

The Real Thing

Sunday, April 18, 2021

Where did the new believers go from the events of the resurrection? What do you want us to know?

Several pictures came to mind, mostly related to our relationship with Jesus and His desire for us to walk with Him on an ongoing basis, just like the disciples had left their nets and followed Him. The resurrection wasn't the end it was just the beginning of a life lived for Jesus.

The impression I kept getting was "**It needs to be REAL**" - "**THE REAL THING**" I felt like God was saying... *"I want them to know that it is real. I am real. What I did on the cross was real. Their salvation is real. My Word is real. And the relationship that I want with them needs to be real."*

There are too many voices out there claiming that none of it is real. There are too many believers who are falling for the lies of the enemy that it is not real. There are too many false representations of Christianity out there. There are too many Christians that are not living a real Christian life.

So this series is going to focus on The Real Thing...

A Real God who wants...

Real Relationship with...

Real People and fill them with...

Real Power

Let's take a quick look at our two key texts for this series

1 Kings 14:21-31

Rehoboam King of Judah

21 Rehoboam **son of Solomon** was king in Judah. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in **Jerusalem, the city the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name**. His mother's name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite.

22 Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord. By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than those who were before them had done. **23** They also set up for themselves **high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree.** **24** There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. **25** In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. **26** He carried off the treasures of the temple of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made. **27** So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them *(an imitation that looks similar to the real thing but isn't a form of godliness but denying its power)* and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace.

28 Whenever the king went to the Lord's temple, *(It still looked like they were doing what they were supposed to, there was a pretense of worshiping God, but it wasn't real, it wasn't sincere and there was still a whole lot of false stuff going on too)*

the guards bore the shields, and afterward they returned them to the guardroom. *(Why? Because Rehoboam didn't want people to look to closely, otherwise it would become apparent that things weren't what they were supposed to be. That's what the enemy wants to do to us. He doesn't want us to question things to deeply, to study the Word to much, to question our lives and the behavior of the church and compare directly to the Gold of God's word, otherwise we might realize how fake what we have is)*

29 As for the other events of Rehoboam's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? **30** There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

31 And Rehoboam rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. His mother's name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite.

2 Timothy 3:1-5; 13-24

3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. **2** People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, **3** without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, **4** treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— **5 having a form of godliness** *(its going to be a weak imitation but not the real thing)* but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

13 while evildoers and impostors **will go from bad to worse**, deceiving and being deceived. **14** But as for you, **continue in what you have learned** (*you've got to make sure you've got the real thing and that you continue to walk in the real thing*) and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,

Paul seems to indicate that part of continuing in the real thing is to make sure you have the real thing in the first place

One of the greatest heartbreaks of my ministry life is to hear of people, or worse yet watching it happen right before my eyes, who say they no longer believe in God

Did you know that the number of people claiming to be atheists has doubled since 2007 and while 32% of them say they grew up in a home with parents who didn't believe in God, 60% of them said they were raised in church-going homes but at some point lost their faith

Vince Antonucci suggests several reasons why

Why Don't People Believe In God?

Well, lots of reasons. Here are some:

1. GROWING UP IN A FAITHLESS FAMILY

In one study, 32% of atheists said they grew up in a home with parents who didn't believe in God. It can be difficult to break out of the mindset that became engrained early in life.

2. STOPPED BELIEVING IN RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS

On the other hand, over 60% of atheists were raised in church-going homes but, at some point, lost their faith. Why? I suspect they were never told [why we believe](#), but only told to believe. They weren't led to make their faith their own.

3. EXPERIENCES AT COLLEGE

People who lose their faith often do so in college. Why? It could be from exposure to people who believe other things or a professor who attacked faith in God, and this person who grew up in the church can be left confused and wondering if they were silly for ever believing.

4. INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGES

[Intellectual questions](#) about faith often start between the high school and college years and can continue indefinitely. When faced with unanswerable questions, a person can assume the faith they believe in is inadequate or irrelevant.

Some questions have sound intellectual answers, but a person who can't find those answers can easily turn away from their faith. Examples of these questions may be:

- "If God is loving, why is there so much evil in the world?"

- “If God created the world in six days, what about evolution and dinosaurs?”
- “Why would a good God send people to hell?”

5. EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

I’ve found that a lack of faith in God often traces back to [emotional challenges](#) more so than intellectual reasons. Why do people lose their faith? Some turn because God didn’t answer an important prayer or rescue them from the consequences of a bad decision. They may have been hurt by a church or turned off by hypocritical Christians. One study found that many of the most well-known atheists grew up without a father. It can be challenging to believe in a good and loving heavenly Father when you’ve had unpleasant experiences or maybe the absence of a father.

6. DESIRING UNITY

When a believer meets someone from a differing religious background, they may feel uncomfortable defending their faith. They may reflect on previous discussions or debates over religion. This tension could lead them to draw the conclusion that it would be best if all religions were equally true, or if none were true.

7. WANTING MORAL INDEPENDENCE

I’ve had several unbelieving friends who were willing to discuss God and listen to evidence. Over time, I was able to help [reveal God](#). They admitted they couldn’t rationally deny the existence of God or that Jesus truly was his Son come to earth to save us. They remained atheists who would not accept Jesus as their Savior. Why? Sadly, they didn’t want to bend their knee to God and give him moral authority in their lives. They wanted to keep doing what they were doing without God interfering. That’s why it’s so important to talk about the topic of Jesus.

8. ISSUES ABOUT SEX

Surveys tell us that of people who have walked away from the church and their faith: 19% said sexual abuse acts committed by clergy were a significant reason why. For those raised Catholic, the number was 32%. Even more prevalent, 29% (and 39% of those raised Catholic) said they left the church because of negative teachings and treatment of gay and lesbian people. It’s something for us to think about: Many don’t want to become Christians because they want to be loving people, and believe Christians are too mean and judgmental.

9. POLITICS

For years, cynical people have rejected church because of a belief that Christians are too into politics. In the last year that issue has become exponentially worse. Not only are people staying away from the church because of politics, but they’re also now leaving a church because of politics. In fact, it’s believed that 14% of American Christians [left their churches](#) as a result of the 2016 elections. Many feel that Christians have prioritized political issues over character because their support of politicians is viewed as immoral. This has created a crisis of faith for

many and gives another reason for those already outside the faith to have no interest in coming in.

While the reasons may be varied the fact is they no longer believe it is real or have settled for a weak imitation that somehow appeases or eliminates their objections

That's why it is so important for us to know the real thing

One of the primary things The enemy attacks is our belief in the existence of the one true God. He seeks to prove to us that God does not exist or at least replace Him with a false representation of a non-existent deity.

He is ok with you believing in a false god because he knows that god is not real

Our journey to have the real thing begins with...

A REAL GOD...

Isaiah 45:5-7; 12; 18-22

5 I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, **6** so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. **7** I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.

12 It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.

18 For this is what the Lord says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited—he says: “I am the Lord, and there is no other. **19** I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob’s descendants, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right. **20** “Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save. **21** Declare what is to be, present it— let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. **22** “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.

7 times in Chapters 44, 45 and 46 God declares that He alone is the true God and there is no other.

The real God is **SEEN** in all that He **CREATED**

Psalm 19:1-5

¹The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ²Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. ³They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. ⁴Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. ⁵It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. ⁶It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

- *Over 500 known solar systems in the Milky way Galaxy*
- *It is over 100,000 light years from edge to edge*
- *It contains some 400 billion stars and at least as many planets*
- *Only 15% of stars in the galaxy host planetary systems*
- *Only known environment in the universe capable of sustaining life*
- *The Universe is millions of times bigger than our galaxy*
- *Our Sun is could fit 1.3 million earths inside of it and accounts for 99.86 percent of the mass in the solar system*

Romans 1:18-20

¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

The real God is **KNOWN** through His **INTERACTION** with that creation

The real God is **HEARD** as He **SPEAKS** through His Word

The real God is **EXPERIENCED** through His **SON**, Jesus Christ

Hebrews 1:1-3

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. **3** The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

John 14:8-11

8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? **10** Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. **11** Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

He asks one of his new Christian students to stand and.....

Professor: You are a Christian, aren't you, son?

Student: Yes, sir.

Professor: So you believe in God?

Student: Absolutely, sir.

Professor: Is God good?

Student: Sure.

Professor: Is God all-powerful?

Student: Yes.

Professor: My brother died of cancer even though he prayed to God to heal him. Most of us would attempt to help others who are ill. But God didn't. How is this God good then? Hmm?
(Student is silent.)

Professor: You can't answer, can you? Let's start again, young fella. Is God good?

Student: Yes.

Professor: Is Satan good?

Student: No.

Professor: Where does Satan come from?

Student: From...God...

Professor: That's right. Tell me son, is there evil in this world?

Student: Yes.

Professor: Evil is everywhere, isn't it? And God did make everything. Correct?

Student: Yes.

Professor: So who created evil?

(Student does not answer.)

Professor: Is there sickness? Immorality? Hatred? Ugliness?

All these terrible things exist in the world, don't they?

Student: Yes, sir.

Professor: So, who created them?

(Student has no answer.)

Professor: Science says you have 5 senses you use to identify and observe the world around you. Tell me, son...Have you ever seen God?

Student: No, sir.

Professor: Tell us if you have ever heard your God?

Student: No, sir.

Professor: Have you ever felt your God, tasted your God, smelt your God? Have you ever had any sensory perception of God for that matter?

Student: No, sir. I'm afraid I haven't.

Professor: Yet you still believe in Him?

Student: Yes.

Professor: According to empirical, testable, demonstrable protocol, science says your GOD doesn't exist. What do you say to that, son?

Student: Nothing. I only have my faith.

Professor: Yes. Faith. And that is the problem science has.

Student: Professor, is there such a thing as heat?

Professor: Yes.

Student: And is there such a thing as cold?

Professor: Yes.

Student: No sir. There isn't.

(The lecture theatre becomes very quiet with this turn of events.)

Student: Sir, you can have lots of heat, even more heat, superheat, mega heat, white heat, a little heat or no heat. But we don't have anything called cold. We can hit 458 degrees below zero which is no heat, but we can't go any further after that. There is no such thing as cold. Cold is only a word we use to describe the absence of heat. We cannot measure cold. Heat is energy. Cold is not the opposite of heat, sir, just the absence of it.

(There is pin-drop silence in the lecture theatre.)

Student: What about darkness, Professor? Is there such a thing as darkness?

Professor: Yes. What is night if there isn't darkness?

Student: You're wrong again, sir. Darkness is the absence of something. You can have low light, normal light, bright light, flashing light....But if you have no light constantly, you have nothing and it's called darkness, isn't it? In reality, darkness isn't. If it were you would be able to make darkness darker, wouldn't you?

Professor: So what is the point you are making, young man?

Student: Sir, my point is your philosophical premise is flawed.

Professor: Flawed? Can you explain how?

Student: Sir, you are working on the premise of duality. You argue there is life and then there is death, a good God and a bad God. You are viewing the concept of God as something finite, something we can measure. Sir, science can't even explain a thought. It uses electricity and magnetism, but has never seen, much less fully understood either one. To view death as the opposite of life is to be ignorant of the fact that death cannot exist as a substantive thing. Death is not the opposite of life: just the absence of it. Now tell me, Professor. Do you teach your students that they evolved from a monkey?

Professor: If you are referring to the natural evolutionary process, yes, of course, I do.

Student: Have you ever observed evolution with your own eyes, sir?

(The Professor shakes his head with a smile, beginning to realize where the argument is going.)

Student: Since no one has ever observed the process of evolution at work and cannot even prove that this process is an on-going endeavour, are you not teaching your opinion, sir? Are you not a scientist but a preacher?

(The class is in uproar.)

Student: Is there anyone in the class who has ever seen the Professor's brain?

(The class breaks out into laughter.)

Student: Is there anyone here who has ever heard the Professor's brain, felt it, touched or smelt it?.....No one appears to have done so. So, according to the established rules of empirical,

stable, demonstrable protocol, science says that you have no brain, sir. With all due respect, sir, how do we then trust your lectures, sir?

(The room is silent. The professor stares at the student, his face unfathomable.)

Professor: I guess you'll have to take them on faith, son.

Student: That is it sir.. The link between man & god is FAITH. That is all that keeps things moving & alive.