

The Case for Thomas

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[3428 Words]



If you were to begin praising Peter's speech to the ruling body in Jerusalem where he defended the healing power of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:8ff), and I were to immediately interject: Oh, you mean Peter the cry baby? For so he is depicted in Scripture and in art. Of if I were to say: Oh, you mean Peter the denier of Christ? For so he acted during Jesus's secret trials, then although I would be technically correct, I would have missed the point. And if

you were to begin praising Paul for explaining the passing of the Law of Moses in Romans and I were to interject: Oh, you mean that carnal man who was often under the influence of sin (Romans 7:14), again I would have missed the point for a Christian is not known by his former sins. If this is true, then why is it that Christians frequently speak of "Doubting Thomas"? Truly this Christian and Apostle had more to leave posterity than doubt. Or is this done just because many Christians are lazy and do not have the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to read behind the headlines?

Referenced Data Supporting the Case for Thomas

Pericope	Scripture	Action
§31	Jn 1:35-51	Jesus calls His first disciples
§63	Mk 3:13-19 Lk 6:12-16	Appointing the twelve apostles
§99	Mt 10: 1-42 Mk 6:7-11 Lk 9:1-5	Pairing the twelve apostles
§170	Jn 11:1-16	March to Lazarus's house
§216	Lk 22:31-38 Jn 13:31-38	Two swords are enough [<i>hikanos</i>]!

	(Mk 14:30)	
§218	Jn 14:1-31	Upper Room Discourse. Thomas asks: What is the way?
§226	Mt 26:36-46	“enough” [<i>apecho</i>]!
§227	Mt 26:47-56	Peter cuts off Malchus’s ear
	Mk 14:43-52	Apostles ask: Shall we draw?
	Lk 22:47-53	
	Jn 18:2-12	
§253	Lk 24:36-43	Fifth apparition to ten Apostles. Thomas is missing.
	Jn 20:19-25	
§254	Mk 16:14	Sixth apparition to 11 Apostles. My Lord and My God!
	Jn 20:26-31	
	1 Cor 15:5b	
§255	Jn 21:1-25	Seventh apparition to seven apostles who were fishermen.
§258	Lk 24:44-49	Tenth apparition to eleven in Jerusalem
	Acts 1:3-13	Final list of eleven apostles

Notes: The above pericopes (§) are listed in *One Gospel in Clear English* as a single integrated chronological account.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke construct four lists of the 12 and 11 apostles. Only John gives us personal character information on the man Thomas.

Jesus Begins Calling His Disciples (§31)

In the fullness of time, Jesus being 37 years old, left his four brothers and two sisters behind Him as he walked from Nazareth to the Jordan River opposite Jericho. It was an easy 70-mile downhill walk dropping 2400-ft in elevation. The journey took about three days. John the Baptist was baptizing in the Jordan River at the same spot where His Jewish ancestors had entered the Holy Land under Joshua 1400-years earlier (circa 1406 BC) while Moses watched from Mt. Nebo. It was February in the year 30 AD. The average air temperature was 52°F and Jesus was to be baptized full emersion in the 47°F waters of the Jordan River. When Jesus emerged from the cold water, two things happened:

- 1) He had just imputed the sins of the world to Himself:
 - a) We sinners identify with Jesus,
 - b) but Jesus identified with our sins; and
- 2) The Trinity was manifest for the first time in history:
 - a) The anthropomorphic **voice** of the Father was heard from the heavens: “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”.
 - b) The **body** of the Son was seen in the Jordan, and

c) the Holy Spirit was manifest in the **form** of a dove remaining on the Son's shoulder.

Immediately afterwards, Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Satan for 40 days and 40 nights. All Christians will at one time in their lives be tested like Abraham by the Lord. Can you stand up to the test? Jesus lost 40 pounds during His fast.

Just as Jesus was emerging victorious from His 40-day temptation by Satan, John the Baptist was experiencing the first day of his seven-day experience: 1) On the first day, the religious authorities hostile to Jesus asked him if he were Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet (Dt 18:15)? He replied no to all and referred to himself as just a voice crying in the wilderness. 2) On the second day, John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. 3) On the third day at 10 AM, John the Baptist reidentified Jesus as the Lamb of God in the presence of John and Andrew. When he did, they immediately began to follow Him. And Andrew ran to tell his brother Peter, but John's brother, James the Greater, was working in Bethsaida, and could not be immediately contacted. 4) On the fourth day, when they were within 20 miles of Bethsaida, The Lord found Philip who immediately went to tell his brother-like friend, Nathanael (Bartholomew). Now John, Andrew and Peter, Philip and Bartholomew were all from Bethsaida a suburb of Capernaum. 5) It is not said what happened on day 5. 6) It is also not said what happened on day 6. 7) But on day seven, after God had proverbially done all His work and rested, there was a wedding in Cana. Jesus with his six disciples (brothers John and James the Greater, brothers Andrew and Peter, brotherly friends Philip and Bartholomew) numbered seven. His mother, four brothers and two sisters also numbered seven. So there were 14 at the wedding from Joseph's house. **Thomas was not among them.**

Appointing the Twelve Apostles (§63)

Just prior to the second of the four Passovers in Jesus's ministry, He performed the first of seven healings on the Sabbath in a synagogue in Capernaum (§48) and shortly after that performed the first of seven Messianic miracles by cleansing a leper (§52). Consequently the Jews were hounding Him looking for the slightest misstep in a man who had the aura of Messiah. At the second Passover in Jerusalem, Jesus again roiled the waters by performing the second healing on a Sabbath and by saying, as related by John, that He being the Son was equal to the Father. Retreating to the quieter region of Galilee, Jesus two weeks later, again healed on the Sabbath (§60) thus stirring up the local hierarchy. At the same time, a very large crowd of people from the outlying Aramaic speaking regions of Idumea, Decapolis, Tyre, and Sidon began to gather in Capernaum (§62). So Jesus knew that the time was right to officially name his Apostles and address the crowd.

As Jesus withdrew in sight of the crowd from the Sea of Galilee in May of AD 31, He took his closest disciples with Him to Mt. Eremos about three miles from Capernaum and 509-ft over the lake in elevation. At the base of Mt. Eremos was the Plain of Gennesaret where a large crowd could gather. Jesus spent the night alone, but in the proximity of fifty or so of His disciples. In

the morning he came down from the peak and officially named The Twelve from the group of disciples, and then descended to the plain to address the crowd for the famous Sermon on the Plain of the Mount.

The first six disciples called to be Apostles were the two pairs of brothers and two brotherly friends who had previously attended the Wedding of Cana with Him. They were Peter and Andrew, James the Greater and John, Philip and Bartholomew. The second six were Matthew, **Thomas**, James the Lesser, Simon the Zealot, Thadeus, and Judas Iscariot. **Here we have the first mention of Thomas.**

Pairing the Twelve Apostles (§99)

Six months later, in November of AD 31, Jesus performed his second of seven Messianic miracles (§79). Because the second miracle put the ruling hierarchy on the spot, they had to issue a public statement about Him. He was officially rejected by the Jews on the false premise that He cast out demons by the power of Beelzebul.

Four months later, in March of AD 32 just before the hidden third Passover, Jesus paired The Twelve sending them out in pairs to exorcise, heal, and proclaim the kingdom of God. The pairs were Peter and Andrew, James the Greater and John, Philip and Bartholomew, **Thomas and Matthew**, James the Lesser and Thadeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas. This is the second mention of Thomas. Matthew, the former tax collector, was an influential man who knew many important people and had enough money to throw a banquet (§54, 55). Thomas was paired with him. These were the two most influential Apostles in the second six.

The March to Lazarus's House (§170)

Early in January of AD 33 just before the fourth and final Passover, Jesus received news while He was keeping His distance from Herod Antipas in Perea and the hierarchy in Jerusalem, that His friend Lazarus had taken sick (§170). Because all things were prophesied to come to pass on the fourth Passover just three months distant, Jesus decided that raising Lazarus from the dead would be the perfect miracle to polarize the people into those that loved Him and those that hated Him. So when Jesus announced from Perea: **“Let's go to Judea again”**, the Apostles anxiously replied that the Jews had just tried to stone Him at the Feast of Dedication just a month ago (§160 and §138). Jesus then answered that He was glad that He was not there when Lazarus died, but that this event had been arranged to increase their faith. **To this Thomas, expressing the feelings of the others replied: “Let us all go so that we can die with Him.” Thomas was a man of faith and action.** John remembered this remark and brought it to parchment sixty years later and if Thomas were speaking sarcastically, John would have told us. No. His words bespoke his heart.

Two Swords (§216)

On Thursday evening 31 March 33 AD during the Last Supper, Jesus, in preparing his disciples for His departure, gave the missing tenth New Testamental commandment: “Be known as My disciples by your love for one another.” After this Jesus said that if you do not have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one so that He might be judged as a lawbreaker according to Scripture (“And He was judged to be a lawbreaker” Isaiah 53:12.). The Apostles then said: “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And the Lord replied: (Two swords are) enough. Some exegetes say that the Greek word for enough (*hikanos*) meant that enough had been said. But that meaning is more appropriately implied by *apecho* when the Lord said: Why do you keep falling asleep! Enough of this. *Hikanos* is for enough of a quantifiable amount—in this case two swords.

Upper Room Discourse (§218)

At the beginning of the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus said that He was going away to build a house for them and that they already knew where He was going, to which **Thomas replied: “Lord, we do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?”** This gave Jesus an opening to deliver the sixth of His seven I Ams. Jesus rather than scolding Thomas answered his question saying: “**I am the way, the truth, and the life.**” Philip then became evocative and said: “Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.” Later, after promising to send the Helper only to believers who keep His commandments, Judas not Iscariot (Thadeus) said: “Lord, what has changed such that You are going to disclose Yourself only to us, but not to the world?” To this Jesus reiterated that to love Him is to keep His commandments. Later during the teaching, the Apostles replied together: “Now You are speaking plainly and not using veiled language. “Now we know that you know all things and do not have to wait for us to vocalize our thoughts. Therefore, we believe that You (Messiah) came from God (John 16:30).”

In summary, Thomas was the first of the three individual speakers that evening. Only John calls Thomas, Didymus the Twin, and only John relates the Upper Room Discourse.

Thomas Missing from Fifth Apparition (§253)

After the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus appeared ten times to His people. At the fifth apparition, the Apostles who had not yet developed enough faith to be fearless for the Lord were holed up in a sealed room. **Only Thomas was brave enough to leave that room to gather supplies for the group in the city of Jerusalem.** Jesus appeared to the Ten and said: “Peace be with you. Why are you so frightened? Why do you have doubts? Why have you not believed the witnesses who saw Me? See My hands and my feet. It is Me. A ghost does not have flesh and bones.”

Later when Thomas rejoined the group after doing what they were afraid to do, the ten Apostles recounted the details of the apparition. To this Thomas replied using the very same words the others used on him: “Unless I too see the nail marks in His hands and feet, I will not believe.”

It should be remarked here that John was the first to believe, and that occurred inside the tomb with no need for a personal apparition. This fact applies only to John. Peter was the next to believe because the fourth apparition was personally directed to him. Next, ten of the Apostles believed because of group apparition number 5. Thomas being no different in faith than the other ten also needed a personal apparition. The detail put into his denial (nail marks in His hands and feet) were said because the other Apostles were using these very words. Thomas felt that for all his efforts, he had been left out.

Notice that both Peter and **Thomas** had personal apparitions numbered 4 and 6 respectively. Although apparition 6 was in the presence of the eleven apostles, it was for Thomas’s benefit.

Sixth Apparition (§254)

When Jesus reappeared to the Apostles a week later, Thomas was among them. Jesus looked at Thomas and said: **“Come here and touch the nail wounds in my hands, and the lance wound in my side. Do not doubt. Believe!”** Thomas responded: **“My Lord and My God!”** Then Jesus continued: **“You believe because you have seen Me. Blessed are they who believe without seeing.”**

In the above encounter, Jesus used the same words that Thomas had used expressing his doubt to the other ten Apostles. Thomas’s response is striking—so striking, in fact, that John made it the climax of the last chapter of his account of the Gospel—My Lord and my God! No other disciple had made such a striking affirmation of Jesus’s deity.

Seventh Apparition to the Seven Apostles (§255)

Here we finally see that the eleven timid Apostles finally accrued enough faith to venture out of their house in Jerusalem and go as the angel had directed to a mountain in Galilee. Nevertheless we do not find them preaching, but reverted to their former comfortable occupation of fishing. The Master, however, is not overtly displeased with them and gives the seven important instructions for the future. And the interactions among Jesus, Peter, and John as told 60 years later by John are revealing.

But the most revealing clue is presented in the second sentence of this pericope. Here John names the seven fishermen saying: **“The seven were Simon Peter, Thomas the twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, John, James the Greater, and two other apostles (possible Andrew and Philip).**

First of all, the two unnamed Apostles are the brother of Peter or Andrew and the brother of Nathanael of Cana (Bartholomew) or Philip. There is no way it could have been somebody

else. Brothers were inseparable. When Jesus picked the first three disciples after His baptism, each ran immediately afterwards to find his brother. Then the two pairs of brothers and two brotherly friends with Jesus were a group of seven.

Finally there is but one looming question. Who was the Thomas's twin called *Didymus* in Greek and *ta'am* in Hebrew? Now when Jesus appointed the Twelve, Thomas was paired with Matthew. Later when Jesus paired the Apostles for a mission, again two evangelists pair Thomas with Matthew. Finally in Acts 1:13, when the 11 Apostles are paired, Thomas is now with Philip who has a more prominent role in evangelism as with the eunuch from Nubia. If Thomas were a biological twin then like the first three disciples picked by Jesus, he would have run and notified his brother. But this was not the case. So, to whom was Thomas a twin? John bares the answer: "**The seven were Peter, Thomas the twin...**" So Peter was Thomas's twin! There is no other reason for listing Thomas in second place when he was in fact the seventh or eighth called. The inner circle consisted of Peter, John, and his brother James the Greater. These were the inner three. Peter's brother, Andrew, is the next closest to the inner circle. The only reason for listing Thomas adjacent to Peter is because he is Peter's twin—specifically his character twin, not his biological twin.

Who Carried the Second Sword?

We learned above that at the conclusion to the Last Supper, Jesus said that two swords were enough [*hikanos*] so that He could fulfill Isaiah 53:12 so that the Messiah would appear to be a law breaker. We know that Peter wielded one sword even before a command was given to do so. Peter was impetuous. But the second sword was still in its scabbard because no order had been given to attack. **Who did not draw his sword because the command had not been given? It was obviously Thomas, Peter's twin, who stated on the march to Lazarus: "Let us go so that we can die with Him." This was the man who offered to go out of the barricaded house in Jerusalem to get food and supplies for the other ten apostles because they were afraid to venture out. Thomas was as bold in his faith as he was in his actions, but not as impetuous as Peter, his twin.**

Thomas in History

There is a strong early Christian tradition that the Apostle Thomas evangelized Syria, Persia, North-Western India, and Southern India. There is talk that he might have evangelized 17,000 people. In fact, he was so popular that at least two pseudepigraphical works used his name as the author. The *Acts of Thomas* describes his second mission through India, while the *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection of proverb-like sayings attributed to Jesus. Both works are probably third-century creations and do not elicit true apostolic Christianity, but are rather docetic, meaning that the spiritual aspects of Jesus are accentuated while the physical are diminished or denied altogether. This is why some early docetic works tend to portray Thomas as the physical counterpart or identical twin of the spiritual Jesus. I maintain that John writing in the late nineties saw this developing trend and spoke out against it by admitting that Thomas was a twin, but in fact, Peter's character twin and not Jesus's physical identical twin. So here, in the last chapter of John we have the mortar to the stones laid in the

first chapter (Jn 1:1-13), namely that Jesus was the *memra*, the Shekinah Glory, that came in the flesh!

In any event, it is impossible that books were written and legends developed around the name of a man that was unknown. Thomas was truly well known in the East.

Summary

1. Thomas was not among the first six disciples called after Jesus's baptism.
2. Thomas was paired first with Matthew, a prominent man in Capernaum, and then with Philip, who molded Caesarea into the spiritual center for Hellenistic Hebrew Christians. These two were among the second six.
3. "Let us all go so that we can die with Him." (march from Perea to Bethany)
4. "Lord, we do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?"
5. After the Resurrection when ten of the Apostles were afraid to leave the house and venture out into Jerusalem, Thomas went for supplies and information. (5th Apparition of ten)
6. "My Lord and my God!" (6th Apparition and climax to final chapter of John). Like Peter's apparition, this apparition was specifically for a single Apostle.
7. The Docetists portrayed Thomas as Jesus's physical twin. John countermanded this anthropology by portraying Thomas as Peter's character twin—not his physical twin—the whole point of this being that Jesus, the *memra* and Shekinah Glory, had come in the flesh.
8. Peter and Thomas carried the two swords.
9. Thomas was known well enough in India such that two pseudepigrapha claimed him as an author.