

5.

I Will Go Where You Want Me to Go

(Thomas)

About A.D. 39

The Apostle Thomas started walking slower and slower. He kicked the dust up with his sandals. "Oh, I wish I didn't have to go to this meeting," he thought.

The apostles were coming together in Jerusalem to decide to which country each of them should go to tell the people about Jesus. They were going to pull straws.

Thomas wanted to tell people about Jesus. He was ready to go to some country to do it. But Thomas was afraid that if they pulled straws he would have to go where he did not want to go.

Even though Thomas walked very slowly, he finally got to the house where they were having the meeting. The other apostles were all there.

They all sat down together. After praying together they pulled straws. The Apostle Thomas was to go to India.

"Oh, no!" he cried. "It is just as I feared. India! It is impossible. I cannot go to India. India is too far away. No one knows very much about it, and, besides, I am Hebrew. The people there won't understand what I am saying. They might even kill me. No, I just won't go!"

Thomas stormed out of the room, a very unhappy man.

That night, however, when Thomas finally fell asleep, Jesus appeared to him and said, "Don't be afraid, Thomas. Go to India and tell the people about me. I will be with you every step of the way."

Thomas awoke. He knew Jesus had spoken to him. Jesus, whom he loved dearly, wanted him to go to India. And Jesus would go with him. Thomas said in his heart, "I will go wherever you want me to go, Lord Jesus. Your will be done."

The very next morning Thomas went to the marketplace to see what he could find out about going to India. He was sure to find people there from many lands.

As Thomas was walking around, looking this way and that, he suddenly came across a merchant who looked as if he had come from a foreign country.

"What is your name and where are you from?" asked Thomas.

"My name is Abbanes," said the man. "I have just come from India. King Gundaphoros wants me to bring a carpenter from here to work for him. Do you know of such a man?"

Thomas could hardly believe his ears. "I am a carpenter," he stuttered.

"What kind of carpentry do you do?" asked Abbanes.

"Oh, I work in wood, make plows and yokes and boats. I also work with stone slabs and have some experience in building palaces."

"You are my man!" cried Abbanes. "Will you go to India with me?"

It almost seemed like another dream to Thomas. Before he knew it, he was on the way to India.

It was a long, long trip in those days. Boats were slow. Thomas and Abbanes probably boarded a boat in one of the ports of the Red Sea and then sailed around Arabia and across the sea to South India.

Finally they arrived at the court of King Gundaphoros and Thomas started working for him.

Being a carpenter was not the most important thing to Thomas, however. Wherever he went, he was kind to the poor. He shared his food with the hungry and healed those who were

sick. He learned the language of that part of India and told the people around him about Jesus. He founded many churches. Finally even King Gundaphoros became a Christian.

Many years went by. Thomas preached what he knew about God in many parts of India. Finally, another king, whose name was Misdus, came to power. Misdus was very angry when he found out that both his mother and son had become believers in Jesus. He planned to kill Thomas, but was afraid of the people because he knew they loved Thomas. So he led Thomas personally out of the city as if he were going to discuss something with him, and when they were away from the crowd he had several soldiers lead him away to be executed.

Thomas knew he was about to die. But now he was not afraid the way he had been years ago

when he was first asked to go to India. On the way to his death, Thomas prayed, "My Lord and my God, you who have been my leader and guide wherever I have traveled, guide me now on my way to you. I have finished the work which you have given me to do.

Then Thomas was killed.

Not all ancient writings agree on the details of how Thomas got to India and how he died. But one thing is certain. When missionaries came to India many hundreds of years later, they found, to their surprise, people who called themselves *Thomas Christians*.

"Who brought the good news about Jesus to India?" the missionaries asked. "The Apostle Thomas did," they answered. "That is why we call ourselves by his name."

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6.

A Job of His Own

(John Mark)

About A.D. 45

John Mark loved the Apostle Peter. He liked his big booming laugh. He liked the way the Apostle Peter told the stories about Jesus.

John Mark was the Apostle Peter's helper. Wherever Peter went to preach the Word of God, John Mark went also. He did whatever needed to be done to make traveling and preaching easier for Peter. John Mark liked doing that, but sometimes he wondered whether God would ever ask him to do something on his own.

Many, many people came to hear Peter tell about what it had been like to be with Jesus. They listened spellbound as Peter told of the way Jesus had helped people, how he had died,

and how God had raised him from the dead.

They did not want to let Peter go because they were afraid they would forget something of what Peter had said. They wanted to memorize the words, but they were not written down anywhere.

One day the people took John Mark aside. "We know Peter is too busy to write down all the things Jesus did," they said. "You have heard him tell these stories many, many times. Please write them down and give the writings to us so we can read them over and over again and remember them."

John Mark thought about this request. The more he thought about it, the more excited he