

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the resurrection of Jesus. While this may seem boring and irrelevant, it is actually the foundation of our Christian faith. If Christ has not be raised from the dead our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins. Further, the resurrection of Jesus provides hope that death will not separate us from our loved ones forever. This promise grows more precious as we grow older.

We will approach the subject of the resurrection of Jesus via the Apostle Thomas. Please consider: **“Now Thomas (called Didymus) one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it’” (Jn. 20:24, 25).**

The word “Thomas” comes from the Aramaic word *teoma*, meaning “twin”. The word “Didymus” comes from the Greek is *didymus*. which also means “twin”. It is logical to assume that Thomas was a twin and had been mistaken many times for his brother. He therefore assumed that the reports of the resurrection were merely a case of mistaken identity. Note, however, that Thomas did come to believe. Note also that Jesus never condemned him for being skeptical! Thomas's faith was based on evidence. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was not an illusion nor a case of mistaken identity.

Here are some famous illusions that have fooled millions.

- David Copperfield claims to be able to make the Statue of Liberty disappear. Of course he can't! He “appears” to do so, however, by placing his audience on a rotating platform and having a carefully constructed duplicate scene behind them minus the 225 ton statue.
- Harry Houdini claimed to make an elephant disappear. Of course it was only an illusion. The huge box containing the elephant also had a specially constructed mirror that concealed the elephant and made the box appear to be empty.
- Cutting someone in two has been a standard illusion for many years. The trick involves two people and carefully constructed containers that hide the feet of one and the head of the other.
- David Blaine's card through the window trick also involves two people and two decks of cards. While David does not see the selected card his accomplice does. It is therefore simple to select the same card and write the same name by someone on the other side of the window. When David throws his deck at the window the selected duplicate card “miraculously” is stuck to the window. No one realizes that the real autographed card is lying on the ground.

But now let us return to the story of Doubting Thomas. The appearance of Jesus to Thomas was not an illusion. Luke informs us that Jesus appeared to His disciples by “many convincing proofs” for a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3). A week after His first appearance Jesus appeared again to His disciples when Thomas was present. Even though the doors were locked Jesus miraculously appeared in their midst. He stood before Thomas and said: **“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe. Thomas said unto Him, My Lord and my God” (Jn. 20:27, 28).**

As we have said, the resurrected Jesus was not an illusion! His disciples looked at Him with their eyes and touched Him with their hands (1 Jn. 1:1). They even gave to him a piece of broiled fish

and He ate it in their presence (Lk. 24:42). Jesus not only appeared to the Twelve but also to above 500 brethren at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). When Paul wrote to the Corinthians most of these witnesses were still alive. The “many convincing proofs” convinced every one of the Apostles that Jesus had literally been raised from the dead. Every one of them suffered for preaching His resurrection but still went to their graves without denying what they had seen and touched.

Thomas, himself, died as a martyr. Church tradition and history tell us that Thomas traveled the state of Kerala in India around A.D. 50. Kerala was home at that time to a Jewish community. Tradition says that he converted 40 Jews upon his arrival, along with 3,000 Hindus of Brahmin origin. Thomas was said to have been speared to death by a Hindu priest around A.D. 72. Thomas is considered the patron saint of India and his name “Thoma” is a popular name in India to this day.

The point is that Thomas the Twin was absolutely convinced that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. It needs to be emphasized that he was not alone in originally doubting. When the women first told the apostles of His resurrection, not one apostle believed them. They thought the words of those women were nonsense (Lk. 24:9-11). Yet every one of the apostles came to believe, many died as martyrs, and as we have said, every apostle went to his grave without changing his story.

Please don't let anyone rob you of the blessed hope we have in Christ, He really did rise from the dead!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce