

WHAT DOES BELIEF IN THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST IMPLY?

Jesus' words, which are powerful and meaningful, are yet very simple:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:16.

His preaching and that of His disciples was to impart to the hearers a special knowledge which they previously had not had. He opened to them two prospects: Belief and obedience would bring to them blessing and salvation, while failure in this would bring the sorrow of His condemnation. Until these hearers had understood and received this divinely-given message, they faced neither salvation nor condemnation, neither hope nor dread.

"Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." Psalm 49:20.

"The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead."
Proverbs 21:16.

Therefore, may we not reason that knowledge with true understanding brings the responsibility to choose?

But to return to Jesus' powerful message -- He preached the Gospel, the good news and glad tidings. This news so joyous to contemplate was about the Kingdom of God; and, in connection with that, about Himself, the Name of Jesus Christ. This kingdom is to be an actual kingdom, filling this earth. It will supplant in glory and righteousness every known kingdom and government - thus ending the corruption and grasping for power with which today's kingdoms are rife. It will bring to God's earth and to His people, peace and joy, the ultimate in justice, security, and mercy. It would be inspiring at this time to dwell further on these promised conditions, but it may be more to the point and immediately helpful to consider the change which knowledge and comprehension of God's will brings to man.

From being as irresponsible to God as even the animals in their innocence and ignorance, who live and die without perception or hope, men who understand are changed by God Himself. As they realize the hopelessness of their position and the state of sin into which all are born and labor, God commands that they repent.

"And they (the apostles) went out, and preached that men should repent." Mark 6:12.

Repentance means a change, a thinking and living differently, a newness of life. Thus, from every human who has been called to repent, the God in heaven looks for response. Will this man hear and obey? Or - will he not? Each who has had this

opportunity will be required to answer for what he has done. He must be aware of God's coming judgment, to which he is called. The time is nearing when the Lord Jesus will return to fulfill this, His Father's purpose. Those who have died through all ages will be resurrected from their sleep of death, and will be joined by those still living at the time of Jesus' return.

"... this I confess ... and have hope toward God ... that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." Acts 24:14-15.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."
II Corinthians 5:10.

And, concerning the righteousness of His judgment, the Word of God reveals:

"... as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." John 5:30.

At the judgment, the Lord Jesus will render to His righteous and faithful followers, eternal life as His saints, with glory and honor as kings and priests with Him in that everlasting kingdom.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34.

In great and dreadful contrast, the many who have not responded to His love and who have failed to honor His Word, will know utter rejection at His judgment. This will bring to them great suffering, culminating in the second death - inescapable and eternal.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
Revelation 21:7,8.

The kingdom of God on earth is to be the gracious reward for those who, in humbleness and fear, have striven to follow after the footsteps of their Lord. The establishment of this kingdom will bring to glorious fulfillment, God's promises made throughout the ages, and preserved for us in the Old and New Testaments.