomas was rewarded for his doubts.

Rewarded? Yes, I can think of no other word to describe the privilege of touching our Master's hand and side. Would you not ask a thousand questions if at the end it meant you could touch Messiah? If it meant that you could know the intimacy of that depth of relationship?

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Thomas was given that gift because he was not willing to follow and believe anyone except Yeshua – not even his closest companions. Thomas had his eyes set on the things of God and not on men. He remembered the warning of his Master and followed it even when it meant doubting his fellow disciples.

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Thomas passed the test, and as a reward – he touched Yeshua. And when we strive and battle and question in order to make sure we are following the correct Messiah – that touches Yeshua too.