

## **The One Who Believes Has Eternal Life**

The title of this sermon is a quote from Jesus. He said, *“The one who believes has eternal life.”* (John 6:47) But what does it mean to believe? What is faith, really? Peter Pan, who said a lot of wonderful things, said, “Dreams do come true if only we wish hard enough.” Is that what Jesus was talking about – wishing hard enough? Peter Pan also said to Wendy, “Just think happy thoughts and you’ll fly!” Do you remember hearing that as a child and trying it? Did it work for you? It never worked for me. I must not be happy enough.

In the second half of John chapter 6, we find many of Jesus’ disciples leaving Him. What was that about? Had Jesus done something wrong? Had they lost their faith? Or, was it something else? The first thing that the second half of John 6 teaches us is...

### **I. Three Reasons Why People Rejected Jesus.**

In verses 41 and 42 it says: (John 6:41, 42 NIV 2011)

**At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”**

And He didn’t just say it once. Five times in this chapter, Jesus said that he “came down from heaven.” People who say that Jesus never claimed to be God, just aren’t paying attention. He said it continually, using multiple phrases. And the Jewish leaders knew exactly what He was claiming. That’s why they were grumbling! But here, then, is the first reason why they rejected Jesus as God: **they erroneously thought they knew Him.** They thought that Jesus was the naturally born son of Joseph and Mary. They assumed that he was born in Nazareth. They also thought they knew Mary and Joseph. If they had just done a little bit of research, asked some simple questions of Mary, they would’ve discovered the truth.

If they had asked Mary, she could have told them that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, not Nazareth. If they had examined the Scriptures, they would’ve discovered that the promised Messiah had to be born in Bethlehem. If they had pressed some of the people in Bethlehem, I’m sure they would’ve at least heard “stories” about angels and shepherds and Wise Men. The truth was knowable. But they made up their minds before they had examined the facts.

Do you know anyone who’s made this mistake? If you ask them what they think of Jesus, they say, “Oh, well, I believe he was a great teacher and a compassionate man, but I don’t believe he was God.” And if you ask them why they don’t believe he’s God, they’ll say, “Well, there just isn’t any evidence of that.” But is there really no or too little evidence or have they not bothered to examine the evidence?

Lee Strobel had a degree from Yale Law and was an award-winning journalist at the *Chicago Tribune*. He was not a believer in Jesus Christ, nor was he interested in becoming one UNTIL his wife became one! Suddenly, he feared that his fun, carefree, risk-taking wife was gone, only to be replaced by a religious prude who wanted to trade in their upwardly mobile lifestyle for all-night prayer vigils and volunteering in grimy soup kitchens.

Instead, what she increasingly became was more loving, more fun, and filled with integrity, personal confidence and joy. He decided to apply his skills as a legal investigative reporter to the question: who was Jesus – really? And his search did not begin with the Bible but with the questions, “Where does science point? Where does history point?” Finally, he investigated the resurrection and said, “...it became evident that everyone – even Jesus’ critics – agreed that Christ’s tomb was empty following the crucifixion...” In 1981, he wrote up the results of his two-year investigation, where he concluded “I realized it would take more faith to maintain my atheism than become a Christian.” When he walked out of the bedroom that day and told his wife, Leslie, he said she cried with joy.

Where are you today? Have you made up your mind about Jesus but never really done the research? Strobel has actually now written several books where he interviews scientists, historians, theologians about all the questions he had. Maybe you should get to know Jesus before you decide who you think He is?

The second reason these religious leaders rejected Jesus is because they looked only to human authorities for answers, rather than to God. We have record of the Jewish leaders, even the highest legal body of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, discussing, arguing and debating among themselves about the identity and the claims of Jesus. The one thing we have no record of is of these religious leaders PRAYING about who Jesus is! Doesn’t that seem strange?

But Jews in Jesus’ day, who DID call out to God, heard from God. At Jesus’ birth, Simeon and Anna were older saints who were calling out to God. It says of Simeon that:

**...He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. (Luke 2:25-26)**

And it says of Anna:

**...She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Lk. 2:37-38)**

So, Simeon and Anna, who were calling out to God in prayer, knew who Jesus was because the Holy Spirit had revealed it to them. God has promised to do the same for you. Are you aware of that? In Jer. 33:2-3 it says:

**“This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it – the LORD is his name: ‘Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.’”**

How will God reveal Himself to you? Well, it could be in any one of a number of ways. He could reveal Himself through other people’s testimony, as He did with Lee Strobel. Or He could do it through a sermon like this one. Or it could be while you’re reading the Bible. I even know of several people whom God revealed Himself to in a dream. If you call, He will answer. Have you called yet?

The third reason that people rejected Jesus in John 6 is because they resisted the draw of God. In verses 37, 44 and 45, John speaks of God the Father “drawing” people to Him. In verse 44 Jesus says:

**“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...” (John 6:44)**

Now, what exactly does this mean? Does this mean that we have no choice in the matter but it’s like a divine lottery; if our number happens to be chosen by God, then we’re

“drawn” to Him? Is that how it works? No, it doesn’t mean that at all. Verse 45 explains it. It says:

**“It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.” (John 6:45)**

So, God reveals Himself to everyone: “They will ALL be taught by God”! We all then have a choice; will we listen or tune Him out?

But you say, “Well, what does that mean, ‘They will all be taught by God’? How does that work?” Again, God’s Word explains it in Rom. 1:19, 20 where it says:

**...what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.**

“So,” you might say, “I’m supposed to know that God exists from nature? Well, I happen to believe in evolution, so how does that convince me of God?”

Have you seen the ‘creation cow’ on the internet? Let me explain. The internet site, Creation Moments, posted this photo of a cow with a perfect map of the world on its side.

[Show photo of cow with map – ‘Creation Moments.com’]

They then asked evolutionists, “If you agree that the cow’s spots are designed, (which they all did) why won’t you agree that the actual cow – which is so much more complex than the arrangement of its spots – was designed as well?” This is the argument of the apostle Paul in Romans 1, as well as the modern argument of world-class scientists such as astronomer Hugh Ross and the director of the Human Genome Project, Francis Collins, and the physicist, Paul Davies and the biologist, Michael Denton. Science is not a contradiction of Scripture. Science is a confirmation of Scripture. Scripture reveals a universe that is orderly, predictable and planned. This is exactly what Science confirms. Scripture also reveals a Designer behind the order. For those with eyes to see, Creation is often their first glimpse of God.

So, the three reasons that these first-century critics rejected Jesus were because:

1. They thought they knew Him without really examining Him.
2. They looked only to human authorities for answers, rather than asking God.
3. They resisted the draw of God Himself.

But this chapter doesn’t end on such a sour note. The last third of the chapter is Jesus telling His followers and His critics how they can overcome their doubts. Let’s look at that now as well. These verses show us...

## **II. How Anyone Can Overcome His Doubts About Jesus.**

For these first-century disciples to overcome their doubts, they needed answers to their questions. So, first, they needed to get to know the real Jesus, not their ‘rumor Jesus.’ You need to do the same thing. But you need a reputable source of information. Let me suggest Lee Strobel’s book, *A Case for Christ*. This book is 360 pages of evidence organized into three sections: Examining the Historical Record, Analyzing Jesus Himself and Researching the Resurrection. You really have not made an intelligent decision about Jesus until you’ve examined the evidence about who He really is.

Secondly, Jesus’ first-century disciples needed to talk to Jesus, ask Him their questions. Now, you may not believe that Jesus exists so you’re thinking, “Why would I talk to someone

who I don't believe exists?" You should do it because you might be wrong, and you should do it because He called you first!

It's one thing to examine evidence about somebody but it's quite another to meet him personally. You might find yourself in the same place that C. S. Lewis found himself after his several-year-long investigation of Jesus Christ. In 1929 he came to believe there was a God but not until 1931 did he believe in Jesus. It happened like this:

As I drew near the conclusion, I felt a resistance almost as strong as my previous resistance to Theism. As strong, but shorter-lived, for I understood it better... to accept the Incarnation was a further step in the same direction... I know very well when, but hardly how, the final step was taken. I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning. When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. Yet I had not exactly spent the journey in thought... It was more like when a man, after a long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake. And it was, like that moment on the top of the bus... <sup>1</sup>

In Rev. 3:20, the resurrected Jesus is speaking and He says:

**"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."**

In the end, believing in Jesus is that concrete, that personal. He knocks at your door. You open it and invite Him in. According to Jesus, it's really that simple.

The last reason for rejecting Jesus in the first century was that they resisted the draw of God. They chose to ignore the knock on their door. Verse 66 through 69 say:

**From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.**

**Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."**

How about you? Is Jesus knocking at your door right now? Oh yes, you still have some questions but right now, you agree with Peter. You believe and know that Jesus is the Holy One of God and you hear the knock at the door of your heart. Let's open that door right now, together. Let's pray:

*Jesus,*

*Thank you for coming today. Thank you for speaking by your Spirit to our spirits. Some of these friends here realize that they have known of you but they've never asked you to come into their heart, the center of their being. They want to do that now...*

[If you've never done that, just repeat these words silently as I speak them out loud]

**Jesus, today I say "Yes" to your invitation to enter my heart. I confess that I've sinned and I ask you to forgive me. "Yes," I want to be your son/daughter. "Yes," I believe you are the Son of God. "Yes," I commit my life to you. Amen.**

*Thank you Jesus, for meeting us here today and for telling us and showing us the truth!  
Amen.*

And here's the promise for you to take with you. Jesus said:

**"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life." (John 6:47)**

One last story: a dad was helping his four-year-old son learn his first Bible verse. It was John 3:16. He would say a phrase and the boy would repeat it after him. Then the dad would say a phrase but leave out one word. So, their final attempt went like this:

Dad: For God so loved the...  
Boy: World!  
Dad: That he gave his one and only...  
Boy: Son!  
Dad: That whoever...  
Boy: Believes!  
Dad: In him, shall not...  
Boy: Perish!  
Dad: but have eternal...  
Boy: FUN!  
Yeah, that's exactly what we'll get.<sup>2</sup>

Now, in each of our worship locations, your site pastor will come and offer some final words...

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1955), p. 237

<sup>2</sup> Christian Reader, "Kids of the Kingdom" 7/01/1998