

HARD TO BELIEVE

Help From Jesus Christ for Doubters and Skeptics

1. The Real Problem

LOOK UP AND READ: Luke 24:1-27, Psalm 14, and John 7:17.

On the day of His resurrection from the dead, Jesus met two of His followers walking down the road to the village of Emmaus. Because of some supernatural phenomenon, they did not recognize Him (verse 16). He found them sad (verse 17) and confused (verses 18-24) and filled with doubt. To help them, He turned their attention to the Scriptures, the written Word of God. He also put his finger on the real problem behind all difficulties about faith.

a. What they were doing wrong.

These men had been followers of Jesus, but now they had serious doubts about Him. What they did with these doubts is instructive to others who struggle with questions about the claims of Christianity. First, they made a mistake by consulting with *each other* about these things.

“ . . . they talked together. . . ” (v. 14)

“ . . . they communed together and reasoned . . . ” (v. 15)

“ . . . communications . . . one to another ” (v. 17)

Reasoning with yourself or with other doubters seldom does anything to dispel doubts. It puts you deeper into the darkness.

b. The right thing to do.

Then “*Jesus himself drew near*” and encouraged them to talk about their doubts with Him (vs. 15-19). The right thing to do is to tell Jesus about your questions. John the Baptist did this when he was in prison facing the death penalty.

“Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”
(Matthew 11:2-3)

In the darkness of the dungeon, he who first declared Jesus to be the Son of God and the Lamb of God (John 1:29-34) questioned the most basic article of his faith! What did he do about his doubt? Talk with others having the same doubts? Reason with himself in the darkness of his growing unbelief? No, he sent word to Jesus, and asked Him the question that was troubling him. And Jesus gave him a convincing and liberating answer (See it in Matthew 11:4-6)!

Even skeptics can take their questions directly to Jesus. One of the problems they have is that they often avoid contact with Christianity, and fail to investigate its claims. The truth of Christ will hold up under scrutiny! And even agnostics and atheists can talk directly to Jesus. If you don't believe in prayer, you can try it anyway.

“O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” (Psalm 34:8)

“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.” (John 1:45-46)

Investigate. Find out. Ask Jesus about your hard questions. Take your doubts to Jesus.

c. Where their problem was.

In responding to their confusion (vs. 18-27), the Lord called them “fools” !

“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken . . .”
(verse 25)

A man is a fool who is slow to believe everything in the Bible. So said Jesus. The answer to their doubt was in the Bible, but the problem was that they were slow to believe it. In the way He pointed to their problem of unbelief, Jesus pinpointed the source of the problem: the heart. They were

“slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”

The difficulty is far more in the heart (the seat of our affections and will) than in the mind. Skeptics and doubters are not smarter or more educated than believers. Some of the most brilliant scientists and thinkers that ever lived were devout Christians. It is not intelligence or knowledge that block the way of belief; it is a stubborn will.

Look at Psalm 14, which exposes the folly of atheism (both theoretical and practical). Verse 1 says that the atheist says “*in his heart, there is no God.*” Disbelief in God and disbelief in the Bible are the results of *heart* problems! What does this mean?

When the will is yielded to the Creator, truth is easy to see and accept. When the will is set against the authority of God, God and His truth will not be perceived. Look at Jeremiah 29:12-13, Romans 1:18-22, and I Corinthians 2:12-14.

Jesus made a promise about truth that we should all claim for ourselves.

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John 7:17)

If a man wills to do God’s will, God will make sure that He knows the truth he needs in order to do God’s will! That’s a promise. So the answer to the problem of unbelief is the surrender of the will. Those who seek Him, with their heart yielded, will find the Lord! Those who seek the truth with a heart yielded to follow it will soon understand the truth. The heart is the key.

