

“The Missing Man!”

John 20:19-29

Intro. – Have you heard about the *interrobang*? This is a suggested new punctuation mark. It’s a cross between an exclamation point and a question mark. It is being defined as follows: “It would be appropriate as the climax symbol to questions &/or comments that can be answered or made with a shrug, a sneer, an expression of resignation or a glance of daggers.”

Let me try to illustrate this by using “Medicine at Work” where interrobang was used in the medical world by patients and doctors:

- a. patients = “What are the chances of you injecting that in my arm, instead of...?!”
“Isn’t that a rather personal question, doctor?!”
- b. doctors = “Now, that didn’t hurt, did it?!”
“How can I examine you, son with your teeth on my fingers?!”

With all the above, let me introduce Thomas (Aramaic) or Didymus (Greek = “twin”). He is one of the original Twelve. He is the one who said in John 11:16 “...*Let us also go, that we may die with Him.*” But when it came time to stand up for Jesus, Thomas like the others forsook Him. And now, who is missing when the little company gathers after the crucifixion? At this time in his life, Thomas is much like an interrobang. The bitterness of sorrow/shame had driven him to despair. He found it difficult to believe all the time, and now he was finding it impossible. The others were saying they had seen the Master and that He was risen/alive! Thomas answers: “*unless I see in his hands the imprint of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe* (interrobang)!”

For Thomas, everything seemed to be collapsing. Our text says, “*But Thomas was not with them when Jesus came.*” Don’t you wonder why this was the case? Thomas, one of the neediest of the disciples, and he’s not there when Jesus comes; instead, he’s “The Missing Man!”

What did Thomas miss by absenting himself from the presence of the Lord? What do we miss by absenting ourselves from His presence? Is there a parallel and if so what is it?

Purpose: to learn what Thomas, the missing man, missed by absenting himself

I THOMAS MISSED SEEING

A. Jesus Made Himself Available

1. Ten of the original Twelve gathered “...*the first day of the week... when the doors were shut...*”
2. Thomas was absent and the reason why is most clear – more than skeptical – “...*until I see His hands... touch his hands... put my hand into His side...*” – yet, Jesus made Himself available...
3. Missed the following by not being present:
 - a. the privilege of seeing Him Who alone throttled death, hell and the grave... He was/is alive!
 - b. missed the assurance/promise of the glorious certainty of eternal life...
 - c. missed the joy of seeing His risen Master – sobbing into singing... night into light...!

Jesus made Himself available; yet, Thomas chose to absent himself. Look at what Thomas missed!

B. Jesus Makes Himself Available

1. Thomas does not have a corner on the market when it comes to skepticism:
 - a. Illus. – read of doctor who was doubtful of receiving payment from a patient; so, the doctor diagnosed the patient’s illness over the phone. Nephew called asking more questions. Doctor said, “There’s nothing wrong with your uncle. I’ve examined him enough and he only thinks he’s sick. He thinks he is sick.” Week later, this doctor met the patient’s nephew. “How’s your uncle? he asked? “Worse,” said the nephew, “Now he thinks he’s dead.”
 - b. Illus. -- secretary taking dictation. She says to her boss: “Are you sure you want a exclamation point? Nobody’s surprised at anything around here anymore.”
 - c. Illus. - accounting firm’s window reads: “In God We Trust: All Others We Audit”
2. No other area of “the Faith” maligned more than the fact of our Lord’s bodily resurrection:

- a. uniqueness of Christianity -- its hub... is in the fact of Christ's bodily resurrection
- b. the evidence is clear/factual and certainly demands a verdict!
- 3. Thus our Lord makes Himself available to you and to me:
 - a. Matthew 18:20 "...where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in their midst."
 - b. we can't see Him with "the naked eye"...; nevertheless, He is present!
 - 1) why we gather -- to be in His presence together in worship...
 - 2) why we assemble about His Table -- to remember Him in the manner He requested...
 - 3) why we study His Word -- to increase in service, in faith to live grace responsive life!
 - 4) why we thrill at witnessing others becoming Christians... we're not alone!
- 4. Look at what we miss when we absent ourselves from Him!

II THOMAS MISSED RECEIVING

A. Jesus Gave the Following

- 1. V 19 "*Peace be with you...*"
 - a. Illus. - six kids + dog got noisy... Dad often say, "Louder... let's make it louder..."
 - b. Illus. - Dr. Robert Oppenheimer, made the 1st atomic bomb. He appeared before Congress. Was asked if there was any defense against the "A" bomb. "Certainly," the physicist replied. The crowd hushed and waited for his response. "Peace will render the bomb useless" he said.
 - c. Thomas needed peace, was in a fever of restlessness/wretchedness whipped by doubts/fears...
 - d. those present were given *peace* (fervor without fever... motion without friction) but because Thomas chose to be the missing man, he missed out on his *peace*.
- 2. V 21 "*as the Father has sent Me, I also send you*" = i.e. disciples present were "recommissioned"
 - a. with Christ's death, everything seemed pointless -- great purpose He had given seemed useless
 - b. they were men without a goal -- all *purpose* was lost...
 - c. Christ came and *recommissioned* them to the task of *making disciples* = teach, baptize, teach..
- 3. V 22 "*...breathed... receive Holy Spirit*" = reaffirming the promise that miraculous gift of HS be given after the ascension on Pentecost...
 - a. through Gospel preached men/women/young people be convicted of sin by HS and led to grace and forgiveness of sin...
 - b. this reaffirming given disciples... but, again Thomas missed simply because he was absent.

B. Jesus Gives the Following

- 1. Peace = one grand result being "in Christ" = peace with God = not at odds with God...
- 2. Reminder of our great task and power behind accomplishing it...
- 3. If we "miss" Jesus, whatever else we have achieved/gained amounts to nothing:
 - a. i.e. if the presence of Jesus is a glad reality, nothing else will really matter, will it?!
 - b. Illus. - song: "I've Just Seen Jesus" phrase "All that I've done before won't matter anymore, I've just seen Jesus!"
 - c. Illus. - King Darius is in the palace and Daniel is in the lions' den -- but there is restlessness in the palace and peace in the lion's den. Why? Presence of the God makes the difference!

III THOMAS MISSED GIVING

A. Jesus Received the Following

- 1. Disappointment -- Thomas was this to his Lord, Jesus:
 - a. for a whole week Thomas was doubting, mistrusting Jesus.
 - b. had he been present... he would have been assured
- 2. Drag = missed privilege of helping his brothers, his fellow disciples:
 - a. what an encouragement he could have and should have been to them...
 - b. Thomas missed the privilege of being a giver...

Thomas not with them when Jesus came -- Thomas missed being able to give!

B. Jesus Receives the Following

1. Disappointment - when by choice who claim Him as Lord/Savior also by choice absent themselves from His presence at an assembly... around His Table... winning of souls...
2. Drag
 - a. can't rob myself without affecting or "robbing" you – i.e. if I starve myself spiritually speaking, I starve you!.
 - b. if I sin, I can't sin alone... i.e. I can't detach myself from the presence of the Lord without affecting my brothers/sisters in the Lord!

Conclusion: When Thomas was not missing, he said, "*My Lord and My God!*" Note, this was not an *interrogang!* Jesus then says, "*Do you believe because you have seen? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe!*" In other words, seeing isn't always believing!

In 1930 when merthiolate first came on market, no one would buy it. People didn't trust it to help their hurts. But, after the manufacturer added dye so people could SEE it and alcohol so people could FEEL it, people began to buy it like crazy...

Faith resulting from seeing is good, but, faith resulting from hearing is more excellent. Why our theme "Into the Word" so appropriate. Romans 10:17 says, "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*" When by choice we absent ourselves from Jesus' presence, when we're not seeing, receiving, and giving to His glory, we're absent from His Word. But, when we're seeing, receiving, and giving to Him – we are not missing, we are in His presence! Amen and Amen!!