

Discipleship Questions

Why is it essential to believe in Jesus?

What evidence has been given so that you might believe in Jesus?

What do many people claim it means to believe in Jesus?

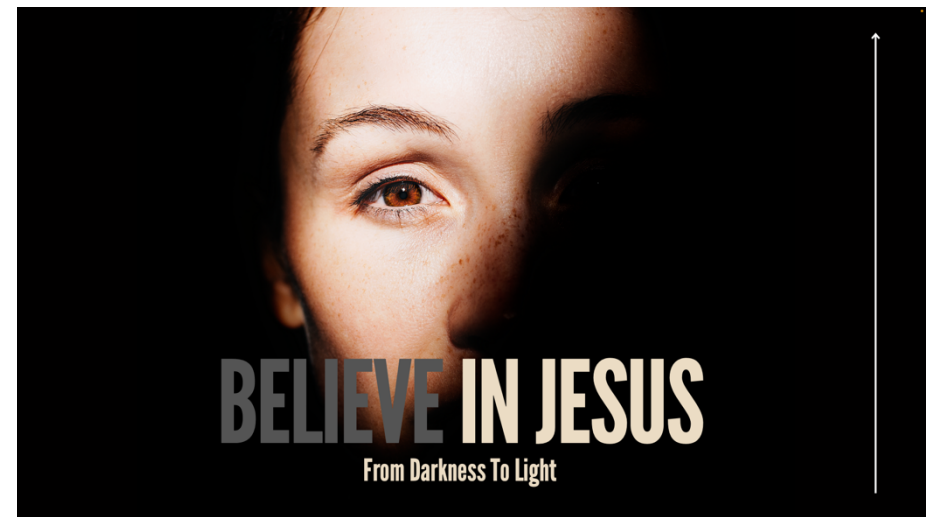
What does it actually mean to believe in Jesus?

How does the bronze snake help you understand the nature of true faith?

How do the Israelites in the wilderness and the manna help you understand the nature of true faith?

Why is it impossible for you to earn salvation by your own works?

Why is it impossible to be saved without obedient works?



Jesus of Nazareth was the one God had foretold as the Messiah who would establish an everlasting kingdom. He was both the Son of Man (emphasizing His humanity) and the Son of God (emphasizing His Deity, John 1:1-18, 29-52). He overcame temptation (Matthew 4:1-11), taught about the kingdom of God, and worked many miracles (Matthew 4:23-25). Ultimately, He sacrificed Himself on the cross (Luke 23:13-25, 44-46) and rose from the dead (Luke 24:1-8). Now, all people can access the salvation from sin and the victory over death God has provided through Him (Romans 5:6-11)! Therefore, as you recognize these things, you must believe in Jesus as the Son of God who provides the opportunity for you to be saved.

John 20:24-31

Jesus appeared to His disciples (and others, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8) after His resurrection to provide convincing proof that He had risen (Acts 1:3; Luke 24:13-35, 36-43). However, it was up to each person whether they would truly believe Jesus as the risen Son of God! For Thomas (one of Jesus's apostles), he would not believe without examining the evidence of Jesus's hands and side. For you, you must consider the evidence that has been left in Scripture. In addition, you should recognize that the people who saw Jesus after He had risen were willing to suffer and die for their faith in Jesus (Acts 3-5). Some will choose to believe the evidence of the risen Savior and experience eternal life through Him, while others will reject the evidence.

John 3:14-21

Believing in Jesus as the Son of God is essential to experiencing eternal life. Failing to believe in Him will result in dying in your sins (John

8:24). Therefore, it is critical to understand what it means to truly believe in Jesus. Sadly, many think that believing in Jesus merely means being convinced of who Jesus is and what He accomplished. While this is a necessary aspect of belief, it is not all that is involved! This passage compares Jesus being lifted up to the snake that was lifted up in the wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9). As God provided the bronze snake on the pole for those who needed healed in the wilderness, faith required more than just believing the fact that looking at the snake would provide healing. Instead, faith required believing so much that they looked at the snake. The same is true when it comes to believing in Jesus. God has provided Jesus as the sacrifice for sin so that you can not perish and not experience God's wrath. Believing in Jesus requires more than just agreeing to the facts about who Jesus is and what He has done. Instead, it involves trusting so completely in Him that you will do whatever He requires of you! For God requires good works rather than evil deeds to please Him.

John 6:28-40, 47-51

The work God wants from people today is to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. However, once again, believing in Jesus is not limited to a mental acceptance of who He is and what He has done. Instead, this passage demonstrates that Jesus is the Bread of Life sent from Heaven. This references the period of the Old Testament when God provided for His people physically by giving them bread (manna) every morning (Exodus 16). But more was required to experience the life God was providing for these people than just intellectually acknowledging the presence of bread. They also had to gather and eat it if they wanted to live! In the same way, experiencing the spiritual life God has provided through Jesus involves more than intellectually acknowledging how Jesus has provided everything needed for spiritual life. It also involves consuming Him by taking His teachings and way of life and putting them into application in your life!

Ephesians 2:1-10

You died spiritually because you rebelled against God. This meant that you would experience God's wrath. But God has provided the only way of escape through His love, grace, and mercy being shown through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Now, you can be saved by His grace if you believe in Jesus. In fact, it is impossible to save yourself by your own good works apart from Jesus! For once you sin, you cannot undo the consequences of your sin by yourself and earn salvation. Therefore, there are no meritorious works you can do to earn salvation without Jesus! The only way you can be saved is to have true faith in Jesus. But you must define

saving faith in the same way that Jesus defines it (full trust in Him that obeys what He says).

James 2:14-26

This text helps to demonstrate that Jesus defines true faith as involving works of obedience. While Ephesians 2 demonstrates that you cannot save yourself by your own good works apart from Jesus, this passage demonstrates that true faith in Jesus involves trusting Him enough to do whatever He says. This is the consistent picture of true, saving faith in Scripture (notice the actions of faith in Hebrews 11). So, you cannot separate true faith from obeying whatever Jesus says! In fact, faith without works is dead, and a dead faith cannot save anyone! While many churches teach that faith alone is enough for salvation, this passage clearly teaches the exact opposite. Although meritorious works (works through which we claim to earn/deserve salvation) do not save, works of faith/obedience do save (justify, declare righteous)! These save because they trust in Jesus enough to do whatever He says, confident that He will save you if you do what He says (Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)!

Matthew 7:21-23

Jesus taught that it is possible for people to mentally accept Him as Lord and not be pleasing to God or have eternal salvation! In fact, Jesus said there will be many people on Judgment Day who will acknowledge Him as Lord but will not be saved. These can even have done many good things in His name. However, Jesus says they lacked true obedience to God! So, they may have claimed Jesus as Lord and done some good and religious things, but they had not truly turned their lives over to Jesus. Therefore, you must make sure that you do not just believe in Jesus intellectually, but that you actually practice the things He says (Luke 6:46-49)!

Conclusion

Jesus Christ has provided the only way for you to be saved from your sins. Now, He requires that you place your complete trust in Him. Everyone who does this will not perish in their sins by experiencing God's wrath, but will experience the eternal life God has provided through Jesus instead! Yet, truly believing in Jesus does not just involve mentally accepting certain facts about Jesus as being true. Rather, it involves putting your full trust in Jesus to do whatever He says!

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