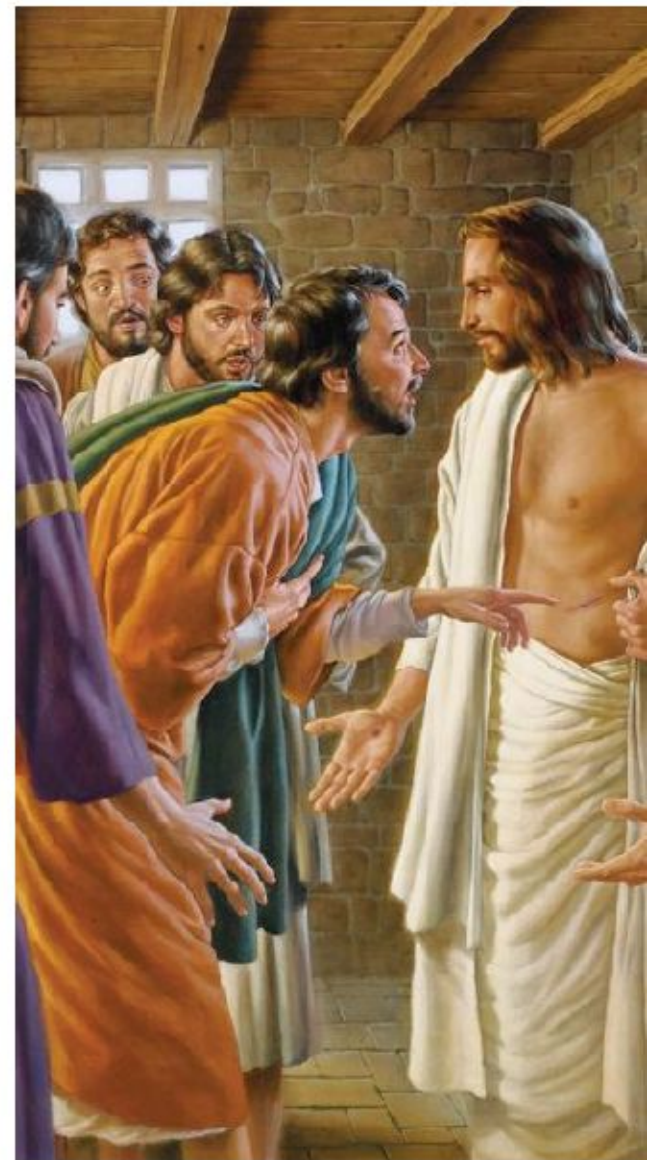
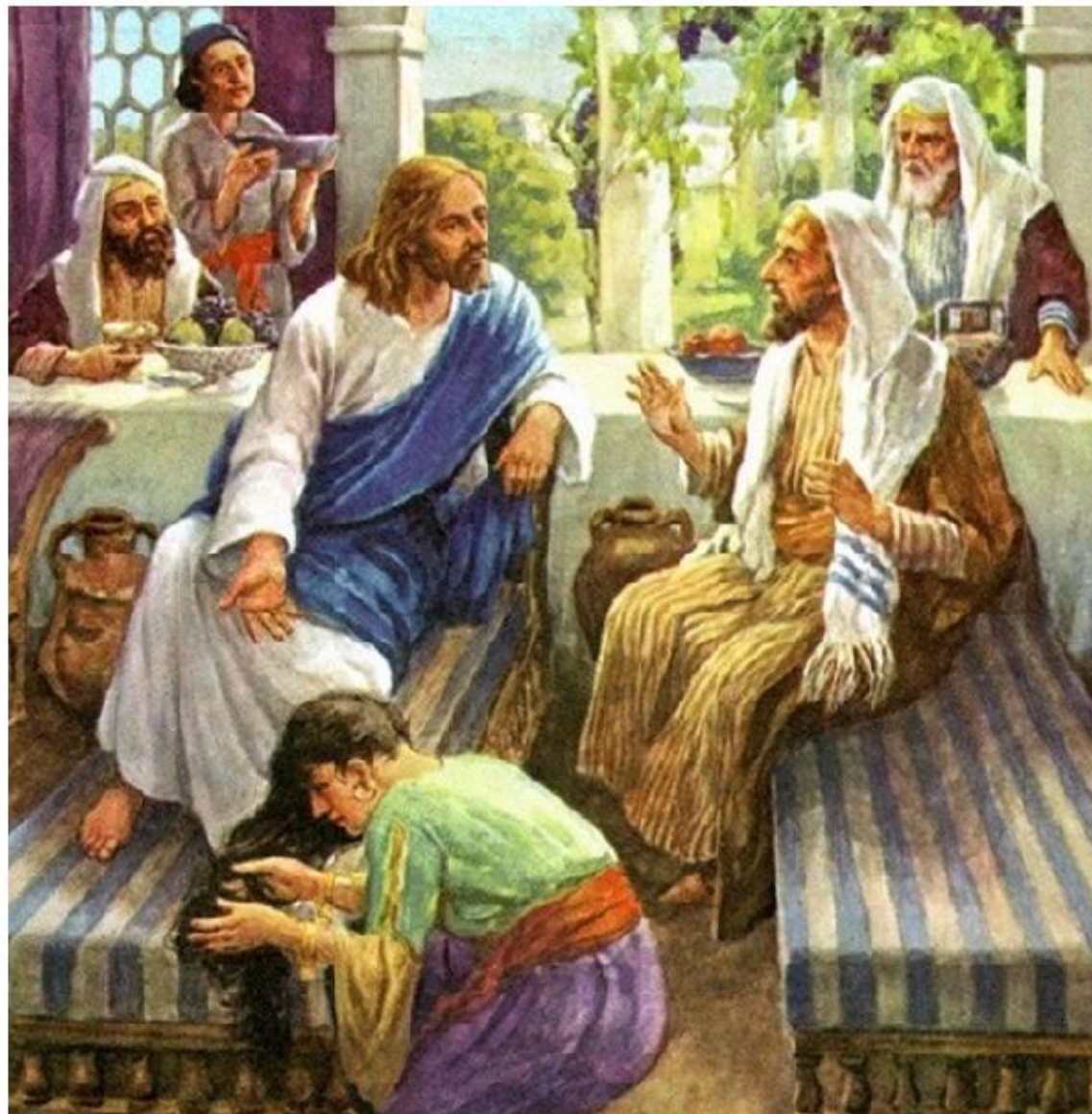


BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO BELIEVE



John presents a diverse group of people in his Gospel, who testified in various ways their belief in who Jesus was. The Son of God knew each of these individuals in a way only God could know them.

Jesus patiently worked with them as they allowed Him into their lives. It was His desire for all to see Him as the way to find salvation, divine truth, and eternal life. These testimonies go all the way back to Abraham, who rejoiced in the future Messiah, and all the way forward to believers after Christ, who also rejoice for what He did to save them.

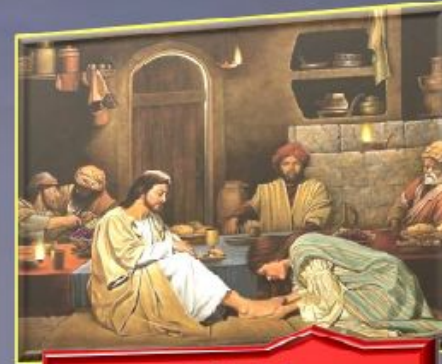
John mentions many testimonies of people who believed in Jesus.

Some believed without hesitation, others with doubts. There were those who believed but hesitated, and acted against their own convictions.

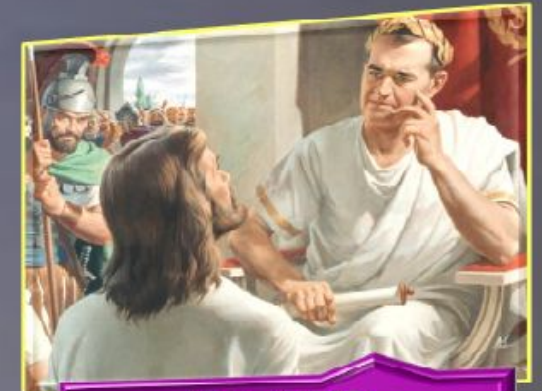
There are also those who believed without seeing, like Abraham, and like the believers of the 21st century.



ABRAHAM:
Believe by faith



MARY:
Believe and
give thanks



PILATE:
Believe and
yield



THOMAS:
Believing by
seeing



YOU AND I:
Believing
without seeing



“Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’ ”

John 20:29, NKJV

SUNDAY: HARKING BACK TO ABRAHAM

Why was Abraham's witness so important that it was included in John's gospel?

ABRAHAM: BELIEVE BY FAITH

"Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." (John 8:56)



What did Jesus mean by the expression "seeing my day"?

Abraham was given a wonderful promise: "and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Gen. 22:18.)

He was aware that this promise did not refer only to his abundant offspring. It referred to the seed promised to Eve, that is, to the Savior of the world (Gen. 3:15.)



Unbeknownst to him, Isaac represented Jesus, ascending the mountain carrying the wood on which he was to be sacrificed (Gen. 22:6.)

Only when he was stopped from sacrificing his son, and the latter was replaced by a ram, did Abraham understand the mission of the Savior (Gen. 22:11-14.) By faith, he saw the day of Jesus Christ (His redemptive death), believed, and rejoiced.



Genesis 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 18:16 And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. 17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; 18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

Genesis 26:4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

Matthew 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham

Acts 3:25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

Abraham's witness was so important that it was included in John's gospel because John knew that Abraham was well respected for his generosity and kindness. He was used by God as a visionary prophet through his ancestry the Messiah would come. Therefore, he was a reputable ancestral father of authority. In that capacity, Abraham either saw Jesus in the vision of the future and rejoiced, or as that Savior whom he had earnestly longed to see, and when the revelation (as enunciated in the above passages) was given to him, he rejoiced.

How does Paul use this story of Abraham to reveal the great truth of salvation by faith alone, without the deeds of the law? Romans 4:1–5

Romans 4:1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Paul uses this story of Abraham to reveal the great truth of salvation by faith alone without the deeds of the law by using it to explain, on the authority of the OT Scriptures, that even Abraham was justified on the same basis on which justification is offered to the heathen.

How do these verses help us understand the idea of Abraham as the father of those who live by faith?

These verses help us understand the idea of Abraham as the father of those who live by faith by proving that Abraham was used as a forerunner.. one who was seen by God as representing faithfulness, an example in conduct and attaining righteousness while not being circumcised. Hence, he was a father of those who live by faith in the sense of being chosen by God. He was one of the first examples of living by faith even before he was circumcised. He was justified without the works of law and received that designation others claimed.

MONDAY: THE WITNESS OF MARY

- **How has Mary's testimony affected those who have heard this story?**
- **How can we show appreciation for what God has done for us?**

Mary Magdalene Anoints Jesus **John. 12.1** Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived in Bethany to visit Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, and his two sisters, Mary and Martha. **John. 12.2** They were glad to see Jesus. While He was in town, Simon, the Pharisee whom Jesus had healed of leprosy, invited Him and His disciples over to his house for dinner. Lazarus was to be the honored guest sitting next to Jesus, and Martha helped with the preparations.

John. 12.3 Mary, thinking of the danger to Jesus' life, bought a bottle of the most costly perfume she could find. Slipping into the room, she first poured some of it on Jesus' head, then knelt and poured it on His feet. Immediately the room was filled with rich fragrance. Mary wept while doing this, and some of her tears fell on His feet, so she wiped them off with her hair. **John. 12.4** Then Judas Iscariot, the disciple, who in a few days would betray Jesus to the chief priests and Pharisees for money, broke the silence.

John. 12.5 “This is very expensive perfume. It must have cost close to a whole year of a working man’s wages. What a waste! We could have sold the perfume and given the money to the poor!” **John. 12.6** He said this, not because he wanted to help the poor, but because he was treasurer of the group and had been taking money out of the bag for his own use. **John. 12.7** Jesus, not wanting to embarrass Judas, said quietly, “Let her alone. She saved her money to buy this perfume so she could anoint my body for burial. **John. 12.8** **You** will have plenty of opportunities to feed the poor, but I’m here only once. After what I’ve been through, it’s refreshing to be appreciated.”

MARY: BELIEVE AND GIVE THANKS

“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12:3)

There were several reasons that led Mary to offer Jesus an expensive perfume, and anoint him with it (Jn. 12:1-3.)

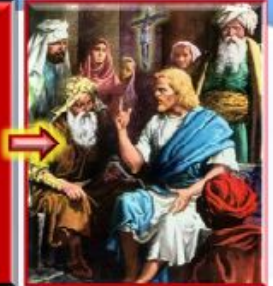
Jesus had forgiven her sins
(Lk. 7:44-48)



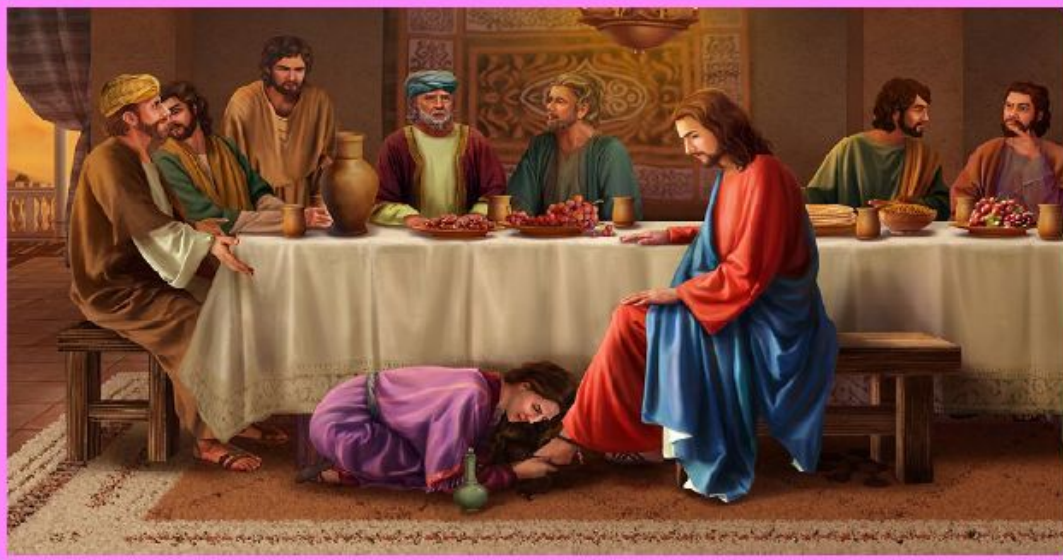
Jesus had raised her brother from dead
(Jn. 11:1-2)



Jesus had spoken of his own death
(Jn. 12:7)



But those invited to the party did not understand Mary's motivation.



Simon, the host, thought only of her sins (Lk. 7:39.)

Judas thought only of the benefit he could have gained from such a costly gift (Jn. 12:4-6.)

But Jesus knew the hearts of all. He made Simon see his lack of gratitude. He told Judas not to use the poor as an excuse.

He had only words of affection for Mary. He rewarded her faith by reminding her that her sins were forgiven, and he praised her action before Judas and the others.

We aren't sure if Mary realized the full mission of Jesus, but her heart was so full of appreciation for Him forgiving her sins and resurrecting her brother, that she felt compelled to anoint His feet with the fragrant perfume she had been saving for His burial. It seemed possible that Jesus might soon be anointed King and she wanted to be the first to honor Him by this simple gesture.

When the fragrance spread to every corner of the house they were visiting, some of the disciples, including Judas, chastised her for such a waste of money that could have been given to the poor. Jesus understood what was on her heart, however, and commended her act, reminding them that the poor would always be with them, but His earthly presence was temporary.

The Gospel of John has a recurring theme of how Jesus knew what people were thinking and feeling. **He understood Mary's heart when she anointed Him, and He also understood the heart of Judas—that he was a thief and was stealing from the disciples' money box** (John 12:6).

Mary's anointing Jesus has been a testimony to all believers, inspiring people, out of appreciation, to donate largely and gladly to further God's mission of saving the world.

TUESDAY: THE UNWITTING WITNESS OF PILATE

Why was Pilate convinced of the innocence of Jesus?

What statement by Jesus made Pilate panic despite his appeal to the humanity of the crowd for Jesus' innocence?

What final decision did Pilate make that showed he could not meet the test before him?

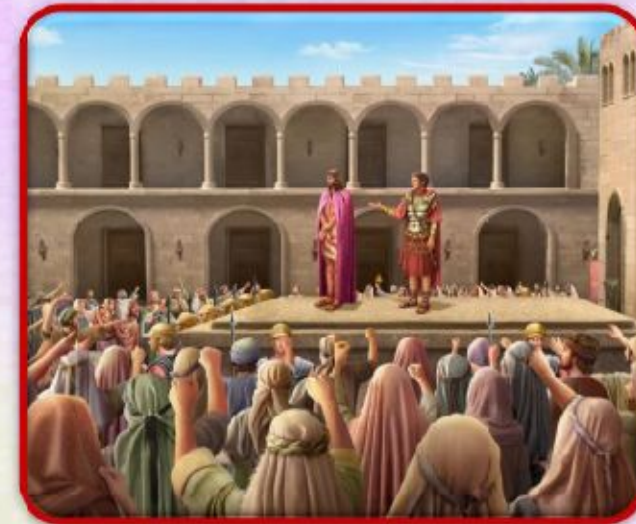
PILATE: BELIEVE AND YIELD

"What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him." (John 18:38)



After hearing Jesus speak about the truth, Pilate was convinced of his innocence (Jn. 18:37-38.)

Later, he again declared that Jesus had committed no crime (Jn. 19:4.) He even tried to appeal to the humanity of the crowd, and again declared his innocence (Jn. 19:5-6.)



But the climax was when he learned that Jesus declared himself to be the Son of God. Pilate panicked (Jn. 19:7-8.) As he spoke to Jesus, he became convinced of the reality of this claim (Jn. 19:9-11.)

If Jesus was what He claimed to be, then he had to make a choice: believe Him and let Him go; or reject Him and let Him die.

The pressure of the mob was stronger than his own conviction. He believed, but he gave in to the pressure. He lost his eternal life to preserve his power (John 19:15-16.) Will you deny your faith to please those around you?



“From the first, Pilate was convicted that Jesus was no common man. He believed Him to be an excellent character, and entirely innocent of the charges brought against Him. The angels who were witnessing the scene marked the convictions of the Roman governor, and to save him from engaging in the awful act of delivering Christ to be crucified, an angel was sent to Pilate’s wife, and gave her information through a dream that it was the Son of God in whose trial her husband was engaged, and that He was an innocent sufferer.”

She immediately sent a message to Pilate, stating that she had suffered many things in a dream on account of Jesus and warning him to have nothing to do with that holy man. The messenger, pressing hastily through the crowd, placed the letter in the hands of Pilate. As he read, he trembled and turned pale, and at once determined to have nothing to do with putting Christ to death. If the Jews would have the blood of Jesus, he would not give his influence to it, but would labor to deliver Him.” -Early Writings, p. 173.

What can we learn from Pilate's example about the dangers of allowing popular sentiment, even pressure, to keep us from doing what we believe is right?

(1) It is better to stand for the right than to compromise.

(2) There is danger in 'thinking' something is right because it may 'feel' right. (i.e. the feeling that one feels when there is a lessening or absence of pressure and popular displeasure).

(3) While doing what is right may be unpopular, bending to the pressure of others often leads to our lacking internal peace and can lead to dishonoring ourselves and suicide.

(4) Christians living in a predominantly un-godly world should expect popular sentiments to be contrary to their desired way of life. The best defense is to resist the offensive lifestyle and determine to live like Christ while doing what is right notwithstanding the cost.

(5) When we permit popular sentiment and pressure to dictate our behavior it can lead the person who is endeavoring to do what they know is right to social stress, which in turn can lead to the development of psychological problems ranging from exaggerated anxiety and depression to antisocial and violence-related behaviors.

(6) The believer runs the risk of distorting their Christian witness, losing their 'saltiness' and limit being used by God in ministry and mission when they align themselves with most popular sentiments or submitting to any un-godly pressure.

WEDNESDAY: THE WITNESS OF THOMAS

The resurrection of Christ was not an event Thomas had anticipated would advance God's kingdom. He may have also felt offended that he was left out when Jesus revealed Himself to the other disciples. These things led to him being a shaky, doubting disciple at first.

What can we learn from the story of Thomas about faith and doubt? What major mistake did Thomas make?

John. 20.19 That same day toward evening, the disciples decided to lock the doors of the upper room where they were staying. They were afraid because it was being rumored that they had stolen the body of Jesus, and Jewish authorities could come looking for them. Suddenly Jesus appeared in the room and proclaimed, “Peace to all of you.” **John. 20.20** He showed them the scars in His hands and the one by His heart. Then they realized that what Mary had said was true. Jesus was alive! He had risen from the dead! Their hearts were filled with joy. **John. 20.21** Again Jesus greeted them, saying, “Peace to all of you. As my Father sent me on my mission, so I’m sending you.” **John. 20.22** As He looked at them, His heart filled with compassion. Then He took a deep breath, and breathing toward them, said, “Receive the Holy Spirit until He comes upon you in His fullness.

John. 20.23 If you tell people that God has forgiven their sins, make sure they have turned away from them. If they have not turned away from them, they have not been forgiven.” **John. 20.24** Thomas, who was one of the twelve and sometimes called Didymus, had not been present to see Jesus for himself. **John. 20.25** When he returned, the disciples were eager to tell him what had happened. They said “The Lord is alive! He’s risen from the dead! We’ve seen Him and talked with Him!” Thomas said, “That’s impossible! Unless I can personally see the scars in His hands and touch them to make sure they’re real, and unless I can do the same to the scar by His heart, I refuse to believe what you’re saying.”

John. 20.26 One week later, Thomas had the chance to do just that. The disciples were in that same room, still keeping the door locked for fear that the Jews would come looking for them. Suddenly, Jesus stood in the middle of the room and said, “Peace to all of you.” **John. 20.27** He said to Thomas, “Thomas, come here. Look closely at the scars in my hands and feel them, then look at the scar by my heart and feel it. This will help you to believe that I’m no longer dead.” **John. 20.28** Thomas stood there speechless. Then he fell to his knees and said, “Lord, you’re alive! They were right! I believe! You are my Lord and my God!” **John. 20.29** Jesus said, “Thomas, because you’ve seen me in person, you believe what your brothers told you. Many won’t have the same privilege of seeing me in person as you’ve had, yet when they hear the gospel, they will believe and be just as thrilled as you are.”

John. 20.30 There were many other things that Jesus said and did in the presence of His disciples, but they didn't write them all down. **John. 20.31** The things they did record are written so you can build your faith on the fact that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Believing this, you can have eternal life because of what He has done for you.

THOMAS: BELIEVE BY SEEING

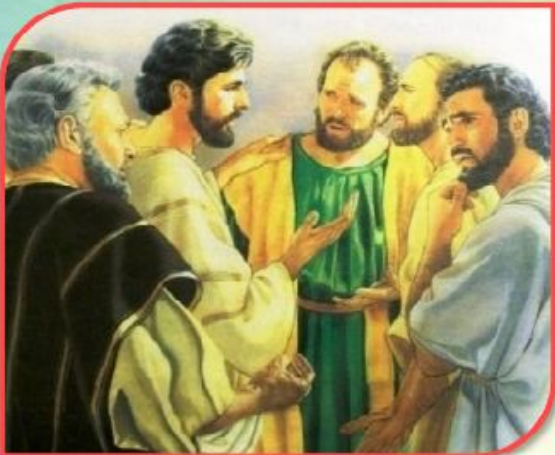
"Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." (John 20:27)



Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared in the upper room after his resurrection (Jn . 20:19, 24.)

Although the apostles and other witnesses assured him that they had seen the resurrected Jesus, Thomas did not believe them. Instead of accepting their testimony, he set his own conditions for belief (Jn. 20:25.)

He was not the only one who set his conditions: the king's officer, Nicodemus... Despite the three and a half years he spent with Jesus, Thomas did not seem to have enough evidence to believe in his resurrection.



Despite his unbelief, Jesus gave him new evidence by appearing before him, answering the exact doubt he had expressed, and inviting him to believe (Jn. 20:26-27.)

Even with all the evidence God gives us to believe, there is always room for doubt. It is our choice to accept that evidence and believe in Him.



What we can learn from the story of Thomas about faith and doubt:

(1) Faith is built on confidence in a person and revolves around his/her credibility while doubt revolves around a person's perception and senses.

(2) Faith is a choice and calls on the person to look outside of themselves. Doubt is a consequence and has the tendency to be unreasonable (as in possessing a disposition that disposes them not to believe except certain predetermined conditions are met) and evidenced based.

3) *“God ever provides men with sufficient evidence on which to base faith, and those who are willing to accept it can always find their way to Him. At the same time God does not compel men to believe against their will, for in so doing He would deprive them of the right to make their own choice.” (Ibid, SDA Commentary, above)*

(4) Heaven reserves a special blessing on those who exercise their faith... “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (Ch. 20:29); there is no blessing pronounced on those who doubt.

«In His treatment of Thomas, Jesus gave a lesson for His followers. His example shows how we should treat those whose faith is weak, and who make their doubts prominent. Jesus did not overwhelm Thomas with reproach, nor did He enter into controversy with him. He revealed Himself to the doubting one. Thomas had been most unreasonable in dictating the conditions of his faith, but Jesus, by His generous love and consideration, broke down all the barriers. Unbelief is seldom overcome by controversy. It is rather put upon self-defense, and finds new support and excuse. But let Jesus, in His love and mercy, be revealed as the crucified Saviour, and from many once unwilling lips will be heard the acknowledgment of Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" »

EGW (The Desire of Ages, pg. 808)



YOU AND I: BELIEVING WITHOUT SEEING

"[...] blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29b)

What evidence does God give us to believe in Him?



Nature



Although imperfect and affected by sin, nature teaches us the intelligent design with which it was endowed by its Creator

The Word of God



In the Bible we find abundant testimonies of the powerful works of God in history and in people. We have in it, especially, the testimony of Jesus himself

The prophecies



The fulfillment of prophecies that announced historical events many centuries before their fulfillment (Greece invading Persia; Tyre devastated; the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem; etc.)

Personal experience



How is our heart transformed?
How have we seen the hand of God at work?
What answers do we get to our prayers?

To believe, in short, is to see a greater reality that is beyond our immediate circumstances.

“You may say that you believe in Jesus, when you have an appreciation of the cost of salvation. You may make this claim, when you feel that Jesus died for you on the cruel cross of Calvary; when you have an intelligent, understanding faith that his death makes it possible for you to cease from sin, and to perfect a righteous character through the grace of God, bestowed upon you as the purchase of Christ's blood.”

EGW (The Review and Herald, July 24 , 1888)