

## **Jesus, the Chief Shepherd of the Church**

**April 26, 2015**

**This morning, I would like you to take a moment to think about this scenario. You have been given the task of hiring a group of 12 people to work with you on a mission that will affect the whole world. You have just 3 1/2 years to train these workers and then you will be taken from them and they will be left to carry out the mission of spreading out over the whole world the truths that you have taught them. What kind of people would you choose? Jesus began his ministry by choosing 12 followers and among them were ignorant fishermen, low esteemed tax collectors, and one was a traitor. None of those 12 men were members of the elite religious leaders of Jesus' day. None of them had educational degrees that demanded the respect of their fellow citizen. Jesus came from a poor family and his father was a carpenter. A minority of people understood through the revelation of God at the time of Jesus' birth that this was the Son of God, but the majority of the people didn't think much about this Galilean who one day called men to follow him. The amazing thing is that they left all and followed him.**

**As they began to follow Jesus, other people also followed him. Mary Magdalene, a woman who was possessed with seven devils, was delivered of her affliction and followed Jesus. The outcast Samaritan woman left her water pots and went into the city to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ after Jesus revealed to her his true identity. There were wealthy people who also believed in him, but many of them led obscure lives because they were afraid of being rejected if they proclaimed their belief in Jesus as the Messiah.**

**It was not an easy life following Jesus and proclaiming his truth. In John 6:30, there is a discussion between Jesus and some people who asked this question, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered them with these words, "This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He sent." They mentioned to Jesus that their ancestors ate manna in the desert and it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Jesus responded by telling them that Moses didn't give them bread from heaven, but God provided that for them. Then He told them that they must believe that God sent Him to them as bread from heaven not to do his own will but to do the will of his Father who sent him. He said, "I am the bread of life." He mentioned to them that those who his father had given to him would eat of his flesh and drink of his blood and have eternal life. This made them angry and they said that the saying was hard and they couldn't understand it so many wouldn't follow Jesus after this conversation. Jesus turned to his 12 disciples and asked "Do you also want to go away?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words to eternal life."**

**One of the men that Jesus chose was named Thomas. Thomas was one who dared to ask the tough questions. He was courageous and was not one who just followed the crowd. He spoke his mind and history has nicknamed him "doubting Thomas."**



In John 14, Jesus spoke to his disciples about the fact that He was going back to the Father and He told them not to have troubled hearts, but to believe. He was going back to His Father and He would prepare a place that where He is there his children would be also. He promised to come back for them so they would all be together again at a future time. The disciples certainly didn't understand the words that Jesus spoke, but as in former times, most didn't ask any questions; they just listened. But Thomas said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, and how can we know the way." Jesus spoke these wonderful words, "I am the way, I am the Truth and I am the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know the Father."

In John 11, there is the wonderful story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. However, leading up to this event is the story of Jesus speaking to his disciples that He was going to the town of Bethany to "wake Lazarus up from his sleep." See verse 11.

The disciples tried to direct Jesus away from going to Bethany because people had threatened to kill him in that area. They argued that if Lazarus was sleeping, he would get better. Then Jesus told them that Lazarus was dead and He said, "Nevertheless, let us go to him."

Thomas, who was called a twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go that we may die with him," He is a symbol of strength as he spoke encouraging his fellowmen to follow Jesus even if it meant death to all of them.

Thomas lost hope when Jesus was crucified. See John 20:24. He didn't stay close to the disciples, but went off by himself. He missed the visitation of Jesus after he arose from the dead and when the disciples tried to tell him that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, he refused to believe. He said that unless he saw the nail prints in His hands and could put his finger into His side, he would not believe.

Eight days later Thomas was with the disciples when Jesus came with the doors shut and He stood in their midst and said, "Peace to you." He then addressed Thomas. "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said, "My Lord and My God!" Jesus said "Thomas because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Thomas was the first disciple to proclaim Jesus as Lord and God. Tradition records Thomas' travels as he proclaimed the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Modern Iraq, Iran, and India were places that he travelled to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. He built churches and won souls to Jesus in difficult parts of the world. When Portuguese people landed in India in the early 1600's they found groups of Christian believers there. The Mar Thomas Church was founded there many years before and the people were still proclaiming the truth of the gospel as Thomas had proclaimed it to their ancestors. Thomas was said to have been thrown into a pit by a Brahmin and pierced with a spear causing his death. Thomas asked hard questions and Jesus answered them. His word says, "Come let us reason together" says the Lord.