

11.4.19 - Worshiping Beliefs

I recently read Oswald Chamber's lessons on Job entitled Our Ultimate Refuge: Job and the Problem of Suffering. He points out that Job's comforters were worshiping their beliefs of God and not God Himself. Job and his comforters believed God blessed good people and punished bad people. Job's experience was a big contradiction to this belief. Job knew that he did nothing to deserve the tragedies in his life yet he did not accuse God of being unjust, he believed God was honorable and could justify Himself. Job's comforters would not give up their belief that only bad people get punished so they insisted that Job committed some big sin or was hiding some great sin to deserve his tragedies. Not much comfort to someone in Job's situation! I believe that this is what is going on in the conflict between naturism and textile believers. Textile believers cannot handle such a big contradiction of their beliefs that they over react to protect their belief instead of checking to see what the Bible says.

In science we do experiments to test our theories. "Theories" would be called "beliefs" in the realm of religion. If the results agree with the theory, we can conclude that the theory is correct. If the results do not agree with the theory, we question the accuracy of the experiment and the theory not the phenomenon we are studying. This is an oversimplification, but this is not a science article. In Christianity we test beliefs by seeing if they line up with what the Bible says while being careful not to force the Bible to "prove" what we want to be true. This is an easy trap to fall into. Lately I have been having trouble remembering where I put things so they would be easy to find. The easy-to-find part often does not work and I begin a hide and seek game with myself. There are some places where I am sure I did not put the missing item. When I look there so I can tell my wife I looked in that area, I probably would not see it anyway even if it were there. Why waste time looking when you are sure it is somewhere else. When we go to the Bible to check something that we know is right we do not look much for

contradictions in the belief. We know it is right, so why waste time looking for something that we already know is not there.

In Christianity we have the Bible as well as the real day to day world to learn about our beliefs in God. Like the phenomenon in science, God and day to day events are always correct and we misunderstood what the Bible or our teachers said about God. Don't even consider the possibility that our teachers could have been wrong. Remember the two rules of education: 1) The teacher is always right. 2) If you think the teacher is wrong, refer to rule one. The whole book of Job could be a statement against the belief that God is obligated to bless good people and punish bad people. Did the belief disappear after the book was written? What belief do you think is behind this question? **John 9:2** **And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?** Maybe blindness is a result of being a bad person? Alright, the disciples did not read Job because books/scrolls like clothing were very costly and most of them could not read because there was little use for the skill. They learned it from someone. They did not have the belief at birth. The belief was still around over a thousand years after the book was written. You can still find it today. The first question that comes to someone's mind when they hear of an unusual tragedy is, "I wonder what they did to deserve something like that?"

I believe that all of us are incorrect on some of our beliefs. Try to find a commentary that supports the naturist view of nakedness. Most of the commentaries are written by better Bible scholars than I am. They are certainly wrong on some points so it is likely that I have been off on some subject as well. If you'd like to see how false beliefs are supported by the Bible, read Mathew Henry's commentary on **Isaiah 20** and remember that undergarments are not a consideration if you can barely afford an outer garment. I do not remember reading that Isaiah was wealthy. He probably had only one garment as was the custom of the day for everyone except the wealthy. The Hebrew word is clear enough to not add undergarments on Isaiah to keep him from being naked.

There are other examples of other outstanding Bible scholars on other beliefs, but you may not see the belief as false and stop reading.

How would we know that someone is worshiping his beliefs instead of God? One way to tell is that they have a closed mind on the topic being considered. A good example is one that was used on me at church:

"God is clothed in **Isaiah 6:1** so that is good enough for me to follow." I wanted to tell him that I expected him to do better than that and give him a few arguments to use the next time he needed to defend his beliefs. I could have argued his point even better than he did. I'd have had to misdefine words and twist the meanings significantly, but I could have done it. What he did instead is compare his righteousness with God. I knew arguing with him would have been a waste of time. The mind convinced against its will is of the same opinion still...Jesus said it a different way, He said to not cast your pearls before swine. He didn't mind name calling, He was much tougher on the legalists than I am.

Another sign of belief worship is the "I know what the Bible says, but...." philosophy. They usually claim feelings as their justification, but the feelings are associated with some belief. Of course, you have heard, "I can not believe that God would...." The most important word in this phrase is "believe" not "God". What God does is not dependent on your belief. Beliefs are a way to simplify God so we can begin to understand Him and they should always be open to change. Drama can be used if you do not know what you believe and so you have no way to defend it. The challenge with naturism is that it is so far from what they believe that they think some sort of reaction is needed.

I have even heard people who proclaim a Bible standard for their lives make the statement that they knew what the Bible said to do, but due to the specific circumstances of their current problem they felt like they should do something different. This is belief worship over God worship.

Is belief worship a problem to be concerned about? Yes, it is! Most of the negative treatment we receive from the textile people is a result of

their belief worship. Belief worship is clear when looking at Job and his “comforters”. Just try to imagine how Job felt after losing his fortune, health and ten children, then read this statement by Eliphaz **Job 4:7 Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?** He is saying that only bad people get the treatment that you are getting, so you must have done something terrible. You are lying when you say you did nothing to deserve this treatment. Job’s friends went straight to character assassination since they couldn’t win the argument on the facts. If you are the one worshipping the belief, it is not this clear how misinformed you come across to the one going through the valley so most of the time your incorrect doctrine is almost never questioned. Just like Eliphaz you do not know what someone else did or did not do and your guess could be based on a false belief about God. Notice also the confidence Job’s “comforters” had in their incorrect beliefs....they had no idea they were worshipping their beliefs just as they had no idea just how wrong they were. I am here to tell you that just because your accusers are confident does not mean that they are correct. Truth is not determined by confidence it is determined by accuracy. The Bible is the basis for truth.

Jesus and the Pharisees are an extreme example of belief worship in place of God worship. Jesus did not conform to what they expected that their Messiah should be. He upset their beliefs and exposed their hypocrisy. They could not believe that the Messiah would be the bastard son of a poor carpenter who never studied in any of their schools. He had very average men for disciples...the lower dregs of society such as fisherman and tax collectors. He fellowshiped with the sick and diseased as well as prostitutes. He ate with unwashed hands and broke the Sabbath to mention just a few of their beliefs He did not comply with. They finally decided to save the world from this imposter, but a simple beheading, like John the Baptist, would not be enough. The people needed to see how bad He was and they were looking for a little revenge for the set-back in their image. So, they made up false accusations and had Him crucified.

No one would go that far to stop a naturist you say. I agree, but what they would do to confront a Christian who is a naturist sometimes puts them on a very similar path. False accusations and character assassinations are not out of the question when dealing with someone like a naturist. Jesus shows where it ends if God does not control it. We are trying to add reasoning to their behavior so we can understand it and react to it as God would have us react.

The reproach of Jesus did not come from the world, it came from the Bible believing Pharisees and their associates. Notice that we get very little negative from the world about naturism unless some well meaning "Pharisee" sends them after us to force us back into their belief system. Seems that the reproach in **Heb 13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.** is to be expected from Christians. I would have said that Chambers was mad from too much study before I got a taste of belief worship from my textile "friends" and textile family members.

What is the solution to the problem, you ask? Dealing with people is not near as easy as solving a problem in math or arithmetic. There is no one method or answer that is right all the time and, in some cases not even most of the time. Oswald Chambers did not offer any ways to get people out of belief worship. He seemed to expect the reader to change his life and not work on changing others. Our experience agrees with Chambers. There is very little you can do to change others by force or argument. Prayer should not be ruled out, but God does not force us to do His will and He is unlikely to force a textile believer to see the error of his or her ways. He wants followers who obey out of love instead of fear. Our hope with this article is, that you will be better able to understand what causes them to act so strange and be closer to saying as Jesus did, "forgive them for they know not what they do." Also, we all need to watch that we are not worshiping our belief instead of God. The belief is not God, it is a way to make God easier to understand and should be open to change if proven to not fit the real world or what is revealed about God in the Bible.