

DO YOU YET BELIEVE NOT FOR JOY?

I think you'd agree that **Easter and Christmas** have a number of things in common. Here are three:

- 1) They are both **Christian holidays** celebrated throughout **the world**—not just in the United States.
- 2) They have **both been “commercialized”** to the point that many people **are clueless** regarding the **Biblical reason** for the holiday.
- 3) And even for those that are familiar with the **Biblical reason** for the holiday, they really only grasp **part of the significance** of what actually took place. I touched on this last week when we were looking at those who were witnessing the **crucifixion**. They **saw** what was happening—but didn't really **fully comprehend** what they **were seeing!**

And just as that was true regarding the **crucifixion** of Jesus, it is also true regarding the **resurrection** of Jesus! And—once again—**Jesus' very own disciples** were ones that had difficulty **understanding**—and **believing**—what it was they were seeing!

Please take your Bibles and turn to Luke 24; follow along as I read verses 36-43. As you probably already realized from the title of the message, the thought we are going to be focusing on comes from verse 41: “And while they yet believed not for joy...” But we aren't going to just look at the **disciples** and their refusal to believe—we need to apply it to ourselves! And so the question we are going to consider is this:

Do You Yet Believe Not for Joy?

Notice again what it says in verse 41: “And while they yet believed not for joy...”

First, we need to look at... **1. An explanation of “yet believed not for joy”**

The key—in my mind—to understanding this phrase is the meaning of the little word **“for.”** The Greek word that the preposition “for” comes from occurs **650** times in the Greek NT—and has roughly **twelve** different meanings! That's actually true of several prepositions in Greek!

Without getting too technical, here is the way **many** translations—and **most commentaries**—explain the verse: “They”—meaning the disciples—“yet believed not **because of their joy...**” In other words, because it was **too good to be true**, they refused to believe it! **John MacArthur** put it like this: “It seemed too good to be real, and they were torn between hope and skepticism, just like those praying for Peter's release from prison would later be (Acts 12:12-16).” (Precept Austin, Luke 24:41)

But the Greek word that **“for”** comes from also means **“with”**—and that I believe is the meaning the fits best here. The verse then, would read, “And while they yet believed not **with joy...**” In other words, they “kinda/sorta” believed—but not the kind of belief that **resulted in joy!** So why am I willing to go “against the grain,” so to speak, and **disagree** with the majority of commentators? Because as we look at other references regarding the mind-set of the disciples at this time, we **see very little joy!**

Next, let's consider... **2. An examination of those who “believed not for joy”**

So who are these that believed not **with joy?** **The disciples**, right? How do we know? Look at vs 33: “And they” [the two men that met Jesus on the road to Emmaus] “rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and **found the eleven** gathered together, and them that were with them...”

Why is it significant that **the disciples** were the ones who **believed not** with joy? Because of all the things that they had **seen and heard!** And because of that—**humanly speaking**—they should have been **the first group** to believe **with joy!**

A. What the disciples had seen

--They saw **5000** men—besides women and children—fed with 5 loaves and 2 little fish—with **12** baskets full of leftovers (Mt 14:15-21). On another occasion, they saw **4000** men—besides women and children—fed with 7 loaves and a few fish—this time with **7** baskets full of leftovers (Mt 15:32-39).

--They saw Jesus walking on the water and stilling the waves (Mt 14:23-33).

--They saw the lame made to walk, the blind made to see, and the deaf made to hear.

--They saw lepers cleansed, and the sick healed, and demons cast out.

--On top of that, they saw **Jesus bring back to life** three people that were dead: the widow of Nain's son (Lk 7:11-17), Jairus' daughter (Lk 8:41-56), and Lazarus (John 11:1-44).

These were the ones of whom it was said, "...while they yet believed not with joy..."

B. What the disciples had heard

Did Jesus tell His disciples about His upcoming death—and resurrection? He sure did—and **multiple** times! In fact, in the book of **Matthew** we read of **five different** occasions where Jesus told them He would **be killed—but would rise again** (Mt 16:21; 17:9, 22-23; 20:18-19; 26:32).

In the book of **John**, Jesus tells them specifically **how** He would be killed: by **being lifted up**—meaning **crucified** (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33)! And **in Mark**, we have recorded some of the details Jesus told them about how **He would be treated!** **Mark 10:33-34** "...Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall **condemn** Him to death, and shall **deliver** Him to the Gentiles: ³⁴ And they shall **mock** Him, and shall **scourge** Him, and shall **spit** upon Him, and shall **kill** Him: and the third day He **shall rise again.**"

And if this wasn't enough, Jesus warned them—in great detail—about the **emotional roller coaster** they would be on while all this was taking place! We see that in John 16; let's turn there.

John 16 is part of the Upper Room discourse where Jesus gives the disciples some specific instructions that are not given in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Because this account is from a different **location**—and **situation**—than any of the **five** accounts in Matthew, this is the **sixth different** time that Jesus told them He would rise again! Please follow along as I read verses 16-19.

Got the picture, right? Jesus told His disciples that He was "leaving" for a while—but will then be coming back! They were obviously confused about what He said and were talking among themselves, but Jesus knew what they were saying and thinking.

--**Now vs 20.** "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament..." In other words, 'You will **be saddened** when I go!' "...but the world **shall rejoice.**" And then He adds, "Ye shall be sorrowful, but your **sorrow shall be turned into joy.**" 'Yes, you will have sorrow—but it won't last! It will be replaced with joy!'

--**In vs 21,** He gives the example of what a woman goes through during "travail"—meaning childbirth—but how that anguish is forgotten once she holds that precious child she has been carrying for 9 months.

--**Now vs 22.** "And ye now therefore have sorrow..." Why? Because Jesus would be dying!

--"but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice..." And as if that isn't enough, He adds that the joy they will have at that point **cannot be taken away** from them by men!

--To recap, Jesus tells them they are going to have sorrow in the near future—but He also tells them it will **be temporary**—and **replaced with** a joy that no one would be able to take from them! So they should have been **prepared to believe**—and been confidently trusting God during their **temporary sorrow** because of what Jesus told them. But that wasn't their mindset, was it? Instead, they were fearful and doubtful!

So **who** were the ones that believed not for joy when they saw the resurrected Jesus? The ones who saw Jesus **bring dead people back to life**—and the ones who were told by Jesus **how** He would die...and **where** He would die...and how He would **be treated**...and how **they would feel** when all this was happening—but that it was all **only temporary because He would rise again!**

Please turn back to Luke 24. We've looked at an **explanation** of what it means to "believe not for joy"—and an **examination** of those who didn't—at first—believe for joy. Did the disciples **remain** in the state of "believing not for joy?"

No; they did not!

--In vs 36, Jesus appears to them.

--In vs 38, He asks them why they are so fearful and doubtful.

--In vs 39-40, He shews them the wounds in His hands and feet.

--And in vs 41-43, He **asks** for something to eat—then **eats it** in front of them to show them He is not a mirage or a ghost!

--On top of that, notice **Acts 1:3** “To whom [the disciples] also He shewed Himself alive after His passion [suffering] **by many infallible proofs**, being **seen of them forty days**, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:”

--The result? Notice what it says in vs 50-53. So obviously their “believing not with joy” turned into “believing with **great joy!**”

Not only that, but also in the book of Acts we see that these **once-skeptical doubters** of the resurrection become the fiercest **defenders and proclaimers of the resurrection!**

But they **should have been** the ones to do that, right? **They spent 3-1/2 years with Him** before He was crucified and **saw miracle after miracle**—and heard sermon after sermon—during that time. And after He rose again, He appeared to them off and on for **forty days**—and taught them **even more** during that time!

Surely—based on all of that—they have a huge advantage over us! God certainly **doesn't expect us** that have **never physically seen** Jesus, to believe with the **same kind** of joy...and have the **kind of commitment** ...and **whole-heartedly serve Him** in the same way, does He?

And that brings us to considering...**3. God's expectation of us**

What does God **expect of us** that have not physically seen Jesus? The **same thing** He expected of those who **had seen** Jesus! We see that in **three** ways.

A. The commendation of those that believe without seeing

John 20:29 “Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: **blessed are they that have not seen**, and yet **have believed.**”

Pretty obvious that Jesus **commends those that believe** without seeing—which includes us! God **wants us to believe**—and tells us that is one of the reasons He gave us the word of God! **John 20:31** “But these are written, that ye might **believe that Jesus is the Christ**, the Son of God; and that believing **ye might have life** through His name.”

--And Peter says we can **love**—and **rejoice in** Jesus—even though we haven't **physically seen** Him!

I Peter 1:8 “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, **though now ye see Him not, yet believing**, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:” Simply put, God expects us to believe without seeing!

B. The commitment level expected of those who haven't seen

--Does God expect His followers **now**—who haven't physically seen Jesus—to **serve Him** with the same commitment level of those who did see Jesus? Yes; He does! In fact, **Jesus Himself** tells us that very thing!

--In **Matthew 28:19-20**, we have Jesus' “Marching Orders” to His disciples: “Go ye therefore, and teach [disciple] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Teaching [instructing] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

--In a nutshell, Jesus' disciples were to **preach** the gospel and **make disciples** out of those that believed the gospel. The **new followers** of Jesus were to do the same thing—**share the message** with others and **train those that believed** to do the same. And since Jesus **commands us** to do the same thing that He **commanded His disciples** to do, He obviously expects us to have **the same commitment level**—even though we haven't seen Him!

There's a third way we know that God expects us to believe without seeing and it is this:

C. The condemnation of those that do not believe—even if they haven't seen

Does God condemn those who **refuse to believe** in Jesus even though they haven't **seen** Him? The answer is a resounding “Yes!” God **expects us** to believe what **He says** in His Word—and holds us accountable for what **He says!** Time does not allow me to elaborate on this too much, but I can't just say it without proving it!

--**John 3:18** “He that believeth on Him [Jesus] is **not condemned**: but he that **believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

--John 8:23-24 "And He said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I said therefore unto you, that **ye shall die in your sins**: for if ye **believe not that I am He**, ye shall **die in your sins**."

--John 12:48 "He that rejecteth me [Jesus], and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: **the word that I have spoken**, the same **shall judge** him in the last day."

Please know that Jesus doesn't give any "exception" clauses in these proclamations! That means they applied to those that heard them **directly** from Jesus' lips—but also apply to all of us that read them now! --Even here—in Luke 24:25 and 26—we see Jesus **expecting His followers** to believe what the prophets had written about Him...and His suffering...and His ascension back to heaven.

Lastly, I want us to consider...**4. An evaluation of ourselves**

From time to time, I can't help but wonder what God thinks when **He sees what takes** place down here on earth—especially in preparation of holidays that are supposed to focus on Him! More important than that, though, is what does **God see when He is looking at you?** All of us here are in one of **three** groups.

A. Those that don't believe

Please know that I am **not** talking about **atheists!** I'm talking about people who **believe in the existence of** God—but who **refuse to believe** that they **need to repent** of their sin. Instead, they **trust in their own efforts** to get into heaven—and **reject their need for Jesus** and what He did for them on the cross!

Notice what it says in verses 46 and 47.

--So Jesus' words after He rose from the dead was that a **message of the need for repentance** was to be preached—and the **message of remission** (forgiveness) of sins—found only in Jesus—needed to be preached.

--His word to **sinner**s is "Come unto me for cleansing and forgiveness." But many don't come!

--His word to the **weary and heavy-laden** is "Come unto me, and I will give you rest!" But they don't come!

--His word to the **broken-hearted** is "Come unto me, and I will heal you!" But they don't come!

Is that you? Come to Christ! Oh, may Jesus' last words to you **not be**: "And ye **did not come to me**, that you might have life!

B. Those that believe—but not for joy!

This group consists of born-again, blood-bought children of God—but who **live like** they've been orphaned! They believe—**but not for joy**—just like the disciples! In fact, many of us are a lot more like the disciples than we realize!

Just as Jesus told the disciples that they would **have sorrow**, God reminds us that we will **have sorrow**.

--I Thessalonians 3:3 "That no man should be moved by these **afflictions**: for yourselves know that we are **appointed** [destined] thereunto." Afflictions—problems and trials—are a part of our lot in life!

--James 1:2 "My brethren, count it all joy **when** ye fall into divers [various] **temptations** [trials.]" It doesn't say "if" we fall into trials—it says **when!**

Not only that, we—like the disciples—have the promise that our trials are only **temporary!**

--II Corinthians 4:17a "For our light affliction, which is but for a **moment...**" It won't last forever; it is but for a moment!

And we have—like the disciples—the promise that the sorrow that the trial brings will be **replaced by a joy** that will never end! **Romans 8:18** "For I reckon that the **sufferings of this present time** are not worthy to be compared with the **glory which shall be revealed** in us."

'But Pastor, this verse doesn't say anything **about joy!**

--True! But if being in a **place** of glory...with the **King** of glory...in a **sin-free condition...** and with a **glorified body**, doesn't bring you **everlasting joy**, nothing will!

I'm not trying to **be morbid**—and I'm not claiming to **know the future**. But I do know this: heart-ache...and heart-break...and loss...and pain...and problems... and sufferings...and trials are **in the future of all of us**—if you're not already experiencing **them now!**

--It will **look** different for each of us—it will take on **different shapes and sizes**—and it **will last** for different **lengths** of time. And I'll do what I can to **help you** through these times as best I can—and **pray for** you and **with you**—but I **can't take** the sorrow away!

But I can **point you** to the One who can! I can **show you** some of the promises of God—and remind you that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5)!

--How about it, child of God? Is this you? Are you a believer—but so focused on the problems and trials and troubles of life that you are **joyless**—when God wants you to be **joyful**?

C. Those that believe—and have fullness of joy

--Does God want us to have a joy-filled life? He does! In fact, Jesus plainly states that the joy **He had**, He **wants us to have!**

--**John 15:11** “These things have I spoken unto you, that **my joy** might remain in you, and that your **joy** might **be full.**”

--**John 17:13** “And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have **my joy** fulfilled **in themselves.**”

--Can we **have joy**—even in the midst of trials? God says we can—and actually **commands** us to! It says that in **James 1:2**—a verse I gave you earlier: “My brethren, **count it all joy** when ye fall into divers [various] temptations [trials.]”

--But how—in a **practical way**—can we do that? Here is the advice **George Mueller** gave: “When trials come, we should say: ‘My Heavenly Father puts this cup of trial into my hands, that I may have something sweet afterwards. I will wait and see what good God will do to me by it, assured He will do it.’” (Streams in the Desert, Vol 1, Apr 15th).

--**Another man wrote:** “Nothing that is not God’s will can come into the life of one who trusts and obeys God. This fact is enough to make our life one of ceaseless thanksgiving and joy.” (Streams, August 14th)

So what about you? **What does God see** when He looks at you?

--Does He see an **unbeliever**—someone who has not—and will not—personally receive Christ as their Savior—even though they believe **about** Him?

--Or does He see a **child of His** who is not joyful because you doubt the **goodness** of God and the **faithfulness** of God and the **love** of God and the **power** of God and the **timing** of God and the **wisdom** of God?

--Or does He see in you a Job-like faith that says, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him?”

We serve a risen Savior that not only conquered death so that you can have forgiveness of sins, but also has the power to help you live a life that is pleasing to Him—and joy-filled—regardless of the storms of life!

So what does God want you to do in light of what you’ve heard this morning?

It depends on **what** you are!

1. Are you a **possessor** of Christ? Do you **have** the Son—or just know **about** Him? Eternal life and forgiveness of sins is found only in Jesus Christ. It has nothing to do with **what you do**—it has everything to do with what **Jesus did!** He died—in your place—and suffered the punishment of your sins.

That is a gift—but it must be personally received by you. Have you received Christ? If not, that is what He wants you to do today!

2. If you are a child of God, are you living like you’re an orphan? Are you trusting in God for forgiveness of sins—but not to help you with the trials of life? If that’s you, stop doubting—and start trusting!