

# Believe!

John 20:19-31 (v. 27)

## Introduction

One day, when I was working at a rest stop on I-65, a Christian co-worker came in all worked up. When I queried why he was so excited, he asked if I had heard the news that they found Noah's Ark.

"No."

"Isn't it exciting?"

"Why?"

"It proves the Bible's right. Now, people will *have* to believe it!"

I hated to burst his bubble, but if people must have archaeological proof that the Bible is true, we're in trouble. Every story would have to be verified by archaeological evidence. In 1993, they found a fragment of a stele at Tel Dan, commemorating the victory of an Aramean king over his neighbors to the south, the "king of Israel" and the "king of the house of David." This was the first proof that there was a king David, the king the Bible refers to as the greatest king of Israel. There had been other evidence that he existed, but this was the first extra-biblical proof of a king David who was a great king. And there are scholars who doubt that the stone is being translated properly.

## Faith, not Science

Science is based on fact, at least that's the way it started out. A hypothesis must be proven either by observation or experimentation. Christianity deals in truth, which is not proven, but accepted by faith. I don't believe in Jesus because the Bible has been scientifically proven to be true, but because I believe in Jesus, I know that the Bible is the Word of God and hence, true. Archaeological evidence is just that, evidence. It *may* prove that someone existed, or something happened a certain way, but it must be interpreted. So, usually it merely *points to* a fact. As in a court of law, a jury may be persuaded by a preponderance of evidence, but they are also swayed by a good lawyer's argument. A good story in a closing can go a long way to exonerating your client if evidence is not on your side.

## The Importance of Belief

This is not to say that evidence is unimportant. But what matters is belief. That is what is at the heart of Christianity. Jesus said in **John 3:16**, "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*" The way to forgiveness of sins and eternal life is to believe in Jesus. As He said in **John 14:6**, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" He also said in **John 3:18**, "*Whoever believes in Him [God's Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*" Sounds cut and dried to me: belief in Jesus equals eternal life; unbelief equals eternal death.

## We Are Unbelievers

The downside is that we are unbelievers by nature, well, at least by our fallen nature. We often think of sin as acts or words contrary to the will of God. But, at the heart of these words and actions is unbelief. (Read **Matthew 15:18-20a**) because of the sin nature, we are unbelievers at the core and must be transformed into believers.

## When Thomas Saw, He Believed

Thomas had his doubts. Not only must he see Jesus, but he also said he must touch Him to believe. If he can't do that, he says he will *never* be able to believe that Jesus has risen from the dead (**John 20:25**). Yet, when Jesus appeared and invited Thomas to touch His wounds, there is no record that he did that. At Jesus' invitation, he merely answered, "*My Lord and my God!*" (**v. 28**). But Jesus said, "*Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*" (**v. 29**). Because Thomas saw the risen Christ, he believed that He was God. Claiming Him as my God shows that he had saving faith.

## How Can We Believe?

How can we be brought from unbelief to belief? We don't see Jesus physically, as His apostles did, but we do have their eye-witness testimony. Just after he records Jesus' death, John writes: *He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe* (**John 19:35**). We can trust that the writings of the apostles are true and accurate. John of Carpathus said: *Blessed are those who, when grace is withdrawn, find no consolation in themselves but only continuing tribulation and thick darkness, and yet they do not despair. Rather, strengthened by faith, they endure courageously, convinced that they do indeed see Him who is invisible* (**Texts for the Monks in India 71**).

## Word and Sacrament

We also have first-hand experience of the risen Jesus. He presents Himself to us today in Word and Sacrament. This is why we come to church, to hear the Word and receive the Sacrament of the Altar. For there is His body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine, forgiving our sins and strengthening our faith, so that we can believe in Him. See Jesus today and believe!

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*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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