

Let's review last week's itemized Easter check list:

- Sin - Forgiven and Forgotten! -Check!
- Death - Swallowed up! - Check!
- Grave – Empty! - Check!
- Hell - Conquered! -Check!
- Satan - Crushed! - Check!
- Us - Champions! - Check!

It's been exactly one week since we celebrated that domino effect of victory after victory. And we did celebrate. Easter wasn't cancelled! We watched, we listened, we sang, we prayed, we cried, we watched and listened and sang some more.

But a lot can happen in 7 days. Have any doubts about your status as champions, crept in? You don't have to be embarrassed. Whether it was this past week or some other week, Satan never gets tired of teasing us with doubts about Easter. You can be honest, because then you can relate to a man who had his own doubts a week after Easter. Let his experience help us: **Stop Doubting and Believe!** 1) The Risen Christ appeared to Thomas and others. 2) The Risen Christ inspired John and others.

(1)

Many think that "doubting" label that Thomas got stuck with was unfair. There is no doubt Thomas was a twin. Didymus is Greek for twin. There is no doubt he was absent when Jesus came on Easter evening. Where was he? Was he hiding somewhere? We don't know.

We do know that 10 of his closest friends were together and insisted they saw Jesus alive, not to mention his teacher had repeatedly promised it would happen during their 3 years together.

But Thomas refused to believe his friends or his teacher: "*Guys, I know what I saw. With my own eyes I saw spikes driven into his hands and a spear stuck in his side. I saw him die! You aren't going to convince me he's alive. I can only be convinced if I can see him with my own eyes and touch his wounds with my own hands.*"

A week later Jesus' disciples met in the house again – all of them. Jesus motioned for Thomas to come closer. "*Thomas, you issued me challenge. Challenge accepted.*" **Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side.** How could Jesus have known what Thomas said? He wasn't there when he said it. He couldn't unless he was the all-knowing Son of God.

The translation of what Jesus said next is: "**Stop doubting and believe!**" Literally, the original Greek says: *Don't become an unbeliever. Instead, be a believer.* Jesus' words conquered Thomas' doubts and convinced his heart, and his lips confirmed it: "**My Lord and my God!**"

Jesus, then explained to Thomas why this was such a good thing for him: **Because you have seen me, you have believed.** He continued on to explain why this is such a good thing for us: **Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.** We are blessed – faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you don't see.

What we celebrated last week - Easter - did it really happen? Neither you nor I actually saw our resurrected Christ. Did he come back from the dead? Absolutely! We may not have seen it, but others did, and they've told us about it.

It was witnessed by some women, a few more apostles, and over 500 others. Not to mention the apostles, Paul and John. They had the unique privilege of seeing Jesus decades later in special appearances. That's why we can **Stop Doubting and Believe:** *The Risen Christ appeared to Thomas and others.*

(2)

That's more than enough proof for us. But our Jesus always goes above and beyond. To give us even more reason to **Stop Doubting and Believe:** *the Risen Christ inspired John and others.*

Here's how the Apostle John closes this chapter of his Gospel: **Jesus performed many other**

**signs (miracles) in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.** Imagine that! John had already written about Jesus:

- Healing the official's sick son, the lame man at Bethesda and the blind man at Siloam

He had written about Jesus:

- Turning water into wine
- Walking on water.
- Feeding the 5,000.

John had even written about:

- Jesus raising Lazarus.
- Jesus raising Jesus. (A dead man raising himself, certainly increases the degree of difficulty!)

If that wasn't enough, the other 3 Gospel writers toss in an additional 30 miracles. Then you have to listen to John's closing verse of his Gospel's closing chapter: **Jesus did many other things. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have enough room for the books that would be written.**

There could have been way more documentation, **But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

The life he's talking about is life here, through the daily forgiveness of our sins; and life beyond here, through the resurrection of the dead!

Our Easter confidence last week was real. Absolutely! We may not have seen Christ's resurrection, but Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Paul and Peter, James and Jude all did.

Jesus lives! Do you feel the relief? Those sins that crushed you – Jesus buried them in his tomb forever!

Do you feel the comfort? The death you so dread – Jesus turned that into your gateway to glory with him!

Do you feel the freedom? Your fear of hell – Jesus damned damnation forever, for you!

*The Risen Christ appeared to Thomas and others. The Risen Christ inspired John and others.* Did Jesus rise isn't the question anymore. The real question is what are you going to do with it? Yes, it certainly makes a difference in your everlasting life, but let it also make a difference in your daily life.

- Stuff at least some of your stress caused by the past 6 weeks into his empty tomb, and take less stress into the weeks to come! Don't worry about having enough for bills, or about your health or the health of your loved ones. Christ handled your big-ticket items – salvation, death and hell, let him handle your stress, too!
- Pack at least some of your pessimism into his empty tomb, and wake up a little more hopeful and happy! Don't lose sleep over things you can't control. Let Christ handle your situation for you, with you!

Chase away any doubts about the events of Easter. Jesus is our living Lord. Thomas saw it. John wrote about it. No wonder our celebration carried over from last week into this week and will continue to spill over into the weeks and months ahead. We're Champions! Believe it!