



Looking for a Sign

Thomas stands as a powerful example of the human desire for proof before belief. After the resurrection, when the other disciples told Thomas that they had seen the risen Jesus, Thomas refused to believe unless he could see the nail wounds and put his finger into them and his hand into Jesus' side (John 20:24-25). When Jesus appeared again, He invited Thomas to examine His wounds, but then He gave a profound lesson that reaches far beyond Thomas himself, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Jesus was not condemning honest questions, but He was revealing that faith is not dependent upon having physical evidence placed directly into our hands. The Bible repeatedly teaches this principle, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1), and "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Peter likewise speaks of believers who love and trust Christ even though they have not physically seen Him, "Though you have not seen him, you love him" (1 Peter 1:8). The Christian faith is therefore not a demand to possess every piece of evidence before trusting God; it is a response to what God has revealed, choosing to believe His Word even when our eyes cannot see the whole picture.

Salvation can be understood through the pattern established in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were given a command by God: they could freely eat from every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because God warned them, "in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). They were not required to independently understand everything about death, evil, or the consequences of disobedience; they were called to trust the One who had spoken. Yet the serpent persuaded Eve to question God's Word, suggesting that God was withholding something from them, "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). Adam and Eve chose to trust their own judgment rather than God's command, and sin and death entered the human story (Genesis 3:6-19; Romans 5:12). Then, thousands of years later, God placed another tree at the center of His plan of redemption, the cross. Jesus bore our sins on the cross, and through His death came the promise of life, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). Paul declares that "as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). The choice confronting humanity is therefore remarkably similar: Will we trust God's Word and His provision for salvation, or will we insist on trusting our own understanding? Proverbs warns us, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). Salvation is not earned by proving ourselves worthy; it is received through faith in Jesus Christ. "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). Just as Adam and Eve had to trust God's warning concerning the first tree, we are called to trust God's promise concerning the second tree...the cross. The first tree became associated with humanity's entrance into death; the

cross became the place where Christ entered into death on our behalf so that those of us who believe may have eternal life (John 3:16; Romans 6:23).

There is therefore a serious warning for any of us who demands that God prove Himself before they will believe or act. The book of Job shows the danger of placing God in the position of the One who must answer to us. After Job questioned God's purposes amid his suffering, God responded with a series of questions that exposed the vast difference between the Creator and His creation, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (Job 38:4). God continues by asking Job questions about creation, nature, the heavens, and the ordering of the world (Job 38-41), ultimately reminding Job that finite human understanding cannot place the infinite Creator on trial. Paul echoes this same truth when he writes, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?" (Romans 11:34). We should seek truth, ask sincere questions, and examine the evidence, but there is a profound difference between seeking understanding and demanding that God submit to our standards before we will trust Him. Faith means trusting the One who sees what we cannot see. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). The resurrection itself calls us to make a decision: *Thomas wanted to see before he believed, but Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who believe without seeing*. The question is ultimately not whether God has provided reasons to believe, but whether we will trust His revelation when we cannot see everything for ourselves. The Bible gives the answer plainly, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Study Questions:

1. What does Jesus mean when He says, "Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed," and is He asking us to believe blindly or to trust what God has revealed even when we cannot personally see it? (John 20:29)

2. If faith is "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen," how is Biblical faith different from simply believing something without evidence? (Hebrews 11:1)

3. What would it look like in your everyday life to truly “walk by faith, not by sight,” and what areas of your life reveal that you may be trusting what you can see more than what God has said? (2 Corinthians 5:7)

4. Why did God give Adam a command that required him to trust God's Word without explaining every consequence of disobedience, and what does this teach us about the relationship between faith and obedience? (Genesis 2:16-17)

5. Why was the serpent's question, “Indeed, has God said,” so effective in causing Eve to doubt God's Word, and what does this teach us about how Satan attacks our faith? (Genesis 3:1-5)

6. Is it possible to believe that God exists while still trusting your own understanding more than God, and what evidence in your decisions would reveal whether you truly trust Him? (Proverbs 3:5-7)

7. Was Adam and Eve's greatest sin simply eating the forbidden fruit, or was the deeper issue that they chose to believe another voice rather than trust God's Word? (Genesis 3:6-19)

8. How does Jesus bearing our sins “in His body on the cross” answer the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and what does the comparison between the first tree and the cross reveal about God's plan of salvation? (1 Peter 2:24; Romans 5:18-19)

9. If we are saved “by grace...through faith” and not as a result of works, why do we continually try to prove our worthiness to God through morality, religious activity, or good works? (Ephesians 2:8-9)

10. When God asks Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth,” what does God's response teach us about the limits of human understanding and the danger of demanding that the God explain Himself to His creation? (Job 38:2-4)

11. What kind of faith enables Habakkuk to say that even if the crops fail and there is no food, “Yet I will exult in the LORD,” and could you honestly make the same declaration if God did not change your circumstances? (Habakkuk 3:17-18)

12. Why does Jesus ask Martha, “Do you believe this?” after declaring that He is “the resurrection and the life,” and what would your answer be if Jesus asked you that same question today? (John 11:25-26)