

What Are We to Believe?

Rod Reynolds

Many of us, at least in the United States, have heard of the newspaper feature "Ripley's Believe It or Not." This feature told of unusual facts which were true, but nevertheless rather hard to believe.

Often it's hard to believe the truth. Often it's hard to believe something is possible, until it's been done.

For more than forty years the Empire State building in New York was the world's tallest building. But before it was built many did not believe it was possible to build such a tall building. Yet the man who built it believed not only that it could be built—but that it could be built in less than a year and a half. Sure enough he achieved what many did not believe possible. The building was completed in just over a year from the time it was started (http://history1900s.about.com/od/1930s/a/empirestatebldg_3.htm).

Many did not believe the Golden Gate bridge across the entrance to San Francisco Bay could be built—until it was done. Until not long ago most would have thought the idea of man going to the moon was an impossible dream. Yet, now it's been done. Is it possible for the dead to live again? Is it possible for humans to become like God—shining with supernatural brilliance like the noon-day sun (I John 3:2; Daniel 12:3; Matthew 13:43)? What do you believe is possible?

Does belief matter? Is belief necessary for a Christian? Does it matter what you believe? Does it matter whom you believe? How can you believe the truth?

Let's consider what the Bible says about the matter of belief and its answer to these questions.

First, let's consider the question, "Is belief necessary for a Christian?"

Note the following: "But the cowardly, **unbelieving**, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). This tells us we must believe—something, since unbelievers who refuse to repent will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire. We must believe, but what are we to believe? And whom or in whom are we to believe?

We live in a world today where people, at least some people, will believe almost anything. Circulating on the Internet are all sorts of "urban legends" and tales which are widely believed by many people, even though they are false. A significant number of people believe implausibly that the U.S. government, not Islamic terrorists, destroyed the World Trade Center.

Many of the most highly educated people in our society believe that life arose by chance and that human beings and other complex life forms are nothing more than the product of a series of incredible accidents. But the more that is learned about the complexity of life and the

science behind it the more preposterous becomes the idea that biological life on earth with all of its variety and complexity arose by chance (cf. "[Scientists Refute Darwinism](#)"; and "[God as Creator](#)"; "[The Mystery of Life's Origin](#)"; "[Intelligence Versus Nonsense](#)" at cogmessenger.org).

Yet we are also living in a skeptical age where fewer people, at least in the West, say they believe in God or the Bible. And although various kinds of religions are still popular, very few people, relatively speaking, actually believe what the Bible says.

If we are to be truly Christian, if we are to have salvation, there are specific things the Bible tells us we must believe.

One, we must believe the gospel (Mark 1:14-15; 16:15-16). Yet, most people do not believe the true gospel, the gospel Jesus taught, because they have been deceived. If they believe any gospel, it is a false one. And when the true gospel is presented to most people, they reject it. Relatively few people in history have been willing to believe the truth. The true gospel, in its fullest sense, includes the entirety of God's word, revealed to mankind through the Bible. And most religions, including various forms of "Christianity," have rejected the word of God in favor of human tradition, as did the people of ancient Israel, and Judah (II Kings 17:7-22; Jeremiah 44:16-23; Ezekiel 11:12; Matthew 24:5; Mark 7:6-9).

As part of believing the gospel, we must believe that God exists (Hebrews 11:6). And this verse also implies we must believe God's promises, and that we will receive the rewards promised if we diligently seek God. Abraham believed God's promises, even though they seemed impossible from a physical, human standpoint (Romans 4:20-22; Galatians 3:7-9; Hebrews 11:8-12).

Like Abraham, we not only have to believe God exists, we must come to personally know him and we must have a personal belief, trust and faith in God our Father and Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 5:24; 3:14-18; 6:47; 11:25-26). It is through believing in Christ that we gain salvation (Acts 13:38-39).

But what does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ? Is a mere empty profession of faith sufficient? Abraham believed God, but how was that belief demonstrated? According the Scripture, it was through his obedience to God's commandments (Genesis 22:18; 26:5; Hebrews 11:8; James 2:20-24). Genuinely believing in Christ means believing his word and living by it so that it bears fruit (Luke 8:11-15; John 8:31-36; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-13). If we believe in Christ we will do the same works he did and we will keep his commandments (John 14:12-15, 23). If we keep his commandments we will have a personal knowledge of and relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ through the Spirit of God. If we say we know God and refuse to keep his word we're only fooling ourselves (Matthew 7:21-27; 1 John 2:4).

Now the final question that we began with: How can you believe the truth?

Learn to fear God and hate evil (Proverbs 1:7; 8:13). Hating evil includes hating lies, anything that is not the truth (Proverbs 6:16-19). Prove your beliefs (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Seek the truth diligently (Proverbs 2:1-10). Note this includes searching it out and asking for it at the same time. Note that wisdom is for the upright. To believe the truth you must live by it—which means obeying God's commandments (Psalm 111:10). Spend time studying the Scriptures so that you can understand them (2 Timothy 2:15).

Belief is essential for salvation. We need to ask ourselves often—"What do I believe?"

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