

Chapter 93

The doubting disciples made happy

Mark 16 v 14

Luke 24 vv 36-49

John 20 vv 19-21

Come, in our thoughts we go once again to the house where the disciples are gathered. It is now well into the evening, but they are still sitting together. As I told you in the previous chapter, they had carefully locked the street door, for those strange rumours - that they had broken open the tomb and stolen the body of Jesus - were being believed. That is why they are fearful. They fear the vengeance of the Jews. They fear the punishment of the Roman governor. Who knows what they can expect? Anxious fear fills their hearts, they are by no means cheerful and happy. The past few days they have experienced so much sorrow.

All their hopes have been dashed. They had expected that their beloved Master would wear a royal crown, and ... He had received a crown of thorns. ... He had been nailed to the cross. Everything had come about so contrary to their expectations.

And now these strange rumours have also come, that He is risen. At first they would not listen to such things. It was only "idle tales". But, well yes, even Peter now said that he had seen the Lord, and now the two Emmaus travellers related how He had walked with them to Emmaus - yes, now they no longer dare to say that it is "idle tales". No, more than that, they believe it now also, for they cry to those from Emmaus: "The Lord is risen

indeed."

Oh, their hearts are filled with a deep longing for Him. Oh, if only they could just see their Master. Their souls are filled with a mourning after Jesus,

Suddenly, unexpectedly, He stands in their midst. "Peace be unto you," come the calm words from His mouth.

They look upon Him with eyes full of dismay. They have longed for Him, and now that He is with them, they are afraid. They think that they see a spirit. Their hearts throb with terror, their hands tremble.

Yet the Lord Jesus knows what is in their hearts.

"Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself."

He shows them His wounded hands and feet, to set their minds at rest.

Yes, now they must surely believe, for they can see Him. And yet ... and yet ... it is really too much for them. For joy they cannot, dare not yet believe it.

Then the Lord shall remove all doubts from them.

"Have ye here any meat?" He asks.

Oh yes, they have some of that. They give Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb.

THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

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Jesus takes the food and eats it, so that all can see it. Jesus did not need to eat any more, for He now has a glorified body, but He can indeed take some food. By this means the last doubts were driven from the disciples' hearts, for a spirit cannot eat.

"These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me," says the Lord to His disciples.

And then, Luke tells us, He opened their understanding.

"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

All at once everything becomes clear and plain. The Holy Spirit clarifies everything in their hearts.

It is still the same now, children. The Holy Spirit must open our hearts too, and enlighten our understandings, or we shall never comprehend it.

Do you ever ask for that? ...

It becomes a happy evening for the disciples.

The Lord Jesus gave them commandment to go and preach. They have seen and witnessed everything, so they can best tell what has taken place. They must bring the Gospel to a world which lies in wickedness, to a world lost in guilt. They must show men the way of salvation. They must point to the blood of Christ, which only can take away their sins, which only can cleanse their souls.

And God's servants, the ministers, are still bringing this message now. That message never changes. That Gospel remains the same,

throughout all ages, until the end of the world.

The disciples must begin at Jerusalem. That joyous message then must first be brought to the hardened Jews, but afterwards the Gospel shall be made known unto the Gentiles, and God will bless that preaching, through the Spirit's working, to the hearts of many.

On this first day, the resurrection day of the Lord Jesus, He appeared five times. I will just repeat them. First, He appeared to Mary Magdalene; next to the women on the way to Jerusalem. After that to Peter alone, and then to the two on the Emmaus road; finally to the disciples in the room.

Now, do try to remember!

John 19 v 24 and 25

One disciple was not present that evening. All the disciples were there except ... Thomas. Why? Could he not come? ... Was he sick perhaps? ... Oh, no, certainly not, for he had been there (Luke 24 vv 9 and 33), but he would not remain any longer, doubt and unbelief rend his heart. Thomas also has heard the women's story, but he does not believe it. Is he so indifferent then? ... No, on the contrary, grief is gnawing his soul, but he is so fearful of being deceived! If by any means it is not true, then they will all be deceived. Then the disappointment will be so much the greater. No, he doesn't believe it. He dare not believe it. He gets up and goes out.

And when the disciples sat together and Jesus came in their midst, then Thomas was not present. What a pity!

Yet the other disciples did not leave Thomas out. No, evidently they went to him the next day. They sought him out.

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"We have seen the Lord," they inform him, delighted. They hope that their brother disciple will now believe it.

But Thomas shakes his head obstinately.

"Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe," he insists.

Children, that was wrong of Thomas. That was sinful unbelief. Certainly he feared to be deceived, and that is why, in spite of everything, he still remained unbelieving.

Thus a week slowly passes. For Thomas that was a fearful week. He sees the joy of the other disciples and he lacks that gladness. He



Thomas refuses to believe

becomes more and more miserable, more and more unhappy. Be sure that Thomas did not have an easy time that week.

But happily the Lord Jesus will even remove the doubt and sinful unbelief from the heart of Thomas. Just listen!

John 19 vv 26-29

Eight days later the disciples are again gathered together. This time Thomas is with them. Silently, and with sadness in his heart he listens to their conversation, but he cannot share their happiness of soul.

"Peace be unto you," resounds the blessing, and once again the Saviour stands in their midst. In happy surprise they all raise their heads. Thomas too pulls himself with a jerk out of his sad meditation.

Then the Lord Jesus turns to His unbelieving disciple.

"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." So speaks the Son of God. How patient the Lord is with His people, is He not? Truly, He is the good Shepherd. He brings back His scattered sheep.

The Lord Jesus shows Thomas His omniscience - for nobody has told Him the words of Thomas, and yet He knows them.

And ... did Thomas do it? ... No, now that he sees his Master and hears His words, the unbelief and doubt have fled from his heart. But hear what he says. Reverently he speaks: "My Lord and my God!"

"Thomas," says the Lord, "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." These words are really a gentle rebuke.

I could tell even more about this subject, but that is still too difficult for you, boys and girls. You notice, that the Lord Jesus is no longer with His disciples daily. Now and then He appears to them, but He no longer walks round with them as formerly.