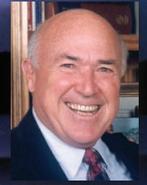


The Marvel of Unbelief



Simply Teaching the Word Simply—Pastor Chuck Smith

Pastor Chuck Smith, founder of the Calvary Chapel family of churches, went to be with the Lord on October 3, 2013.

And He [Jesus] marveled because of their unbelief. MARK 6:6

Why do people reject Jesus? What is at the root of their unbelief? Many times it is because they do not really know Him. With eternity at stake, it's so important for every person to investigate who Jesus is for themselves—to read the Gospels and learn about Jesus firsthand, rather than taking someone else's word.

UNBELIEF IN NAZARETH

Once Jesus began His public ministry, He began fulfilling Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. He healed the brokenhearted, opened the eyes of the blind, and preached the Gospel to the poor. Soon great crowds followed Him everywhere.

One day Jesus decided to visit His hometown of Nazareth again. The first time He traveled by Himself, but this time multitudes accompanied Him. Just like His first visit, Jesus attended synagogue services on the Sabbath day. He read the Scriptures and began to preach. Mark tells us that the people were astonished at His teaching and wondered how He had gained such knowledge. “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this that such mighty works are performed by His hands!” (Mark 6:2).

Astonished, the people marveled at His teaching and His works. They recognized something extraordinary about Him—and yet they did not believe.

THEY DIDN'T REALLY KNOW HIM

When the Nazarenes heard Jesus and observed what He did, they said, “Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon?” (Mark 6:3). They remembered him as a boy. Perhaps years before, they had brought Him their yokes or plows for repair or purchased tables and chairs from Him. They knew Him in His earlier years—so all His adult wisdom and miracle-working troubled them. They rejected what they saw with their own eyes.

What do you suppose accounted for their unbelief? It may be that they thought they knew Him—but they were mistaken. They did not know Him at all. Oh, they possessed a certain amount of head knowledge about Jesus. They knew He had grown up

to know Him firsthand. That supernatural meeting transformed his life completely.

What do you know about Jesus? Where did you get your information about Him? Have you read the Gospel of John prayer-

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in Nazareth as a carpenter. They knew His brothers and His sisters and His mother. Although they thought they knew Him completely, they knew Him only partially. Their unbelief stemmed from their insufficient knowledge.

How many people today have opinions of Jesus based upon insufficient knowledge? Christianity's greatest opponents are those who don't know Him. Their prejudice and unbelieving stance emerge from the disparaging remarks others have made concerning Him. Some people have never endeavored to understand Jesus for themselves.

The claims of Jesus are so radical and the consequences of unbelief so great that it would be wise to examine all of the evidence personally. Jesus said that whoever believed in Him would be saved, but whoever did not believe in Him would be condemned (John 3:18). With the stakes so high, you should make more than a cursory examination of the facts. You should study diligently to determine whether Jesus is indeed the Savior of the world. Or is He a fraud and a liar, whereby justifying your unbelief?

Before he became Paul the apostle, Saul thought he knew Jesus. He considered Jesus to be the leader of a dangerous, anti-Jewish sect that needed to be stamped out. Where did Saul develop this concept? No doubt from his sessions with the Pharisees, as he heard them express their negative opinions and their doubts. But then one day Saul had a personal encounter with Jesus and came

fully, saying; “Lord, if this is a true record, if You are really the Son of God, then reveal Yourself to me”? Have you read it with an open heart, or is your mind prejudiced against Him?

TRANSFORMED LIVES

In our time and culture, hundreds of thousands of lives have been radically transformed by the power of Jesus Christ. Through faith in Him, people who once were hopeless alcoholics, written off by the world, are now whole, healed, and living productive lives. Others, strung out on drugs, met Jesus and had the same radical transformation as Paul. Today they're joyfully serving the Lord. Many felt so miserable they thought of suicide, but now their lives are full and rich as they walk with Jesus in newness of life. With the testimony of so many transformed lives—not to mention the hundreds of thousands who have gone before us and left their own stories to prove the power of Jesus—how is it that so many refuse to believe?

Many men and women think they know Jesus; however, their information is based upon false witnesses, lies, and gossip. They've never looked at the evidence for themselves. Yet they've formed opinions that keep them from all the good things Jesus wants to do for them and in them. They miss out on all of this richness simply because of the folly of ignorance and unbelief. 

This article was edited by permission and taken from the book Faith by the late Pastor Chuck Smith of CC Costa Mesa, CA.