

*“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. Then Jesus said to Thomas: ‘put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe. Thomas said to him: ‘my Lord and my God!’ Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; but blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”*

Doubt. It's a five-letter word that causes all kinds of problems. In our lives, it's a feeling of uncertainty that manifests itself in a lack of conviction in some form or fashion. It often starts off small like a pin hole leak in a copper pipe underneath our homesteaded sanctuary. But before you know it, the pin hole turns into an inch and our whole sanctuary is flooded. Doubt happens in our personal lives when we compare ourselves to others and conclude that we don't measure up. Doubt happens in our professional lives when we are forced to make difficult decisions that we know won't be received well by some and/or all. And doubt happens in our parental lives when we wonder if the boundaries that we establish with our children will produce the fruit of seeing them become productive and virtuous human beings somewhere down the road.

But in our spiritual lives, doubt isn't just a feeling of uncertainty that manifests itself in a lack of conviction in some form or fashion. Doubt is the dreadful, debilitating, and dubious spiritual disease of really questioning in your heart, mind, and soul if Jesus is able. It starts small also. But it evolves into a raging river with no dam in sight to turn back the flood of pessimism within our spirit. And it happens because deep down we question if Jesus is able. Satan started it in the Garden of Eden with the words “has God really said?” It caused all kinds of problems. Sarah had intimate fellowship with doubt when she laughed at God's revelation that she would have a child in her old age. It caused all kinds of problems. And Thomas owns the unfortunate distinction of being labeled as *Doubting Thomas* from now to forevermore because he said, “unless I see, I will not believe.” It caused all kinds of problems as well.

When last we gathered at the river, we witnessed one of the most glorious miracles recorded in the entire Bible. It occurred because a lady who bled for 12 years straight had the faith and courage to put herself in the best possible position to be on the receiving end of divine intervention. Today, however, in the exact same passage of Scripture, you are going to see the exact opposite from the individuals involved in the story who are not named Jesus. They doubted that Jesus was able to bring the dead to life again. But these individuals are not just any run of the mill individuals. They were leaders of synagogues as well as disciples of Jesus who were soon going to be entrusted with the high honor of being the spokesman for how God is going to relate to humanity from that point forward. So, the message at the river today is simple: if God's people and God's leaders doubt Jesus is able, then how in the world can we expect the world to believe that He is? You are going to notice today that there was only one person in that 2000-year-old room who believed Jesus could raise the dead. It wasn't Peter, James, or John. It wasn't Jairus, the synagogue leader, or even the precious little girl's mother. It was Jesus and only Jesus. And we have a lot in common with them. So today I want to give you 4 reasons why we doubt that God is able. To do that, please turn with me to Mark 5:35-43.

*<sup>35</sup> While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?” <sup>36</sup> Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don't be afraid; just believe.” <sup>37</sup> He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” <sup>40</sup> But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup> He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.*

### Why We Doubt God is Able:

#### 1. Our reliance on our wisdom is often greater than our reliance on God's wisdom (35-36).

- **I Know** – (1) Many infants first word or words are “mom,” “dad,” “yes,” “no,” or “woof woof.” (2) Not mine. My first words were “I know.” (3) And they foreshadowed many humbling lessons that God saw fit to order up for me over a 48-year span. (4) Because often, I've made the fundamental mistake of relying on what I know more than what God knows.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The people who came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader, spoke and acted as if they were wiser than Jesus about life, death, and the prospect of miracles. Consequently, deep down, these synagogue people – church people – really didn't believe what claimed to profess.
- **Textual Emphasis – Why Even Bother?** - (1) The most haunting of all questions is right here in this passage of Scripture: Your daughter is dead “so why even bother the teacher anymore?” (2) Here's why it's haunting: (a) It assumes Jesus has the same perspective of life as we have. He doesn't. “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even if he dies (In 11:25). (b) It assumes Jesus has our view of death. He doesn't. Jesus says right here she's not dead, she's just asleep (even though her heart had stopped, and she wasn't breathing). (c) It assumes Jesus has the same view of the miraculous as we do. He doesn't. He spoke the world into existence. So, therefore,

in the way Jesus sees the world, everything is a miracle. (d) But the biggest reason it's haunting is because they assumed Jesus' knowledge of life, death and miracles were equal to theirs, not superior. Thus, the reason for the question "why bother?"

- **For Us:** "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, and my ways higher than your ways" (Isaiah 55:9). The first step towards doubting God is able is always relying on what you know instead of what God knows.

## 2. Our pessimism is often greater than our belief (39-40).

- **If Pessimists Could Add Verses to the Book of Proverbs:** (1) Proverbs is a great book in the Bible. I like it because of all the one liners of wisdom contained in it. (2) But what would have happened if God would have granted an eternal pessimist the opportunity to add to it? (3) They might have included: (a) "If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong." (b) "When things are going well, something is about to go wrong." (c) "Anytime things appear to be going better, you have overlooked something." (d) "If you do something you are sure will meet everybody's approval, you can also be sure someone won't like it." (3) Pessimism is just a word for doubt, for the propensity to find hopelessness in a hopeful situation.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** When individuals in the Bible were pessimistic about what God had promised or spoken, it often manifested in the form of sarcasm and/or laughter. Peter, James, and John's laughter revealed their pessimism, just like it did with Sarah and the serpent in the Garden.
- **Textual Emphasis: Disguises for Unbelief** – (1) In the Scriptures, there are several disguises for unbelief. There's the disguise of (a) redirection. It's the one Judas Iscariot used when he diverted the disciple's attention away from Mary pouring the alabaster jar of perfume on Jesus' feet and on to selling it and using the money to give the poor. (b) There's cross-examination – like the serpent in the Garden. (c) There's argumentation, hostility, and back-channel conspiring – which is what the religious leaders did to Jesus. (d) But there's also sarcasm and emotional outbursts. The most common of which is laughter. Sarah laughed because she didn't believe, and she was a matriarch. Here, the disciples and the people in Jairus' home laugh and they were leaders.
- **For Us:** Our disguises of unbelief hurt our witness and they hinder our mission. If we laugh at God's promises in unbelief, how can we, the people of God, expect our message to change people's lives in the world? And leader's if we can't believe God, what right do we have under the authority of heaven to lead?

## 3. Our surprise is often greater than our expectation (42)

- **Surprising Child's Presents:** (1) When children open presents on Christmas or their birthdays, they always start with the biggest and work their way to the small ones. (2) By the time they get to the small ones, their joy quickly moves from exuberance to "oh look at this small one." (3) But I love looking at their faces when the small ones contain something of great value to them. They are surprised. (4) The gift giver isn't. That person knows what's contained in the package.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** When Peter, James, John, and the child's parents saw the child alive and walking, they were completely astonished. But there was one person in the room who wasn't. His name is Jesus. He expected it.
- **Textual Emphasis: The Astonishment vs Expectation:** (1) The contrast between the two miracles of Mark 5:21-43 were completely different when it comes to astonishment and expectation. (2) The woman who had been bleeding for 12 years wasn't a church leader. She wasn't a disciple. She was an unclean woman. And she touched his robe because she knew what Jesus could do. (3) Here though, Jairus – the synagogue leader – and his wife, and the leaders of the New Covenant leaders we know as the disciples – Peter, James, and John – were "astonished." That word means to be surprised to the point of bewilderment. It's not a positive in this context. They were astonished God did something when they should have expected it.
- **For Us** – We must recognize if we, the people of God, don't really believe deep down that God is able. He will raise up people outside the church who do, just like the woman who bled for 12 years.

## 4. Our disobedience is often greater than our obedience (43)

- **Where Our Captain** – (1) *"Where our Captain bids us go, tis not ours to murmur no. For He that gives the sword and shield. Chooses too the battlefield."* (2) And the greatest battlefield for the Christian is the battlefield of obedience. For when we disobey, we raise our armaments and muskets to fire at God without even realizing it.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** After Jesus raised this girl back to life, he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone. By doing so, they had two choices: (1) Obedience or (2) Disobedience. We don't know what choice they made. But we can be sure that there were many others he gave this order to, and they chose not to obey it.
- **Textual Emphasis – When Jesus Says "Don't Tell":** (1) On many occasions, Jesus follows a miracle with the command not to tell. We've already seen it in Mark 1:43-45 with the cleansing of a leper. But, unfortunately, in that man's excitement, he did the exact opposite and disobeyed. In our passage, we are left to ponder what their choice would be because Mark doesn't tell us. (2) But Jesus told them not to tell because he didn't want public attention to hinder his mission (the cross) and detract from his message (salvation through the cross).
- **For Us:** We tend to think of disobedience as telling God "No." But for us, it's trying to help Jesus along. He doesn't need your help. He invites you to join him in his mission through obedience. He is able. The question is: do you believe that enough to obey?