

STUDY GUIDE



CHURCH NAME

WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN

DOES SCIENCE DISPROVE THE RESURRECTION? (PART 1)

JOHN 20:24-31

06/04/2017

MAIN POINT

Miracles and science are not at odds with one another.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When are you most tempted to fear or to doubt? How do you get over fear or doubt?

Is doubt always wrong? Are there situations where we should doubt? Are there situations where we shouldn't?

What doubts did you have about Christianity before you became a Christian?

Christianity has always had its share of doubters, from Jesus' family and friends to modern-day skeptics. Yet it is important to remember, doubt always precedes faith. Jesus is not afraid of our doubts. Just like many of us today, Thomas doubted something that seemed "improbable" to him—the news of Christ's resurrection. It did not fit his worldview, because in his worldview, it wasn't natural for Messiahs to suffer humiliating deaths at the hands of the Romans. And dead men stay dead! As such, the news about Christ's resurrection was "unbelievable" to Thomas, so he doubted it. Today, just like Thomas, many of us doubt the resurrection because of the claims of science. Science has "proved" Christianity wrong. However, we will see that science's claim on miracles is impossible by its own standard. Science and miracles are not at odds with one another—in fact, it takes faith to say that there are no miracles.

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 20:24-25.

Who was Thomas, and why did he doubt Jesus? Are such doubts reasonable? Why or why not?

Read John 11:16 and 14:5-6. What do we learn about Thomas here? While Thomas is most often referred to as "Doubting Thomas," why is this actually not an accurate description of Thomas's personality?

On the surface, why is doubting a miracle like a man coming back from the dead a perfectly natural thing to have doubts about? Why are these doubts not the enemy of faith?

“Doubting Thomas” is kind of a misnomer when you take a close look at the rest of the Gospel accounts. Thomas was bold and outspoken at times. He was willing to follow Jesus into death. He asked questions. Yet, this one moment in an upper room has defined how we think about this man. Thomas was not there and did not see Jesus, so he did not believe. People, after all, do not usually rise from the dead. Yet seeking to have his questions answered by Jesus led Thomas to faith, because Jesus is not surprised or caught off guard by our doubts. It could be that our science-minded friends come to faith through their doubts, not in spite of them.

Can you think of a time when doubt led you to faith? Explain.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 20:26-31.

What does it tell you about Jesus that He met Thomas in his doubt instead of chastising him?

How closely does your response to doubting friends align with Jesus’ response to Thomas?

Jesus knows everything, so He surely knew that Thomas doubted Him. Yet Jesus was not angry; He was patient. He answered Thomas’s questions in the way that Thomas wanted them answered because Jesus loved Thomas. Jesus will answer your questions, too. Sure, faith is required on our part, but Jesus welcomes our questions, and He is always able to answer them. Sometimes walking through doubts is what it takes to come to faith, and that is okay.

Why is Thomas’s announcement in verse 28 significant? What would have been an astounding claim to make if Jesus was not who Thomas believed Him to be?

Even though we have not seen Jesus like Thomas, why are we not at a disadvantage to believe?

Josh McDowell said that “pride and pleasure” kept him from coming to the cross. How are meaning and life really found in Jesus?

No one would call Jesus God if they didn’t believe Him to be God. For a Jew, this would be blasphemous. Some are tempted to think, “Sure, if I could see Jesus, I could believe.” Yet in reality, we still have a reliable testimony to believe in Jesus from the Word of God. The Bible testifies that these events are true and records them as historical fact. As we read God’s Word, the Holy Spirit will attest its truthfulness to us.

What does this passage teach you about learning to walk in faith?

Thomas and the other disciples witnessed many signs and miracles as proof that Jesus was the Messiah. We only read about a collection of those miracles and hear verbal testimony from others who have also read and heard about Jesus, but who have not seen. Learning to walk in faith means that we understand and embrace the blessing that comes with post-New Testament faith.

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Are you experiencing doubt in your heart right now? If so, concerning what? Will you be bold enough to ask Jesus the questions you have?

How can you make time to hear from God this week?

Thomas refused to believe until he saw the holes in Jesus' hands and feet and the scars in His side. What proof are your non-believing friends looking for? How might you address their doubts in a way that doesn't belittle them for having doubts?

Is this group a place where we can feel comfortable to both doubt and believe? Why is it essential to make room for both?

PRAY

Praise God for being big enough and holy enough to accept our doubts and overcome them with truth. Pray that people in your church would look at Jesus and say with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." Thank Him for meeting us where we are and overcoming our doubts with His truth.

COMMENTARY

JOHN 20:24-31

20:24-25. If Judas depicted betrayal and Peter denial, Thomas demonstrated skepticism. The word translated told in verse 25 appears in the imperfect tense. The disciples kept on telling Thomas they had seen the Lord. Thomas, fed up with such nonsense, grew weary of holding on to a faith that had crumbled. He removed himself from the disciple band, telling them he wanted to hear no more about this ridiculous notion of a resurrection. Thomas used strong language with his friends, indicating the frustration to which the events of the past week had driven him.

20:26-27. But John moved on to show us doubting alleviated. In spite of what he had said, Thomas at least joined the Sunday evening service a week later. Again, in spite of locked doors, Jesus appeared and greeted them exactly as He had a week earlier. But rather than showing His hands and side to the entire group, He turned to Thomas and invited empirical investigation. Sincere Christianity has always welcomed sincere research. Jesus did not scold Thomas or condemn his hesitation. He provided the evidence. Only then did He say to him, Stop doubting and believe.

20:28-29. In the flow of this wonderful story, John next offered us a record of doubting abandoned. Thomas moved quickly from rough-talking skeptic to willing worshiper. In the New Testament, no one had yet said to Jesus, My Lord and my God. Here again the theme of our study looms large—believing is seeing. Thomas saw and believed—and that was fine. But happy are the millions who since that day have not had the opportunity of Thomas and the other ten and yet have believed. More than 375 times in the Old Testament and 100 times in the New Testament, the Bible talks about blessing. This one is related to faith and especially faith in the resurrection.

20:30-31. Scholars remain hopelessly divided on how many miracles Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, but thirty-five seems a reasonable approximation. John recorded only ten at the most. The number was of little concern to John. He chose the works and words of Jesus that would prompt readers to faith. That faith would give meaning to experience as believers found life in the name of Jesus.