

SPECIAL STUDIES NUMBER SEVEN

John 20:28

John 20:28 reads as follows:

"And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."

In commenting on this passage, and the contextual setting in which it is found, I purpose to restrict my remarks to the subject at hand, namely the Deity of Christ.

Two "first day of the week" occasions are presented in verses 19, 26. The first of these two occurred on the day Christ was resurrected (John 20:1-10). Later that very day, we read:

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you," verse 19.

The words "the doors were shut" imply not only that they were "shut" but also "locked" inasmuch as this was done specifically "for fear of the Jews". The New International Version reads in part:

"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews..."

This is interesting because "Jesus...stood in the midst" although "the doors" were "locked for fear of the Jews." This poses no difficulty since Christ, in a glorified body, escaped from the "linen" grave "clothes", leaving them in tact (John 20:5-8), as well as passed through the sepulchre's solid mass of rock (Mark 15:46).

In verses 19-25 we have the record of the Lord's appearance, and His conversation with "the disciples". In John 20:24 we read:

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came."

Thus, Thomas was not privy to see and hear what the others did. But, "the other disciples therefore said unto him, we have seen the Lord...", verse 25. Upon hearing the testimony of his fellow brethren, he began to make his demands, saying:

"Except I shall see in his hands the prints of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," verse 25.

The "peace" that Christ pronounced, verse 19, and the gladness experienced by "the disciples", which the literal presence of Christ produced, verse 20, were obviously not in the thinking of Thomas. Yes, Thomas is willing to believe, but only on certain conditions which he himself would lay down. Hearing about Christ, although reported by his intimate friends, was not sufficient. He must see and feel. And, unless his demands are met, then he will definitely not believe, verse 25.

Beginning in verse 26, we have the events that occurred one week later, that is on the next "first day of the week". The expression "after eight days", verse 26, means "on the eighth day", and counting from one Sunday to the next Sunday would be "eight days". As an example that "after" means "on", consider that Christ would be resurrected "the third day" (Matthew 16:21), or "after three days" (Mark 8:31). Customarily, we would think that "after three days" means on the fourth day, or on any other day "after three days". But, this cannot be in this application. Christ did not resurrect on the fourth day, or on some other day beyond the third day. "He rose again the third day" (I Corinthians 15:4). Therefore, "on" a certain day may mean the same thing as "after" that same day.

In verse 26 we read:

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."

These words are essentially the same as those recorded in verse 19, with two exceptions:

1. "For fun of the Jews" is omitted;
2. "And Thomas" is present "with them."

The Lord "then", verse 27, addresses His remarks "to Thomas". And His words were:

"Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hand; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

These words reveal that the Lord knew of the incredulity of Thomas, although there is no record of Christ either being present when he expressed himself, or of the others reporting his words to Christ. Yet, He knew. Truly, He is Omniscient, and therefore, God. Compare John 1:48-50.

As a week earlier, the Lord "shewed unto them his hands and his side," verse 20, so He does the same to Thomas, verse 27. The response of Thomas was:

"My Lord and my God," verse 28.

Instead of rebuking Thomas for his confusion, Christ said, "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed," verse 29. Those who, like Thomas, "hast seen", and those who "have not seen" must believe exactly the same thing in order to "have life", verse 31. The message to be believed is the gospel of Christ, consisting of the death and resurrection of Christ (I Corinthians 15:3,4). The message is of who He is, and what He accomplished on behalf of sinners. Thomas "saw" a mortal wound in a living man, and was convinced by reason thereof that the One who was so wounded, yet lived, was "Lord and...God".

This is even more remarkable when one remembers that Thomas was a Jew. And, the Jews were a monotheistic people, owning no other God than Jehovah Himself. The Old Testament affirms:

"Only in Jehovah...shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isaiah 45:24,25, A.S.V.).

This is what the Jews held to, yet, Peter, in addressing a group of religious Jews, said of Jesus Christ:

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The Jews at large did not want to hear any such thing, but Thomas, in being convinced by what he saw, confessed that Christ is, "My Lord and my God".

Now, let us look at this confession more closely. In John 1:1 we read:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (Ton Theon) God, and the Word was (Theos) God."

I have purposely written the verse this way to show that, according to scholars, the first word "God" is preceded by the definite article, whereas the second word "God" is not. Jehovah's Witnesses, who deny the Deity of Christ, teach that since the definite article is used with "Theon" and not with "Theos", that a distinction is intended. According to them, the distinction is that where "Ton Theon" occurs, the one true God, Jehovah, is signified, whereas "Theos", without the definite article, speaks of "a god", that is "a god" in a lesser, and inferior sense, and speaks of Christ. Thus, Jehovah's Witnesses, in the New World Translation, render John 1:1 as follows:

"In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

The reading of a number of passages of scripture where the definite article does not appear before "Theos" will reveal that "a god" cannot be meant. Read Matthew 5:9; 6:24; Luke 1:35,78; 2:40; John 1:6,12,13,18; 3:2,21; 9:16,33, as cases to point. The New World Translation does not translate "a god" in any of those thirteen verses, although "Theos" occurs without the article. That list of scriptures could be multiplied, showing exactly the same thing.

In John 20:28, the words, "My Lord and my God", according to scholars, clearly reveal that the definite article appears before "Theos". Hence, the phrase would be "O Kurios mou kai o Theos Mou," (end quote, The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, George Richer Berry, page 308.) "O Theos Mou" is literally, "The God of me."

In John 1:1, Jehovah's Witnesses tell us that "the God" refers to Jehovah. Well, here "the God" speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ! If Thomas was mistaken, why did not Christ rebuke him, correct him, or set the record straight? Rather Christ said to him, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed" (John 20:29).

Rest assured, there are many "gods" in scripture, but they are "gods" of man's invention and appointment. There is only one true and living God who is to be adored, as Thomas did Christ, and that is Jehovah. Jesus Christ, he said, is "The Lord of me and the God of me."