

It Is Written

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Believing In Jesus Vs. Believing Jesus

By David Dann

Although a large number of people followed Jesus on the day after He miraculously fed the 5,000, not all of them were willing to accept His words when He claimed, among other things, to have “come down from heaven” (Jn. 6:38, NKJV). As for the outcome of this situation, John 6:66-69 relates the following:

From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Many of these disciples thought they believed in Jesus, but as it turns out, they did not believe what He said. Because they did not believe Him when He spoke, they proved themselves unfit to be His followers. Peter, on the other hand, recognized that both Jesus and His words were of the Father. The circumstances recorded in John 6 have, in a sense, played themselves out countless times in the lives of religious people from that day until now. Many people claim to believe in Jesus and consider themselves disciples of Jesus, but few actually believe Jesus with respect to accepting that His words are really true. Consider the following areas in which many of those who say they believe in Jesus demonstrate that they do not actually believe Jesus:

1. The Genesis account of creation. The Bible presents the entire creation of the physical universe and all that is in it as having taken place over a period of six successive days of one week, in which mankind was created on the sixth day (Gen. 1:1-31; cf. Ex. 20:8-11). Jesus affirmed the truth of the Genesis account when He stated concerning the creation of mankind that “from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female'” (Mk. 10:6). Those who say they believe in Jesus prove that they don't really believe Jesus when they reject His words in favor of the idea that man appeared on the scene millions of years after the initial beginning of the creation.

2. The final punishment of hell. The Bible presents hell as the final destiny of all unforgiven sinners which is depicted as “the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Jesus affirmed the reality of hell when He said, “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched -- where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched'” (Mk. 9:43-44). Those who say they believe in Jesus prove that they don't really believe Jesus when they reject His words in favor of the idea that hell is merely temporary, or that the wicked simply cease to exist beyond the judgment.

3. The necessity of water baptism. The Bible presents baptism, that is, immersion in water, as a condition that must be met by penitent believing sinners in order to receive remission of sins (Acts 2:37-38; 8:36-39; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-6; 1 Pet. 3:21). Jesus affirmed the necessity of baptism in order for one to receive forgiveness and salvation when He said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16; cf. Matt. 28:18-20). Those who say they believe in Jesus prove that they don't really believe Jesus when they reject His words in favor of the idea that sinners can be saved by faith alone before and without being baptized in water.

Conclusion

Jesus said, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mk. 8:38). Don't bother claiming to believe in Jesus unless you really believe Jesus!

Seed and Soil

By Jim R. Everett

The productivity of seed is directly proportionate to the fertility of soil. It matters not how good the seed is, if it is planted in bad soil; either it will not germinate or, having germinated, it will produce a sickly plant. So it is with the word of God and human hearts.

In the parable of "The Sower," stress is laid, not on the power of the seed, but, on the kind of soil in which it is sown. Four kinds of soil are mentioned in which the seed is sown -- the wayside, rocky places, soil in which thorns are abundant, and good soil (Lk. 8:1-15; Matt. 13:1-23). Each of these represents four different kinds of human hearts, while the seed is called "the word of God" (Lk. 8:11).

The deficiencies of the first three kinds of soil do not, in any way, cast reflection upon the power of the seed to produce life. The problem is in the soil and not in the seed. Neither should men speak of the word of God as powerless to convert men -- the potential to produce new life and to change men is found in the word of God (see Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 1:22-25). So why doesn't it always bring forth an abundant harvest? -- because the soil, the human heart, is not receptive or it is encumbered with the cares of the world. So, let's not blame God for our lack of productivity -- the kind of soil we are has been our choice.

What are the ingredients of fertile soil? Jesus defines it thusly: "... they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Lk. 8:15). I believe there are still human beings with good hearts that want the word of God. Is your soil good?

"For Our Good Always"

By Greg Gwin

"And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day" (Deut. 6:24).

In his final words to the Israelites, Moses re-counted the commands that God had given on Mt. Sinai. And, he urged them to realize that everything the Lord had commanded them to do was in their own best interest.

The subsequent history of Israel bears witness to the truthfulness of Moses' statement. So long as they faithfully followed God's will, things went well for them. But, when they neglected their duty and turned away from His law, they always suffered awful consequences.

The statement that Moses made so many years ago is still true today. Some may ask, "Why did God command this?", or "What is the purpose of that?" The simple answer is that it is for OUR good.

God did not make the rules just because He wanted to "flex" His divine power. He didn't order us to do various things simply to test us or torment us. Instead, He established His law because He knows us. He created us. He knows what is best for us. And, He desires that everything go well for us.

Think about some of God's laws, and see that they are "for our good always." Consider His prohibitions against drunkenness, adultery, lying, stealing, murder, etc. By keeping from these evils we are insuring our own well-being. Meditate upon His commands to study, pray, love our spouses and children, treat others as we want to be treated, etc. Each of these -- when fully obeyed -- leads to happiness and joy in our lives.

God loves us. His commands are a real manifestation of that love. Let us show our love for Him by obeying His law faithfully.