

## Di122 Essentials of Christianity

### *Lesson Di122-28 Church: Expectation*

We all have hopes for our future—marriage, children, financial security. The greatest hope for the Christian is referred to as the ‘blessed hope.’ One day Jesus will come back to take us to be with him. The early believers did not completely understand this, although Jesus had tried to tell them about it. When he died, many of them lost all hope. They had mistakenly thought that the Messiah would set up an earthly kingdom then and there. They despaired of ever having hope again.

After the crucifixion, the apostle Thomas just wanted to be left alone. It had come to this. The whole world seemed to be collapsing around him and his friends. His Messiah and teacher had been nailed to a cross. He had died, and been buried. Thomas had seen it all and was now desolate. His friend Jesus was dead. “Death is so final,” he thought.

Earlier that week, Thomas had passionately encouraged the other disciples to go with Jesus to Jerusalem and die. He had actually said, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16). He somehow did not believe that this awful thing would happen. But now it had actually taken place. The awful reality of it was taking its toll.

Somehow he had not understood what Jesus had been saying about having to go to Jerusalem, having to suffer many things at the hands of the religious leaders, and having to be killed (Matt. 17:21). It just had not registered with Thomas. Be killed? Surely not! God would not allow that.

Hopelessness had an easy entry into Thomas’ life that day. He just wasn’t ready to accept what had happened to Jesus. There was no way this was going to turn out good in his mind. He could see no more hope for this world.

Thomas could never have imagined what happened next. Somehow he had missed something. The other disciples were praising God, and were so happy that it made Thomas think they had lost their minds. They were hopping around, giddy, and trying to tell him that they had been with Jesus—who was alive again! How could this possibly be? Thomas had seen his dead body. But here they were, going out of their minds with joy and smiles all around. Thomas could not bring himself to even hope that Jesus was alive. It was unbelievable. He knew that Lazarus had been raised from the dead, but Jesus? And if that was the case, then where was he?

All Thomas could think was that he wanted proof! “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25).

A week later the disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you!” Of course he knew what Thomas had been thinking. He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” The risen

Jesus was standing in front of Thomas. Thomas' mouth was wide open as his jaw dropped with amazement. It was true! All that the disciples had said was true. Blessed hope came to Thomas in the midst of his hopelessness.

Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:26-29).

Jesus was not going to leave nor forsake his people. Even though he had been dead, he is now alive. Even though he had been gone for three days, he was back. Even though Thomas had been totally hopeless, he became totally full of hope.

What Jesus had said weeks before suddenly made sense in his mind. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may also be where I am" (John 14:1-4).

Thomas now understood. The Holy Spirit made the pieces fit together in his mind. Jesus had to die, just as the Scriptures had said. Now that he had reconciled all things to the Father, he had made a way for those who believe on him to receive the gift of eternal life. He had sacrificed his life to take all sin upon himself, so that even doubting Thomas could join him forever.

You might ask Thomas why he was so happy. Because he was now filled with hope. The apostle Paul says it this way: "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:11-14)

In another letter written to the Thessalonian church, Paul gives more details of the return of Christ. He says, "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1Thess 4:14-18).

What a wonderful day to be alive and waiting for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ! Let your hearts be full of hope today.

This lesson is **important** because its focus is the hope of the church—Jesus’ second coming and spending eternity with him. Without hope we lose our strength and power to live for God. We live in the expectation that Christ could return at any moment.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that our hope in this life rests in the fact that Jesus is soon returning to take all believers to be with himself for all eternity. Jesus is our resurrected Lord and Savior. The ‘blessed hope’ of his return—the expectation of his soon coming—should motivate the church to spread the saving message of Christ to the lost world around us.

Your **review** questions are:

1. Why was Thomas without hope in this story from the Bible? [Pause]  
A. If you answered, “Thomas was without hope because Jesus had just been crucified and he thought he was dead,” you answered correctly.
2. What brought immediate hope to Thomas? [Pause]  
A. If you answered, “Thomas became filled with hope when he met the resurrected Jesus face to face,” you are correct.
3. What is the believer’s blessed hope for his future, that he should keep in mind no matter what? [Pause]  
A. If you answered, “The believer’s blessed hope is that our resurrected Lord Jesus is coming back to get us, so that we can be with him where he is,” you are right.

Your **assignment** is to listen to the lesson several times. Then go and tell someone about the expectation of those who believe on Jesus. Explain to them about the ‘blessed hope.’ Pray to God and ask him whom you should share this lesson with and then follow his leading.

Memorize these scripture verses:

First Thessalonians 4:14-18: “The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1Thessalonians 4:14-18).

John 14:1-4: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you may also be where I am” (John 14:1-4).