

## “EXCEPT I SHALL SEE”

After three days, our Lord raised from the grave and revealed Himself to His disciples and others. The inspired John records, “then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord” (John 20:19-20). One of the disciples, Thomas, was not present at the time this took place (20:24). “The other disciples therefore said unto him [Thomas], We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe” (20:25). Jesus rebuked Thomas and others “and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him [Jesus] after He was risen” (Mark 16:14). Jesus did not rebuke any man for seeking, asking, and requiring evidence before making a conclusion. Jesus knew that faith requires facts and evidence (Mark 16:20). However, Thomas and the other disciples had been presented evidence – credible, eyewitness accounts – and this evidence was rejected. Jesus rebuked them “because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.” Eyewitnesses had seen the print of the nails and the scar on Jesus’ side (John 20:20) and had relayed that fact to Thomas, but because his heart was hard (Mark 16:14), he would not believe.

What John records next is extremely powerful. Though Jesus expected Thomas to believe the evidence already presented, Jesus was willing to fulfill Thomas’ request. “After eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:26-27). Is it the case that, though evidence has already been presented regarding what we practice and teach, we should be willing to make that evidence readily available to anyone who asks? Yes, Jesus told His disciples that it may be necessary for them to “shake off the dust of your feet” (Mat. 10:14), but only after the disciples had presented the truth (10:7, 14). Jesus, Himself, “answered nothing” (Mat. 27:12) when the chief priests hurled accusations at Him, but only after He had answered them over and over again (Mat. 26:55, 63-64; 27:11). The apostle Peter commands, “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). Even when Jesus told His disciples, “let them [the Pharisees] alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mat. 15:14), Jesus was not teaching that the disciples should allow the false doctrines of the Pharisees to go unanswered. Jesus was telling His disciples not to be upset that the Pharisees had been “offended” by the truth (15:12). False teachers who are left alone will be free to sow their dangerous seed. The Bible teaches that gainsayers (those who speak contrary to the Word of God) must be exhorted and convicted “whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake” (Tit. 1:9-11). Christians must “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” and “have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 The. 3:6, 14-15).

We must be willing, ready, and able to present the truth (evidence) so that those who

teach contrary to the doctrine of Christ cannot draw men to “follow their pernicious ways” (2 Pet. 2:2). We must be willing, ready, and able to present the truth (evidence) in order to admonish our erring brethren, “pulling them out of the fire” (Jude 23). If we are not willing, ready, or able to present evidence, we cannot expect to be of any help to anyone.

- *Brad Green*