

John 20:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

Analysis

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. John identifies Thomas with both Aramaic name (ܢܗܝܢܐ, "twin") and Greek equivalent Didymos (Δίδυμος, also meaning "twin"). This naming pattern (John 11:16, 21:2) emphasizes Thomas's identity while explaining terms for Greek readers. The phrase "**one of the twelve**" confirms Thomas's apostolic status despite his absence—his failure to gather doesn't forfeit his position, though it costs him Easter evening's blessing.

Thomas's absence remains unexplained. Unlike Judas's deliberate apostasy, Thomas simply wasn't present when Jesus appeared. Perhaps grief isolated him; perhaps fear scattered him; perhaps practical errands delayed him. Scripture's silence invites caution against harsh judgment. Yet his absence demonstrates gathered fellowship's importance—blessings flow through community. The corporate gathering received Christ's peace, commissioning, and Spirit (vv.19-23); Thomas's isolation meant missing resurrection's initial joy. His story warns against forsaking assembly (Hebrews 10:25) and illustrates how isolation breeds doubt while fellowship nurtures faith. Providence uses even unwise absence to birth testimony—Thomas's doubt becomes vehicle for Christ's greatest resurrection proof.

Historical Context

Thomas appears in all apostle lists (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13) and receives special attention in John's Gospel. He demonstrated devotion willing to die with Jesus (John 11:16), asked honest questions about Christ's way (John 14:5), and now struggles with resurrection faith. Later tradition calls him "Doubting Thomas," but this nickname oversimplifies—Thomas demanded evidence all apostles initially lacked (Luke 24:11, Mark 16:11).

Early church tradition (Acts of Thomas, 3rd century) places Thomas's missionary work in Parthia and India. The Mar Thoma Church in Kerala, India, claims foundation by Thomas around 52 AD. While these traditions lack biblical confirmation, they demonstrate early Christianity's missionary expansion and Thomas's honored place despite recorded doubt. Archaeological evidence in India (Thomas Cross inscriptions) and Syrian Christian liturgy preserving Thomas traditions suggest historical kernel behind legends.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Thomas's absence demonstrate the spiritual danger of isolating from Christian community during trials?
2. What does Scripture's sympathetic treatment of Thomas's doubt teach about Christ's patience with honest struggles?
3. How can God use even our failures and absences to accomplish greater purposes in His providence?

Interlinear Text

Θωμᾶς δὲ εἷς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα ὁ λεγόμενος Δίδυμος
Thomas **But** **one** **of** ^{G3588} **the twelve** ^{G3588} **called** **Didymus**
G2381 G1161 G1520 G1537 G1427 G3004 G1324

οὐκ ἦν μετ' αὐτῶν ὅτε ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς
not **was** **with** **them** **when** **came** ^{G3588} **Jesus**
G3756 G2258 G3326 G846 G3753 G2064 G2424

Additional Cross-References

John 11:16 (Parallel theme): Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.
