DOUBTING THOMAS John 20:24-29

I've been given this nickname:
Doubting Thomas.
It's hardly fair. Don't we all have doubts? Don't we all need to have someone brave enough to share them, to bring them out into the open?
Why should it always be me?
Let me ask you: what proof do we have that Jesus has indeed returned and not just as a spirit? Is my question a lack of faith or a step towards advancing faith to a firmer understanding???
Looking back, and watching from afar, I saw Jesus crucified, yes, watched him die, saw his body taken down, taken to a sepulchre.
It was an accepted fact. Jesus was dead and buried. His enemies had won. Three years of building hope, witnessing miracles, suddenly all gone. Or has it?

Don't we all have doubts?

On the third day after his crucifixion, Mary had gone to the sepulchre where he'd been lain, to anoint his body, found the stone rolled away, and had come running back to tell Peter and John he wasn't there! They also ran, - I wonder what were they thinking? Mary followed. They confirmed what she had said and returned, but Mary stayed. It was then that Jesus appeared, and told her to tell us that he was ascending to his Father, to his God and our God!
And that very evening he appeared to the other ten. Why was I not there and they were?? Was it left for me to challenge my rightful doubts? Yes, please consider, he appeared to them through locked doors, suddenly present with them all. A physical body can't do that! But that's what they all said. First Mary, now too the other disciples! Was it some spirit of their imagination and hope, but not the resurrected body! Dead flesh and lifeless blood is the cold fact, - that reality surely cannot change!

I told them straight, - unless I could put my finger in the wounds in his hands, thrust my hand into his side, I would not believe, and more to the point, nor would anyone else! I'm not going to be mesmerised by wishful thinking! I need proof!

What did they expect? What would you have thought, come on, what would you have said? Left it to me again? As the days passed it seemed more and more likely that somehow this was just as I was thinking, some colossal made up dream. And yet….
I was there when he fed thousands of people with just a few loaves and fishes.
I was there when we were nearly sunk in a vicious storm, - he just stood up and stilled the tempest, - and all the boats, all of us, were suddenly safe.
He even walked on the water to reach us right in the middle of the sea, - we'd left him on the beach and suddenly there he was! We were all frightened, thinking it was a spirit. He saved Peter and got on board. Styed with us. I now need him to say again: "Fear not, it is I". How do you tell reality from a dream? A dream from reality?

A DREAM OR REALITY?

The last three years kept spinning before me:
People healed of all kinds of sickness;
The deaf, the dumb, - hearing, speaking normally, straightaway;
Those leprous as snow, suddenly with full flesh;
A withered arm stretched out, complete and whole.
The contrast between the joy he brought to so many people, and the persistent picture now in my mind of three crosses, three deaths, the darkness.
But yes, he had brought the dead brought back to life!
That ruler of the synagogue's daughter, - she was only twelve years old, - dead but now alive.
The widow's son at Nain, - carried out quite dead on his bier. Yet Jesus speaks to him and up he gets.
And there's the impossible resurrection of Lazarus, - dead four days and already half decomposed. Jesus spoke, "Lazarus, come forth!" And he did, set free, restored..
But for Jesus to resurrect himself! When he died, when he was gone, who would speak to him and say "Arise" how could he possibly promise to rise the third day?

So what do I believe?
Jesus turned upside down everything I'd ever learned..
Now he's dead, can I really believe it ever really happened?
I tremble at the thought that if he does come back, if I do touch his hand, if he really is there again, what is the true explanation…And if he doesn't, where does that leave us?

We have gathered again. We are together, but I feel left out.
It's been over a week since they say they saw him. They still keep insisting, "Jesus is risen. Jesus is risen".
But they haven't seen him since, - so where is he? What's he doing?
One of them cracks a joke, and they all laugh, looking at me.
Oh Jesus, if you really are there, please show yourself.
Help me believe.

The laughter suddenly stops.
I feel an overwhelming presence of love: it is tangible.
Dare I face this moment?

"Peace be unto you"

"Peace be unto you"

His words create the peace they speak of.
Memories return of his serenity, dominion, and most of all, his love.
But is this still a dream?

He turns to me:

"Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing."

I look at his outstretched hands, there are the holes. He shows me his wounded side.
It takes me back to the wooden spikes, the thrust of the spear, I hear again the cheering crowd, so constant in my memory!
How is this possible? Is it really happening?
I know that I must do as I had demanded.
I reach out, touch him. Everyone is looking at me. His physical presence matches mine.
Flesh to flesh. I cannot doubt any further. It is no apparition.

My whole life with Jesus whips through my consciousness;
This really is the risen Lord. He's done what he promised,
Proved life everlasting, a life unrestricted by matter.
Proved what he's always said.
The kingdom of God really *is* within you, yes, within us all!
Life is everlasting! Not miracles, but divine revelations flood my being.
A reality I had been too scared to accept, and dared not believe.

It <u>is</u> Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth! Alive! Not a spirit, but resurrected in the flesh.
I have felt his hands, his body. Can I doubt anymore?

I sink to my knees.
"My Lord and my God".

Jesus reaches down to me. His grip is warm, forgiving.
He lifts me up, both physically and mentally.
I now see. Everything he has said has moved from belief to understanding

"Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed"

I DO NOT DOUBT: I UNDERSTAND!

I have seen and touched him. Yes, he *has* conquered death! I have witnessed the proof of true being. He once said: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Yes, he has shown it here and now!
The doubt has gone. I believe, yea, more, much more:

I UNDERSTAND.

[Thomas was there when Jesus said to Peter: "Feed my sheep", and went on to become a missionary in India]

©KenCooper2024