

Abraham or Lot?

There are many important lessons from the life of Abraham that can be learned from the Bible. I want to consider why Abraham was a sojourner. Why did Abraham wander? Why did Abraham look for a “city” and “country” above, not below (Hebrews 11:8-16). Why did Abraham have no earthly inheritance (Acts 7:1-5).

The answer to these questions is found in the fact that Abraham accepted his place in God’s plan as a simple sojourner. Likewise, Christians are supposed to be sojourners as well (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11-12). Abraham was not attached to this world, and neither should we be. We sing, “This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through”, right?

In contrast, consider Lot, Abraham’s nephew in Genesis 13 and 19. Lot had a city, he had a house, and he “put down roots”. But, what did he get? What did he lose? He lost his wife and his daughters, and ultimately his own reputation.

Are we like Abraham, or like Lot? Where is your treasure, on earth or in heaven (Matthew 6:19ff)? What are you seeking to gain, the world or heaven (Matthew 16:26)? Where is your mind, on earthly things or things above (Colossians 3:1-4)? What do you love, the world or the Father (1 John 2:15-17)? What is the source of your wisdom, earthly or heavenly (Jas. 3:13ff)? Let’s be an Abraham and not a Lot! - *Chris Reeves*

Sentence Sermons

- The person who does as he pleases is seldom pleasing to God.
- Sometimes you have to push on the door of opportunity in order to open it.
- If you tried to do something and failed, you are far better off than if you had tried to do nothing and succeeded.
- You can't repent too soon because you do not know how soon it may be too late.

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Whosoever Believes: A Study of Faith in the New Testament

Man's Understanding of "Faith"

"Faith" is often misunderstood in the religious world today. Many people mean "faith only" when they say "faith". Many read Bible texts with "believe" (and no other actions) and conclude "faith only". However, we know from James 2:19, that what someone (like the demons) may believe alone, is not acceptable to God.

"Faith" in the NT

Because there is confusion today about what "faith" means, we want to examine briefly in this article how "faith" and "belief" are used in the New Testament.

Sometimes "faith" in the New Testament is used objectively, meaning a body of truth that is found outside of (objective) a person. In this case, "faith" often has the article "the" in front of it — "the faith". For example, we read in Acts 6:9 about some priests who were obedient to "the faith". They were obedient to the gospel truth that was preached to them. Other examples of "the faith" could be found in Galatians 1:23, Philippians 1:27, Jude 3, etc.

Sometimes "faith" in the New Testament is used subjectively, meaning the faith (belief or conviction) that is found inside of (subjective) a person. This "faith" used subjectively, can be found in one of three ways inside a person. It can be (1) a specific belief that a person has about Jesus

(John 8:24; 12:42; 1 John 5:1, 5), it can be (2) a personal scruple or conscience that a person has about a particular practice (Romans 14:1,2,22-23), or it can be (3) a comprehensive obedience to all of Jesus' words (John 3:16). Let us now examine this last way more closely.

How or why can "faith" be used broadly or comprehensively, to include all the specific actions that Jesus wants us to do to be saved? What makes this claim any different from the one who says that "faith" means "faith only"? Let us now consider four facts about the use of "faith" or "believe" in the New Testament:

First, "believe" is sometimes found by itself in contexts where obedience to other things is taught. Look at "believes" in John 3:16, but notice that one must also look to Jesus (John 3:14-18). Look at "believes" in Acts 10:43, but notice that one must also be baptized (Acts 10:44-48). Look at "believe" in Acts 16:31, but notice that one must also be baptized (Acts 16:32-34). You will find the same thing if you study the use of believe in the conversion of the Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2:37-44), the conversion of the Corinthians (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14), the conversion of the Ephesians (Acts 19:2-5), and the conversion of the Romans (Romans 10:4-21). Something else like confession, repentance, and baptism is joined to "believe" in each of these cases.

Second, "believe" refers to believing the words of Jesus and keeping (obeying) them. Man's definition of "believe" is something like, "Accept Jesus as your personal savior..."

However, Jesus' definition of believe is this: "how shall ye believe my words" (John 5:47; see also John 2:22; 3:12; 4:41, 50; 5:24, 38; 8:31; 11:48; 12:38; 14:10; 17:8). Believing Jesus' words includes accepting the need for confession (Matthew 10:32), repentance (Luke 13:5), and baptism (John 3:5; Mark 16:15-16).

Third, "believe", by nature, is active and obedient to what or who is believed. Look at the different examples of "faith" in Hebrews 11 and notice the verbs of action attached to faith: "By faith ... offered ... prepared an ark ... obeyed ... offered up Isaac ... refused ... compassed about ... etc" (Heb. 11:4ff). The truth is, "faith" obeys. Faith is active, working, and obedient (Galatians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; James 1:3; 2:14-26; Revelation 2:19).

Fourth, "believe", like other actions, can be mentioned by itself with reference to salvation, but never "_____ alone". For example, we are saved by believing the gospel, but not by believing the gospel alone (Romans 1:16). We are saved by believing in our heart, but not by believing in our heart alone (Romans 10:9-10).

Friends, "faith" and "believe", like all Bible words, must be defined in accordance with scripture. "Faith only" is not found in the New Testament, but a comprehensive, obedient faith is. Will you have that kind of obedient faith in your life that will bring you to obey Jesus? - Chris Reeves