

THE MISSING MAN

John 20:19–24

I. Who was missing?

1. Who was it that did not gather with the disciples on the evening of that first Easter
2. Someone was not there – *who was expected to be there*
3. There were those not expected, but who was this that was *conspicuous by their absence?*
4. When the little company gathered in the upper room behind shut doors whose place was vacant?
 - a. It wasn't Judas – Missing, but not expected – He had already betrayed his Lord and been scourged by his own conscience, Judas had gone out and hung himself – Judas was not there, but neither was he expected
 - b. Who was missing? It wasn't Pilate. We would no more expect Pilate than we expected Judas. Pilate had had his chance at Jesus. Pilate had had an opportunity of knowing, of befriending Him, of serving Him. But Pilate had allowed his own self-serving interests to get the better of him. He chose friendship with Caesar over friendship with Christ. He attempted to wash his hands and conscience of the whole thing. We would not expect Pilate to be present in this little company of friends of Jesus.

c. Whose place was vacant? It was not Caiaphas. He, too, had his moment. His envy had made him blind to truth. He was the religious leader of the Jews, but he failed to see Jesus for who He was. He labeled Him a blasphemer. No, it was not Caiaphas who was expected that evening in the upper room.

5. Then, who was missing?

- a. Read the text (vs 24) again and we find a very familiar name – we remember him well – though poorly: Thomas – *the doubter*
- b. He was expected – he was a member – he was one of the Twelve – He belonged – he should have been there
- c. They had a right to expect him – but Thomas was not there
- d. He was conspicuous by his absence

6. It is a sad day for any church when its members begin to absent themselves from its services

- a. Many church members can be counted on to be present at social events, civic activities, sporting events, jobs – but cannot be counted on when church gathers together
- b. No church loses the respect of the community until it loses respect for itself
- c. *“Thomas . . . was not with them”*

II. When was he missing?

1. "Thomas was not with them – when Jesus came"

- a. What an unfortunate time to be away! What a lapse of judgment to have missed that service of all services!

- b. The disciples were gathered behind locked doors in the upper room – despondent, despairing and filled with fear
 - c. But Jesus came – He was there – with them – in that dark hour
 - d. But Thomas – perhaps the saddest and bitterest, most despondent of all – was not there
2. Of course he would have been there – had he known what a wonderful service it was going to be
- a. If he had any idea that Jesus was going to show up – then of course he would have been there – he would not have missed it for the world
 - b. But he expected the meeting to be a very dull, dry, sad and routine same old same old
 - c. He felt confident that whoever else would be there, Jesus would not be
 - d. He expected that Peter, James and John and the rest would show up and reminisce about the glorious past that was now gone forever
 - e. They might even talk about hopes for the future
 - f. But nothing could relieve the bitter hurt of that day
 - g. So Thomas said, “I will not go to church today.”
3. But the meeting was not dull – not sad – not filled with lamentation
- a. It was a service filled with new found joy – a meeting that made the future glow with possibilities
 - b. It was a wonderful meeting because Jesus came – Jesus showed up!
 - c. He came then – even as He comes today

d. Wherever hungry hearts yearn for Him and make Him welcome, Christ comes to stand in their midst
– *where two or three gather*

4. I would urge you not to absent yourself from the meeting together of the people of God – like Thomas, you may not be present when Jesus shows up (Heb 10:25)

III. Why was he missing?

1. How did it come about that Thomas – perhaps the neediest of all – was not there to receive the blessing of that meeting?
2. Why was he not there?
 - a. It was not, I am sure, because he was indifferent
 - b. Not missing because he had found satisfaction elsewhere – Thomas was not satisfied – he was not happy
 - c. Why was Thomas missing?
 - d. He had lost hope – with others he had believed that Jesus was “the One who was to redeem Israel” (LK 24:21)
 - e. But now Thomas believed that Christ was dead – the cause for which he had stood was lost forever – darkness had overcome the Light – hope was gone
 - f. With no hope, there was no reason for church

IV. What did he miss?

1. He missed the privilege of fellowship with other believers

2. He missed seeing Jesus – the possibility in every service
3. Thomas missed out on the certainty of the resurrection
4. He missed the joy of being with Jesus
5. Because Thomas was “not there when Jesus came” – he missed out on the gift of peace – Jesus said, “Peace be unto you.”
6. The disciples who were there were commissioned by Jesus who said to them, *“As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”*
7. Last of all, Jesus breathed upon them and said, *“Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”*

CONCLUSION

1. Thomas missed out by staying out
2. He missed receiving – so he also missed the privilege of giving
3. When the other disciples left the upper room, they left filled with the Spirit and joy and peace and a message of life
4. But Thomas had received nothing, therefore he had nothing to give because . . . *“Thomas was not there when Jesus came”*
5. In spite of all his shortcomings and failures, Thomas succeeded in the end
6. What made the difference? How was he brought from despair to the joy and commitment of certainty?

7. Having missed out by staying out one Sunday, Thomas made a point of being there the next Sunday evening!

"And after eight days again the disciples were within and Thomas with them."

8. Thomas may have been a doubter, but he was willing to give himself every opportunity to know the truth

9. On that next Sunday the scripture says (John 20:26–27)

²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

10. Thomas is not alone in doubting

11. Would we absent ourselves from the assembling together of the church *if we truly believed* that Jesus was going to show up?

**Don't Miss Out on Every Chance to See Jesus,
and ALL that He has to offer!**