



## SoulShare

April 13, 2019, 9:00—10:30 am Breakfast & Discussion

### I am Thomas

You know me by my nickname, “Doubting Thomas,” but please let me clarify. And also remember that I was not the only skeptical disciple. Nathanael was tough-minded and like me got his questions answered by Jesus. And after all, Jesus did choose me to be one of the twelve. He does nothing randomly, you know.

I was always a curious child. Those of you with children know that they go through stages of questions. “What’s that?” as they learn language and then, “Why?” That one, for some children becomes an exercise of power over adults because no matter what the answer, they can always ask, “Why?” The adult follows the questions up-stream into shallow water ending with, “Because it just does,” or “Because I said so.”

I guess I never grew out of that stage. But really, I was concerned with logic and truth. I understood how the emotions can affect perceptions. If you really want something to be true, you may be easily deceived.

It took me a while to believe that Jesus was really the Messiah. Nathanael flipped from skeptic to believer when Jesus told him what had happened before they met, even ribbing him about it. I think I was still processing everything when Jesus died. Certainly, just before Lazarus was raised, I was not all that convinced that we and Jesus were going to end well.

Why did Jesus appear to the others at a time when I was not there? That was not an accident, you know. If the field you call “psychology” had been invented in my day, I would probably have pursued it. Even without formal training I understood the power of the crowd. Had we not seen it in the Hosannas that greeted Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem? Then that mob “psychology” came back in Pilate’s courtyard as they called for crucifixion.

Jesus knew that I needed a personal touch. When he quoted what I had said in that very room a week before, all my skepticism melted away. I had experienced Jesus, not by touching Him but by knowing Him. What had been there before but hidden from me because of my rebellious will was suddenly revealed and clear.

I was present when He commanded us to make disciples of all nations, starting where we were and continuing to the ends of the earth. We did need a bit of a push to leave Jerusalem and Judea but eventually we did go.

It is not in Scripture but you will find reliable records of my travel to India and my death there. My personal makeup and experience were exactly what the Lord wanted to use in reaching that thoughtful but misguided people. Their hopeless philosophy of endless rebirths and relentless karma had rejected reason and

affirmed the world as illusion. To perceive this counter-intuitive concept of reality, one needed enlightenment. It was a strategy of the Enemy that bound their souls in deep deception.

But I had experienced an enlightenment myself. My heart had been opened to the Way, the Truth and the Life. By the power of the Holy Spirit, those with open hearts were able to see the truth and bring the message of hope to others trapped in the kingdom of Satan. I count it a privilege to have died while carrying out the command of my Lord and Savior.

A church was established that still calls itself partly by my name, Thomas Christians – I wish they had used only the name of my Master. But it allows you to trace the fact that they live into your day. One of their number is an evangelist named Zacharias who has even come to your country. And why was that ironic turn-about necessary? Because the culture that was formed by a Biblical worldview became bored with God-given reason and embraced mysticism, never stopping to look at where it had led in the country of its origin.

John 11:11-16, John 14:1-17, John 1:43-51, John 20:19-31

*Do you know any “Doubting Thomases”?*

*Can they be annoying?*

*What do they add to any discussion?*

*Look at the incident that convinced Nathanael. John 1:45—49. What was Jesus doing in that encounter?*

*How can we guard ourselves against “wishful thinking”?*

*What does it do to our witness if we don’t — if we are gullible about a questionable claim?*

*How did Jesus give individualized treatment to Thomas in John 20:26—28?*

*Thomas believed because he truly encountered Jesus. How are we able to do that in the present era?*

*What are some of the ways Jesus has shown Himself to be real to you?*

*Compare Jesus’ approach to Thomas with his approach to Peter in John 21:15—17.*

*Scripture does not record the ministry of Thomas but credible history records him as the apostle to India, the church of India claims him and his grave is in India.*

*Consider the ancient philosophy of Hinduism — re-labeled in the west as New Age — and its effects.*

*How does belief in reincarnation affect the ability to understand and respond to the gospel?*

*What does the concept of karma do to a person’s attitude towards those who are suffering?*

*What does relativism and rejection of reason do to the ability to think about anything?*

*What can be said to the person who states, “There is no absolute truth”?*

*Does it make sense that a converted skeptic is suited to convey the gospel to people who doubt the reality of the external world and the reliability of the mind to apprehend it?*

*What does the scripture teach about the relationship of reason and faith? 1Pe 3:15 “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,”*

*Why “with gentleness and respect?”*

*What about the people who do not ask? What should we say to them?*

*Is there a way to get people to see the logical conclusions of their worldview?*

*What does this teach us about evangelism?*

*When are spiritual seeds likely to sprout in a person’s heart?*

*How has evangelism changed between the days of the Billy Graham Crusades and today?*

*How should we approach skepticism in our friends and relatives?*