

To Believe or Not Believe

Mark 16:14-20

7/04/04

Intro

In this last chapter of Mark, we read some truly amazing verses that are important to understand.

These verses are not seen in all texts because there is some question as to the whether they were added later, or were part of the original biblical manuscripts. The best Greek manuscripts do not contain these verses, but at least two of the early church fathers quoted from these verses.

The theme of the verses is actually believing and not believing. That is the question which is most important for each and every person on the earth.

In these verses we gain insight into the importance of believing and not believing.

I. Unbelief is a Serious Matter to God

A. He expected them to believe His Word

- Early in Jesus' ministry, he taught them in veiled words. But as the end drew near, he became very clear that he would be betrayed by the Jewish leadership and handed over to the Gentiles.
- He made it clear that He would be killed, but that He would be rise from the dead after three days.

- But in verses **11 and 13** it is clear that they refused to believe His Word.

Mark 8:31-32, "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly."

- Even His enemies knew that he had said He would rise again.

Illus – On the road to Emmaus, he even rebuked them for not believing...

Luke 24:25-27, And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

B. He expected them to believe the eyewitnesses

- There were several who saw Him after the resurrection and they reported back to the disciples what they saw, but they would not believe.

Illus – Thomas has now taken on the reputation for doubting...

John 20:24-29

- This is one of the strongest reasons for our belief as well. There were more than a few who saw the resurrected Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:4-6, "...and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now,"

- Our faith should be strengthened by knowing that so many saw Him.

C. Unbelief is hardness of heart

- Notice in **verse 14** that Mark says their hearts were hard.
- "They refused to believe." They were resisting the truth.

Hebrews 3:12-14, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

- **There are degrees of faith.**

Illus - "Lord, I believe, help me in my unbelief..."

II. Believing is Tied to Salvation

A. First, a word about baptism

- Because believing and baptism are connected here, some teach **that in order to be saved** you must not only believe, **you must be also be baptized** or you will be condemned.
- But notice that it is only those who **disbelieve** who are condemned, not those who are not baptized.
- Otherwise, salvation is not by grace alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

- However, **real belief produces real actions.**

Illus – in that day, to be publicly baptized was to take a great risk. You were identifying with Christ.

Illus – It is the same way Muslim countries today; to be baptized is to be rejected.

Illus – When our founding Fathers signed the Declaration of Independence, they did so in the knowledge it could cost them their lives.

"We mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor..."

B. Believe and be saved

- Believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the key to salvation.
- You can't separate Jesus from these events.
- Some want to say that Jesus was just a good teacher and a moral example.
- But believing is tied to salvation...

Romans 10:9-10, "...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

- What does it mean to be saved? It means to be saved from condemnation.
- Those who are "in" Christ Jesus are saved.

Illus – Noah and his three sons and their wives were in the ark and the waters of condemnation fell upon the ark.

Isaiah 53:6, "But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

III. Believing Brings Change

A. Spiritual authority

- We now have the authority to carry the words of Jesus to a lost and condemned world.
- We now are allowed to reconcile people to God through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

- We are given authority over demons.

Luke 10:17, The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

B. Spirit empowered praise

- There is much confusion over this issue of speaking in tongues.
- It is a result of the Holy Spirit, but when someone speaks in a tongue, they are speaking to God.

1 Corinthians 14:2, "For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries."

C. Attesting miracles

- Jesus was speaking here to the disciples who he is sending out into the world.

- And we see that miracles seemed to be more evident where the Word of God was being established.
- And that once the Word of God was established there higher accountability to the Word of God and less emphasis on attesting miracles.

Illus – there were examples of some of these things happening, but not seen as a general rule; i.e. Paul was bitten by a snake.

Acts 28:1-10 Paul and the snake.

- Miracles still occur today, but the emphasis is on obedience to His Word.

Luke 16:19-31 – they have the Word of Moses...

Conclusion

God desires that we would believe with all of our hearts and that there be change as a result.