

## How Much of the Bible Can a Person *Not Believe* - and Still Be Okay?

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Assuming there is a problem between man and God, what is the “stuff” that corrects the problem? Is it good works? Is it obedience to various rituals? Is it by confessing and repenting of sins?

*“We maintain that a man is justified (made right with God) by faith ... Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness”* (Ro 3:28 and 4:3). So, what did Abraham believe? He simply believed *“what (God) had promised, He was also able to perform”* (Ro 4:21) - even though God’s declaration defied natural law ... as Sarah’s womb was long dead (Gen 18:9-15 and Ro 4:19). *“Now, not for his sake only was it written, that ‘(righteousness) was credited to him’, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him ...”* (Ro 4:21, 23-24).

So, what must one believe so as to gain right standing before the Creator? This is quite simple. One must believe His words. While the Bible is not God (any more than our words are us), these words come from within Him and, as such, are an extension of Him. That is why unbelief repels Him. *“Thou hast magnified Thy word together with all Thy Name”* (Ps 138:2). It is easier for the heavens and earth to vanish than for a single stroke of His word to fail (Mt 5:18). *“Forever, O Lord, Thy word stands in heaven”* (Ps 119:89). The Horseman (Jesus) in Revelation *“is called, ‘The Word of God’”* (Rev 19:13). But, ... this is just the beginning.

God has decided to use His Word to bring us to Himself. *“In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth ...”* (Ja 1:18). *“(F)or you have been born again ... through the living and abiding word of God”* (1Pet 1:23). He cleanses us by washing us *“with the word”* (Eph 5:26). It is also the tool for Christian growth. *“(L)ong for the pure milk of the word, in order that you may grow ...”* (1Pet 2:2). Eventually, it is *“solid food ... for the mature”* (Heb 5:13,14). God’s word is *“profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness”* (2Cor 3:16). It is *“living and active”* - and is compared to a sword, a hammer and fire (Heb 4:12 and Jer 23:29). So, how much of it can one *not believe* - and still be okay?

Our relationship to His Word determines our eternal fate.

Jesus once said, *“whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels”* (Mk 8:38). But, why any shame? If I believe the Bible is from our eternal Creator - who is incapable of error and never lies - what’s the problem? I did not write any of it. This Book was completed almost two thousand years ago. If I decide to represent it - my job is to faithfully and accurately share its contents to interested parties. What parts could possibly make me red-faced before an *“adulterous and sinful generation?”* Well, let’s start at the beginning of the Book. Is there anything there that might cause me shame?

The first three chapters of Genesis detail Creation ... and then the Fall. God spoke the heavens and earth into existence (initially from nothing) in six days. Then a Garden is described with the first man (naked), the first woman (naked), and a talking animal. Then a singular event of disobedience is recounted which is declared the genesis of all our troubles - troubles like pain, a harsh environment - you know, the bumps and potholes on life’s road. And this road proceeds to a cliff ... over which we all plummet into death. No belief problems yet, right?

Jesus and Paul referred to events in that Garden as they made arguments for marriage, divorce, death, sin, the current physical environment, and the role of women (Mt 19:4-12, Ro 5:12-19, 8:20-23, 1Tim 2:9-15). If the Creation/Fall account is symbolic, a myth, or folklore, then their points crumble. Jesus and Paul believed the Genesis account to be ... historical.

So, why do Systematic Theologians call belief in the historical accuracy of this account, "*The Naive-Literal View?*" Why not just, "*The Literal View?*" And from whence cometh the "*Age-Day Theory,*" "*Progressive Creation Theory,*" and "*Pictorial Day Theory?*" Why these systems of unbelief toward historical information? Could it be ... some are ashamed of a literal adherence to it? Granted, this Account does defy natural law, but, come to think of it ... Abraham's faith required belief against natural law, too.

So, the question remains: how much of the word of God can one *not believe* ... and still be okay? If one is red-faced over the Creation/Fall account - particularly before "*scientific experts*" of the various longevity models - well, what about other things? The Bible declares that forty days after rising from the dead, Jesus physically lifted off the ground and went into Heaven. So, ... do you believe this nature defying account - but not Genesis? What about Elijah "*being taken up*" by a chariot of fire? What about Elisha and the floating iron axe head? What about the sun standing still so Joshua could kill more people? Hundreds of Biblical accounts defy natural law. Do you believe them? Or, do you believe *some* of them - while being red-faced about others? Here is one way to "*test yourself, to see if you are in the faith*" (2Cor 13:5). Go find a scientifically informed, atheistic evolutionist and tell him/her which miraculous Biblical accounts you do believe ... and why. As they begin a belly laugh, and fall to the ground in hysterics - what do you feel inside yourself? Embarrassment? Shame?

The question remains: how much can one ... well, you know the rest of the question.

## **A Couple of Points**

First, ... for any given Biblical declaration, people line up as either a believer or unbeliever. But, it is also clear that God ultimately classifies some as "*unbelievers*" - who actually *do believe some* of the Bible. "*You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder*" (Ja 2:19). These people (and all the demons, too) believe accurately on this point ... but, are *not* okay. "*Many will say to me on (Judgment) Day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name ...'*" (Mt 7:21-23). These people even believe Jesus is "*Lord*" - and that they had served Him in this life! But, they are *not* okay. So, even an accurate faith in *some* of God's word does not result in righteousness being credited to those "*believers.*" So, how much can one *not believe* ....

Second, ... there was a time I ... was an unbeliever. I wholeheartedly believed in evolution - even taking college courses. Quite honestly, all this Biblical material ... was totally irrelevant (I detail much of this elsewhere). So, I know what it means - to *not believe*. How did this change? Well, once jogged awake, I began digging, digging, digging - weighing, weighing, weighing - and asking, asking, asking. Step by step, issue by issue, objection by objection, God eventually "*sold me*" on the validity and accuracy of *His* claims - despite current natural law. Even now, as I reflect back on this journey, I find it stunning. There was no compelling reason God had to come down to my level, dismantle my contrary beliefs, and then open my mind - so as to unashamedly embrace, and then advocate, His assertions. But, He did so anyway. To say I am indebted to Him does not begin to grasp the reality of my former plight - and rescue.

Still, at times along the way, I have struggled with some Biblical declarations. I could not *make myself* believe them ... and I could not *pretend* to believe them either. But, as unbelief is a mortal threat to my eternal well being, what could I do? Fortunately, God addresses this. After The Transfiguration, Jesus was confronted by a situation the disciples could not handle. A distraught father implored Him,

“... if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!’ Jesus responded, ‘If You can? All things are possible to him who believes.’ Immediately, the boy’s father cried out and began saying, ‘**I do believe; help me in my unbelief**’” (Mk 9:22-24). This man humbled himself ... and the Lord responded positively. The Lord has heard this again ... more than a few times ... from me.

I do not know how much one can not believe of the Word of God ... and still be okay. But, I do know this; one stands, or falls, based upon one’s belief, or unbelief, of it. Are you sure you want to stand before the Author and tell Him the Creation Account is a myth, that axe head never floated, no hand appeared and wrote on a wall ....

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