

## Message #178 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

*"What Can I Believe?"*

With Randy Smith

(269) 763-2114

**Preparation Ministries, Inc**

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076

[preparationministries@gmail.com](mailto:preparationministries@gmail.com)

*(Please feel free to call, write, or send e-mails)*

Web Site: <http://www.preparationministries.net>

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to share some questions that I have been asked, and give some answers that I feel are appropriate. You may not agree with all of my views, but hopefully our goals are the same: We all want the truth.

The first question is: Which religion is the right one? It's an interesting and common question. And here's my answer.

I was brought up Christian, but as a Seventh Day Adventist. I was taught that the Adventist religion was the only true religion. When I got older, and finally came to that point in my life where I questioned things, I finally made a commitment to God one day. I said, "O.K., God, it's you and me. I'm sick to death of everyone telling me they have the right stuff. From now on it's you and me. I'm not taking anyone else's word for anything anymore. You want me to serve you, than you show me your truth. I don't care what it is; you show me the truth, and I'll accept it. I don't care what you want me to be. I'll be Adventist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Catholic, Buddhist or Hindu. Anything! Only I want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Well, I wasn't real good at hearing God back then, but I felt that God replied, "Well! It's about time!"

And since then He has been faithful, and I feel He has shown me a great deal of truth. It doesn't always line up with what everyone else thinks, but I know He speaks to me, and I try to listen and obey as well as I can. You see, it isn't about religion, it's about having a personal relationship with Jesus. It's the only thing that counts. If you can't have a good relationship with Jesus, what makes you think a religion is

going to give you any satisfaction? The church you attend has to be a church that points you directly to loving Jesus Christ and not loving the world. And it is the Holy Spirit that has to direct you to the church he wants you to attend. If it isn't God directing you where to go, you're just wasting your time. Let God show you where to attend, and then let God teach you what he wants to teach you while you're there.

And oh yes, don't make the mistake into thinking you have to attend that same church forever. Don't be a church hopper, but by all means let God move you to another church when he thinks you're ready for it. Real learning comes a step at a time, not by staying in a rut for the rest of your life. You may attend just one church all your life, but let God be the one that makes that decision for you.

O.K. The next question is: "Do religious beliefs change, or do they always stay the same?"

Well, this is a two part answer. First, your basic belief in Jesus Christ as your Savior will never change. However, for a Christian, change is an every day occurrence as you grow in Christ through his word and by experiences. God always stays the same, but your understanding of the nitty gritty constantly evolves into a much clearer perspective.

Alright, next question: Do you really believe in God, and if so, why do you believe?

And the answer is, do I believe in God? Absolutely! I certainly do. When I was about 25 years old, give or take a little, I went through a time of questioning whether or not God really did exist. I had been searching for the truth, and had decided that I couldn't really believe anything about God if I didn't believe He even truly existed. One day I was reading a scientific novel. I used to love sci-fi, not mysterious junk about wizards and powers, but space travel stuff. I can't really remember exactly what it was that revealed God to me, but right in the middle of this book about galaxies and space travel and planets, etc., I suddenly stopped short with the realization that God was indeed real, and the facts of the universe and it's workings and ways revealed this to me in a way I had never seen before.

Now, I hadn't said, "God, reveal yourself to me." I had only questioned it sincerely in my mind. But God showed me something special about this. First, it wasn't me that figured it out. I wasn't reading facts, but was reading sci-fi. God had revealed Himself. I couldn't explain it to anyone else, but all of a sudden I knew without a doubt that God was real, and that question had been taken care of. The only thing I had done, of myself, was to have a sincere question as to the existence of God. Since that time, whenever anyone asks me, "how do I know God exists," I tell them, "that's easy. Just ask Him. If he's really there, and He wants you to know it, He'll reveal himself to you. If he doesn't reveal himself to you, then He isn't there.

Now, that might seem like a strange comment, but think about it. You can't discover God if he has hidden himself from you. He will only let you know if he wants to let you know. The real key here is if he wants to reveal himself to you. If someone is just being flippant, not really caring, then I doubt God would reveal himself to that individual. But if you really wants to know the TRUTH, God is willing and ready to start the relationship.

Now, another part of this question is: Do I think there might possibly be a chance that God doesn't exist?

So, here's my answer to that question. If I thought it might just be a teensy weensy bit possible in any microscopic way that God might not exist, then I wouldn't be able to say, "I know God exists." I might be able to say, "I think God exists, but not be able to say I know he exists.

But you see, I don't worship a God who I think exists. And furthermore, I wouldn't even worship a God who I only think exists. When I worship God, I really do mean I worship him. I'm his. I'm every bit his. I don't hold anything back at all. My allegiance is complete. My God is so big, and I am so sure that he is everything he says he is, I have given myself fully to him. I am his. I commit myself to him fully, not just partially. In my opinion, any god that you can't give yourself completely to is not worth fifty cents. After all, what's a God for anyway, just to give yourself to him when it's convenient? My God is so great, and so awesome, I don't want anything but total surrender to him. But then, that's because I've found beyond a shadow of a doubt that he really is real, and that he also is exactly what he says he is. Therefore, if I love him so much that I will give my whole life to him, my whole allegiance to him, it is because I've found he gives himself wholly to me just as much. I give my self to him, and he gives himself to me. Now that's what I consider a good relationship. Husbands and wives should try living in that kind of relationship. There would be a lot fewer divorces.

Now, next question. "What is an Agnostic? Not an atheist, but an agnostic?"

O.K. Agnostic is from the Greek word *agnostos*, meaning ignorant. An agnostic is a person who believes God is not known, and probably cannot be known.

Now, actually, an agnostic is correct in one sense. By this I mean, they don't know God. How could they unless God revealed himself to them? And secondly, they have to believe he probably can't be known. How could they even think God could be known if they don't know him themselves? That would be pretty stupid to think something is true without knowing it to be true? That's an absolute impossibility!!! There has to some beginning for man, some starting place.

And incidently, agnosticism is the place everyone starts from until God reveals himself to them. Of course, there's probably lots of people out there who say they believe that God exists, and haven't really had it revealed to them yet. There are both sides of the spectrum. I guess in some cases, ignorance is bliss???

And one more thing along this line. If a person makes the statement that God absolutely *does not exist*, then there's a real problem in that person. To make such a bold statement while standing on the threshold of the universe, before even getting past our own solar system would be the height of ignorance for sure. How is it possible to believe God doesn't exist when you have never set foot off of planet earth? Talk about being a stupid. Duh!!!!

O.K. the next question is, "What is Passive Anarchism?" Well, the best perspective I can give of Passive Anarchism is a social system in which people live without any specific rule or authority. That means that every man does what he thinks is right in his own mind.

To break this concept down, anarchy, means the absence of law, or absence of rule. The absence of order. The word, passive, means you let it come to you without trying to control it. Personally, I'd hate to live in a state of existence where I was not under the control of power. However, I don't mean just any power, but I want to be controlled by the very highest power. In this way I can be absolutely sure of living forever without some puny usurper of power coming along and messing up my life. You see, I want life, and I want it forever. And I want eternal life in the happiest way possible. Therefore, I want God to be my absolute power because through him I can be absolutely sure I will live happily every after. I can be absolutely sure that no one else can mess up my life, or take my happiness away from me.

Therefore, I love to be controlled, but, controlled by God. It is my absolute pleasure to live under his law and order. I am safe that way. I can have total confidence in my future that way. Therefore, I look forward to obeying God in anything he wants because he is guarantee of my future. Am I passive? Not in the least. I will fight tooth and nail to keep Jesus Christ for myself. No, not with earthly weapons, but with the spiritual weapons God has given us.

Alright, let's go to the next question. "Is truth only truth depending on how it's interpreted?" And the answer is a definite, NO! Truth is truth, whether you understand it or not. That's because God is truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." You see, you might be ignorant of the truth, but Jesus still exists. You can misinterpret who and what Jesus is, but he still remains the truth. Actually, I think real truth is that which remains after you take away the fuzzies. The real knack of understanding truth is to be able to **see** past the fuzzies! Not everybody can. And that's because not everybody *truly* wants to get down to the actual truth. Some people like to be ignorant. They don't like facing reality. They like to live in a make-believe world. "Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream." Sheesh! These people need to get a life before it's too late!

Now here's the next question. "In marriage, it is best to know all the facts about a person before making a decision of whom to marry, and in the same sense, wouldn't it be better to know all the facts about God before settling on which religion is the best one?"

And my answer is, well, it certainly is nice to make a choice based on absolute knowledge. And it is certainly wise to realize the need to be knowledgeable when making a decision that will affect your whole life. And even more wise to realize that you need a lot of knowledge to make a decision that will affect your whole eternal existence.

However, the problem arises that we can't make a systematic study of who and what God is in order to make a decision. We humans could not possibly do that in a billion years. What we do need is to be totally sure who and what God is, but we need to come to this absolute knowledge not by systematic study, but by the faith that God puts in us. You see, in 1 Corinthians 1:21 it tells us that God has determined to save those people who believe by faith, and faith that comes just by the "foolishness of preaching." Think of it. You couldn't know God by studying about God for a billion years, but you can absolutely know God just by hearing about him. And that's because God reveals himself to you. You know him, absolutely know him, just because he reveals himself to you and not because you thought about it for a hundred million years. We are saved by faith, not by sight. We are saved, not by logical exploration, but by hearing the word of God and believing it. I personally know God, and I am saved by Jesus Christ, not because I worked out the mathematical conclusions, but because I came to know him by faith. God revealed himself, therefore I know him. And if you really want to know him, then you're going to have to really and truly ask him to reveal himself to you. However, you better be ready to accept him when he does reveal himself, or you probably won't get any response to your request at all.

Now here's another side of this question, and also in reference to some of the former questions. If you ever do choose a religion, it will have to be a religion that has some form of power in it which causes you to be obedient to that *form*. If God exists, which you have to find out before you can serve him, then he will determine which *religion* is the "right" one. He actually only has one religion. Some people insist he has many ways. That's inconceivable in my mind. If you have a will, and someone wants to do it another way, then they have not actually done your will. If you will that something be, and it exists in any other way than the way you desire it, that you will it to be, then it isn't your will. If it isn't exactly

what you will something to be, then you could only say it is *similar* to your will. It might be *permissive* will, but not *your actual will*.

God also has a will. His will is to be known and obeyed. It's not a religion. It isn't a religion that is important, but coming to know God and becoming obedient to his will is what's important. Humans might try to create a religiosity that is similar to God's will, something that works for them, but they can never please God completely unless they conform perfectly to his will, to his desire. To say there are many forms of religion is true, but there are not many forms of true religion. But God's true desire is only HIS true desire if it conforms perfectly to what HE wants. Any deviation from God's true will is not really God's will. It may be similar, and it may look good from the outside, but it will not be perfectly the same. If we are to truly serve God in the way he wants us to, we can only do that by coming to know his will, and then doing it. Only he can show us what he wants. That means we have to have a very close relationship with him in order to know what his will is. Of course, that's the best part about God; knowing him.

God wants what he wants. Not something similar. If you truly find God, if he reveals himself to you, he will also reveal his desire for you in how he wants you to conform to his will. That means he will tell you how he wants you to worship him. He will tell you how he wants you to serve him, how he wants you to demonstrate your allegiance to him. Then, when you conform to his will, he's your God, and you can expect to be empowered by him because you belong to him and you please him. If you don't conform to his desire, you will not please him as much, and maybe not at all, even though you think you are doing a *good job of religion??* You can't expect God to pour out goodness to you if he is not pleased with how you obey him.

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So, here's one more question I have been asked. It's an interesting one. The question is, "The Bible says that we are predestinated. But it also says we have to make a choice to accept Jesus as Savior. Which is it? Predestination or Free Will?"

And the answer is this way. It is both. We are predestinated according to God's determination, for we are the elect of God. This means we have been elected by him to be sons of God. However, God still holds us responsible for the choices we make. Many people think it can't be both ways. But you see, from a human standpoint it certainly is impossible to be predestinated and at the same time to have the free will to choose or not to choose God. But here again, this is from a humanistic narrow point of view. For God is not locked in to a human view, but he is God. He can have it both ways. And basically that's the problem with trying to figure out God from a scientific perspective. God isn't understood from the puny brains of scientists. He is understood by those who believe him when he reveals himself to them. God is able to operate in "realms" that we can't even conceive of. How could we? We're still trying to figure out how time works.

We have to be careful that our robot mentality does not try to determine the extent of our creator's mentality. I think the single biggest flaw in science is trying to prove that God can't do something by using the same physical laws of the universe that God has locked humans into. Personally, I think it is a wise man who uses science to prove what God CAN do, rather than trying to prove what God CAN'T do. If a person can't conceive of something, it doesn't mean that God can't conceive of it.

You know, most scientists try to insinuate that people who believe in God are deceived. But think about it. These same scientists never consider that they themselves might actually be *the students of deception*.

The thing is, I believe in God. Not only do I believe he exists, but I believe IN him. I trust in him. I set my whole eternal future on him. Not because I hope he exists, but because I KNOW he exists. I also know that he is omnipotent. He is all powerful. If I didn't know that, I wouldn't serve him. I can only serve the biggest, greatest, most magnificent entity that ever did or ever will exist, and then only if I like what he is and what he stands for. Life is too important for me to give myself to someone for eternity that I would hate to live with for even an earthly lifetime.

You know, many people, including Christians, get excited about movie actors or actresses, or maybe football or baseball players. Not me. They can all play the little games of glory all they want. I don't need to glorify someone who is not that much different than me. Bowing down to an 'idol' has never had that much appeal for me. Me, I want the best, because I'm the most important person in my quest for what is best for ME. I asked God to reveal himself to me. He did! Now I serve him gladly, and not just a little. I don't believe in fiddling my life away. It's too important. Eternity is at stake. The bottom line? I am His, and He is mine. I plan to keep it that way.