

Connect the Jots

Such Great faith

Part 8 – July 20, 2014

Welcome to the place where we diagnose the deceptions that blind us, and take ‘em to the Great Physician. **Today’s question: What does *great faith* look like?**

We’re continuing to connect the jots – the seemingly insignificant specifics in scripture that are significantly fulfilled in Jesus!



Jesus set up His office in Capernaum. When we left off, He’d slipped away to pray after curing physical illness and spiritual darkness.

Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ. – Luke 4:41 NIV



You know what the one good thing about demons is? *Their theology!* Jesus’ half-brother wrote:

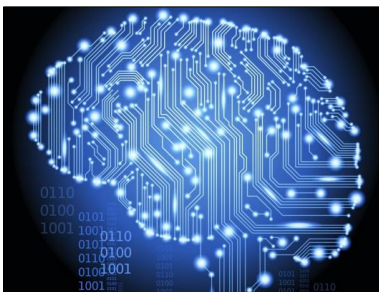
You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. – James 2:19 NIV

So, what makes *your* belief different from the *demons*’?

James is saying, “You have your theology down. So? Even screamin’ demons have sound theology.” **They just won’t acknowledge God’s *authority*. They’ll confess but they won’t concede. They’ll beg but they won’t bow.**

[Remember the man possessed by a legion of demons?] The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” – Mark 5:12 NIV

Are you seeing this?! The demons not only confessed Jesus as the Son of God, they’re *praying to Him!* *They formed a prayer group!* So, **what makes *your* belief different from the *demons*’?** There are two possible answers: **1) *You act on your beliefs* or, 2) *Nothing*.**



[James, who fully believes that we’re *only saved* by God’s grace through *our* faith in his half-brother, *Jesus*, goes on to say:] You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? – James 2:20-22 NIV

Belief must go beyond right thinking. About 14”. Beyond our head and embraced in our heart. **Belief that hides in your head is senseless and dead.**



Mount Nitai; most likely, Nazareth

Just before Jesus moved to Capernaum, **he went to Nazareth and showed His old friends and neighbors how He was the fulfillment of scripture who would usher in God’s Kingdom.** And they promptly ushered *Him* to the cliffs of Nazareth to throw Him to His death. Spoiler alert: they weren’t successful.

Before that He visited our 2nd jot, Cana, where He was already incredibly well known for performing an astonishing miracle.



Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. **[Where He’ll soon relocate, right after His old friends in Nazareth offer Him that bird’s eye view]** When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. **“Unless you people [the Jews] see miraculous signs and wonders,”** Jesus told him, **“you will never believe.”** – John 4:46-48 NIV

Wait! Believe *what?*

The begging official *obviously* believes He can do miracles. They all do. He turned their water into *wine!* **What is it they refuse to believe, that shouldn’t require signs and wonders?**

His identity. His authority. His mission. The fulfillment of Scripture. The ushering in of God’s Kingdom. His testimony.

[He’ll later say to the Jews] **“I have testimony weightier than that of John. [Complete comprehension of every jot and tittle]** For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. **[It’s validated and substantiated by God’s Word]** And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. **[In His Word]** You have never heard his voice **[though He speaks through Me]** nor seen his form, **[though He stands before you]** nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe **[the testimony of]** the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you **[already]** possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, **[the One who’s come to open your eyes, show you your sin, and lead you to the Father]** yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” – John 5:36-40 NIV



They didn’t need the miracles; they had all the prophetic pieces in God’s Word, and Jesus’ testimony to guide ‘em into all truth.

He said to **[two Jews on the road to Emmaus]**, **“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”** – Luke 24:25 NIV

Do you know who *wasn’t* slow of heart? Our 3rd jot: the despised, half-Jewish, Samaritans.



Just before meeting the begging official in Cana, Jesus had encountered the Woman at the well.

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony ... And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” – John 4:39a, 41-42 NIV

They investigated God’s Word to see if it testified about Jesus. It did and they *acted* on it. **Belief is a verb. Faith is an action. It’s not enough to *know* the truth.** Even the demons *believe*. **The truth can’t set you free until you embrace its authority.** The Samaritans heard God’s voice, saw His form, and embraced His Son, who then went to Cana in Galilee and met the begging official.

When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. [Why?] They had seen all that he had **done** in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast [the many mighty miracles] – John 4:45 NIV

The Samaritans’ faith was grounded in God’s Word. The Galileans’ belief was based on His blessings. Which is more true for you?

Sometimes I don’t care about Jesus’ plan. I just want Him to do *my* will. Ever *justify* those feelings? “Don’t let my child die.” “Don’t let my spouse leave.” “Don’t let me lose my job.” How could Jesus say no to *those*? **Ever beg?** I have. **Ever bargain?** I have. **Ever threaten?** *You have?* Wow. That’s *terrible!* I’d *never* do *that!* Well, okay, I have.

The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus replied, “**You may go. Your son will live.**” The man took Jesus at his word and departed. [I love that the royal official isn’t a villain; just a distressed dad. Good heart. Bad approach. And, I love that Jesus heals his son *anyway*. And, I love that the guy who only bows to beg, soon comes around and *fully believes*] While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.” Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So *he* and all his household believed. – John 4:49-54 NIV



In what? In Jesus’ identity, authority, and mission.

Go to any craft or country store and you’ll see a bunch of signs that say: *Believe*. “Good!” as James would say, but *in what?*

To all who received him, to those who believed in **his name**, he gave the right to become children of God ... – John 1:12 NIV

Those who receive Him, believe “in His name” ... *meaning what?*

[Jesus said] “I will do whatever you ask **in my name**, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything **in my name**, and I will do it.” – John 14:13-14 NIV

“Well that’s not true. I’ve tacked the name “Jesus” onto many prayers that didn’t take.”

Actually, it’s like saying, “Stop in the name of the law.” **A good cop would never say, “Give me all your money in the name of the law.”** In fact, **we’re repulsed by bad cops who abuse the authority granted to them for selfish gain.**

To believe in Jesus’ name is to bow to Jesus’ authority; that’s what separates *our* belief from the *demons ... and Hobby Lobby.*



Jesus revealed His identity to the Samaritans, who embraced it. Then to the Jews in Cana, who questioned it. Then to His old neighbors in Nazareth, who out-and-out rejected it.

And then He came to Capernaum, and our 4th jot, the Roman Centurion who asks Him to heal a beloved servant.

Back-to-back officials.

Virtually identical requests.

Vastly different responses.

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.” Jesus said to him, “**I will go and heal him.**” The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. [Recognition of Jesus’ holiness] But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. [Recognition of Jesus power] For I myself [like You] am a man under authority, [Recognition of Jesus’ mission and submission to the Father] with soldiers under me. [Recognition of Jesus’ authority] I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. [Recognition that Jesus commands an unseen army in the invisible realm (FYI: A Roman Centurion commanded 100 men, called a Century)] I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” [Recognition that Jesus has come to serve, not to be served; this guy’s been payin’ attention to Jesus’ teachin’!] When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those [Jews] following him, [“Gold star! A+! Move to the head of the class!”] “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.” [“He’s not a Jew, yet he’s taken my words to heart”] ... Then Jesus said to the centurion, “**Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.**” – Matthew 8:5-10, 13a NIV

What does great faith look like? *That guy!*