

What Shall We Believe and Why?

Sunday, April 6th, 1986

John 20:31

“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Before I speak to you today, I am going to do something that I did last week on the program. I want to tell you about a set of books that I have. I believe that they are very good and they are very helpful to people who want to study the Word of God, to those who teach Sunday school, Bible School, and to those who teach Bible classes.

These books are for those who do not have time to study deeper and heavier commentaries. I know that there are plenty of commentaries out there. I know that we don't need a new commentary written like most of them are written. Most are heavy, hard to read and complicated.

What I have done for the last several years is write a commentary in normal, every day, language. I have studied John Calvin, John Gill, Matthew Poole, and Matthew Henry, Robert Haldane and Charles Spurgeon and all of these different men. I have studied each verse in the 21 epistles of the New Testament and have brought it down to a nut-shell.

I did this for our Sunday school classes at 13th Street Baptist Church. I started these years ago and began writing the lessons verse by verse. I give the meaning of the verses in a brief, brief, statement. I have them here; there are 6 volumes.

For example: I have the Book of Romans, the Book of 1 and 2nd Corinthians. Some of you may have a few of these because a company in England by the name of Evangelical Press published them. They published them one at a time over a period of almost two years. The set is complete now.

There are 21 epistles in the New Testament. I start at Romans and go all the way through to Jude, verse by verse. If you would like to have these books and if you will write to us, we sell them actually less than what we pay for them.

I'm not using gimmicks, devices or tricks to get people to support this program; God supports this program. He has supported us abundantly and sufficiently for 12 years. I want you to have these books if you are interested in studying the Word or teaching the Word.

You write and we will mail you these books; they cost \$10.00. There are 6 paper-back books of 21 epistles. They have been a blessing to a lot of people. They are in 30 English-speaking countries and are being translated into French and Portuguese. These books are going into Africa, Spain, Brazil, and other countries.

If you would like to have them, as many sets as you would like to have, write to me and we will send them to you in the next few days. You think about it and if you would like to have them, let us hear from you. The address will be given at the end of the broadcast.

Now, if you have your Bible, I would like for you to turn with me to the book of John, Chapter 20:31. Here is my subject: "WHAT SHALL WE BELIEVE AND WHY?"

John has come to the end of his Gospel account, the end of his epistle, all that has been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit has been written with one object in view. He says in John 20:31 *"But these are written that you might believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, (that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Redeemer, the Son of God), and believing in Him you might have life through His name."*

That is why this is written; it was not written to cultivate traditions or to help people argue and debate. It wasn't written as a book of Proverbs or good sayings. *"These things were written that you might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that believing you might have life through His name."* That is why John says, *"I have written these things."*

In using this text, I would like to deal with two questions today, just two, very simple questions, the first of which is this:

What is a man to believe? What are we to believe in order to have eternal life? I know you want me to talk in plain, every day, language. What is a man to believe in order to have eternal life? I would be glad to tell you and I will be most happy to tell you.

Secondly: I am going to answer this question: On what authority, on whose authority can I promise eternal life to a person who believes what I am preaching?

Let's take the first question: What is a man to believe in order to obtain eternal life? This tells you right here in this verse, *"These (things) are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, you might have life in His name."*

In order for a person to be justified, sanctified, and redeemed before God, he must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This is what it says, *“that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”*

The four writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John who present the Gospel of Christ, each present Him with a different emphasis. Matthew represents Him as the *“King of the Jews;”* that is very obvious. Mark presents Christ Jesus as the *“Servant.”* Luke presents Christ as the *“Son of man.”*

John, the Scripture that we are reading now, the book that we are reading now, presents Him as the *“Son of God.”* He begins in Chapter 1 and says, *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made by Him; without Him was not anything made that was made: And that Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, the Son of God.”*

What John is saying, is he who rejects the Deity and Godhead of Jesus Christ can never know God or come to God in salvation because Jesus Christ is God. Christ said Himself, *“If you believe not that I am He you will die in your sins; I am He.”* I am who? *“I am God.”*

When He asked the disciples, *“Whom do you say that I am?”* Peter said, *“You are the Christ; you are the Son of God.”* He said, *“Blessed are you Simon, flesh and blood didn’t reveal that to you but my Father which is in heaven.”*

Phillip had preached to the Eunuch and the Eunuch said, *“Here is water; what doth hindereth me to be baptized?”* Phillip said, *“If you believe you may.”* The Eunuch said, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

Am I making myself clear? I’m not saying that you can have a good opinion of Jesus of Nazareth, that you can be saved and find eternal life. Some say that He was like Mohammed, Confucius, a good man, a reformer or a Christian leader, healer or preacher. No; wait a minute, now! *“These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”*

That was the conflict that He had with the Pharisees. He said, *“Many good works have I done among you, for which of these do you stone Me?”* They said, *“We are not stoning you for a good work; we have no objection for your good works but we stone you because you say you are God; you are a man; you can’t be God.”*

God became a man; that is what I am going to say next. We are not only to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, we are to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of man.

My friend; do you know what incarnation is? Incarnation is (God becoming a man). I'm not even going to attempt to explain that; I can't explain that. I do know that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh. This is what I am saying when Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 14; *"Behold; the Lord Himself will give you a sign, a virgin shall conceive and thou shalt call His name Immanuel,"* (God with us).

Isaiah wrote again, in Chapter 9: *"Unto us a child is born, a Son is given and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."* To the Son, the Father said; *"Thy throne O God is forever."*

I am saying that Jesus Christ is not only God, but He is man; He is the perfect God and perfect man. He was born of a woman, conceived of the Holy Ghost, but made of a woman. He was brought forth from a woman's womb, nursed from a woman's breast and grew up in a carpenter's shop. That person is God incarnate in human flesh.

He performed many miracles. He performed miracles that caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear and the dead to live. He performed miracles that caused the hungry to eat and the thirsty to drink.

He never, in His entire, 33 ½ years, in the flesh, as a man, performed one miracle to relieve Himself of one trial, difficulty, sorrow or test. He limited Himself. God in human flesh must fulfill all that the Law requires of His people being tested and tried as we are with the full trial, the full test, and yet without sin.

Yet, He couldn't use a miracle to get out of it. That is the reason Satan said, *"If you are the Son of God, make these stones into bread."* He had been fasting 40 days. He did do that for others who were fasting; He multiplied bread for them but not for Himself.

He is a man and this was the main issue; He was God in Christ *"reconciling the world to Himself."* That is what we are to believe. *"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God."* That man who died on that cross is God in human flesh.

Thirdly: We are to believe that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Son of man, is the Christ. Does that mean anything to you? I know that some of you have been in church all of your life. Jesus Christ is not a curse word, Jesus is the Christ, (the words *"the Christ"* is His office). Jesus is His name of humiliation. Jesus is His name in the flesh.

“*Jehovah God*” is His name. Jesus is His name in the flesh. Christ is His office. Peter said, “*We believe that Thou art the Christ.*” He did not say that “We believe that you are Jesus Christ; we believe that you are Jesus, the Christ.”

The crowd asked John the Baptist, “*Are you the Christ?*” He said, “*I’m not the Christ.*” They said of Jesus, “*Is this not the Christ?*” The woman of Samaria said this when she met Him at the well and went down into town, saying; “*I saw a man and heard a man who told me everything about myself. Is this not the Christ?*”

In Acts 2:36, Peter said; “*God hath made this same Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.*” Who is this Christ that they are talking about? Well, He is the Old Testament promise, the Messiah, the one to whom they looked for, He is the consolation of Israel, the Kinsmen Redeemer.

He is “*that Prophet*” that Moses said God would raise from among the brethren. He is that Priest like Melchisedek. He is that King who is the Son of David. “*He is the Lord our Righteousness*” of whom Jeremiah wrote. He is the “*stem of Jesse.*” He is the “*King of Salem,*” He is “*Shiloh*” that Jacob talked about. He is “*the Branch.*” “*He is the Bridegroom*” that Solomon wrote about. He is the “*Kinsmen Redeemer*” that Boas and Ruth talked about. He is the Atonement.

All of the Old Testament promises and prophecies concerning the Christ, the Messiah, the Emancipator, the Redeemer, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. The disciples said, “*We have found Him of whom the Scripture says, He is the Christ.*” More than that, in summing it all up, “*He is the Seed of Abraham.*”

What are we to believe? “*These things are written,*” John says, “*that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ,*” Jesus the man, Jesus the carpenter, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of Galilee, Jesus of Bethlehem, of Calvary and the Mount of Olives; Jesus is the Christ, the Christ of God. He was anointed, ordained, sent and promised. He was the fulfillment of every Scripture, *the Son of God.*”

Then it says, “*That you might have life through His name.*” We are to believe on Him and call on His name. Have you ever thought about His name? I know you have seen how many times the Scriptures talk about His name; it says, “*That through His name you might have eternal life.*”

Also, it says, *“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Through this man’s name is preached remission and forgiveness of sin.”*

Why does God keep talking about His name? We know His name, it is Jesus. Do we really? I know a lot of folks who are named Jesus; Mexico is full of them. That is the reason God keeps talking about His name, His name describes His character. His name identifies who He is. His name is His attributes.

Moses said, *“What is your name?”* Moses stood on that mountain and God said, *“Take off your shoes; you are on Holy ground. I am going to send you down into Egypt to deliver my people.”* Moses said, *“What is your name?”* Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord until the break of day and said, *“What is your name?”*

You have a God and you call Him Jesus. I am asking you, what is His name? There is power in that name. In the Old Testament there is a seven-fold name of Jehovah; have you ever looked at it? He is called in Genesis 22:14, *“Jehovah-Jireh,”* the Lord will provide.

Abraham said that, *“The Lord will provide Himself a Lamb.”* The Lord who must have a Lamb will provide for Himself a Lamb and will provide Himself the Lamb and will provide for us a Lamb. He provides it all and He needs no help.

He is called in Exodus, *“Jehovah-rapha;”* I am the Lord that healeth thee. He healeth all thy diseases. My friend; we are not just talking about our broken arms, our shriveled feet or our arthritis pain; I am talking about our sins and our diseases of soul, the leprosy of the soul. God hath cleansed us and made us whole. *“By His stripes we are healed.”*

That is the healing we need so that we will never die. You can heal these deaf ears of mine but I’m going to die in the next ten or twelve years anyway, maybe less than that. God healed me forever. He healed my soul. Do you see that? I wish we weren’t putting so much emphasis on the body and would have a little concern about our souls.

Then, He is called in Exodus 17, *“Jehovah-nissi,”* the Lord our banner. The battle is the Lord’s, not mine. It is His. I am not going to get upset; He is on the throne and the battle is going well. You may call to the far corners of the battlefield, *“How is it going?”* It is going well, the battle is the Lord’s; the Captain is in command.

In Judges 6:24, He is called *“Jehovah-shalom,”* the Lord our Peace. That is who Christ is; that is His name.

He is “*Jehovah-raah*” in Psalm 23; “*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.*”

He is “*Jehovah-tsidkenu*” in Jeremiah 23, the Lord my Righteousness, my Sanctification and my Holiness. I have a holiness and sanctification; it is not measured by your rules; it is measured by His. I didn’t meet those rules; Christ did.

He is called “*Jehovah-shammah*” in Ezekiel 48, the Lord is present. That is His name and that is the life that we have through His name and in all that His name implies and imparts. That’s right; “*These things are written that you might believe.*”

I will tell you something else, I’m not talking about believing just with your head but with your heart. You see; this faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God, His person and work is not merely having just head knowledge of some facts, it is having a heart that is committed and a heart that trusts.

The Scripture says, “*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Keep thy heart; out of it are the issues of life. My son, give me your heart. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.*”

“*These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing (with the heart), you might have life,*” (eternal life, and eternal glory, through His name). He is “*Jehovah-tsidkenu,*” our Righteousness. He is “*Jehovah-rapha,*” the Lord that healeth thee, and the Lord that provideth. He is “*the Lord, my Shepherd. He is the Lord, my banner. He is the Lord who is present.*” That is why we have life through His name.

These are the things that men must believe. My friends; there are no short-cuts. The Pharisees asked, “*What shall we do that we might work the works of God?*” He said, “*These are the works of God that you believe on Him whom God has sent.*”

My second question is, on what authority does the preacher promise eternal life to those who believe Christ that He is the Son of God? Let me give it to you; will you listen?

First of all: It is the command of God that you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to 1 John 3:23, “*This is His commandment that we should believe on the name; (there it is again), of the Son of God and that we should love one another as He gave us commandment.*”

That is His commandment. What God commands me to do; I have every right and reason to do it. Does that make sense to you? The Scripture says, *“Lazareth come forth.”* Do you say, “May I.” He told you to believe!

“Take up your bed and walk;” would it be all right if I did it, He told you to? That is pretty good authority isn’t it? *“This is His commandment that you believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ.”*

On what authority do I believe Christ, believe on Christ and expect eternal life? I will tell you secondly that it is the character of God to show mercy. That’s right; Moses said, *“Lord; show me your glory.”* He said, *“I will make all my goodness pass before you; (His goodness is His glory); I will be merciful unto who I will be merciful; I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.”*

David said, *“If Thou O Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, who would stand? But Lord, there is forgiveness with Thee.”* Isn’t that a marvel that there is forgiveness with God? *“God is plenteous in mercy.”* The Scripture says, *“He delights to show mercy.”* That is pretty good authority for believing isn’t it? If I delight to do something, you can be pretty sure that I will do it if I can.

Then, on this authority, I expect to find life in Christ; *“He came into the world to save sinners.”* I am a sinner and you are a sinner. He came to save sinners. Paul said that, *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners.”*

Well, if He came down here to do that, then why shouldn’t I expect Him to do it? He said, *“He came to seek and to save the lost.”* I am a lost sinner, I need Christ. Why would He save me? He said, *“God didn’t send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.”* That is why He came and that is why He died.

I will tell you this, on this authority I believe that the Son of God is Jesus Christ and I expect life through His name. After He died and rose again, before He ascended back to heaven, He appeared to His disciples and said, *“Go into all the world and preach this Gospel to every creature that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing you might have life in His name.”* Now, you go preach this, *“and he that believes it shall be saved. He that doesn’t shall be damned.”*

Paul summed it up with this, *“Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached to you, which you received, wherein you stand, by which you are saved, if you keep in memory what I have preached unto you unless you have believed in vain.”*

Lastly, I will close with this: on what authority do I believe that I have life and believe in Jesus Christ? If Christ is not the Saviour, who is? That is a pretty good question, who is? He asked His disciples one day, *“Will you go away?”* They said, *“To whom shall we go?”* That is another good question.

Shall we go to the temple for salvation? There is no salvation there. Shall we go to the Law? Shall we go to the Priest? They can't save themselves. Shall we go to the flesh? Shall we go to the ordinances?

I will tell you where I am going; I am going to Christ and I pray you would too!