

Title: Why should I believe?

Mark 1:21

Why should I believe in Jesus? Why should I believe that He is the source of life & truth, that he is the way? The people of this world, in particular, those who are atheists, say that science is the only source of truth. It teaches us “how this world works.” While this is true, there is a hidden agenda to science. It is not simply a search for truth, or even a search for all knowledge. The world of science has a hidden agenda. It seeks to understand “How this world works....” in order that it might control this world. For example why do we study Biology? Is it just to understand how living creatures work? Or rather, the study of Biology was originally started so that we might understand how humans work. or that we might understand how to heal and make human lives better, or sometimes... how to hurt and destroy them. What about chemistry? Was it just to study the molecular nature of the world? Or rather, so that we might have the power to create things... valuable things. Since the time of the early alchemists, in the time of the origins of chemistry, man sought to make the philosophers stone... which had the ability to make precious metal from base. So, what I forward to you is that Science is not just the search for knowledge but ultimately Science really seeks to enhance the life of mankind, many times at the expense of the rest of creation. So, because Science has a hidden agenda, one has to be careful of using it as the ultimate source of truth. Not only does it have a hidden agenda, it does not study ALL truth. In Science, every thing must have measurable quality. If you can't measure it, it doesn't exist. That is the scientific method. Seeing is believing. If you can't see it.... if you can't measure it, then it isn't there. As a rule... this okay. Unfortunately, sometimes the scientific method is misused. With regard to “God”, for example, “Seeing is believing” can be misused. For example it is the rally cry for atheists. “Only if I see it, will I believe.” However it is a misuse because they are really saying... “because I don't see it I will not believe.” Because I do not see it, I will not obey.

But it is important to know that not everything we believe is a result of seeing it. For example, I believe that on days which we serve the Lord's supper there is communion wine on the altar. I do not check it every Sunday, but I believe the people who prepare it when they tell me that it is there. I trust them. Scientists have said that there are billions of galaxies out in space. I have never seen one. But I believe them. They are learned people, so I trust what they say about things they know lots about. There is much that we believe, because we trust the authority of the people who tell us things. But then there is a problem.... What do you do when the things which authorities say, are different from “what you see”? The usual answer is “you trust what you see.” But that is easier said than done. You see, the power, the influence of authority is very strong. Three centuries before Christ, there was a philosopher named Aristotle. He was very learned in science. Aristotle taught that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to earth. Today we know the opposite is true, that all objects fall at the same rate. But for almost 10 centuries people

believed Aristotle. Aristotle was regarded as the greatest thinker of all time. Surely he would not be wrong. No one tested his teaching until nearly 2,000 years later. Legend has it that in 1589 Galileo summoned learned professors to the base of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Then he went to the top and pushed off a ten-pound and a one-pound weight. As expected, both weights landed at the same instant, proving that all objects fall at the same rate independent of how much it weighted. But the crazy thing is, despite seeing the proof that falling objects fall at the same rate, the professors refused to change their views. This event became a poignant lesson on the power of authority. The authority of Aristotle was so strong, that the professors denied their eyesight. They continued to say “Aristotle was right.” In this case, putting your faith in the wrong authority, refusing to believe what you see, can lead you to falsehood and error. So even in science falsehood can propagate.

Believe it or not, in our Gospel lesson, there is a similar problem. A man has come into Jerusalem, with miracles and with prophets attesting to his identity. The biggest question is Who is this man? Was he a great teacher? who has brought to us a new teaching. Was he a compassionate man who loved everyone, who loved the poor and suffering? Should we accept his authority? Who is this man -- Jesus of Nazareth? The Gospel of Mark specifically records this event to answer that very question. It starts with Jesus teaching in the temple. It was common for wandering rabbis to come into the temple to assist in worship. It was common for a young man, to read scripture for the congregation and then interpret it Yet Mark records the reaction of the people listening. *“This man does not teach like the other rabbi’s He preaches with authority.”* And Mark says *“The people listening, were amazed.”* Why were they amazed? What does it mean “to preach with authority.” Well, the rabbi’s at the time, simply taught what was written in the scrolls of the prophets. You were taught by rote, to memorize. Then you discussed the possible meanings. You discussed all the possible interpretations from the writings of the great rabbis of history. Jesus however, spoke not on the just the letter of the law but spoke about the spirit of the law. When Jesus spoke, he did not give multiple interpretations, but rather he gave only one. When Jesus spoke, he spoke not as a teacher of the law but as a giver of the law. What amazed them was that, Jesus spoke as one with the authority of God.

Yet, not only did he speak with authority, but he spoke with power. Immediately after teaching in the temple, Jesus is confronted with a demon possessed man, that is, a man who’s self-control has been handed over to Satan, or one of his demons. It is here that, Jesus shows not only his spiritual authority, to teach, but his power over the spiritual. In fear, the demon, spits out *“What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?”* *“Have you come to destroy us?”* *“I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”* Jesus immediately commands him to silence, and then orders him out of the possessed man. Even without the testimony of the demon, who calls him the Holy one of God, his power over the spiritual, identifies his divine nature. Both his teaching with authority, and the testimony of demons answers the question, “who is Jesus Christ?”

The sad part is that that question had already been answered over and over. The sad part is that many present there had already witnessed with their own eyes the answer to the question, “who is Jesus Christ?” At Jesus’ Baptism, the answer to our question comes from a voice from heaven, from God, the father who says “This is my son in whom I am well pleased” Jesus is God’s son. And at the last Supper Jesus asks the disciples “who do the people say that I am?” It is here that Peter rises and boldly speaks “You are the Christ! And Jesus says “Blessed are you.” “For you did not come to know that from men, but from God.” Jesus is God, the savior. At his transfiguration God again comes directly to the disciples to confess that Jesus is his son. Jesus is the anointed one, his beloved one. Not just a good teacher, bringing a new teaching, not just a good man being kind to all, in fact, not one of his creations at all but God’s one and only son. Who is Jesus Christ? He is our healer. He is our teacher. He is our judge. He is our savior. He is the son of God. Or more importantly, He is God. As the Nicene creed states “of one substance with the father, through whom all things were made.” Jesus is God. Yet despite all these facts, the Pharisees of Jesus’ time refused to accept what they saw, and refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, because the authority of Jewish Talmudic teachings was so strong, that the Pharisees denied their eyesight They continued to say Jesus is not the Savior We are still looking for a Messiah. As in the case with Galileo, putting your faith in the wrong authority, refusing to believe what you see, can lead you to falsehood and error. And because they chose not to believe their eyes, they remained ignorant to the question, -Who is Jesus Christ? By their own choice they would never know the answer to the question “Who is Jesus Christ?”

Having said that, to know “who is Jesus Christ” is more than just “seeing is believing.” There is a deeper answer to the question “Who is Jesus Christ?” The deeper answer is more than just knowing the intellectual facts. Just as putting your faith in the wrong authority can lead you astray, It is only when your faith is in the right authority. It is only when you have a relationship with the right authority that “seeing is believing.” To know “who is Jesus Christ” is to have a relationship with Jesus. To know Jesus Christ, is to know that he is God, and that through him all things are possible, that he has the power to do anything in your life. To know Jesus Christ is to know that there is a God who loves you, who has plans of good for you. To know Jesus Christ is to know him as your savior, to know that He died on a cross to pay for all your sins, so that you might experience the love of God, instead of his wrath. To know Jesus Christ is to put your faith in Jesus Christ.

And hallelujah the good news is that “YOU know Jesus Christ!” Interestingly enough, it is here that “seeing is not believing,” but “believing is seeing.” believing leads to seeing. Because you believe, “you see.” When you come to the communion table you come before the very presence of the glorified Jesus. We will not visibly see the wine or bread supernaturally transform themselves into blood and the body of Jesus Christ. Yet Scripture tells us that in some divine manner, Christ's body and blood ARE given to us, that in some divine manner the forgiveness of sins IS offered, and the reconciliation with

God, our maker, has occurred. When we partake of the Lord's supper we are confronted by Jesus in His glory, exercising his divine authority to offer the forgiveness of sins to us. It is a source of God's power that simply requires you to believe the words "given for you for the forgiveness of sins"... You know the answer to the question Who is Jesus Christ? When we participate at the Lord's table we become witnesses to all around us, for we also proclaim the answer to all who witness it. Who is Jesus Christ? He is God, the savior. You know the answer to the question "Who is Jesus Christ?" I rejoice in that,... that you have eternal life, that you have the confidence of knowing that there is a God in heaven who loves you... who walks beside you both in the good times and in the bad.

And yet, it is not sufficient to simply know the answer to the question "who is Jesus Christ?" Our purpose in life, the very reason why we are still here on Earth, is to share the answer with others. There are thousands of people out there in our community who do not know the answer to the question Who is Jesus Christ? They may not even know they are asking the question. But they are asking. And they are hungering for the answer. The person who thinks that they've done so many bad things in their life, that there is no way that God could ever forgive them... they are asking "Who is Jesus Christ?" The person who thinks that the only way people will love me is if I continue to do things to please them, or who thinks that they must continually do things to keep God pleased... They are asking "who is Jesus Christ?" The person who thinks, "I'm basically a good person," "God wouldn't send me to Hell just because I'm not perfect." "I'm good enough" They too are asking "who is Jesus Christ?" They may not even know they are asking the question. But they are asking. The sad part is that the world tells them, Jesus is not the savior. You must continue to look elsewhere. But you know the answer. God is calling us to share with them. Listen to the people you meet. If you listen closely enough, you will hear them asking. Behind the problems they share, behind their whining. behind their lies and deceit. behind the pains they are suffering. They are asking "Who is Jesus Christ?" You know the answer. Be their friend. Answer it! As they come to know you, they will come to know "who is Jesus Christ." amen