



TRUE TRUTH and Why It Matters—“A Word on Beliefs” Part 2

Truth is central to the Christian religion as noted in Part 1 of this series. And yet before we consider any question(s) regarding truth, it seems appropriate to consider what a belief is. We all have beliefs, they govern our lives and ironically we rarely take the time to consider what we mean by the term *belief*. So let's reflect on this a bit.

Truth and beliefs are not the same. I may believe something to be actually true, but in fact it's false, not true. Again, I may think something is false—not true, and thus not believe in it—but it is true. So at times we believe things that are false and refuse to believe what is true and vice versa.

DO I HAVE TO BELIEVE ANYTHING AT ALL?

It should be self-evident that part of being human is our thought life, which includes beliefs. According to Webster's Dictionaryⁱ a belief is a “*state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing...*” This is a good concise definition. Another definition is that a belief is: *a conviction that something is real or true, to give intellectual assent to an idea*. Further stating the matter: *A belief may stem from an immediate non-reasoned acceptance of an idea (i.e., a hunch, a feeling) or from a deliberately thought-out argument.*ⁱⁱ

So our minds are engaged in the habit of trusting in a person or thing/event we hold to be actually true. This is accompanied by conviction and given intellectual assent. Sometimes our beliefs are held without any reason and other times from deliberate argumentation.

ARE BELIEFS UNAVOIDABLE?

I have not met a person who does not have beliefs, even children. It seems that being human and having beliefs are like water and wetness—where one is, the other is also.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is an actual historical person who was born, lived a perfect holy life, died as a substitute for their sins, rose again on the third day conquering the grave, will return to judge the living and the dead, and so, they bend their knee to him as savior and master in light of that belief. But is that belief *true*? Not if Jesus of Nazareth never existed. If that is the case, this would then indict the Bible of being full of mere fables, not reality.

This would mean that Christians for the past two thousand years have believed a *lie*. Regardless of our beliefs—and we all have them—we don't hold on to them if we think they are false. But do our beliefs differ in any significant manner?

ARE ALL BELIEFS CREATED EQUAL?

In the land of the free and the home of the brave, “equality” has come to trump truth especially when it comes to religious truth claims. The question still remains: do some beliefs make more sense or have greater explanatory power than others? Do certain religious beliefs comport to the way the world really is over others or do all religions (i.e., worldviews) actually teach the same essential message? Before answering these questions we must first answer this one, “Is there such a thing as truth and can we know it?” This will be covered in Part 3 of *True Truth and Why it Matters*.

ⁱ Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, © 1971 by G & C. Merriam Co

ⁱⁱ Angeles, Peter A., *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edition, p.31, © 1992 by Peter A. Angeles