

Seeing the Disciples through the Lens of Grace

**4) Thomas, Simon the Zealot,
Thaddeus and James the Less**

Thomas

- ✓ **Thomas was also called Didymus, meaning 'twin' in both Aramaic and Greek**
- ✓ **He is often known as 'doubting Thomas'. But this is an unfair portrayal of him, and does not represent his character, faith and journey as a disciple of Christ**
- ✓ **His commitment to Jesus is evidenced by his willingness to face death with Him, when Jesus returned to Bethany to help Lazarus, 'Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him"' (John 11:16)**

✓ **His devotion to Christ is on display when Jesus told the disciples that He was going to go away and prepare a place for them. 'Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"' (John 14:5-6)**

✓ **Jesus didn't give a formula to knowing the way, but pointed to Himself. There is a difference between giving directions to a destination and taking us there. Jesus is the way to God, the truth about Him, and the one who gives eternal life**

'Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"' (John 20:24-29)

✓ **Thomas was no more a doubter than the others. In fact, as we have seen, he believed Jesus' words concerning His death when the others didn't (John 11:16)**

✓ **Thomas refused to believe in the resurrection unless He saw Jesus and put his finger into the wounds of His hands and side. The others may have had an optical illusion. Thomas was an honest doubter**

✓ **After 8 days Jesus appeared to the disciples with Thomas present. Jesus obviously knew what Thomas had said**

✓ **Thomas now believed Jesus had risen, because he had seen Him**

- ✓ **So what was the problem with Thomas? He didn't believe the eyewitness reports**
- ✓ **But neither did the others before, 'Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either' (Mark 16:9-13)**

See also Luke 24:36-41:

'Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?"'

- ✓ **Thomas did as Jesus told him to (1 John 1:1)**
- ✓ **He was transformed from doubter to a believer, from skeptic to a proclaimer**
- ✓ **Jesus said we are blessed for believing without seeing, on the testimony of eyewitnesses (John 20:29)**
- ✓ **Church tradition records that Thomas took the gospel to India, even leading royal families to Christ**
- ✓ **It's believed Thomas was martyred and killed with a spear near Madras, India**

Simon the Zealot

- ✓ **Also called Simon the Canaanite**
- ✓ **The Zealots were a Jewish nationalist party who strongly opposed Roman occupation and were willing to use violence to fight for their independence**
- ✓ **We can say two things about Jesus' choice of Simon the Zealot:**

- ✓ **1) The amazing grace in uniting believers with different beliefs and political persuasions. Especially Matthew**
- ✓ **2) The wisdom and leadership of Jesus in not squashing his zeal, but redirecting it for the kingdom of God. Paul said of the Jews, *'...they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge'* (Rom.10:2)**
- ✓ **Church tradition states that he spread the gospel in Egypt as a missionary and was martyred in Persia**

Thaddeus

- ✓ **Also known as Judas and Lebbaeus**
- ✓ **In lists of the Twelve he was known as 'Judas the son of James' (Luke 6:16)**
- ✓ **He is also called Thaddeus, a surname for the name Lebbaeus, *'...and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus'* (Matthew 10:3), which means 'heart' or 'courageous'**
- ✓ **The multiple names might reflect attempts to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot**

- ✓ **He asked Jesus an important question,**
'Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me' (John 14:22-24)
- ✓ **Judas asked Jesus why He would manifest Himself to certain ones and not to the world. Jesus replied that He will reveal Himself to those who love Him and keep His words**

James the Less

- ✓ **The Bible tells us nothing about James Alphaeus, except his name**
- ✓ **He is referred to as James the Less, to distinguish him from James son of Zebedee and James the brother of Jesus**
- ✓ **Though less prominent, his life challenges our modern emphasis on the need for visibility and prominence**

- ✓ **He remained humble, even when surrounded by greatness. And the legacy of his loyalty to Jesus serves as an example for us. We don't all need to be in the limelight**
- ✓ **His selection demonstrates Jesus' pattern of choosing both prominent and quieter personalities to be His disciples**
- ✓ **Can we handle being anonymous, obscure?
Jesus made Himself of no reputation**
- ✓ **It's believed James was martyred**

'For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence'

(1 Cor.1:26-29)