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People Believe the Strangest Things

Mark 6:14-29

People believe the strangest things. People believe some strange things about past events and about present events. People believe some strange things about other people in the past and about people who are alive today. Social media has circulated and multiplied many unbelievable things about people and events that some people really believe are true. They make others wonder if what they say is true. How are we to know? When you think about religions, they can teach a lot of strange things and people believe them because that is what people are taught as a child. As adults, these people stake **their lives and their eternities** on these religious teachings. When I think about Christianity, we believe some strange things too. To us who have been taught about the rapture, it sounds logical, but sharing this truth with other people who have never heard of the rapture, it is strange. The resurrection of the body was a strange teaching at first (Acts 17:18-20). Paul wrote a long chapter (15:1-58) in his first letter to the Corinthians explaining the resurrection of the body. Still today, many people think that the resurrection of the body is a strange teaching. To some people the virgin birth is a strange teaching. Then we have Jesus Himself. Lots of people believe some strange things about Jesus. Your belief about Jesus is the one belief that really matters. You can believe some strange things if you want to about past events and people today, but if you do not believe correctly who Jesus is, who He claimed to be, Jesus said, *“you will die in your sins”* (John 8:24) Even this teaching may sound strange to some people.

While Jesus was in the treasury area of the temple courtyard (John 8:20), He told the Pharisees *“I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.”* (John 8:21). Those Jews seeking Jesus were seeking to kill Him. That being the case, they would die in their sins and not go to heaven where Jesus was going after His sacrifice. *“So the Jews said, ‘Will He kill Himself, because He says, ‘Where I go you cannot come?’”* (8:22). These Jews believed that if you killed yourself, you could not go to heaven. They thought, from Jesus’ statement, *“Where I go you cannot come,”* that He was going to kill Himself and they would not be going to hell with Him. *“And He said to them, ‘You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.’”* (8:23). These Jews were seeking the things of the world. They did not believe who Jesus claimed to be. They were ignorant of spiritual matters. *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am, you will die in your sins”* (8:24). Here is your reality check. Do you believe who Jesus claims to be? He claims to be God. People think this is a strange teaching, yet your answer determines your eternity.

Before I became a believer in Jesus, I thought that it was strange to believe that someone 2,000 years ago could die for my sins that I committed today. It did not make sense. It seemed too difficult to believe. Yet this is what God reveals to be true by His words and His actions. *“God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). I have learned to believe what God reveals in His word is true no matter how strange it sounds. Some people may think it strange to **become a member of a church**. I think that this is what God expects every Christian to do when they truly believe in Jesus. We join the body of Christ. We are to be committed to that body, His body. As a husband and wife are joined together in marriage and committed to each other so the Christian is joined by membership with the body of Christ, which is the church (a local church) and committed to that body and to Christ Himself, the head of the body. Paul called this a great mystery (Ephesians 5:30-32). To attend a church on a regular basis without having joined through membership is like a man and woman living together without being married. It is not God’s intention. Also, for a Christian to join a church and then not be committed, involved and attend is like a husband and wife getting married and not doing anything together, or doing very little together.

So, what did people believe about Jesus in our scripture today that is strange?

Mark 5:14 *“Now King Herod heard of Him, for His name had become well known. And he said, ‘John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.’”* This is a strange belief. King Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of Galilee. The fame of Jesus’ miracles and His teachings had spread across all of Galilee. Now it had come into the realm of the local government. King Herod decided to believe that Jesus really was not Jesus or who He claimed to be. Instead, he believed Jesus was really John the Baptist risen from the dead. Some people think that King Herod thought this way because Jesus and John the Baptist looked alike, since they were related (Luke 1:36). Just one problem. At this point, King Herod had never seen or met Jesus (23:8). He would not know what Jesus looked like. Some people think, and maybe King Herod did too that dead people can empower the living to do miracles. The problem with this thinking is first, Jesus had done many miracles before John the Baptist was killed. How did Jesus do those miracles? Second, John the Baptist never did any miracles while he was alive. Why would he do them only after he died? No matter the problems, King Herod really believed, *“This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!”* (5:16). **It was fear that motivated** King Herod to believe something that was not true. Fear and hatred motivate lots of people to believe lies. People believe the strangest things.

Verse 15 “*Others said, ‘It is Elijah.’ And others said, ‘It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.’*” Some people thought Jesus was Elijah. The Jews have a prophecy, “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD*” (Malachi 4:5). The Jews did not have the New Testament to help them know that this prophecy referred to John the Baptist (Luke 1:17). Why would the Jews think that Jesus is Elijah anyway? Probably because Elijah did not die but was taken up by a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11). Some Jews believe Elijah will physically return. There is a big problem with this idea. We know from our New Testament teaching “*that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 15:50). In order to go to heaven, we have to be changed (15:51). Elijah had to be changed too. Elijah just got a **personal rapture**. Some people believe that Jesus is Elijah because during Elijah’s ministry, he did miracles. God used him to raise a widow’s son back to life (1 Kings 17:20-24). When Elijah called out to God to send fire from heaven to burn up his sacrifice that he drenched with water, God answered his prayer with fire. “*The fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench*” (18:38). Because of this action, the nation of Israel turned from their idol worship to follow the Living God. Likewise, Jesus was calling people to repent and follow the Living God. Is Jesus Elijah? No! Elijah was just a man. Jesus is 100% man. He is also 100% God. Now, that is a strange belief, yet it is true because the Bible reveals this truth (John 1:1-5, 14). Again, it is eternally important that we believe correctly who Jesus is. Jesus said, “*For if you do not believe that I am, you will die in your sins*” (John 8:24). This may be strange, yet it is true!

Is Jesus just the prophet or like a prophet? Some Jews believed that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15, “*The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.*” (Also 18:18). **Jesus is this Prophet** like Moses who will lead His people into His promised land, heaven. Jesus is more than just a Prophet though. He is also our **High Priest** (Hebrews 7:22-28 / 9:11) and our **King** (John 18:33-38). Jesus is God. He said, “*I am telling you the truth, before Abraham was, I AM!*” (John 8:58). We need to believe all that Jesus claimed. He is God, the Son. Not only are we to believe who He is, we are to believe all that He teaches. Our belief in Him needs to change our lives and our morality. Jesus said, “*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him*” (John 14:23). At this point in Jesus’ ministry, it is interesting that many Jews believed these false ideas of Jesus, that He was Elijah, or a prophet risen from the dead, that He is John the Baptist risen from the dead. Then when Jesus really does rise from the dead after being crucified, the Jews would not believe it. People believe a lot of strange things about Jesus that are false and do not believe what is actually true about Jesus.

Another proof that Jesus is God is seen by where Jesus gets His power. Herod Antipas believed that Jesus got His powers from beyond this earthly realm. He thought that since John the Baptist died and had risen, John could lay hold of some special powers. Herod thought these powers were at work in Jesus. Again, people do believe some strange things especially about people, or family members who have died. I have not died yet so I do not know what it is like exactly. But I do not think that the powers King Herod believed in really exist. Herod just imagined them. He had to come up with some reason to explain where Jesus got His powers. No mere man could do what people were reporting Jesus was doing. That should have been their clue that Jesus was more than human. Where did Jesus get His power from? His power came from Himself because He is God. Remember the woman who had a flow of blood for 12 years? (Mark 5:25). She believed that if she touched the clothes of Jesus she would be saved from her illness (5:28). After she touched Jesus, she felt in her body that she was healed (5:29). Jesus immediately knew that “*power had gone out of Him*” (5:30). It was His power, the power of God. Luke records that a great crowd of people came to Jesus. “*The whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all*” (Luke 6:19). Jesus is all powerful. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him (Colossians 2:9).

People do believe the strangest things. How we believe matters. We need to believe the truth. We need to believe the truth about Jesus. He is God. He has the power to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6). He has the power to change our lives. His divine power with the knowledge of life and godliness has been given to all who faithfully believe and follow Him (2 Peter 1:3). Don't get caught up in believing the strange things the world teaches about Jesus. Believe what Jesus reveals about Himself and what the Bible reveals about Jesus. No matter how strange they seem, these are the truth.

Questions to ask yourself: Do you believe Jesus is God? Do you believe He died for you so all your sins can be forgiven? Do you believe He can change your life? Will you trust Him, study His word and follow Him faithfully?

Actions to take: Pray and discover what it means to be a member of the body of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-32). Join a local church and invest your life into that body just as a husband and wife invest their lives together.

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