

Straight Bible Talk

Manchester Church of Christ: Share Christ's Love and Share His Message

Faith and Guessing

There are two different definitions for faith that are used in the religious world. The more common definition is that faith is simple acceptance of something as true because the person wants to believe that it is true.

The other definition for faith is that it is accepting something as true based on compelling evidence. It is not a "guess" but the "assurance of things hoped for."

Recently two young men came calling at my house. Some years ago I read the Book of Mormon and was surprised by some of the things that it contained. For example, there is a prophecy that Jesus would be born in Jerusalem

I asked my visitors how it was possible that the Bible stated that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and the Book of Mormon stated that he would be born in Jerusalem. That looks like a contradiction to me!

The answer was that the Bible had contradictions as well. I asked for an example, but they did not know of any.

I was then told that if I would pray God would show me that the Book of Mormon is true. I told them that I had prayed and God had shown me it was false. (The matter of where Jesus was born was one piece of evidence that seemed important to me.) Their response was that I did not pray "hard" enough.

Can praying change facts? To accept two mutually contradictory ideas as being both true defies all logic. But for many people, faith is not a result of logic. It does not depend upon reasoning from evidence to a conclusion. Faith, to such people, is just a guess. It is confirmed by a "feeling," a

"burning in the bosom." Menopause can produce that, but a "hot flash" does not mean that what you believe is true!

We live in an age in which reason is no longer accepted in the field of religion nor in many other fields. My training was as an engineer. I have a degree from Purdue University in Mechanical Engineering. I did not get that degree by ignoring evidence and going by my feelings. Everything was based on evidence and reasoning.

We live in a world that is governed by "natural law." Those laws do not respond to our feelings. They are immutable. They do not change. When you fall off a roof, you might want to temporarily suspend the law of gravity, but it is not going to happen! You can have faith that when you jump off a cliff, you will fall, you will not rise.

There is a field of study called Christian Evidences. In this field, people examine the evidences for various ideas that are held by Christians.

For example, there are those who study the evidences that the Bible is true. Some examine ancient manuscripts to assure us that the text that is used in our Bible is accurate. Their studies indicate a probability of better than 98% that the words that we are reading in our Bibles today are the actual words that were written hundreds of years ago.

Another field of study examines the evidence that Jesus really existed. Ancient records from the Jews, Greeks and Romans are examined for references to the Jesus of the Bible. Again, there has been found substantial evidence that there was such a person.

Another field of study examines the material

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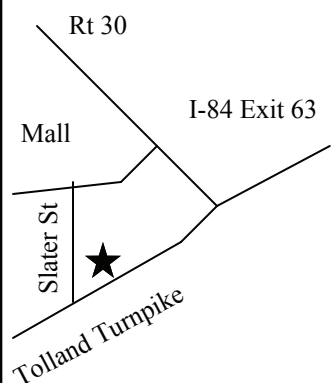
Manchester
Church of Christ

Meeting at
595 Tolland Turnpike
Sun Bible Classes—9 AM
Sun Worship—10 AM
Sun Eve Worship—6:00 PM
Wed Bible Class—7:00 PM

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 17:31

All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated.



595 Tolland Turnpike

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"A Christian Survival Manual"
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found in the Bible to determine if it measures up to the claim to have been inspired of God. In particular, the prophecies of the Bible are examined to see if they have been fulfilled. While there are some Bible prophecies that cannot be verified (particularly those relating to the second coming of Jesus) over and over again the prophecies concerning individuals, cities and nations have been found to be a true representation of what happened.

Another field of study examines the supposed contradictions in the Bible. In case after case it has been found that the contradictions were based on false assumptions made by the readers and do not represent real contradictions by the authors of the Bible

Another field of study examines the internal evidence that the Bible gives for the resurrection of Jesus. In these studies it is demonstrated conclusively that the only reasonable position that one can take is to accept as true that Jesus arose from the dead.

There are all sorts of things that people guess at and then call them matters of "faith." They are not matters of faith, but simply what someone has guessed. Others have accepted these guesses and think that they have faith.

For example, there are those who believe their babies ought to be baptized. One can search the Bible in vain for an example of such a practice. People were admonished to believe and repent before they were baptized in the Bible. There is not a single example of one too young to believe and repent being baptized by an apostle or by one who had been taught by an apostle. Baptizing babies is not a matter of faith but a matter of accepting someone's guess that God would approve such conduct.

The assumption of Mary's body into heaven is another example of people guessing. There is nothing in the Bible nor in any other document from the early church concerning the bodily assumption of Mary. Someone guessed that her body was assumed since they could not find the body. Others believe those who guessed and call it "faith."

Some people guess that sprinkling water on people is acceptable baptism. In the Bible, Jesus was baptized *in* the Jordan River. The Ethiopian is described as going down into the water and coming up out of the water. Twice Paul describes baptism as a burial. But someone guessed that a little water sprinkled was just as good and passed that information

on to others. They accepted the guess and sprinkling became a part of their "faith."

Other people guess that God is pleased with pianos, organs and bands playing music in worship. The New Testament is silent concerning such matters, but plainly declares that God's people are to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs "making melody with your heart to the Lord." Sometimes it is argued that since the Jews did this it must be all right for Christians. But the Jews did many things in worship that are no part of what the church did under the leadership of the apostles whom Jesus chose. Since such music in worship does not come from Jesus' apostles, people are just guessing that it is acceptable. Their "faith" comes from men who lived hundreds of years after the apostles of Jesus.

It really does not matter how many people guess that something is true. Facts are stubborn things. They are true whether we accept them or not. Faith comes from the Word of God that is true.

Do you have a genuine faith or are you only guessing that your religion is true? Do you really want to guess about going to heaven?