I Believe…

After reading this week's essay, we see once again, man and his wisdom trying to put a label on God and push their particular views on fellow believers. Why do we feel the need to put a nametag on Our Creator? Did He not tell us "I AM THAT I AM"? **(Exodus 3:14)** Is an *opinion* a belief? On what truth do we base our beliefs?

The best way to begin is to start with the definition of "Believe." The Oxford Dictionary defines believe as:

VERB
believe *(verb)* · ***believes*** *(third person present)* · ***believed*** *(past tense)* · ***believed*** *(past participle)* · ***believing*** *(present participle)*

1. accept (something) as true; feel sure of the truth of.
   "the superintendent believed Lancaster's story" · "Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead"
   synonyms:
   be convinced by · trust · have confidence in · consider honest · consider truthful · regard as true · accept as true · accept · give credence to · credit · give credit to · put confidence in · count on · rely on · depend on · swallow · swallow something hook, line, and sinker · fall for · go for · buy · take as gospel
   antonyms:
   disbelieve
   - accept the statement of (someone) as true.
     "he didn't believe her or didn't want to know"
   - have faith, especially religious faith.
     "there are those on the fringes of the Church who do not really believe"
     synonyms:
     devout · pious · reverent · believing · godly · God-fearing · dutiful · saintly · holy · prayerful · churchgoing · practicing · faithful · devoted · committed
     antonyms:
     atheistic · irreverent
   - *(believe something of someone)*
     feel sure that someone is capable of doing something.
     "I wouldn't have believed it of Lois—what an extraordinary woman!"
2. hold (something) as an ***opinion***; think or suppose.
   "I believe we've already met" · "the deal is believed to be worth around $15 million" · "things were not as bad as the experts believed" · "humu-humu are, I believe, shrimp fritters"
   synonyms:

think · be of the opinion that · think it likely that · have an idea that · imagine · feel · have a feeling · hold · maintain · suspect · suppose · assume · presume · conjecture · surmise · postulate that · theorize that · conclude · come to the conclusion that · deduce · understand · be given to understand · take it · gather · fancy · guess · dare say · figure · reckon · ween

I've included the entire definition as it encompasses the variations on the word believe and gives a fair understanding of its uses. As you can see, there are numerous applications of its use and I've highlighted the definitions applicable to our topic.

As "believers", what do we believe? From our own First Century our statement of faith is: We believe the Bible, both Old and New Testament, is the inspired revelation and Word of God to all of mankind. It is the true basis for all doctrine and teaching. (**Matthew 4:4**- "But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."; **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, for correction, for instruction in righteousness-"All scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for conviction: So that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.".) We believe the Bible is the foundation for all truth and knowledge. (**John 17:17**- "Sanctify them in Your truth; Your Word is truth.) Jesus said Himself, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me."-**John 14:6**.

Okay great, we believe in God and Jesus Christ. Is there more to it than just believing? That goes without saying. "Do you believe that God is one? You do well to believe this. *Even* the demons believe and tremble in fear."-**James 2:19**. For whatever our personal reasons are, or why we have come to this place, we have taken a leap of faith, been baptized into the family of God and chosen to follow and obey His Commandments, keep His Holy Days and live our lives following the example of His Son, Jesus our Savior.

God's Word tells us, "Truly I say to you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall in no way enter into it."-**Luke 18:16 (also Matt.19:14, Mark 10:14)** We've dropped our guard so to speak and let go of our reluctance and opened our hearts and put our trust and faith in Our Creator and His Word. God's Word is abounding with scripture telling us to **obey** His Commandments, **do** His Commandments and **keep** His commandments and we will be blessed if we do so. "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which

keepeth the covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations."-**Deut.7:9** "If you love Me, keep my commandments,"-**John 14:15** There are over 150 more such scriptures that instruct us to live, obey, keep and do God's commandments. Beginning with Sabbath keeping, it establishes a sign between God and us **(Exodus 31:13).** Following through in keeping all of God's commandments and Holy days just gets easier. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."-**1 John 5:3**.

In keeping His commandments, we believe we are to worship Him in spirit and in truth. "God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."-**John 4:24** To worship God in spirit, we must love Him with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind **(Matt.22:37)**. True worship must be "in spirit," that is, engaging the whole heart. Unless we have a sincere passion and zeal for God, there is no worship in spirit. Going through the motions with lip service won't measure up, neither will "playing church." "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."-**Matt. 15:8-9**. Some believers prefer to worship only "in spirit." This seems quite apparent as in some conversations with Sunday "churchers", who blatantly admit they know they're "doing it wrong" but justify their actions with good intentions. They judge the success of their worship by the thrills and chills they experience, substituting entertainment for truth.

We believe our worship must also be "in truth." This isn't difficult to understand as it simply means that our worship must conform to the revelation of God in Scripture. It must be informed by who God is and what He is like and what He says for us to do and how to do it. This is an area where many take a wrong turn and worship God "in their own way." They may truly believe that they love God with all their hearts, perhaps they do, and still celebrate traditional "holidays" and keep Sunday as their day of worship. They are genuinely nice people and may not have any ill intent whatsoever. "Oh, we worship The Lord on Sundays…" we've heard numerous times. "We keep Christmas and know it isn't really Jesus' birthday but we honor Him that way." Most of us here once sat in the pews on Sundays, kept "holidays" and truly believed our conduct was righteous and our salvation assured. Satan is a clever enemy and deception is one of his specialties **(Rev.12:9)**.

Conforming to man-made traditions and slapping a Jesus label on it won't cut it. We thought we were true believers however misinformed we were. Yet we were

still blinded to God's Truth. We were raised in such traditions and never knew any better until God called us **(John 6:44)**. We believed in what we were told to be the truth. Our worship must be rooted in and secured to the truths of biblical revelation. The pure undefiled, undiluted Word of God. Discounting what mom and grandma taught us is a hurdle that is too difficult for some to overcome. Spending one's life in a certain church or religion only to find out how far off base we were can be discouraging. Rather than change, they'll continue singing repetitious hymns over and over and "calling down the spirit" as in some Pentecostal churches. This is merely entertainment and not scripturally sound. So many believers jump from church to church to be entertained. I've had conversations with folks in the past who have left one church for another because the music program at one church wasn't up to par. Sounds like the real reason for attendance has nothing to do with loving or worshiping God at all.

Although entertainment is not a bad thing, worship is not meant to be fashioned by what feels good, but by the content of what is true and honors God in the way He instructs. "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"-**Luke 6:46** "Many will say to Me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."-**Matt.7:22-23**. Many would be shocked to know their efforts are in vain, the road to heaven doesn't exist in the sense they believe and grandma won't be waiting at the gates.

This goes back to the beginning of this essay in that man is imposing his will or his interpretation of God's Word. From the weekly essay, correcting those who do not pronounce God's name the way they believe is not justified. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."-**2 Peter 1:20**. So many believe they are right and those other folks are wrong, that one interpretation is better or more correct than another. Well, God is right (all the time) and just maybe man is wrong! Why else do we have so many denominations to worship the same God and the same Jesus Christ? "Now I exhort you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; rather that you be knit together in the same mind and in the same judgment."-**1 Cor. 1:10**. Several websites list that there are over 33,000 Christian denominations worldwide. That certainly is a lot of "believers." How does a remnant compare to that number? Food for thought…

We mentioned it dozens of times about "getting wrapped around the axle" in things that take away our focus on the true mission at hand. What is our true mission? I'm confident it encompasses many things but overall, I believe we are to strive to become the image of Jesus Christ and fulfill God's creation purpose within each of us as we fit into the body of Christ, walking in faith and obedience. We are being overhauled from the world's way of doing things, leaving the old man behind and putting on the new. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."-**Eph. 4:22-24 (also 2 Corinthians 5:17).**

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.-**1 Peter 2:9**. I believe that God has chosen and called us out for His purpose. I am confident that *if* we *do* our part, God will always do His. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."-**Phil. 1:6**. We believe in the promises of God and the rewards that lie ahead to those that keep and do His commandments. "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."- **Rev. 5:10**. "Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and shall reign with Him a thousand years.-**Rev. 20:6**. **(also Rev. 22:14).**

As the weekly CGG essay stated**, "**Each one of us shall answer to God for what we believe." We've accepted the Word of God to be true. We are convinced that the Bible is the inspired Word of God given to man through His prophets and His Son. It is inclusive of His plan of salvation for mankind and His instructions to and for us to follow. We fully trust, have faith and confidence in Him and our Savior Jesus Christ, that from Genesis to Revelation, the Alpha and the Omega is without question, Who He says He is. We believe it.

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