

# What Thomas Missed

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: John 20:19-21, 24-29

A. Attendance seems to be a problem in nearly all churches. Over the years, congregations everywhere have been experiencing an ever increasing drop in attendance on Sunday evenings and Wednesday nights. Gospel meetings are even worse with more than a third of the members staying home. Faithful attendance used to be one of the identifying characteristics of members of the Lord's church. Now we have an increasing percentage of members who appear to believe that if they drop in on Sunday morning for the communion service, they have fulfilled their obligation to the Lord for the week. Not going to preach today about why you need to attend more faithfully; going to tell you what you miss when you stay home to do chores, or watch TV, or go shopping, or catch up on your sleep, or whatever else you think is more important than assembling with God and His children.

B. Why are we having an increasing problem with attendance?

1. Some have an honorable reason and cannot attend when they really want to. This is not what we are addressing with in this lesson.
2. Some have a denominational background where they were led to believe that attendance is not important. They need instruction.
3. Some come from churches that meet only once or twice a week. Therefore, they think that all other services than the one on Sunday morning are optional. Again, they need instruction.
4. Some are lukewarm; they know they should attend, but lack true devotion to the Lord.
5. Some are still sheltering at home concerned that if they attend, they will risk contracting a dangerous illness. I am not going to tell you that you are mistaken. The fact is, this is our new normal and we may never get back to the pre-COVID days. At some point, you will have to decide to accept the risk. I'm not going to tell you that you are in error; I want to talk about what you are missing.

C. There are two ways to approach the issue of attendance.

1. We can look at the severe consequences for not attending.
2. We can look at the benefits received in attending.

D. What did Thomas miss by not being with the disciples when they gathered together on that first day of the week?

1. We don't know why Thomas was not there (one can only speculate about the reason), but we do know some things he missed because he was not there.

## I. HE MISSED THE JOY OF BEING WITH THE LORD - VS. 20

A. Jesus tried to prepare His disciples for what was to come - John 16:22-24

1. Consider the happiness and rejoicing on that first day when they saw the Lord alive again - Matt. 28:5-10

## **II. HE MISSED THE COMFORT OF BEING WITH THE OTHER DISCIPLES**

- A. Especially at a time when they needed each other
- B. They spent years in close fellowship and work with the Lord and each other.
  - 1. They had so many experiences in common, shared the same foxhole
  - 2. They had many things to talk about. They had shared a common disappointment - Luke 24:21
- C. At that time in the upper room they would have been sharing the common benefit of just being together.
  - 1. Comfort - 1Thes. 4:18, 5:11
  - 2. Prayer - Phil. 4:6-7
  - 3. From the Scriptures - Rom. 15:4
- D. Thomas missed all these things because he was not there.

## **III. HE MISSED THE EVIDENCE HE NEEDED TO REMOVE DOUBT**

- A. For a whole week after this, Thomas remained in doubt (vs. 26).
  - 1. The other disciples were convinced, but not Thomas.
- B. Generally, attendance is a faith problem. The weak who look for an excuse will find one.
  - 1. The strong, who face the same problems and time constraints as the weak, somehow manage to make the time to attend.
- C. Attendance will help build our faith - Luke 17:5; Rom. 10:17
  - 1. How often have preachers prepared sermon for specific needs and the disciples in greatest need of that edification do not attend?
  - 2. We must preach these lessons on Sunday mornings instead of on Sunday nights because the ones who need them most won't be here.

## **IV. HE MISSED THE COMMISSION GIVEN BY JESUS - VS. 22-23**

- A. This is the nearest thing in John's account to the great commission.
  - 1. This was a figure of the Spirit which was to come upon them on the day of Pentecost.
    - a. The Lord was committing to these men the teaching upon which remission of sins would hinge.
  - 2. Thomas didn't hear it because he wasn't there.
  - 3. It is possible that the Lord could return during one of our worship services. What if you are not here? Will your excuse, which is evidently satisfactory to you, be satisfactory to the Lord?
  - 4. What if the very things taught in our Bible classes is what your children need to encourage them to obey the gospel or remain faithful all their lives, was missed because you did not make that extra effort to get them here?

## **V. HE MISSED THE HONOR SHARED BY BEING THERE**

- A. When you talk about a doubter, who do you think of? Doubting John? Doubting Peter?
- B. Even though the doubt was later removed (and the Lord forgave him); nevertheless, the name remained.

1. Like nails driven in drywall; you can pull out the nails, but what do they leave behind?
2. At our services we may receive the instruction or strength we need to overcome a certain temptation - Luke 8:13; Mark 14:38

## **VI. WHAT DO CHRISTIANS MISS WHEN THEY ARE NOT AT SERVICES?**

- A. The joy of being with the Lord - Psalm 122:1, 16:11, 100:1-2; Matt. 18:20
  1. "The perfect church service, would be one we were almost unaware of. Our attention would have been on God." (C.S. Lewis)
- B. The comfort of being with the disciples of the Lord
  1. A refuge from the world. Are you uncomfortable in the world and feel the need for a temporary respite from it?
  2. We can draw strength from being with other Christians. We have a common goal--to reach heaven someday, and we are working together to obtain it.
- C. The evidence needed to remove doubt
  1. Faith is developed and strengthened through examining God's word
    - a. John 20:30-31
  2. Every time you miss, you miss a lesson you may have truly needed, perhaps what you needed to keep you from falling in the future.
  3. "The Church is not a gallery for the exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones." (Henry Ward Beecher)
- D. The application of the commission given by Jesus. If we are not always here, we may miss some important things that have to do with salvation. Perhaps the joys of seeing some soul obey the Lord.
- E. The honor that rightfully belongs to the faithful.
  1. I know that it is good for me to be here at all services - James 4:17
  2. There is a certain amount of self-esteem and honor among those who faithfully serve the Lord that does not belong to those who are casual in their attendance - 1Tim. 5:17, 3:13; Phil. 2:29-30
  3. One can be committed to a church without being committed to Christ, but it is not possible to be committed to Christ without being committed to His church.

### **Conclusion:**

- A. By failing to be with the disciples when Jesus was there, Thomas did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus; and therefore, since he did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, he could not believe in his own salvation and resurrection. He lost so much by not being there.
- B. "On the most elementary level, you do not have to go to church to be a Christian. You do not have to go home to be married either. But in both cases if you do not, you will have a very poor relationship." (Kent Hughes)
- C. "We desperately need the church for love, for maturity and preparedness, for spiritual care. It is arrogant, rebellious, self-reliant, God-indicting pride to conclude that the church is an optional extra to the Christian life. We need everything God designs for us." (Thabiti Anyabwile)