

The Apostle Thomas

Including Thaddaeus, of the Seventy

October 6, 2023

GOSPEL: John 20:19-31

EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16

Thomas: Personal Glimpses

We can get some glimpses into the personal life and thinking of the Twelve from accounts of them in the Scriptures. For the Apostle Thomas, there are four glimpses we get from the Scriptures, and all are from the Gospel of John.

Thomas' willingness to die with the Lord: John 11:11-16

The setting was late in the year 29 AD, just following the Feast of the Dedication, or Hanukkah (John 10:22), where Jesus knew that he would be crucified in the Spring. When He heard that His friend Lazarus was sick, He stayed two more days where He was. Then He announced, "Let us go to Judea again". His disciples reminded Him that the Jewish leaders had just recently tried to stone Him twice (John 8:59, 10:31), and they couldn't understand why He would go back there (John 11:6-8). Jesus then stated, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him".

John Chrysostom stated¹ that Jesus meant by this that He is the light of the world (John 8:12), which is what He stated just before the Jewish leaders tried to stone Him. "He who 'sees the light of this world' is in safety; and if he that sees the light of this world is in safety, much more he that is with Me, if he separate not himself from Me. Having encouraged them by these words, He adds that the cause of their going there was pressing, because Lazarus was dead. And He showed them that they were about to go not unto Jerusalem, but unto Bethany".

Thomas then stated, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (John 11:16). John Chrysostom stated² that Thomas said this out of weakness and fear. "They therefore had feared for Him also, but for the more part rather for themselves; for they were not yet perfect. So Thomas, shaking with fear, said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him", because Thomas was weaker and more unbelieving than the rest. But see how Jesus encourages them by what He said".

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¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, 62, 1

² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, 62, 1

Thomas and Philip want to understand where Christ was going: John 14:1-7

On Thursday of Holy Week, Jesus was explaining to His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for His disciples and their followers. This made a huge impact on Thomas, as will be seen from the chapter on Thomas' arrival in India. He said, "And where I go you know, and the way you know. Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him'. Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us'. Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:4-9)

Yet the Twelve had heard from the Father on three separate occasions: First, at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:17), second, at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5), and third, on Palm Sunday (John 12:28).

John Chrysostom stated³ that when Peter asked, "Lord, where are You going?", he did so out of loving affection. But when Thomas asked about not knowing the way, he did so out of uncertainty and cowardice. Thomas did not say "Tell us the place", but, "We do not know where you are going". The Twelve had long desired to hear about the place He was going to, and when they got the courage to ask, they did so from both great love and from anxiety. Chrysostom continued⁴:

"But Christ set him straight, persuading him to gain the knowledge of the Father through Himself, while Philip desired to see Him with these bodily eyes. They had perhaps heard concerning the Prophets, that they 'saw God' (Exodus 33:20-23). Christ said, 'No man has seen God at any time' (John 1:18); and again, 'Every man that has heard and has learned from God comes to Me' (John 6:45). 'You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape' (John 5:37). And in the Old Testament, 'No man shall see My face, and live' (Exodus 33:20).

But Christ did not say, 'Have you not seen Me', but, 'Have you not known Me'. If Christ is truly of the same substance as the Father, yet still the Son, He shows in Himself Him who begot Him. If the Twelve had truly known Jesus as the Son of God, they would have known the Father also. Jesus stated that he that knows My Essence, knows that of the Father also. But to make use of a grosser argument, no man can discern what gold is by examining silver. For one nature is not shown by another. Wherefore He rightly rebuked him, saying, 'Am I so long with you?' Because He was clothed with flesh, therefore He said, 'Have you not known Me?'"

For more extensive discussion on Philip's question, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us", see the Study for the Apostle Philip.

³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, 73, 2.

⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, 74, 1.

Thomas' doubt and confession: "My Lord and My God!" John 20:19-29

Some have looked askance at Thomas for his doubt, but there was a special purpose for his inquiry. Because of Thomas' insistence, details of the bodily Resurrection of Christ were revealed that might have gone unnoticed. John Chrysostom said⁵ of this:

"Thomas did not believe the Apostles when they said, 'We have seen the Lord'; not so much mistrusting them, as deeming the resurrection from the dead to be impossible. He did not say, 'I do not believe you', but, 'Except I put my hand, I do not believe'. After the dispersion (John 16:32), which had lately taken place, Thomas was late to return. Consider the loving-kindness of the Lord: for the sake of a single soul He showed Himself with His wounds, and comes in order to save even the one. Thomas would not even trust his eyes. For he said not, 'Except I see', but, 'Except I handle', lest what he saw might somehow be an apparition.

For this is of faith, to receive things not seen; since, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Hebrews 11:1). And here He pronounces blessed not the disciples only, but those also who after them should believe. Someone might say, 'the disciples saw and believed'. Yes, but they sought nothing of the kind, but from the proof of the napkins (John 20:6-8), they straightway received the word concerning the Resurrection, and before they saw the body, they exhibited all faith.

It is worth inquiring, how an incorruptible body showed the prints of the nails, and was tangible by a mortal hand. But this marvel was shown, that the Resurrection might be believed, and that men might know that it was the Crucified One Himself, and that another did not rise in His stead. On this account He arose bearing the signs of the Cross, and on this account He ate. At least the Apostles everywhere made this a sign of the Resurrection, saying, 'We, who did eat and drink with Him' (Acts 10:41). For He exhibited these appearances on account of the disciple.

Thomas' doubt and subsequent confession was as much a statement of the Faith as was Peter's confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16). Hilary of Poitiers concluded⁶ that Thomas' confession states

"The Son has the elements of God's nature; they are immanent in Him in undiminished extent, although they were born from Him to be His Son. For the mystery that we preach is that of a Son Who owes His existence not to division but to birth. He is not a segment cut off, and so incomplete, but an Offspring born, and therefore perfect; for birth involves no diminution of the Begetter, and has the possibility of perfection for the Begotten".

"The confession of Thomas the Apostle, when he cried, 'My Lord and My God' corresponds with this assertion. He speaks of Him, Whom he confesses to be God, as My God. Now Thomas was familiar with those words of the Lord, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is One' (Deuteronomy 6:4). In the light of the Resurrection, the whole mystery of the Faith had become visible to the Apostle. He had often heard such words as, 'I and the Father are One' (John 10:30), and, 'All things that the Father has are Mine' (John 16:15), and, 'I in the Father and the Father

⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, 87, 1.

⁶ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, VII, 11-12

in Me' (John 14:10). And now he can confess that the Name of God expresses the nature of Christ, without peril to the Faith. Without breach of loyalty to the One God, the Father, his devotion could now regard the Son of God as God, since he believed that everything contained in the nature of the Son was truly of the same nature with the Father. Thus it was with full knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel that Thomas confessed his Lord and his God.

And the Lord, in turn, showed that this act of worship was the expression of believing, when He said, 'Because you have seen, you have believed; blessed are they which have not seen, and have believed' (John 20:29). No nature but that of God could have risen by its own might from death to life; and it is this fact, that Christ is God, which was confessed by Thomas with the confidence of an assured faith.

Christ accepts, as His own the Name, which belongs to the nature of the Father. And He teaches that they are blessed who, though they have not seen Him rise from the dead, yet have believed, on the assurance of the Resurrection, that He is God".

One of the hymns of the Church⁷ captures Hilary's thoughts: "The wondrous Thomas has disclosed the wellspring of teachings unto the divinely wise, O Master. For when he touched Thy side and was taught Thy twofold energies through Thy two Natures, he rightly cried aloud: 'Thou art my God and Master!' Thou art the Lord of Glory, Who did become flesh for my sake!"

Theodoret stated⁸ that when Thomas had put his hand on the flesh of the Lord, calling Him Lord and God, he discerned the invisible through the visible nature.

Thomas was not alone in discerning this. The other Ten did this also. Hilary describes⁹ the experience of the Ten with Thomas as follows:

I ask at what point in the walls of that closed house the Lord bodily entered. The Apostle has recorded the circumstances with careful precision; Jesus came when the doors were shut, and stood in the midst. Did He penetrate through bricks and mortar, or through stout woodwork? For there He stood in bodily presence; there was no suspicion of deceit. Let the eye of your mind follow His path as He enters. There is no breach in the walls, no door has been unbarred; yet He stands in the midst. Everything remains firm as it was; no body is capable of insinuating itself through the interstices of wood and stone. The Body of the Lord does not disperse itself, to come together again after a disappearance; yet where does He come from Who is standing in the midst? Senses and words are powerless to account for it; the fact is certain, but it lies beyond the region of human explanation.

⁷ "Eight Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Thomas, October 6th", Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁸ Theodoret, Letters, 83

⁹ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, III, 20

Thomas as a Fisherman: John 21:1-6

Among Jesus' relatives, James and John were fishermen along with their father Zebedee. Due to the type of nets they used, their business required at least two boats and at least a dozen able-bodied men to haul nets. Thus we see Peter and Andrew as partners with James and John Zebedee (Luke 5:10). In addition, Thomas and Nathanael worked with them also and may have been hired hands (John 21:1-3).

Philip, a native of Bethsaida along with Peter and Andrew, was not a fisherman, but was a close friend of Nathanael (John 1:43-48). Matthias was not a fisherman or a direct relative of Jesus. But due to his being put forward as a candidate to replace Judas (along with Jesus' step brother Joseph, Jr.), he had spent the last three years going everywhere with them as one of the 70 (Acts 1:21-23). Since Matthias was born in Bethlehem (along with Joseph, the Betrothed of the Virgin Mary), he could have been a distant relative of Joseph.

Three types of nets¹⁰ were referred to in both New and Old Testaments, and these were the common tools of the fishermen like Thomas. These types of nets had been used for thousands of years and required much different techniques.

The first type, a dragnet (Greek *sagaynay*), is the oldest type. Typical dragnets or seines were up to 1,000 feet long and 25 feet high. It was spread out by boat 100 yards or more from shore and then hauled to shore by a team of 16 men. Sinkers kept the bottom of the net down and floats kept the top on the surface. When the net reached the shore, fish were sorted and catfish were thrown away. This is the type of net referred to in Matthew 13:47-50. This net couldn't be used if the shoreline was rocky or had kelp growing near the shore.

A second type of net is a cast net, also called a bag net (Greek *amphilblestron*). This type is circular, about 25 feet in diameter and has lead weights all around the outer edge. After the net is thrown and sinks to the bottom, it is either retrieved by a system of cords or by a diver. When Peter and Andrew were called (Matthew 4:18), they were using this net, perhaps catching sardines. (When Peter and Andrew left their nets, Matthew 4:20, they left the third type of net: their trammel nets.)

A third type of net is called a trammel net (Greek *diktuon*). This type of net has three layers and was used only at night. It was not useful during the day because the fish could see the weaving and avoid it. Modern synthetic fiber — which is invisible under water — has made trammel nets useful today in the daytime. The trammel net was spread in a crescent shape roughly parallel to the shoreline. The boat that laid the net then quietly maneuvered toward shore between the net and the shore. All of a sudden the fishermen in the boat started making racket by beating the water with oars or stamping on the bottom of the boat. The frightened fish headed for deep water — right into the net and became entangled.

The trammel net was lowered and hauled up perhaps a dozen times during the night. Early in the morning the net was washed and hung up to dry and repaired — and prepared for the next night's work.

¹⁰ Mendel Nun, "Cast Your Net upon the Waters", Biblical Archaeology Review, Nov./Dec. 1993, pp. 46-56.

Glimpses of Thomas During the First Year of the Church

Thomas' name was Judah^{11, 12} at birth, but he was known primarily by his nickname during the late 20's AD. Thomas (Hebrew meaning "The Twin") or Didymus (Greek meaning "Double"), was described¹³ as having a twin brother named Eliezer, who was a follower of the Apostle Peter, but who was not numbered among the Twelve or the Seventy. From traditional accounts¹⁴, Thomas has been described as having studied the Scripture and the Law of Moses diligently in his youth -- so much so that he was never interested in the games the other children played. When the Lord passed through the region where Thomas worked as a fisherman (John 21:1-6), Thomas was immediately drawn to Jesus. Thomas never married, like many of the 12, but instead concentrated on a godly life, simplicity and poverty in evangelizing the extremely poor in the regions he traveled to.

In the first year of the Church, the Book of Acts describes several encounters between the Apostles and the religious leaders. In all cases, Peter or John are quoted as being the spokesmen for the Apostles. On Pentecost, Peter was described "standing with the Eleven" (Acts 2:14) in his message to the people who were confused by the events taking place. When Peter and John healed the lame man, he held onto both Peter and John, but Peter was the one who spoke to the people about what had happened (Acts 3:1-12). When Peter and John were arrested for this, it was Peter who spoke in their defense (Acts 4:1-8). When the Twelve were arrested and put in prison, an angel let them out during the night. Summoned before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, Peter *and the other Apostles answered* and said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:17-29).

Few details are given in Acts regarding the exact accusations that were brought against the Apostles, or who of the Twelve answered these accusations. Pseudo Clement¹⁵ records one example where Thomas responded:

"Then Caiaphas attempted to impugn the doctrine of Jesus. He claimed that Jesus spoke vain things, for He said that the poor are blessed; and promised earthly rewards; and placed the chief gift in an earthly inheritance; and promised that those who maintain righteousness shall be satisfied with meat and drink; and many things of this sort. Thomas, in reply, proved that his accusation is frivolous. He showed that the prophets, in whom Caiaphas believes, taught these things much more, and did not show in what manner these things are to be, or how they are to be understood. Whereas Jesus pointed out how they are to be taken. And when he had spoken these things and others of like kind, Thomas also held his peace.

Thomas Sends Thaddaeus of the Seventy to Armenia

Prior to leaving on his missionary journeys, Thomas sent Thaddaeus, also called Addaeus, one of the Seventy out on a mission to Mesopotamia. Several accounts of this exist today. Following is an excerpt¹⁶ from the account from the Church Historian, Eusebius:

¹¹ Eusebius, Church History, I, 13

¹² Roberts and Donaldson, "Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas", Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

¹³ Pseudo Clement, The Clementine Homilies, II, 1

¹⁴ Holy Apostles Convent, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Buena Vista, CO, 81211, p. 185

¹⁵ Pseudo-Clement, Recognitions of Clement, I, 61

¹⁶ Eusebius, Church History, I, 13

“The divinity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ being noised abroad among all men on account of his wonder-working power, he attracted countless numbers from foreign countries lying far away from Judea, who had the opening of being cured of their diseases and of all kinds of sufferings. For instance the King Abgar, who ruled with great glory the nations beyond the Euphrates, was afflicted with a terrible disease, which it was beyond the power of human skill to cure. When he heard of the name of Jesus, and of his miracles, which were attested by all with one accord, sent a message to him by a courier and begged him to heal his disease. But he did not at that time comply with his request; yet he deemed him worthy of a personal letter in which he said that he would send one of his disciples to cure his disease, and at the same time promised salvation to himself and all his house. Not long afterward his promise was fulfilled”.

“For after his resurrection from the dead and his ascent into heaven, Thomas, one of the Twelve Apostles, under divine impulse sent Thaddeus, who was also numbered among the Seventy disciples of Christ, to Edessa, as a preacher and evangelist of the teaching of Christ. And all that our Savior had promised received through him its fulfillment. You have written evidence of these things taken from the archives of Edessa, which was at that time a royal city. For in the public registers there, which contain accounts of ancient times and the acts of Abgar, these things have been found preserved down to the present time. But there is no better way than to hear the epistles themselves which we have taken from the archives and have literally translated from the Syriac language in the following manner”.

According to tradition¹⁷, the courier, named Ananias, that brought Abgar’s request to Jesus, was a painter. Abgar had instructed him that if Jesus could not come to heal him, he was to paint an icon of Jesus. Abgar believed that the portrait would heal him. Aware of this, Jesus took a napkin and wiped His face with it, leaving a perfect impression of His face on the napkin. Jesus then gave this napkin to Ananias, with a message to say that he would be healed partially by it. Later He would send him an envoy, who would rid him of the remainder of the disease. Receiving the napkin, Abgar kissed it and most of the leprosy fell from his body, with a little remaining on his face. When Thaddaeus came, he completed the job.

In later centuries, this napkin was framed and placed above the city gate of Edessa. This napkin came to be referred to as The Icon of our Lord Jesus Christ Not-Made-With-Hands¹⁸. When Abgar’s great grandsons restored idolatry, the Bishop of Edessa came by night and walled in the icon above the city gate to prevent its destruction. Succeeding generations forgot that the icon was there. During the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565 AD), when the Persians attacked Edessa, the Bishop of Edessa, Eulabius, had a vision from the Virgin Mary about the secret of the icon, and retrieved it. The icon was later destroyed during the Islamic Conquests. The hymns of the Church also celebrate Thaddaeus’ work in Edessa, which began very soon after Pentecost, and before the scattering of the faithful at the death of Stephen, which occurred one year after Pentecost:

“O blessed¹⁹ and God-pleasing Thaddaeus, after the divine and radiant Resurrection of Christ and His all-holy Ascension into heaven, you engaged in the

Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Story Concerning the King of Edessa”, Memoirs of Edessa and Other Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

¹⁷ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, August 16.

¹⁸ This icon is so famous that it has its own Feast Day, August 16th, to commemorate its spectacular history.

¹⁹ “Six Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle Thaddaeus, August 21st”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

preaching of God for the city of Edessa. By your words and miracles you confirmed in the truth Abgar, the local ruler, and all with him”.

“Performing miracles²⁰ through the invocation of Christ, Who manifested Himself in bodily manner, O all-praised one, you drew people and cities to the excellent Faith. You brought an end to the decay of ungodliness, O blessed Apostle, with the divine salt of your sweet words. You healed hearts wounded by the darts of the serpent, crying: O God of our fathers, blessed are You. Caught up to the heights of vision and filled with the divine Spirit, O Thaddaeus, you were divinely enriched by the saving Word and taught men to cry: Blessed is the God of our fathers!”

Moses of Chorene also gives an account²¹ of the work of Thaddaeus in Edessa:

“After the ascension of our Savior, the Apostle Thomas, one of the twelve, sent one of the seventy-six disciples, Thaddaeus, to the city of Edessa to heal Abgar and to preach the Gospel, according to the word of the Lord. Thaddaeus came to the house of Tobias, a Jewish prince, who is said to have been of the race of the Pacradouni. Tobias, having left Archam, did not abjure Judaism with the rest of his relatives, but followed its laws up to the moment when he believed in Christ. Soon the name of Thaddaeus spread through the whole town. Abgar, on learning of his arrival, said: ‘This is indeed he concerning whom Jesus wrote to me’, and immediately Abgar sent for the Apostle. When Thaddaeus entered, a marvelous appearance presented itself to the eyes of Abgar in the countenance of the Apostle; the king having risen from his throne, fell on his face to the earth, and prostrated himself before Thaddaeus. This spectacle greatly surprised all the princes who were present, for they were ignorant of the fact of the vision. ‘Are you really’, said Abgar to Thaddaeus, ‘are you the disciple of the ever-blessed Jesus? Are you he whom He promised to send to me, and can you heal my maladies?’ ‘Yes’, answered Thaddaeus; ‘if you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the desires of your heart shall be granted’. ‘I have believed in Jesus’, said Abgar, ‘and I have believed in His Father. Therefore I wished to go at the head of my troops to destroy the Jews who have crucified Jesus, had I not been prevented by reason of the power of the Romans’”.

“Thenceforth Thaddaeus began to preach the Gospel to the king and his town; laying his hands upon Abgar, he cured him; he cured also a man with gout, Abdu, a prince of the town, much honored in all the king’s house. He also healed all the sick and infirm people in the town, and all believed in Jesus Christ. Abgar was baptized, and the whole town with him. The temples of the false gods were closed, and they hid all the statues of idols, which were placed on the altars and columns, by being covered with reeds. Abgar did not compel any one to embrace the Faith, yet from day to day the number of the believers was multiplied”.

The hymns of the Church celebrate the impact of the work of Thaddaeus in Edessa:

“Going to King Abgar²², O wise one, by divinely efficacious gestures you brought him healing and deliverance. You built Churches for the all-accomplishing Spirit, O wise one, and destroyed the vile temples of mortals”.

²⁰ “Ode VII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle Thaddaeus, August 21st”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

²¹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Moses of Chorene: The History of Armenia”, 8, Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

²² “Ode III for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle Thaddaeus, August 21st”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

“Possessed of a lofty intelligence²³, O Thaddaeus, disciple of the King of all, you received divine understanding and spiritual gifts. In teaching the divine mysteries, O blessed one, who are most rich, you enlightened the uninstructed to worship the consubstantial Trinity. You engraved the Law of God upon men’s hearts, O blessed one, having first erased the traces of ignorance and the false worship of graven images”.

“The enlightenment²⁴ of the Holy Spirit which dwelt within your heart, O Thaddaeus, made of you a true luminary for the world, dispersing the darkness of falsehood. Bearing in your flesh the saving wounds of Christ as an ornament, O wise Thaddaeus, you delivered the people from all ugliness and were taken up into most beautiful joy. You revealed to us the morning Sun of righteousness, O glorious Thaddaeus, showing those mortals who have been illumined thereby to be children of the noetic Light”.

“You were shown²⁵ to be a heaven declaring the glory of God, O Thaddaeus, and were the enlightenment of nations, leading to the divine Faith those who fervently cry: ‘Hymn the Lord and exalt Him supremely forever!’ Bestowing strength upon the infirm, sight upon the blind, and the ability to walk upon the lame through the power of the Spirit, O blessed Thaddaeus, you were a luminary of the city of Edessa, which ever praises you with faith. Thaddaeus, who by a wealth of miracles brought an unbelieving nation to the Faith at the behest of God, saved those who fled to him from the falsehood of idolatry.”

The account of Moses of Chorene continues²⁶ to describe a series of letters exchanged between Abgar, king of Armenia, and Tiberius Caesar. Abgar urged Tiberius to punish the Jews for crucifying Jesus, but Tiberius had other matters pressing, such as a war in Spain and opposition in the senate, and declined. Abgar wrote back that Tiberius should at least bring Pontius Pilate to Rome on charges and replace him. This Tiberius did, for he had heard from Mary Magdalene, who had traveled to Rome to expose those who unjustly condemned Christ. She told Tiberius the whole story of Pilate’s unjust trial, the release of a murderer and insurrectionist in His place and of the cowering of Pilate to the plotting of the Jewish leaders (Acts 3:13-15, Matthew 27:15-24). By the time Pilate arrived in Rome, Tiberius had died and Caius Caligula was Emperor. Pilate was unable to defend himself and was banished to Gaul where he committed suicide²⁷. Pilate’s wife, Procula, came to believe in Christ and lived an ascetic life along with others of the Holy Women²⁸. She had sent word to her husband during Jesus’ trial to “have nothing to do with that Just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him” (Matthew 27:19).

The Work of Thaddaeus (Addaeus) in Other Cities²⁹

²³ “Ode IV for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle Thaddaeus, August 21st”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

²⁴ “Ode VI for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle Thaddaeus, August 21st”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

²⁵ “Ode VIII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle Thaddaeus, August 21st”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

²⁶ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Moses of Chorene: The History of Armenia”, 8, Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

²⁷ Eusebius, Church History, II, vii

²⁸ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 13, June 4, October 17.

²⁹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Teaching of Addaeus the Apostle”, Memoirs of Edessa and Other Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

“Aggaeus, who made the silks and headbands of the king, and Palut, and Barshelama, and Barsamya, together with the others their companions, cleaved to Addaeus the apostle. And he received them, and associated them with him in the ministry, their business being to read in the Old Testament and the New, and in the prophets, and in the Acts of the Apostles, and to meditate upon them daily. He strictly charged them to let their bodies be pure and their persons holy, as is becoming in men who stand before the altar of God. ‘And put far from you unjust partiality, and bribes, and presents, through which the innocent are pronounced guilty (Deuteronomy 1:16-18). And along with this ministry, to which you have been called, see that you have no other work besides. For the Lord is the work of your ministry all the days of your life. And be diligent to give the seal of baptism. And be not fond of the gains of this world. And hear your cause with justice and with truth. And do not be a stumbling block to the blind, lest through you should be blasphemed the Name of Him who opened the eyes of the blind, according as we have seen. Let all, therefore, who see you perceive that you yourselves are in harmony with whatsoever you preach and teach”.

“And they ministered with him in the church which Addaeus had built at the word and command of Abgar the king, being furnished with supplies by the king and his nobles, partly for the house of God, and partly for the supply of the poor. Moreover, many people day by day assembled and came to the prayers of the service, and to the reading of the Old Testament, and the New. The festivals of the Church they also observed in their seasons, and were assiduous every day in the vigils of the Church. And they made visits of almsgiving, to the sick and to those that were whole, according to the instruction of Addaeus to them. In the environs of the city, churches were built, and many received from him ordination to the priesthood. So that even people of the East, in the guise of merchants, passed over into the territory of the Romans, that they might see the signs which Addaeus did. And such as became disciples received from him ordination to the priesthood, and in their own country of the Assyrians they instructed the people of their nation, and erected houses of prayer there in secret, by reason of the danger from those who worshipped fire and paid reverence to water”.

In another account³⁰ of the history of Edessa, Abgar, the king, was humble enough to work alongside Thaddaeus in the building of churches.

“To Edessa Thaddaeus made his journey, and found in it a great work: For the king became a laborer for the church, and was building it. The apostle Addaeus stood in it like a builder, and King Abgar laid aside his diadem and built with him. When apostle and king concurred, the one with the other, what idol must not fall before them? Satan fled to the land of Babylon from the disciples, and the tale of the crucifixion went before him to the country of the Chaldeans”.

“Moreover³¹, Narses, the king of the Assyrians, when he heard of those same things, which Addaeus the apostle had done, sent a message to Abgar the king. ‘Either send to me the man who does these signs before thee, that I may see him and hear his word, or send me an account of all that you have seen him do in your own town’. And Abgar wrote to Narses, and related to him the

³⁰ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Extracts from Various Books Concerning Abgar the King and Addaeus the Apostle”, II, vii, Memoirs of Edessa and Other Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³¹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Teaching of Addaeus the Apostle”, Memoirs of Edessa and Other Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

whole story of the deeds of Addaeus from the beginning to the end. And, when Narses heard those things, which were written to him, he was astonished and amazed.

“And some years after Addaeus the apostle had built the church in Edessa, and had furnished it with everything that was suitable for it, and had made disciples of a great number of the population of the city, he further built churches in the villages also. There were both those, which were at a distance, and those, which were near. And he finished and adorned them, and appointed in them deacons and elders, and instructed in them those who should read the Scriptures, and taught the ordinances and the ministry without and within”.

“After all these things he fell ill of the sickness of which he departed from this world. And he called for Aggaeus before the whole assembly of the church, and bade him draw near, and made him Guide and Ruler in his stead. And Palut, who was a deacon, he made elder; and Abshelama, who was a scribe, he made deacon. And he assembled the nobles and chief men, Barcalba son of Zati, Maryhab son of Barshemash, Senac son of Avida, and Piroz son of Patric, together with the rest of their companions. And Addaeus, the apostle, said to them, ‘You know and are witness, all of you who hear me, that, according to all that I have preached to you and taught you and you have heard from me. Even so have I behaved myself in the midst of you, and you have seen it in deeds also. Because our Lord thus charged us, that, whatsoever we preach in words before the people, we should practice it in deeds before all men’”.

“For three days more Addaeus the apostle spoke and encouraged the people who had heard and received the testimony concerning the teaching set forth in the preaching from those engaged with him in the ministry, in the presence of all the nobles, he departed out of this world. And the whole city was in great mourning and bitter anguish for him. Nor was it the Christians only that were distressed for him, but the Jews also, and the pagans, who were in this same town. But Abgar the king was distressed for him more than any one, he and the princes of his kingdom. And in the sadness of his soul he despised and laid aside the magnificence of his kingly state on that day, and with tears mingled with moans he bewailed him with all men. And all the people of the city that saw him were amazed to see how greatly he suffered on his account. And with great and surpassing pomp he bore him, and buried him like one of the princes when he dies. And he laid him in a grand sepulcher adorned with sculpture wrought by the fingers — that in which were laid those of the house of Ariu, the ancestors of Abgar the king. There he laid him sorrowfully, with sadness and great distress. And all the people of the church went there from time to time and prayed fervently; and they kept up the remembrance of his departure from year to year, according to the command and direction, which had been received by them from Addaeus the apostle. This was according to the word of Aggaeus, who himself became Guide and Ruler, and the successor of his seat after him, by the ordination to the priesthood which he had received from him in the presence of all men”.

“He too, with the same ordination which he had received from him, made Priests and Guides in the whole of this country of Mesopotamia. For they also, in like manner as Addaeus the apostle, held fast his word, and listened to and received it, as good and faithful successors of the apostle of the adorable Christ. But silver and gold he took not from any man, nor did the gifts of the princes come near him. For, instead of receiving gold and silver, he himself enriched the Church of Christ with the souls of believers”.

“Moreover, as regards the entire state of the men and the women, they were chaste and circumspect, and holy and pure. For they lived like anchorites and chastely, without spot — in circumspect watchfulness touching the ministry, in their sympathy toward the poor, in their visitations to the sick. For their footsteps were fraught with praise from those who saw them, and their conduct was arrayed in commendation from strangers. So that even the priests of the house

of Nebu and Bel divided the honor with them at all times, by reason of their dignified aspect, their truthful words, their frankness of speech arising from their noble nature, which was neither subservient through covetousness nor in bondage under the fear of blame”.

“And some years after the death of Abgar the king, there arose one of his contumacious sons, who was not favorable to peace; and he sent word to Aggaeus, as he was sitting in the church. ‘Make me a headband of gold, such as thou used to make for my fathers in former times’. Aggaeus sent to him, ‘I will not give up the ministry of Christ, which was committed to me by the disciple of Christ, and make a headband of wickedness’. And, when he saw that he did not comply, he sent and broke his legs as he was sitting in the church expounding. And as he was dying he adjured Palut and Abshelama. ‘In this house, for whose truth’s sake, I am dying, lay me and bury me’. And, even as he had adjured them, so did they lay him — inside the middle door of the church, between the men and the women. And there was great and bitter mourning in all the church, and in all the city — over and above the anguish and the mourning which there had been within the church, such as had been the mourning when Addaeus the apostle himself died”.

“And, in consequence of his dying suddenly and quickly at the breaking of his legs, he was not able to lay his hand upon Palut. Palut went to Antioch, and received ordination to the priesthood from Serapion, bishop of Antioch”.

Aggaeus went on to convert a large region to the Christian Faith. “The whole of Persia³², of the Assyrians, and of the Armenians, and of the Medians, and of the countries round about Babylon, the Huzites and the Gelae, as far as the borders of the Indians, and as far as the land of Gog and Magog, and moreover all the countries on all sides, received the apostles’ ordination to the priesthood from Aggaeus, a maker of silks, the disciple of Addaeus the apostle”.

Moses of Chorene stated³³ that it was to this same area of Armenia that the Apostle Nathanael (i.e. Bartholomew) went in about 90 AD, and this is where Nathanael was martyred:

“After the death of Abgar, the kingdom of Armenia was divided between two people. Ananoun, Abgar’s son, reigned at Edessa, and his sister’s son, Sanadroug, in Armenia. Others have previously told what took place in their time. These are: the Apostle’s (i.e. Thaddaeus’) arrival in Armenia, the conversion of Sanadroug and his apostasy for fear of the Armenian satraps, and the martyrdom of the Apostle and his companions in the canton of Chavarchan, now called Ardaz. Other accounts are: the stone opening to receive the body of the Apostle, the removal of his body by his disciples, his burial in the plain, and the martyrdom of the king’s daughter, Santoukhd, near the road. Also there are accounts of the apparition of the remains of the two saints, and their removal to the rocks. All these circumstances were related by others, as we have said, a long time before us: we have not thought it important to repeat them here. In the same way also what is related of the martyrdom at Edessa of Addaeus, a disciple of the Apostle, a martyrdom ordered by Abgar’s son, has been told by others before us”.

“The prince who reigned after the death of his father, did not inherit his father’s virtues. He opened the temples of the idols, and embraced the religion of the heathen. He sent word to Addaeus, ‘Make me a head-dress of cloth interwoven with gold, like those you formerly used to make for my father’. He received this

³² Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Teaching of the Apostles”, Addendum, 10, Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³³ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Moses of Chorene: The History of Armenia”, 9, Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

answer from Addaeus: ‘My hands shall not make a head-dress for an unworthy prince, who does not worship Christ the living God’”.

“Immediately the king ordered one of his armed men to cut off Addaeus’ feet. The soldier went, and, seeing the holy man seated in the chair of the teacher, cut off his legs with his sword, and immediately the saint gave up the ghost. We mention this cursorily, as a fact related by others a long while ago. There came then into Armenia the Apostle Bartholomew, who suffered martyrdom among us in the town of Arepan. As to Simon (the Zealot), who was sent unto Persia, I cannot relate with certainty what he did, nor where he suffered martyrdom. It is said that one Simon, an Apostle, was martyred at Veriospore”.

Thomas Leaves Jerusalem

Of the documents that describe the life of Thomas, the one called “The Gospel of Thomas”³⁴ was criticized by the Early Church Fathers as being absurd, impious, and the work of heretics. Cyril of Jerusalem stated³⁵, “Let none read the Gospel according to Thomas, for it is the work not of one of the twelve Apostles, but of one of the three wicked disciples of Manes” (who was a 3rd Century heretic). Eusebius added³⁶, “But we have nevertheless felt compelled to give a catalogue of those works which, according to ecclesiastical tradition, are true and genuine and commonly accepted, from those others which, although not canonical but disputed, are yet at the same time known to most ecclesiastical writers. We have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the Apostles. This includes, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any others besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other Apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings. And further, the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics. Wherefore they are not to be placed even among the rejected writings, but are all of them to be cast aside as absurd and impious”.

After Thomas sent Thaddaeus to Abgar in Armenia, he left Jerusalem for his own mission work. It is generally agreed³⁷ that Thomas’ lot in the mission field was to go to India. However, Eusebius stated³⁸ that Thomas’ lot also included Parthia, which at that time, was just East of the Persian Gulf, and included parts of modern Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. At that time, there was a noticeable Hebrew population in Parthia, and some of the visitors to Jerusalem at the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost were from Parthia, Media and Elam (Acts 2:9). Hippolytus stated³⁹ that Thomas’ work also included Parthia, Media, Persia, Hyrcania, Bactria and Margia (East of the Caspian Sea). See the map in Figure 1 for these locations.

³⁴ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Gospel of Thomas”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

³⁵ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, IV, 36, VI, 31

³⁶ Eusebius, Church History, III, 25

³⁷ Gregory Nazianzen, Orations, 33, 11.

Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Abgar the King and Addaeus the Apostle”, I, 8, Memoirs of Edessa and Other Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁸ Eusebius, Church History, III, 1

³⁹ Hippolytus, On the Twelve Apostles, 8.

At first, Thomas was dismayed to have to go to such a savage people, but the Lord appeared to him in a vision strengthening him and commanding him to be brave. From the Acts of Thomas⁴⁰, we have the following details:

“By lot, then, India fell to Judah Thomas, also called Didymus. And he did not wish to go, saying that he was not able to go on account of the weakness of the flesh; and how can I, being an Hebrew man, go among the Indians to proclaim the truth? And while he was thus reasoning and speaking, the Savior appeared to him through the night, and said to him: ‘Fear not, Thomas; go away to India, and proclaim the word; for my grace shall be with you’. But he did not obey, saying: Wherever You wish to send me, send me elsewhere; for to the Indians I am not going”.

“And as he was thus speaking and growing angry, there happened to be there a certain merchant come from India, by name Abbanes, sent from the king Gundaphoros, having received an order from him to buy a carpenter and bring him to him. And the Lord, having seen him walking about in the market at noon, said to him: ‘Do you wish to buy a carpenter?’ And he said to Him: ‘Yes’. And the Lord said to him: ‘I have a slave, a carpenter, and I wish to sell him’. And having said this, He showed him Thomas at a distance, and agreed with him for three pounds of uncoined silver. And He wrote a bill of sale, saying: I Jesus, the son of Joseph the carpenter, declare that I have sold my slave, Judah by name, to you Abbanes, a merchant of Gundaphoros, the king of the Indians. And the purchase being completed, the Savior taking Judah, who also is Thomas, led him to Abbanes the merchant; and Abbanes seeing him, said to him: ‘Is this your master?’ And the Apostle answered and said, ‘Yes, He is my Lord’. And he said, ‘I have bought you from him. And the Apostle held his peace”.

“And at dawn of the following day, the Apostle having prayed and entreated the Lord, said: ‘I go wherever You wish, O Lord Jesus; Your will be done’. And he went to Abbanes the merchant, carrying nothing at all with him, but only his price. For the Lord had given it to him, saying, ‘Let your worth also be with you along with my grace, wherever you may go”.

Stopping at the royal city of **Andrapolis** on the way to India, Thomas attended⁴¹, with Abbanes, a wedding of the daughter of the king of that locale. “While everyone feasted, Thomas ate nothing, saying, ‘For something greater than food or even drink have I come here, even that I might accomplish the will of the King’. Because Thomas did not partake of the feast, a certain one of the wine-pourers (a Hebrew) stretched forth his hand and struck him. And the apostle, having raised his eyes and looked at him who had struck him, said: ‘My God will forgive you this wrong in the world to come, but in this world He will show His wonders. And I shall soon see that hand that struck me dragged along by a dog”.

“Thomas looked at no one at all, but only kept his eyes on the ground, waiting until he should depart. And that wine-pourer that struck him came down to the fountain to draw water. And there happened to be a lion there, and it came forth and killed him, and left him lying in the place, after tearing up his limbs. And dogs immediately seized his limbs, one laying hold of his right hand in his mouth, brought it to the place of the banquet. And all seeing were terror-struck, inquiring which of them had been taken off. And when it was clear that it was the hand of the wine-pourer who had struck the apostle, the flute-girl (also a Hebrew) broke her flutes in pieces, and threw them away, and went and sat down at the feet of the Apostle. She said, ‘This man is

⁴⁰ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas”, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

⁴¹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas”, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

either God or God's Apostle; for I heard him saying in Hebrew to the wine-pourer, I shall soon see the hand that struck me dragged about by dogs, which also you have now seen; for as he said, so also it has come to pass'. And the king, having heard, came up and said to him: 'Rise up, and go with me, and pray for my daughter; for she is my only child, and today I give her away'".

Thomas went into the bridal chamber to pray for the couple⁴². After a long prayer to the Lord that He would reveal hidden mysteries, Thomas concluded by saying, "I beseech You, Lord Jesus Christ, I offer You supplication for these young persons, that You may make what happens and befalls them to be for their good'. And having laid his hands on them, he said, 'The Lord will be with you'; then he left them in the place, and went away". After Thomas left, the couple had a vision of the Lord Jesus Himself. As a result, they both resolved to live celibate the rest of their lives, dedicating their lives to good works and righteousness.

When the king arrived in the morning, he was surprised to find his daughter and her husband radiantly joyful. But he was furious about the change in his daughter's plans, and sent servants to search for Thomas to kill him. But Thomas had already left town. When the Hebrew flute-girl heard what had happened, she also rejoiced. Together with the bride and groom, they spent a long time evangelizing the area, even instructing the king in the ways of the Lord.

The hymns of the Church refer to this part of Thomas' early missionary journeys as follows⁴³:

"Beginning with a most magnificent manifestation of wonders, and radiantly propounding the glory of the divine teachings, with your preaching did you embrace the whole world, which cries out, 'Glory to Thy power, O Christ!' O blessed and most honored Thomas, we praise you as one who himself beheld the Word, and who are an Apostle and a fervent minister and witness to His glory and majesty. Having set a foundation firmly upon the Chief Cornerstone, O blessed and ever all-memorable one, you did build a bridal chamber and a heavenly tabernacle for them that cry, 'Glory to Thy power, O Christ'".

In Persia on his way to India, according to tradition⁴⁴, Thomas also met the wise men who had visited the infant Jesus thirty some years earlier. The wise men were the descendants of the Prophet Daniel and knew something about Old Testament prophecy and the expected Messiah. Just as the Magi rejoiced with exceedingly great joy when the star reappeared after the audience with Herod (Matthew 2:10), so they did also when Thomas came and told them the rest of the story. Thomas then baptized them, instructed them, and sent them all over the area of Persia with the Gospel. Later, others of the Twelve came through Persia also (Philip, Andrew, Matthias, Simon the Zealot, Jude, Nathanael and Matthew; not necessarily in this order).

Some accounts of Thomas' life say that he raised up churches all along the land route to India; that is, Persia, Hyrcania, Parthia, Caramania, Bactria, etc. Other accounts say he traveled by ship to India from the Persian Gulf. It may be that the wisemen organized evangelistic teams - under Thomas' authority -- to cover all this territory. In later centuries, many churches in this

⁴² Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas", *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

⁴³ "Stichera for Matins, Ode IV, of the Commemoration of the Apostle Thomas, October 6th", *Russian Menaion*, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁴⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Magi.

region trace their history to Thomas according to Eusebius (quoted by Butler), but it may have been Thomas' disciples that actually went there.

Thomas Arrives in India to Build the Heavenly Palace

When Thomas arrived in the cities of India⁴⁵ with Abbanes the merchant, Abbanes went away to greet Gundaphoros the king, and reported to him about the carpenter that he had brought with him. And the king was glad, and ordered Thomas to come in. Gundaphoros wanted Thomas to build a palace for him, and described the location where he wanted it built. Thomas agreed and described a palace that he had had a vision of in the heavens, but which seemed to Gundaphoros like a palace on earth. He asked Thomas, "When will you be able to start?" Thomas answered, "I shall begin in Dius (October) and finish in Xanthicus (April)". The king wondered, "Every building is built in summer; but can you build and make a palace in winter itself?" The Apostle said, "Thus it must be, and otherwise it is impossible". After hearing more of Thomas' plans, Gundaphoros said, "You are a craftsman indeed, and it is fitting that you should serve kings". And having left many things for him, he went away.

Modern study⁴⁶ has identified a king named "Gondophernes" or "Guduphara" whose dominions about the year 46 AD included the territory of Peshawar, which is on the Pakistani-Afghan border just East of Kabol.

"And from time to time⁴⁷ he also sent the money that was necessary, for the living both of him and the other workmen. And Thomas taking it, dispensed it all, going round about the cities and the districts, distributing and doing kindness to the poor and the afflicted. He gave them rest, saying, 'The king knows how to obtain royal recompense, and it is necessary for the poor to have repose for the present'".

"And after this, the king sent a messenger to the Apostle, 'Show me what you have done, or what I am to send you, or what you need'. The Apostle sent to him, saying, "The palace is built, and only the roof remains to be done'. And the king, having heard, sent him again gold and uncoined silver, and wrote to him, 'Let the palace, if it be done, be roofed'. And the Apostle said to the Lord, 'I thank You, Lord, as to all things, that You did die for a short time, that I might live in You for ever; and have sold me, so that You may deliver many through me. And he did not cease to teach and refresh the afflicted, saying, 'These things the Lord has dispensed to us, and He gives to each his food. For He is the support of the orphans, and the provider of the widows, and to all that are afflicted He is rest and repose'".

"And when the king came into the city, he inquired of his friends about the palace which Judah, who also is Thomas, had built. And they said to him, 'He has neither built a palace, nor done anything else of what he promised to do. But he goes round the cities and the districts, and if he has anything he gives all to the poor, and teaches one new God, and heals the diseased, and drives out demons, and does many other extraordinary things. And we think that he is a magician. But his acts of compassion, and the cures done by him as a free gift, and still more, his single-

⁴⁵ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas, When He Came Into India", Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

⁴⁶ Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, December 21

⁴⁷ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas, When He Came Into India", Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

mindfulness, and gentleness, and fidelity, show that he is a just man, or an Apostle of the new God whom he preaches. For he continually fasts and prays, and eats only bread with salt, and his drink is water, and he carries one coat, whether in warm weather or in cold, and he takes nothing from any one, but gives to others even what he has. The king having heard this, stroked his face with his hands, shaking his head for a long time”.

“And he sent for the merchant that had brought him, and for the Apostle, and said to him, ‘Have you built me the palace?’ And Thomas said, ‘Yes, I have built it’. And the king said, ‘When, then, are we to go and see it?’ And he answered and said, ‘Now you can not see it; but when you have departed this life, you shall see it’. And the king, quite enraged, ordered both the merchant, and Judah who also is Thomas, to be put in chains, and to be cast into prison, until he should examine, and learn to whom he had given the king’s property. And thus I shall destroy him along with the merchant. And the Apostle went to prison rejoicing, and said to the merchant, ‘Fear nothing at all, but only believe in the God proclaimed by me, and you shall be freed from this world, and you shall obtain life in the world to come”.

“And the king considered by what death he should kill them. And when it seemed good to him to flay them, and burn them with fire, on that very night, Gad, the king’s brother fell ill, through the grief and imposition, which the king suffered. And having sent for the king, he said to him, ‘My brother the king, I commend to you my house and my children; for I, on account of the insult that has befallen thee, have been grieved, and am dying’. And Gad appeared to have died. And as they were talking together, the soul of Gad his brother departed. And the king mourned for Gad exceedingly, for he altogether loved him”.

“In a near-death experience, Gad got a glimpse of what Thomas had built for his brother. He wanted to dwell in the magnificent palace, but he was told that he couldn’t, because it had been built for his brother. On his return from his near-death experience, he immediately called for his brother, Gundaphoros”.

“They sent the good news to their king, saying, ‘Your brother has come alive again’. And the king started up, and along with a great multitude went to his brother, and went in and stood beside his bed as if thunderstruck, not being able to speak to him. And his brother said, ‘I know and am persuaded, brother, that if anyone asked of you the half of your kingdom, thou would give it for my sake. Wherefore I entreat you to grant me one favor, which I beg of you to do for me’. And the king answered and said, ‘And what is it that thou ask me to do for you?’ And he said, ‘Assure me by an oath that you wilt grant it me’. And the king swore to him, ‘Of what belongs to me, whatever you shall ask, I will give you’. And Gad said to him, ‘Sell me that palace which thou have in the heavens’. And the king said, ‘Since when does a palace in the heavens belong to me?’ And Gad said, ‘That which the Christian who is now in the prison, whom the merchant bought from a certain Jesus, and brought to you, built for you’. And as the king was at a loss, Gad said to him again, ‘I speak of that Hebrew slave whom you did wish to punish, as having suffered some imposition from him, on account of whom I also almost died’.

Gundaphoros was stunned! Collecting himself, he realized the eternal benefits that were conferred upon him and destined for him. He said to Gad, ‘That palace I cannot sell you, but I pray you to go into it, and dwell there, and become worthy to be of its inhabitants. But if you really wish to buy such a palace, behold, the man is alive, and will build you one better than that. And having sent immediately, he brought out of the prison the Apostle, and the merchant who had

been shut up along with him, saying: I entreat you, as a man entreating the servant of God, that you wilt pray for me. Entreat him whose servant you are, to pardon me, and overlook what I have done to you, or even what I meant to do. That I may be worthy to be an inhabitant of that house for which indeed I have labored nothing, but which you laboring alone have built for me, the grace of your God working with you. And that I may become a servant, I also, of this God whom you proclaim. And his brother, falling down before the Apostle, said: I entreat you, and supplicate before your God, that I may become worthy of this ministry and service, and may be allotted to become worthy of those things”.

Thomas, seized with joy, said, ‘I make full confession to You, Lord Jesus, that You have revealed Your truth in these men. For You alone are a God of truth, and not another; and You are He who know all things that are unknown to many. You are He, Lord, who in all things show compassion and mercy to men; for men, through the error that is in them, have overlooked You, but You have not overlooked them. And now, when I am entreating and supplicating You, accept the king and his brother, and unite them into Your fold, having cleansed them by Your purification, and anointed them with Your oil, from the error which encompasses them.

That night, Thomas sealed both Gundaphoros and Gad with oil (This is known today in the Orthodox Church as “Chrismation”), for they had heard Thomas saying that God recognizes His own sheep through His seal. Both Gundaphoros and Gad had a vision of Christ that night, but they saw no bodily form. Thomas then gave them the Eucharist. “And when light came, and it was dawn, having broken bread, he made them partakers of the thanksgiving of Christ. And they rejoiced and exulted; and many others also believed, and were added, and came to the refuge of the Savior”.

The hymns of the Church refer to this part of Thomas’ early missionary journeys as follows⁴⁸:

“Beginning with a most magnificent manifestation of wonders, and radiantly propounding the glory of the divine teachings, with your preaching did you embrace the whole world, which cries out, ‘Glory to Thy power, O Christ!’ O blessed and most honored Thomas, we praise you as one who himself beheld the Word, and who are an Apostle and a fervent minister and witness to His glory and majesty. Having set a foundation firmly upon the Chief Cornerstone, O blessed and ever all-memorable one, you did build a bridal chamber and a heavenly tabernacle for them that cry, ‘Glory to Thy power, O Christ!’”.

And the Apostle ceased not proclaiming, and saying to them, “Men and women, boys and girls, young men and maidens, vigorous and aged, both bond and free, withhold yourselves from fornication, and covetousness, and the service of the belly. For under these three heads all wickedness comes. For fornication maims the mind, and darkens the eyes of the soul, and becomes a hindrance of the due regulation of the body, changing the whole man into feebleness, and throwing the whole body into disease. And insatiableness puts the soul into fear and shame, existing by what pertains to the body, and forcibly seizing what belongs to another. And the service of the belly throws the soul into cares and troubles and grief. Since, therefore, you have been set free from these, you are without care, and without grief, and without fear; and there remains to you that which was said by the Savior, ‘Take no care for tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself’”.

⁴⁸ “Stichera for Matins, Ode IV, of the Commemoration of the Apostle Thomas, October 6th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

Thomas Moves on to Other Cities⁴⁹

In a short time, the Lord revealed Himself to Thomas that he should continue his missionary journeys, where Thomas had a number of followers at this time. “But he continued in his fasting, for the Lord’s day was about to dawn. And on the night following, while he was asleep, the Lord came and stood by his head, saying, ‘Thomas, rise up early and bless them all; and after the prayer and service go along the eastern road two miles, and there I shall show in you my glory. For because you go away, many shall flee to me for refuge, and you shall reprove the nature and the power of the enemy’. And having risen up from sleep, he said to the brethren who were with him, ‘Children and brethren, the Lord wishes to do something or other today through me. But let us pray and entreat Him that nothing may be a hindrance to us towards Him, but as at all times let it now also be done unto us according to His purpose and will’. And having thus spoken, he laid his hands upon them and blessed them. And having broken the bread of the Eucharist, he gave it to them, saying, ‘This Eucharist shall be to you for compassion, and mercy, and recompense, and not for judgment’. And they said, ‘Amen’.

As Thomas left town, a crowd of people followed to see what would happen. At the place two miles outside the town, there was a demon in the form of a huge beast that had killed a young man. The young man had been converted by Thomas earlier, and had partaken of the Eucharist that Thomas had served to a large group of people, but had fallen back into fornication, and had thus been overcome by the demon, which the demon boasted about. By his prayers, Thomas killed the beast, driving out the demon, and raised the young man from the dead. As this happened, the earth opened up, swallowing the body of the beast. Thomas asked King Gundaphoros and his brother to have a team of workers fill in the chasm with dirt and build housing for strangers over the spot.

The young man, on the other hand, confessed his sins at Thomas’ feet with many tears. Thomas instructed the young man that he must abandon his former life, understand Who it is that saved him, and become a disciple and hearer of Christ. Then he shall both see Him, be with Him for ever and rest in His rest, and he shall be in His joy. But if you are rather carelessly disposed towards Him, and again return to your former deeds, and if you forget the splendor of the light of Him whom you now desire, you shall be deprived not only of this life, but also of that which is to come.

Following this incident, Thomas proceeded to the next town, accompanied by a large crowd, who had also witnessed the raising of the young man from the dead. A huge crowd gathered to try to get a glimpse of Thomas, who was short of stature, by climbing up into elevated places and buildings. To make this easier, Thomas and the young man went up a small hill so that people could see him, and he spoke to the crowd as Jesus had done for the Sermon on the Mount, repeating many of the things Jesus had said then (Matthew 5:1). As Thomas spoke, the crowd wept, and asked what they should do, just as the crowd did when Peter spoke at Pentecost (Acts 2:37). Thomas answered that “God does not reckon against you the sins which you did, being in error; but He overlooks your transgressions, which you have done in ignorance”.

⁴⁹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas, remaining Chapters”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8. Except for the last chapter on the death of Thomas, all of the “Acts of Thomas” deals with the early part of his work in India.

Everyone followed Thomas as he headed for the home of the parents of the young man that was raised. On the way, a certain woman came to him and begged him to free her from a demon that had oppressed her for five years in fornication. After Thomas had freed her from the demon, she asked that Thomas might seal her against the demon's return. Thomas proceeded to seal her⁵⁰ in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, along with all the others that had repented when he spoke on the mount. Thomas then asked his followers to set a table, and he served the Eucharist to all of the newly illumined.

A young man who had murdered his girlfriend came to receive the Eucharist. As he picked up the bread to put it into his mouth, his hands withered such that he could not lift them to his mouth. Those who saw it brought the young man to Thomas immediately. Thomas asked him to confess immediately what he had done. Falling at Thomas' feet, he admitted that he had been chrismated by Thomas some time ago, and that he had been trying to practice what he had learned. He had proposed to his girlfriend, and wanted to marry her, but she was inclined to begin living with someone else. Not wanting her to fall into fornication, he killed her.

Thomas stated that this is the work of the Serpent, using peoples' desire for intercourse to bring them into subjection to shamelessness and unrestrained lust. He asked for water to be brought in a bowl. Blessing the water as is done for modern Orthodox baptism, Thomas asked that the gift of the Holy Spirit may be fully perfected in the waters. When the young man washed his hands in the blessed waters, his hands were restored.

Thomas then asked the young man to show him the dead girlfriend. He led Thomas, followed by a huge crowd, to the inn where he had killed her. Thomas asked someone to pick her up and lay her on a bed out in the courtyard of the inn. After praying, Thomas blessed the young man and said to him, "Go, and take her by the hand, and say to her, I through my hands killed you with the sword; and again I raise you by my hands, in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. As he touched her hands, she sprang up, fell at Thomas' feet and grabbed at his clothing, frightened out of her wits, and asked where that other man was. Thomas calmly asked her to tell everyone what she had seen.

She described a man who was hateful in appearance, all black and having clothing that was exceedingly filthy; he took her on a tour through a place of torture. There were many chasms, a great stench and blazing fire in each chasm. People were tortured horribly by the demons that lived there and she heard crying, great lamentation and gnashing of teeth. Each chasm had some different kind of torture and stench, and the filthy man made her bend down into each chasm to smell the smoke and the sulfur and to see the poor wretches that were trapped there. He brought her to another chasm, and as she bent down, she saw mud, and worms spouting forth (cf. Mark 9:43-48), and souls wallowing there; and a great gnashing of teeth was heard from them. Finally he led her to a dark cavern that exhaled a great stench. Many people were peeping out hoping to get a breath of fresh air, but their keepers would not let them. The guards in the dark cavern

⁵⁰ It is interesting to note here that the record from "The Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas" mentions Orthodox Chrismation, but not Orthodox Baptism. Today, Chrismation, which is a sealing in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, follows baptism, and confers the Holy Spirit on the newly illumined person. The Acts of Thomas mentions baptism as something that was normally done, but doesn't mention baptism per se in the accounts of peoples' conversion. It is possible that the texts that we have today, dating from the 10th Century AD, have been corrupted since their compilation in the late 1st and early 2nd Century.

demanded that the filthy man should give her to them, but he said he didn't have permission to do so yet. Just as this happened, Thomas called her back.

Some of the hymns of the Church refer to this testimony by the woman that Thomas delivered. The composition of Anatolius⁵¹ (5th Century), reads:

“You did follow after Christ, O Apostle Thomas, and did disdain the world. And laying up His teachings in your treasury, you were shown to be an Apostle. Wherefore, being among pagans, souls darkened by their deception and passions did you illumine with the Savior's commandments that they might believe in the consubstantial Trinity. You did enlighten your mind with the divine fire of the Master, as a lawful disciple, O Apostle Thomas. For with the Cross as a rod you did draw the souls of the impious from the depths of ignorance. Wherefore, with the pole of the divine Spirit you did even fish for *the darkened conscience* of the Indians. Ever beseech Christ God, that we be delivered from *the sight of the dark enemy*, and that our souls be saved. Abandoning the depths that were fished, with faith you did hasten to the rod of the Cross, and therewith you did fish for men, O Apostle Thomas”.

After this Thomas spoke to the multitudes standing by. “You have heard, brethren, what this woman has recounted. And these are not the only punishments, but there are others worse than these. And if you do not turn to this God whom I proclaim, and refrain from your former works and deeds which you have done without knowledge, in these punishments you shall have your end. Believe, therefore, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and He will forgive you the sins you have done, and will purify you from all the bodily desires that abide in the earth. Let those that stole steal no more, but let them live, laboring and working; and let the adulterers no more commit adultery; for adultery is with God an evil altogether grievous above other evils. Put away also covetousness, and lying, and drunkenness, and slandering, and requiting evil for evil. For all these are alien and strange to the God proclaimed by us; but rather live in faith, and meekness, and holiness, and hope, in which God rejoices, that you may become His servants, having received from Him gracious gifts, which few or none receive.

All the people therefore believed, and presented their souls obedient to the living God and Christ Jesus, enjoying His blessed works, and His holy service. And they brought much money for the service of the widows; for he had them collected in the cities, and he sent to all of them by his own servants what was necessary, both clothing and food. But he did not cease proclaiming and saying to them, and showing that this is Jesus the Christ, concerning whom the Scriptures proclaimed that He should come, and be crucified, and be raised from the dead after three days. And he showed them a second time, beginning from the prophets, and explaining the things concerning Christ, and that it was necessary for Him to come, and for all things to be fulfilled that had been said to us beforehand concerning Him.

And the report of him ran through all the cities and countries; and all who had persons sick or tormented by unclean spirits brought them, and they were healed. Some also they laid on the road by which he was to pass, and he healed them all by the power of the Lord. Then said all with one accord who had been healed by him, with one voice: ‘Glory to Thee, Jesus, who give Thy healing to all alike by means of Thy servant and Apostle Thomas. And being in good health, and

⁵¹ “Stichera for Matins, Ode IX, of the Commemoration of the Apostle Thomas, October 6th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

rejoicing, we pray Thee that we may be of Thy flock, and be numbered among Thy sheep; receive us, therefore, O Lord, and consider not our transgressions and former offenses which we did, being in ignorance’.

Thomas’ Return to Judea for the Funeral of the Virgin Mary

Thomas remained in India until his death, except for one short interval at the time of the death of the Virgin Mary in c. 55 AD. As Thomas was leading people to the Lord in India, the Virgin Mary was growing old in Jerusalem. As Mary reached her mid 70’s, she was feeling the effects of old age. And it was then that the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her to tell her that her departure was imminent⁵², and would occur in three days.

Shortly after Gabriel left, the Apostle John was translated from wherever he was at the time. This was similar to the way the Deacon Philip was translated from the desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza to Azotus (Acts 8:26, 39-40), and as Habakkuk the prophet carried food to Daniel, who was in the lions’ den, and quickly returned to Judaea⁵³. There is some disagreement among the Church Fathers as to whether John was in Ephesus or in some region of Judea. They contend that John did not leave the Virgin Mary alone during her lifetime, unless it was just briefly in the care of her stepson, James, the Lord’s brother.

After John arrived⁵⁴, “the rest of the Twelve arrived also from whatever part of the world where they were then preaching the Gospel. All except Thomas! They stood and went in, and greeted the queen mother with the following words: ‘Hail, Mary, full of grace! The Lord be with you’ (Luke 1:28). And she eagerly rose quickly, and bowed herself, and kissed them, and gave thanks to God”.

“Then the blessed Mary said to her brethren: ‘What is this, that you have all come to Jerusalem?’ Peter, answering, said to her: ‘We had need to ask this of you. Certainly, as I think, none of us knows why we have come here today with such rapidity. All declared plainly the place where they had been that day. And they all wondered that they were there when they heard these things. The blessed Mary said to them: ‘I asked my Son, before He endured the passion, that He and you should be at my death; and He granted me this gift. Whence you may know that my departure will be tomorrow”’.

“After Mary’s death the next day, the Apostles with great honor laid the body in a tomb on the Mount of Olives, then Thomas was suddenly brought to the Mount of Olives, like the others had been brought earlier. He saw Mary’s body going up to heaven, and began to cry out to her. Then the girdle with which the Apostles had encircled her body was thrown down from heaven to the blessed Thomas. And taking it, and giving thanks to God, he came again into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, finding all the Apostles and a great crowd there. Then Thomas said, ‘Where have you laid her body?’ And they pointed out the sepulcher with their finger. And he said, ‘The body is not there’. But they didn’t believe Thomas. Then they went to the sepulcher, which was a new

⁵² Roberts and Donaldson, “The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary”, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v.8.

Roberts and Donaldson, “The Passing of Mary”, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v.8.

⁵³ Lancelot C. L. Brenton, “Bel and the Dragon 1:33-39”, The Septuagint with Apocrypha, Hendrickson, Peabody MA, 1990

⁵⁴ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Passing of Mary, First Latin Form”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

one hollowed out in the rock, and took up the stone; but they did not find the body, and did not know what to say. Then Thomas told them how he was singing mass in India — he still had on his sacerdotal robes. He, not knowing the word of God, had been brought to the Mount of Olives, and saw the body of the blessed Mary going up into heaven, and prayed her to give him a blessing. She heard his prayer, and threw him her girdle, which she had about her. And the Apostles seeing the belt which they had put about her, glorified God, on account of the benediction which the blessed Mary had given him, and because he had seen her body going up into heaven. Then Thomas gave them his benediction, and said, ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’”

In another account⁵⁵, it states, “And Thomas said, ‘While traversing the country of India, when the preaching was prevailing by the grace of Christ, the king’s sister’s son, Labdanus by name, was about to be sealed by me in the palace. All of a sudden the Holy Spirit said to me, ‘Thomas, go to Bethlehem to greet the mother of your Lord, because she is taking her departure to the heavens’. And a cloud of light having snatched me up, set me down beside you”.

“And the same cloud⁵⁶ by which they had been brought carried them back each to his own place. And so also the Apostles quickly returned to where they had at first been, to preach to the people of God”.

The Death of Thomas

Following Thomas’ return to India⁵⁷, he was preaching along the Western Coast of India near Mylapore. In one place, a certain pagan priest slew his own son and accused Thomas of the crime. Tumult arose and a mob assembled to seize Thomas and demand that the court sentence him to be tortured. No one could be found who could testify that Thomas had no part in the murder. Thomas asked that if the court will give him permission, he will ask the dead man in the Name of his God to say who killed him. They all accompanied Thomas to the body of the priest’s son who had been killed. After a prayer, Thomas proceeded to raise the priest’s son from the dead to testify against his father. Seeing this, the whole crowd cried out “Great is the God whom Thomas proclaims!” Thomas was freed and the priest fell into the pit that he had had dug for Thomas. And a great multitude of the people were converted to God and were baptized by Thomas.

Thomas’ martyrdom came in the early 70’s AD, on the East Coast of India (this is off the map of Figure 1 to the East), after he had been traveling about the Far East for over 40 years. Preaching Christ to the very poor, Thomas converted Sindikia, who was the niece of Mygdonia, the wife of Charisius of the royal court. Sindikia urged Mygdonia to learn the whole truth for herself. Dressing in rags, they both went to hear Thomas preach. As she listened, Mygdonia’s heart was moved, and she came to believe in Christ. Returning home, she began to shun unbelievers as enemies of God, abstaining from worldly pleasures in general. When she ceased marital relations with her husband, Charisius persuaded King Misdeus to send Queen Tertia to convince Mygdonia not to disdain marital relations, since Tertia and Mygdonia were relatives.

Mygdonia set forth the Christian Faith to Tertia as best she knew it, and Tertia desired to learn about the Faith in greater depth. Counseling with Mygdonia, the two women secretly sent

⁵⁵ Roberts and Donaldson, “The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v.8.

⁵⁶ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Passing of Mary, First Latin Form”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁵⁷ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 198.

for Thomas to come and instruct them. Thomas came, instructed them and baptized them. The two women agreed to serve the Lord in purity, and resolved that they could no longer consort with their idolatrous husbands. King Misdeus marveled at this change in his wife, and together with Charisius, conducted a strict investigation as to the reason for the change in their wives' behavior. Meanwhile, Thomas had been performing innumerable miracles among the poor, such that some members of the king's court heard and were converted. Included among these was the king's son, Juzanes.

Misdeus was extremely angry with Thomas, and had his feet set on red-hot iron plates. This had no effect so he cast Thomas into a huge furnace. But Thomas emerged the next day unharmed. Charisius advised Misdeus to order Thomas to offer sacrifice to the sun god, in order to offend Thomas' God. As they led Thomas to the place, the image of the sun god melted as if made of wax. While the faithful danced for joy at beholding the might of the God of heaven, the pagan priests were furious with Thomas for destroying their idol.

King Misdeus put Thomas in prison, intending to kill him. However, the jailers were aware that their walls did not hold Thomas, and out of fear for their lives if he escaped, they informed the king about what was happening, including visits of his wife and son. This was similar to the way the Twelve were released (Acts 5:22-23) and the way Peter was released from Herod's grasp (Acts 12:7-10). Misdeus himself visited the prison, inspected the seals, and found Thomas gone.

Misdeus wanted to know⁵⁸ why Thomas had come, and felt threatened because Thomas' works had been heard of in all the country. Thomas stated very simply that Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth, had sent him here to save many, and that he might depart this body at Misdeus' hands. And while they were speaking, Misdeus was considering in what manner he should put him to death; for he was afraid of the multitude standing round, many, even some of the chief men, having believed in him.

Ignatius of Antioch stated⁵⁹ that Thomas had absolutely no fear of death due to his experience with the risen Christ. "When the Lord said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, into the print of the nails, and reach your hand here, and thrust it into My side', immediately they believed that He was Christ. Wherefore Thomas also said to Him, 'My Lord, and my God'. And on this account also did they despise death, for it were too little to say, indignities and stripes. Nor was this all; but also after He had shown Himself to them, that He had risen indeed, and not in appearance only, He both ate and drank with them during forty entire days".

Misdeus arose and took Thomas outside the city, accompanied by a few soldiers. Those of the multitude ran along, eager to rescue Thomas, but he was led away by the soldiers. And when they came to that place where they were to spear him, Thomas spoke to the soldiers and those of the multitude that had followed. When I depart from my body, let not your eyes be darkened in understanding, nor your ears shut up so as not to hear those things in which you have believed the God whom I preach. Behave in a manner becoming those who are free, being void of human glory, and live the life towards God. Juzanes bribed the soldiers to allow Thomas to go off a short distance to pray for everyone. And when Thomas had prayed, he said to the soldiers, "Come and finish the work of him that sent you". And the four struck him at once, and killed him. And all the brethren wept, and wrapped him up in beautiful shawls, and many linen cloths, and laid him in the tomb in which of old the kings used to be buried.

⁵⁸ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas, remaining Chapters", Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁵⁹ Ignatius, "To the Smyrnaeans", ch. 3.

According to the Roman Martyrology⁶⁰, the death of Thomas occurred on the East Coast of India on the “Big Hill” eight miles from the modern city of Madras, in the year 72 AD. The gravesite of Thomas is still a modern tourist attraction, although Thomas’ relics are not there. His relics now reside in the city of Ortona on the East Coast of Italy. The liturgy of the Churches in India up to the 16th Century used forms and a Syriac language that undoubtedly were derived from Mesopotamia and Persia.

And Syphorus and Juzanes⁶¹ did not go to the city, but spent the whole day there, and waited during the night. And Thomas appeared to them, and said, “I am not there; why do you sit watching? For I have gone up, and received the things I hoped for. Rise up and walk, and after no long time you shall be brought beside me”.

And Mideus and Charisius greatly afflicted Tertia and Mygdonia, their wives, but did not persuade them to abandon their Faith. And Thomas appeared, and said to them, “Forget not the former things, for the holy and sanctifying Jesus Himself will aid you”. And Mideus and Charisius, when they could not persuade them not to abandon the Faith, granted them their own will.

And all the brethren assembled together. For Thomas had made Syphorus a presbyter in the mountain, and Juzanes a deacon, when he was led away to die. And the Lord helped them, and increased the faith by means of them.

And after a long time, it happened that one of the sons of Mideus was a demoniac; and the demon being stubborn, no one was able to heal him. And Mideus considered, and said I shall go and open the tomb, and take a bone of the Apostle’s body, and touch my son with it, and I know that he will be healed. And he went to do what he had thought of. And the blessed Apostle appeared to him, and said, ‘You did not believe me when I was alive; how will you believe me when I am dead? Fear not. Jesus Christ is kindly disposed to you, through His great clemency’. And Mideus, when he did not find the bones (for one of the brethren had taken them, and carried them into the regions of the West), took some dust from where the bones had lain. He touched his son with it, and said, ‘I believe in You, Jesus’.

And his son being healed in this manner, Mideus met with the rest of the brethren who were under the rule of Syphorus, and entreated the brethren to pray for him, that he might obtain mercy from our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to the Roman Martyrology⁶², the death of Thomas occurred on the East Coast of India on the “Big Hill” eight miles from the modern city of Madras, in the year 72 AD. The gravesite of Thomas is still a modern tourist attraction, although Thomas’ relics are not there. His relics now reside in the city of Ortona on the East Coast of Italy. The liturgy of the Churches in India up to the 16th Century used forms and a Syriac language that undoubtedly were derived from Mesopotamia and Persia.

⁶⁰ Thurston and Attwater, Butler’s Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, December 21

⁶¹ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas, remaining Chapters”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁶² Thurston and Attwater, Butler’s Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, December 21

Results of Thomas' Missionary Journeys

One characteristic that stands out in the above accounts of Thomas' missionary journeys is the emphasis on good works and holiness. We are not given many details of the names of the presbyters and bishops that succeeded Thomas, but we are told that the Far East was drastically changed by his life. Documents associated with Clement of Rome⁶³, who was Bishop of Rome in the late 1st Century, give some details about the effects of Thomas' mission work on the way to India.

“For, behold, scarcely seven years have yet passed since the advent of the righteous and true Prophet (i.e. 37 AD). And in the course of these, men of all nations coming to Judaea, and moved both by the signs and miracles, which they saw, and by the grandeur of His doctrine, received His faith. And then going back to their own countries, they rejected the lawless rites of the Gentiles, and their incestuous marriages. In short, among the Parthians — as Thomas, who is preaching the Gospel amongst them, has written to us — not many now are addicted to polygamy. Nor among the Medes do many throw their dead to dogs; nor are the Persians pleased with intercourse with their mothers, or incestuous marriages with their daughters. Nor do the Susian women practice the adulteries that were allowed them”.

Some of the hymns of the Church⁶⁴ emphasize the work of Thomas with the extremely poor in India.

“Christ, the lover of Mankind, took you like a pearl from the abyss of the turmoil of the world, enriching with you the poor and them that are held fast by the poverty of evil circumstances, O Apostle Thomas. Wherefore we bless you and glorify in praise your most festive memorial, honoring you piously. You did enlighten all the land of India, O most sacred Apostle and Seer of God. For having illumined all, you did make them children of Light and of the day of the Spirit, O wise one. And having cast down the temples of idols, you did through grace raise up Churches to the glory and praise of God”.

“Beholding the divine wisdom of Christ, you were mystically shown to be a noetic bowl wherein the souls of the faithful are gladdened, O Apostle Thomas. For with the divine net of the Spirit, you did draw men from the depths of wretchedness. Wherefore you did go forth from Zion like a river of grace, pouring forth your divine teachings upon the whole world. Therefore, emulating the sufferings of Christ, you were pierced in your side, entering the shade of incorruption”.

Gregory Nazianzen refers⁶⁵ to Thomas as an example in holiness and asceticism. “Let us cleanse our touch, our taste, our throat, not touching them gently, nor delighting in smooth things, but handling them as is worthy of Him, the Word, that was made flesh for us”. Gregory suggested following the example of Thomas by not pampering our palate with dainties and sauces and

⁶³ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Recognitions of Clement”, IX, 29, Pseudo-Clementine Literature, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁶⁴ “Eight Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Thomas, October 6th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁶⁵ Gregory Nazianzen, Orations, 40, 38.

luxurious eating, but tasting and learning that the Lord is good, with the better and abiding taste. Since we are in this world for just a short while, there is not much point to refreshing that thankless dust (i.e. our bodies), which lets pass and does not hold that which is given to it. Rather we should be delighting it with the words which are sweeter than honey.

“The Teaching of the Apostles”, a late 1st Century document by an unknown author⁶⁶, also describes some of the results of Thomas’ missionary work.

“And after the death of the Apostles there were Guides and Rulers in the churches; and, whatsoever the Apostles had committed to them and whatsoever they had received from them, they continued to teach to the multitude through the whole space of their lives. They too, again, at their deaths committed and delivered to their disciples after them whatsoever they had received from the Apostles. (This included) what James had written from Jerusalem, and Simon (Peter) from the city of Rome, and John from Ephesus, and Mark from Alexandria, and Andrew from Phrygia, and Luke from Macedonia, and Judah Thomas from India. (This was done) that the epistles of an Apostle might be received and read in the churches that were in every place, just as the achievements of their Acts, which Luke wrote, are read. That hereby the Apostles might be known, and the prophets, and the Old Testament and the New; that so might be seen one truth was proclaimed in them all: that one Spirit spoke in them all, from one God whom they had all worshipped and had all preached. And the divers countries received their teaching”.

“Alexandria, and Thebais, and the whole of Inner Egypt, and all the country of Pelusium, and extending as far as the borders of India, received the Apostles’ ordination to the priesthood from Mark the evangelist. He was ruler and guide there in the church, which he had built, in which he also ministered”.

“India, and all the countries belonging to it and round about it, even to the farthest sea, received the Apostles’ ordination to the priesthood from Judah Thomas, who was guide and ruler in the church which he had built there, in which he also ministered”.

Gregory of Nyssa wrote⁶⁷ that the people of India really loved and preferred Thomas in his humility as the head of their Church.

“The prophet Amos was a goat-herd; Peter, Andrew and John were fisherman. Paul was a tent-maker, Matthew a publican, and the rest of the Apostles in the same way — not consuls, generals, prefects, or distinguished in rhetoric and philosophy, but poor, and of none of the learned professions. But starting from the more humble occupations of life: and yet for all that their voice went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. ‘Consider your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world’ (1 Corinthians 1:26-27)”.

“Perhaps even now it is thought foolish, as things appear to men, when one is not able to do much because of poverty, or because of lowliness of extraction. But who knows whether the horn of anointing is not poured out by grace upon such

⁶⁶ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Teaching of the Apostles”, I-III, Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁶⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, Letters, 13.

a one? Which was more to the interest of the Church at Rome, that it should be presided over by some high-born and pompous senator, or by the fisherman Peter, who had none of this world's advantages to attract men to him? But Peter, the stranger, without a table, without a roof over his head, was richer than those who have all things, because through having nothing he had God wholly”.

“So too the people of Mesopotamia, though they had among them wealthy satraps, preferred Thomas above them all to the presidency of their Church. The Cretans preferred Titus, the dwellers at Jerusalem, James, and we Cappadocians the centurion, who, at the Cross, acknowledged the Godhead of the Lord. This was in spite of the fact that there were many at that time of splendid lineage, with fortunes at their disposal, and who prided themselves upon having the first place in the Senate. And in all the Church one may see those who are great according to God's standard preferred above worldly magnificence”.

Some of the hymns of the Church⁶⁸ describe the results of the missionary journeys of Thomas.

“The radiance of the Spirit descended upon you in the aspect of fire, O blessed one, and made a divine refuge of you, who quickly drive away the gloom of godlessness. You enlighten the world with the radiance of your words most wise, O expounder of the mysteries, adornment of the Apostles, and blessed beholder of Christ. Illumining them that sat in the darkness of ignorance with the lightning flashes of your preaching, O glorious one, you did show them forth as children of our God and Master for the sake of their faith. His suffering and death did you emulate, and you were an inheritor of glory, in that you were wise and divinely eloquent, a disciple of Truth”.

Other hymns, the composition of Anatolius⁶⁹, read:

“You were shown to be like Elijah who rode a chariot, O Apostle Thomas, aflame with the fire of the divine Spirit, riding upon a chariot of the virtues. For plumbing the depths of the sea of knowledge, you did catch fish, bringing them from death to life. Wherefore enlightening the souls of the faithful with the staff of the Cross, did you lead them up from deadly deception unto life”.

The Christian community that still exists in India traces its roots to Thomas, although some divisions have occurred since the 16th Century. Other Christians in China and Tibet do also. Most probably Thomas never got as far as China and Tibet (being martyred on the East coast of India in the Coromandel Coast area), but that some of Thomas' disciples evangelized China and Tibet.

Further Evangelization of India in the Time of Constantine

The historian, Socrates Scholasticus, stated⁷⁰ that Thomas evangelized primarily the coastal areas of India, and that he didn't get all the way into the interior of India, which is a very

⁶⁸ “Eight Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Thomas, October 6th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁶⁹ “Stichera for Matins, Ode IX, of the Commemoration of the Apostle Thomas, October 6th”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

⁷⁰ Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, I, 19

large country. During the 4th Century, however, missionary work was done in the interior parts of India, with the help of the Christians that remained from Thomas' work.

“The interior of India, in which many barbarous nations using different languages lived, was not enlightened by Christian doctrine before the times of Constantine”.

“A certain philosopher, Meropius, a Tyrian by race, determined to acquaint himself with the country of India. Having taken with him two youths to whom he was related, who were by no means ignorant of the Greek language, Meropius reached the country by ship. It so happened that a little before that time, the treaty between Rome and India had been violated. The Indians, therefore, having seized the philosopher and those who sailed with him, killed them all except his two youthful kinsmen; but sparing them from compassion for their tender age, they sent them as a gift to the king of India”.

“He was pleased with the personal appearance of the youths and constituted one of them, whose name was Edesius, cup-bearer at his table; the other, named Frumentius, he entrusted with the care of the royal records. The king died soon after, leaving them free, and the government fell on his wife and infant son. Now the queen seeing her son thus left in his minority, begged the young men to undertake the charge of him, until he should become of adult age. Accordingly, the youths accepted the task, and entered on the administration of the kingdom”.

“Thus Frumentius controlled all things and made it a task to inquire whether among the Roman merchants trafficking with that country, there were any Christians to be found. Having discovered some, he informed them who he was, and exhorted them to select and occupy some appropriate places for the celebration of Christian worship. After a little while he built a house of prayer; and having instructed some of the Indians in the principles of Christianity, they fitted them for participation in the worship. On the young king's reaching maturity, Frumentius and his associates resigned the administration of public affairs, and sought permission to return to their own country. Both the king and his mother entreated them to remain; but being desirous of revisiting their native place, they could not be prevailed on, and consequently departed”.

“Edesius, hastened to Tyre to see his parents and kindred. But Frumentius arriving at Alexandria, reported the affair to Athanasius the bishop, who had recently been ordained; and acquainting him both with the particulars of his wanderings and the hopes Indians had of receiving Christianity. He also begged him to send a bishop and clergy there, and by no means to neglect those who might thus be brought to salvation. Athanasius having considered how this could be most profitably affected, requested Frumentius himself to accept the bishopric, declaring that he could appoint no one more suitable than he was. Accordingly this was done. Frumentius, invested with episcopal authority, returned to India and became there a preacher of the Gospel, and built several churches. Being aided also by divine grace, he performed various miracles, healing with the souls also the bodily diseases of many. Rufinus assures us that he heard these facts from Edesius, who was afterwards ordained to the priesthood at Tyre”.

FIGURE 1
Map of Part of Thomas' Mission Work

