

“THE LIFE GOD REWARDS”
Big Idea . . . Part 7: The First Key: BELIEF

INTRO: The teachings of Jesus (and Paul) indicate two keys or principles determine everything about eternity. The first is who/what we *believe*. It determines *where* we will spend eternity (destination issue). The second key is our *behavior* after salvation. It determines *how* we will spend our forever life (rewards issue). Parts 1-6 have focused on the second key.

TODAY, 1st Key/Principle – BELIEF.

BACKGROUND: Belief is common theme in the Bible, over 150 times in NT (50⁺ Xs in John). But what does it mean to believe? In NT some believed and were saved (Jn. 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9-10). BUT, some believed and were not saved (Jn. 2:23-25; 6:14-15, 66-69; 8:30, 44, 59; 12:42-43; 1 Cor. 15:1-2; Jam. 2:19). If our eternal destination is based on biblical belief, it is critical to understand what it means. Matt. 11:25-30 is an invitation from Jesus to find rest (true salvation). He explains the key elements in true belief. Too many “accept Christ” and live however they wish. Any gospel based upon grace that makes no behavioral changes is a false gospel. Too many wrongly believed you can accept Christ just as you are (which is true) and stay that way (not true). What are the key elements in biblical BELIEF? All of them together.

- I. ACCEPTANCE (AGREEMENT) OF THE FACTS OF THE GOSPEL** – We need some basic understanding of the facts of the Gospel (vv. 25, 27 “these things . . . revealed...”) God reveals by His Spirit we are lost sinners who need a Savior. We need some basic understanding of “things” like who we are (sinners) and who He is (Savior). Rom. 10:9-10 Believe in a resurrected Savior. Acceptance is more than intellectual assent, easy believism, being good, etc. It is accepting that the gospel is true.
- II. DEPENDENCE** (v. 25 “little children”) – There has to be an attitude of humility and need (Matt. 5:1-6). We are desperate realizing we can’t save ourselves. Entering this kingdom requires childlikeness (Matt. 18:1-4). I am helpless to save myself – never be good enough (=perfect). Rich Young Ruler (Mk. 10:17-22).

III. REPENTANCE from sin (v. 25, 26, 28) – not just realize my sins and broken by them, but willing to turn from them and to follow Christ. “Repent” is the first word of the Gospel (Matt. 3:2; Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 5:31; 13:3, 5; Acts 11:18; etc.) We must be willing to deal with our sins.

IV. TRUST in Christ alone (v. 28 “Come to me”). I must believe and receive and rely upon His finished work to freely give me abundant and eternal life (Jn. 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-10, 13). The next three are verifiers I’ve done the first four.

V. OBEDIENCE that is consistent and continuous (vv. 29-30 “Take my yoke upon you”) – Follow Me is His call. This demands submission and surrender. He is Lord. Belief and obedience can never be divided (Jn. 3:36; Phil. 2:12-13). Salvation based on belief produces a desire to obey. A.W. Tozer . . .

VI. PERSERVERANCE. “Learn, Take” are continuous. True belief lasts. There is an enduring quality to it. It’s called discipleship (learn-manthano) - growth in maturity to Christlikeness. True belief “abides” (Jn. 15). Biblical belief continues (Jn. 8:30-32).

VII. ASSURANCE (vv. 28-29 “I will give...your will find rest”). God gives rest (confidence, peace, assurance) to all who believe (1 Jn. 5:13).

Eph. 2:8-10 explains salvation is by grace through faith (belief), but that means nothing if we abuse grace and have a faulty definition of belief. Ex? Rich Young Ruler – He did a lot right but refused to obey.

CONC: The first key to enjoying an abundant and forever life in heaven is to believe. Sad be only a “few” (Matt. 7:13-14; Lk. 13:22ff). That belief changes not only our destination, but produces behaviors that brings great compensation and rewards. So, 2 Cor. 13:5 . . . Now truly ready to live the life God rewards!