

THE TWELVE (10)

Want to be with Jesus

A. Introduction

1. Who were the Twelve?

The Twelve were men who were called to believe in Jesus and to follow Him.

The Twelve were men who were chosen from a larger group of disciples to be apostles and were given what they needed to do this role.

2. What do we learn from The Twelve about what it means to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Andrew taught us that disciples of Jesus introduce people to Jesus.

Simon Peter taught us that disciples of Jesus are changed by Jesus to be like Jesus.

John taught us that disciples of Jesus love the truth about Jesus.

James taught us that disciples of Jesus learn to suffer for Jesus.

Philip taught us that disciples of Jesus never stop learning about Jesus.

Nathanael Bartholomew taught us that disciples of Jesus are waiting for Jesus.

Matthew Levi taught us that disciples of Jesus show the welcome of Jesus.

B. Meet Thomas

1. What do we know about Thomas?

A twin – three times John calls him 'Didymus' which means 'the twin'.

"Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples." (John 11:16)

"Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve." (John 20:24)

"Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee." (John 21:2)

A fisherman – maybe a co-worker of some of the other disciples who were fishermen.

"Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go out with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing." (John 21:1-3)

An apostle – chosen by Jesus.

"These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector." (Matthew 10:2-3)

A doubter? – Doubting Thomas.

"But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." (John 20:25)

2. Isn't the big lesson Thomas teaches us, is that disciples hear and believe the eyewitness testimony about Jesus?

Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared to His disciples.

"Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" (John 20:24-25)

But Thomas did not believe their testimony – he wanted hard evidence.

"But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." (John 20:25)

Thomas didn't need to see the evidence with his own eyes because he had the testimony of eyewitnesses.

Jesus appeared to his disciples again when Thomas was present, and graciously gave Thomas the evidence he wanted.

"A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 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 20:26-27)

Thomas is offered the evidence he wanted, but it doesn't seem like he needed it.

"Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Seeing for him was believing.

He publicly and personally confesses that Jesus was his Lord and God.

"Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

Jesus says that seeing is no longer necessary for belief in Him, and everything He did including His resurrection, because the testimony of the eyewitnesses is sufficient.

So isn't the lesson from Thomas that disciples hear and believe the eyewitness testimony about Jesus?

3. Don't all the disciples teach us this lesson?

Weren't all the disciples', not just Thomas, doubters and slow to believe?

"When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense." (Luke 24:9-11)

"When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it. Afterwards Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either. Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen." (Mark 16:9-14)

4. What do we learn from Thomas about what it means to be disciples of the Lord Jesus?

Thomas appears 8 times in the Bible. 4 occasions are the list of the apostles (in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts); the other 4 are in John's Gospel.

Disciples of Jesus want to be with Jesus.

C. Thomas wanted to be with Jesus

1. Thomas wanted to be with Jesus even if it meant dying with Him.

It was unsafe for Jesus to be near Jerusalem.

“Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.” (John 10:39)

But then news came that Lazarus was sick.

“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. Then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?” (John 11:5-8)

Even though Lazarus was now dead, Jesus wanted to visit him and his sisters.

The disciples were convinced that by doing so, Jesus would be killed.

“Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” (John 11:16)

Thomas would rather go with Jesus and die with Him, than be separated from Him.

2. Thomas wanted to be with Jesus and asked Him how to get to where He was going so he could be with Him.

Jesus taught His disciples that He would soon be returning to heaven.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” (John 14:1-4)

It was clear that there was much Thomas did not understand.

“Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:5)

Yet here was a man who did not want to be separated from Jesus.

Jesus graciously gave him an answer to his question.

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” (John 14:6-7)

3. Thomas wanted to be with Jesus so much that he was distraught when he thought Jesus was gone forever.

After Jesus died on the cross, Thomas was sure that he would never see Him again.

“Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” (John 20:24-25)

When he heard the news that Jesus was now alive it sounded too good to be true.

He would not make that mistake again.

“Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.” (John 21:12)

4. Thomas wanted to be with Jesus and he would one day be again.

It is most likely that Thomas took the good news of Jesus outside the Roman Empire, travelling as far as India.

It is possible that he was martyred by being speared to death.

Then came the reunion with his Lord.

"Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

E. Disciples want to be with Jesus

1. We don't need to see Christ to believe in Him.

"Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:29-30)

"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:8-9)

2. We don't need to see Christ to be with Him – because His Spirit lives within us.

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." (Romans 8:9)

When we read the Bible – He is with us.

"She had a sister called Mary, who sat the Lord's feet listening to what he said." (Luke 10:39)

When we pray – He is with us.

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

"Jesus makes all your prayers good prayers, makes you a good pray-er. Your prayers are a delight to God the Father. He hears them through his Son. He looks on you in his Son and delights in you." (Tim Chester)

When we gather with God's people – He is with us.

"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:20)

When we make disciples – He is with us.

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

3. But one day we who believe in Him will be with Him and see Him.

"I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far." (Philippians 1:23)

"But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2)

Do want to be with Jesus now and for all eternity?