**VOLUME 5; CHAPTER 10 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**WAS THOMAS MISTAKEN? by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.*

*John 20:28*

IN THE BIBLICAL ORDER THIS IS THE EIGHTH DAY AFTER Easter, and consequently, the anniversary of the day on which Thomas uttered his great confession; and our Lord, His final beatitude. The confession of Thomas was the greatest of the confessions which fell from the lips of disciples of Jesus during the period of His presence among them in manifest and bodily form. The final beatitude of Jesus, the beatitude meant not for Thomas, not for the other apostles, but for us who name His name, and, believing thereinto, have received that gift of abounding life which comes in answer to such faith.

This confession of Thomas was without ambiguity in its terms. The evangelist was, moreover, most careful to state that the words were not in the nature of a declaration which might have been addressed to the Almighty Father, but that they were addressed to the Lord Himself. Notice the carefulness of the words, "Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God."

Was Thomas mistaken? That is a serious question; and upon our answer to it must depend our intellectual, emotional and volitional attitude toward Christ Himself. If Thomas was mistaken, then our attitude toward Christ cannot be that of Thomas. If Thomas was right our attitude must be that of his great confession.

Let us first consider the confession of Thomas as to its nature and as to its reason; and, secondly, inquire the bearing of this confession upon our attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

I need hardly tarry above a few moments with the first suggested matter - that, namely, of the nature of the confession. As I have already said, it was a confession without ambiguity, perfectly clear and simple, from which there can be no possible escape. Thomas, looking into the face of his Lord, said to Him, "My Lord and my God." "My Lord," which was a confession of the absolute sovereignty of Jesus, and therefore a confession of absolute submission to Him. Yet, had there been no other word spoken, it would not have arrested our attention, or perhaps demanded so serious consideration. The disciples had called Him Lord so often; and, indeed, it may be said that the title as it was then used was not as significant as I have indicated in my present definition of its meaning. The title "Lord" as used at the time had in some cases very little more significance than the title "Sir" as we use it in addressing men today. As it fell from the lips of this man, however, I think I am warranted in saying it came with full and rich and spacious meaning. I do not think for a moment that you will differ with me when I say that Thomas, saying to Christ upon that occasion "My Lord," did in that word recognize the sovereignty of Christ over his own life, and did by that word yield himself in willing submission to that sovereignty.

The second word of the great confession is even more arresting, and, indeed, it is by the second that I interpret the value of the first. Not only "My Lord," not only the One Who is sovereign over my life and to Whom I am prepared to render whole-hearted submission, but "My God." The word stands without exception for absolute Deity; and therefore indicated, on the part of the man who employed it, that he bowed before the One so addressed not only in submission but in worship. "My Lord," the confession of sovereignty and of submission; "My God," the confession of Deity and of worship.

Let us inquire into the reason why Thomas made the confession. Let us first of all look at the man. We did not see very much of him in the New Testament. Matthew, Mark and Luke all name him, simply placing him among the number of the first twelve disciples who subsequently became apostles. Luke also tells us that he was with the twelve in the upper room on the day of Pentecost These are the only references which the evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke make to him. It was reserved for John to give us pictures of him; and these are few, but they are full. We see him first in the eleventh chapter on the occasion when the Lord was turning His face toward Jerusalem, with the intention of bringing back Lazarus out from among the dead. It was Thomas who said in heroic despair, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." The next picture of him is in the upper room, when the Lord was delivering His final discourses, which we call the paschal discourse. Thomas was the second to interrupt the conversation. Christ was talking about His own going away, and it was Peter who first interrupted Him. As our Lord answered Peter, He said, "Whither I go, ye know the way." Thomas, who would never pretend to believe anything of which he was not sure, said: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; how know we the way?" Jesus answered Him: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one cometh unto the Father but by Me." Then Philip interrupted: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The answer came tenderly and quickly: "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," Thomas was listening. The next time we see Thomas is in this chapter twenty. Once again and only once again, He was one of the seven who stood on the shores of the lake when Jesus restored Peter to service. These are all the pictures we have of the man, but they are certainly enough to enable us to say two things concerning him. He was a man at once cautious and courageous. We speak of Thomas as a sceptic. Yes, but let the word be redeemed from our abuse of it. He was a sceptic. He was a man who was compelled to investigate, to inquire, a man who "would not make his judgment blind," a man who would "face the specters of the mind," and would make no confession of faith, of hope, of confidence, unless it were a confession absolutely honest, true to the profoundest convictions of his mind. He was cautious; he was courageous. This is the man from whose lips the greatest confession fell that was ever uttered in the listening ear of Jesus during the time He was present among His disciples in bodily manifestation.

The confession was the result of a triumph over difficulty. Wherein lay his difficulty? He knew perfectly well that his Lord was dead, dead as both Thomas and all the disciples expected He would be if He persisted, in spite of all their warnings, in going up to Jerusalem. I believe that Thomas had either watched the crucifixion from a distance, or else that he had taken one last agonized look at the dead body of the Lord. I think when the disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, in his answer there is a revelation, not of hard, cynical scepticism, but of a broken heart: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe," The impression of the wounds was upon the spirit of the man. Perchance that was why he was not present on that Easter morning when the Lord was manifested. No hint is given as to the reason of the absence; only the fact is chronicled.

Thomas said, "Unless I see what you saw, I will not believe." He did not ask for something other than they had received. He did not ask for some special revelation, denied to the rest. He asked for the same proof, and for that alone. Jesus was dead; Thomas saw the wounds, and knew that He was dead. Eight days passed away. Thomas was now in the upper room with the rest. Suddenly Christ stood in the midst. Now what were the evidences that produced this confession? First, the things he saw. He saw Jesus, and he knew perfectly that it was the very Lord and Master he had seen nailed to the Cross, and Whose wounds had been apparent to him. There He stood, wounded, dead, alive with the very scars displayed. He was alive out of death. Then Thomas believed.

What did he believe? Not that Jesus was alive. Do not let us read these stories carelessly, or we miss our way in the very heart of the confession. When Jesus said to Him, "Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed," He did not mean he believed He was alive; that required no exercise of faith. The fact that Jesus Who had been dead was alive was demonstrated by sight. Then he believed. What did he believe? Not that Jesus was alive. That, he saw and knew. Of that, vision was proof. It is not true, even though we still repeat it, that seeing is believing. "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed." There are two separate statements; seeing first, believing followed. Seeing that He was the living Christ, what did he believe? He believed what he confessed, "My Lord, and my God." He believed that the One Whom he had seen die, and known dead, but Whom he now saw risen and alive, was the Lord, that He was God.

So far I am not arguing as to whether he was justified in his belief. I am only trying to show the process by which he came to that belief. Thomas - cautious, courageous - had seen his Master die, had seen His wounding; knew He was dead. Then he saw Him alive, confronting him; and as a result he believed, first, that the risen One was his Lord, and, secondly, that He was his God.

The inquiry of supreme importance is this: Was that conclusion justified? Though I weary you with repetition of the circumstances, I want us to get back into the naturalness of the scene. Thomas saw Him dying, saw Him dead, saw the gaping wounds, Was he justified in saying "My Lord, and my God"? Was that conclusion justified upon the basis of that evidence? That is the heart of the inquiry.

If the conclusion that Jesus was God was based merely upon the fact of resurrection, I declare it was not justified. The resurrection did not demonstrate Deity. The Hebrew Scriptures told of the actual raising of certain men from the dead. This man Thomas had seen three dead ones come to life during the ministry of Jesus. He had seen the child of Jairus after resurrection. He had seen the son of the widow of Nain, lying dead upon the bier, carried out to burial, raised to life. The very last sign of the Lord had been that of the raising of Lazarus, and he did not say, "My God," because Lazarus was alive from the dead. If the confession was merely the result of the resurrection, then I declare it was not justified, that the fact that Christ was risen from among the dead is not enough upon which to base a doctrine of His Deity; but if he believed on the basis of that resurrection as the sequence of all that had preceded it, then I claim that he was justified.

In that hour when Thomas became convinced that the One he had seen dead was alive from among the dead, there came back again to him with gathered force, focused into one clear, bright light, all the facts in the life and ministry of Jesus which had preceded that resurrection. All the way from Caesarea Philippi to Calvary, Jesus had told Thomas and the rest He was going to die and rise again, but they had never believed Him. Now Thomas looked at Him and saw Him alive: He had said He would come back from the dead so repeatedly that you cannot find me a single instance when Jesus foretold His coming Cross, that He did not also predict His resurrection. No one had believed Him. I do not mean to suggest that their unbelief was malicious or unkind, or that they questioned His sincerity, but they thought He was mistaken. Had they believed what He told them, that He would rise again, they would not have been scattered at the crucifixion, or they would have gathered back again into Joseph's garden, waiting to see if He would come; but they never believed. Thomas, now looking into His face, remembered all that He had said as He stood confronting Him. In that moment all the predictions of Jesus were fulfilled by His standing there alive, and He was vindicated in those claims He had made. In that, His resurrection was differentiated from that of all others; it was part of a fore-ordained purpose.

Yet, more than that contributed to produce the conviction which made Thomas add "My God." Let me rapidly group what Thomas had seen before the Resurrection. I am simply trying to interpret by looking through the lattice windows of the pictures already referred to. What had Thomas seen in Jesus? First of all, he had undoubtedly been captured by the charm of His personality. Then he had been impressed with the splendor of His ideals. Still later, he had been amazed at the foolhardiness of His heroism. I am trying to speak out of Thomas's experience. There had entered into the mind of the Master the conviction that He was bound to go to Jerusalem, when every sane man knew perfectly well that His enemies were waiting to kill Him; and He Himself knew it, yet with splendid heroism but awful foolhardiness He would go. That is what Thomas felt. What next? Thomas had seen an exhibition of His power more wonderful than he had ever seen before, when He called Lazarus out of the grave. Then what? Arrived at Jerusalem, Thomas had been impressed by the mysticism of His teaching in those paschal discourses in which He talked so strangely. We really do need to get back into the atmosphere to understand how these men must have felt as He uttered His last words to them. We read them over and over again in the light of the Spirit's interpretation until their great teaching flames and flashes in eternal value; but these men did not understand these things as we understand them. They had heard Him say, I am going away, and where I go you cannot come. None of you ask Me where I am going; I am going to the Father, and if I go, I will come again to you. I came from the Father. I have been in the earth. I am going again to the Father. Put yourself in the place of Thomas, and listen to such words; they must have sounded mystical, mysterious, the words of a Dreamer, with no logical sequence or connection. When He said, "Where I am going you know the way," Thomas could bear it no longer, and he blurted out: "We do not know where You are going; how can we know the way?" Finally there had been the tragedy of the Cross, the horror of it, the shame of it, the brutality of it, the devilishness of it!

All these things were in the past, separated from each other, with no relation to each other, separated because seeming to contradict each other. The irresistible charm of His personality, the splendor of His great ideals for humanity, the apparent foolhardiness of heroism that marched straight toward murder; the wonderful power that tarried on the march to bring back out of death a man, while He Himself was going straight into death; the strange mysticism of His teaching about going to the Father when they knew there were those in the city that would murder Him; and the end of it all when they arrested Him, and swore His dear life away, nailed His kind hands to the Cross, plunged a spear into His side. Thomas turned away, and there was no Easter Sunday for him. Do you wonder at it?

He was there the next Sunday, the next first day of the week, and there stood his Master, the same; the same charm of personality, the same light flashing from His eye, undimmed even though He had been through death; His heroism vindicated, for He had been to death and had mastered it; the wonder of His power greater than ever, for He had not been raised by another - He had come back Himself; more mystical than ever, for no door had opened to admit Him; and, finally, the Cross of shame was seen shining in the light of resurrection. In that moment Thomas said: "It is my Lord; it is my God!" The isolated, separated incidents merged into a great whole and captured the man, so that he bent in worship. I, perhaps, should not have had clarity of vision enough to come so quickly to conclusion, but I must eventually have made the same confession had I had such experience of this One, infinitely more than man, "My Lord, and my God."

Take any one of those impressions alone, and you can nearly account for it, but never quite. Take them all and merge them in the mystery of resurrection, and you cannot account for them. Yes, we have known people with great charm of personality. We have known people with great ideals. We have seen foolhardiness in heroism, but there we must halt. We have not seen men raise the dead, although we may be able nearly to account for that. We have heard great mystic words from others. That day, in the upper room, the whole of these impressions came back surging upon Thomas, light meeting light, tone merging into tone, until harmony from the heart of the universe swept through him, and he said, not "My Lord" alone, but also "My God."

When he made the great confession, Jesus looked at him and said: "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed." He did not deny its declaration; He did not refuse its implication; He did not say to Thomas, "This is a mistake." Can we believe that Jesus is Lord and God? Can we say of Him "My Lord, and my God"? We have not seen; can we believe? What evidence have we? John writes: "Many other signs, therefore, did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe." John said: "I have grouped together here words and works of this self-same One, crowning all my story with this story of the resurrection; I have put before you in the writings the things that Thomas had before him, that though you have not seen Him you may also believe." All the evidences Thomas had we have in these writings. What is this Gospel of John - a biography of Jesus? Certainly not. Some of you have often heard me say it; forgive me if I repeat it. Arrange this book chronologically, and you have not the happenings of twenty days. It is a document of signs, words uttered and works done, and the whole of them interpreted finally by the resurrection. In the presence of this writing, if Thomas was justified in saying "My Lord, and my God," I am also justified in saying it.

Yes, but you say: "Are you sure of the writing? Are you sure it is a true story?" You must let me answer that after my own fashion. If it be not true, I still earnestly desire to find the men who invented it. There is nothing in literature like it, no dream like it in all your dreamings, oh masters mine!

But we have more than the writings; we have the witnesses. We have the witness of those who have had life in His name. John said, "These are written that ye may believe." Can you find any people who have read the writings, and have believed what Thomas believed, and who as the result have had life in His name? The question is an absurd one. That is the history of nineteen centuries of Christian effort; the writings, men believing, men receiving life, men sealing the accuracy of the writings by the witness of their own victories won. Life, what kind of life? Life that masters sin, that realizes holiness, that is growingly conformed to the image and likeness of God. These are the victories of the writings through nineteen centuries. I need not go back to apostolic times. All this host, not one or two, not occasional individuals, but tens, twenties, hundreds, thousands, millions who have believed in the Christ of these writings and have received life; and I know they have received life not because they say so, but because I have seen it working dynamically in them until the evil things that mastered them have dropped off like leaves from a tree smitten by the lightning of God, and fresh, beautiful things have been manifested in their lives. The witnesses to the accuracy of the writings compel me to say: "Seeing that I have in the writings all that Thomas had, and I have in the witnesses those who seal the writings, then also in the presence of this Christ who has been winning these victories, the Christ of these writings, I must say, and I can no other, so help me God, He is my Lord and my God."

What is faith? Mark Rutherford says: "Faith is not belief in fact, demonstration, or promise. It is sensibility to the due influence of the fact, something which enables us to act upon it, the susceptibility to all the strength there is in the fact, so that we are controlled by it. Nobody can precisely define it. … All we can say about it is that it comes by the grace of God, and that failure to see the truth is not so lamentable as failure to be moved by it." Thomas was convinced of truth when he saw the risen Christ. That was not faith or belief. He felt the whole fact of the truth and its appeal, and he answered it when he said, "My Lord, and my God." That was belief. I may or may not be able by my argument concerning the writings or the witnesses to bring you into intellectual conviction of the truth; but if I do it is quite useless. It is not by conviction that man receives this life. It is by answer to it, by uttering that voluntary confession.

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The experience growing out of faith is an experience of blessedness, and it seals the act of faith which at the beginning is a venture in response to conviction; and no man has ever made that act of faith in the presence of this Lord Christ, but that there has been such answering experience.

Our decision as to whether Thomas was right or wrong will make a very great difference. Supposing Thomas was wrong, what then? Supposing it was a mistake, that this Jesus risen from among the dead was not God, absolute God, very God, what then? On highest levels let me state it. Our intellectual conception of Christ is one which makes trust impossible. I may be able to have confidence in His ideal and in His endeavor, I may admire it and even seek to imitate it; but trust him - no. No man of my own nature can command my perfect trust. I cannot trust Him. Why not? He is as finite as I am. He cannot see any further beyond the horizon than I can see, or if He can see further than I can, there is yet more beyond His seeing, and I must have a guide who can lead me there. I cannot trust Him if He be only man.

Our emotional attitude must be changed. If Thomas was wrong, our emotional attitude toward Him is one of sympathy and nothing more. I can sympathize with His great ideals, I can wish He had been able to establish that Kingdom, that men thought He was going to establish. I can sympathize with the tragedy of His death, and say He is Brother to all suffering souls who have walked such ways of darkness. I can enter into sympathy with Him, but that is all.

If He be not very God, my volitional relation to Him is immediately changed, and I speak on the highest level only. What is my volitional attitude to Christ if Thomas was wrong? It is one of friendship, which takes His advice, but is able to better it, friendship which gives as well as takes advice. If He was not very God, then indeed He was a child of His own age, and today we know infinitely more than He did. I catch gleams of truth, but I can better them from later teachers. That is the consistent attitude, if Thomas was wrong.

If Thomas was right, then I worship. Then, though I say I love Him, I am almost afraid to sing it glibly, for my love is reverent, adoring love, which, while I touch the warm flesh of His condescending humanity, is conscious of the splendors of Deity; not the love of friendship, which takes and betters advice, but the love of worship which when He speaks asks no question; when He seals truth concerning my own life, concerning God or the Holy Scriptures, knows that truth is final. That is my Christ. I do most definitely and solemnly affirm that the confession of Thomas is my confession, "My Lord, and my God."

We must understand that those two attitudes, both of them honest, cannot merge, cannot mix, cannot walk together. They must in honesty stand apart, for if the thing I believe of this Christ is true, then those who rob Him - for me, at least - are degrading Him. Whereas I may respect them, I cannot work with them. If the thing they say is true, then I am an idolater, for I am worshipping a man.

The question is a supreme question, and it is one we are bound to ask, and we are compelled to answer; and upon our answer must depend the whole of our attitude both toward the Christian religion and all those who bear His name. The hour is an hour in which loyalty demands that if we believe Him to be very God, we reaffirm the truth with lip and life.