



## Seeing and Believing Bible Study

[Please provide: Bibles and copies of the Bible study for attendees.]

### Introduction

“I’ll believe it when I see it.” We’ve heard the claims far too many times: advertisers promising us that their products are the best; politicians promising us a far better future than we could ever imagine if only they are elected; family and friends making promises they never intend to keep. The world has made us skeptics. In order for us to believe something is true, we need evidence - something tangible that we can see with our own eyes. If we cannot see it, and it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

So it was with Thomas, one of Jesus’ disciples. He heard the good news from his fellow disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that they had seen Jesus. Thomas, however, was not there in that locked room when Jesus first appeared to them, and he refused to believe. He wanted real, tangible proof that Jesus had actually risen from the dead. He wanted to see Jesus with his own eyes in order to believe what the other disciples had told him.

### Thomas, Doubting Thomas

In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes several prophecies about the purpose for which He came. Read John 3:14-15, John 8:28, and John 12:27-36. What did Jesus come to do?

It is in John 11:16 that we first meet Thomas. Jesus was on His way to Bethany, where He would raise Lazarus from the dead. Since the Judeans were seeking to kill Jesus, Thomas knew that there was danger involved with traveling alongside Jesus to Bethany. He knew that Jesus was likely going to die. What did Thomas say in John 11:16? Why was he willing to go with Jesus, even though he knew the danger?

Thomas makes a second appearance in John 14. Here, Jesus speaks of His departure to go and prepare a place in His Father’s house. However, Thomas does not understand the meaning of Jesus’ words. What does Thomas say in John 14:5, and how does Jesus respond?

Thomas’ appearances in John 11 and 14 serve as the backdrop for the account following Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. We do not know if Thomas witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion. He is not listed among those who were near the cross in John 19:25-27. We do know that Thomas was intimately familiar with what happened to Jesus at His crucifixion, as John 20 makes clear.

After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples. Read John 20:19-23. Where were the disciples when Jesus appeared to them, and what were they doing?

Read John 20:24-25. Thomas knew Jesus would have marks of the nails in His hands, and also knew a spear had been thrust into Jesus' side. Why did he refuse to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead?

We call him "Doubting Thomas" because of his words in John 20:25: "*Unless I see ... I will never believe.*" Yet, Thomas was not just **doubting** Jesus' resurrection; he refused to believe.

Read John 20:26-28. What did it take for Thomas to believe? What was Thomas' confession when he finally saw Jesus?

### **Give Me Eyes to See**

In John 20:29, Jesus says to Thomas, "*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" Thomas received the proof that he needed in order to believe that Jesus had, in fact, risen from the dead. However, we do not have the luxury of seeing Jesus' resurrected body as those disciples did some 2,000 years ago. How are we able to believe since we have not seen with our own eyes?

Read together the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed from *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

By the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives through the Means of Grace, God's Holy Word, and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, God gives to us and keeps us in the faith through which we believe in His promises. Through the faith we have received, God shows His great love for us that sent Jesus to die on the cross on our behalf. As God's children, redeemed by *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29), God leads us to repentance and promises us forgiveness and everlasting life.

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