

IT MATTERS WHAT WE BELIEVE

We have often heard it said that it does not matter what anyone believes about the Bible, just so long as they are sincere. I marvel at such thinking, not only at how far removed it is from common sense and reason, but also at how contradictory it is to the Scriptures. It is indeed strange that anyone would conclude that believing error and falsehood is just as good, and just as acceptable in God's sight, as believing the truth. Christ asserted that "the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Free from what? Well, primarily, free from the horrible bondage of error. There are multitudes today who are captives to the blinding, blunting and distressing influence of false teachings that deprive them of the joys and comforts that could otherwise be theirs. Yes indeed, it matters *greatly* what we believe and why we believe it, just as it matters greatly what we *do* and why we do it.

Christ certainly never even hinted that what people believe is all right with Him, just so long as they are sincere in it. He clearly declared that in order to be a "true worshiper" it is necessary to worship God "in spirit and in truth." (See John 4:23-24). Very obviously, then, those who worship Him in a formal, nominal, outward and fleshly way, who believe false doctrines and render only lip-service, are worshipping Him in

vain (Matt. 15:8-9). We will either worship the Lord in the way He has prescribed, or we will not render a worship that He will accept or acknowledge. It's just that simple.

The apostle Paul, writing under divine inspiration, made it as clear as the noonday sun that what we believe is vitally important when he declared, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And this was so essential a point that he repeated it in the very next verse. "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8-9). Our happiness and well-being while we live here in this world is greatly determined by what we believe. If we believe error, being sincere in it will not keep us from being wrong, and neither will it prevent us from suffering the repercussions of being wrong.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine. "Continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself, and them that hear thee." If it did not matter what we believed, why would it matter whose doctrine we continued in?

—Elder Ralph Harris

