

“Even His Brothers Did Not Believe”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: John 7:1-9

- A. Ironical that in a gospel designed to create faith in Jesus, John writes of persons who lack faith
 - 1. In His own nation - John 1:11
 - 2. Among His disciples - John 6:66
- B. At one time, even His brothers did not believe
 - 1. Matt. 13:55; John 7:5; Mark 3:21
 - 2. Foretold - Psalm 69:8
 - 3. Eventually came to believe in Jesus - Acts 1:14
- C. Why did Jesus' brothers not believe in Him from the very beginning?
 - 1. Had they not seen the miracles?
 - 2. Did they not know Him as well as anyone?

I. WHY THEY DID NOT BELIEVE

- A. Possible reasons for their unbelief
 - 1. May have been blinded by familiarity
 - a. As is often said, "Familiarity breeds contempt"
 - b. Hindered many who knew Jesus from childhood - Matt. 13:54-58
 - c. A problem common among prophets - John 4:44
 - 2. May have been blinded by envy
 - a. Large crowds had been following Jesus everywhere, making it difficult for His family to speak to Him at times - Matt. 12:46-47
 - b. Jealousy can be a powerful deterrent to seeing clearly
 - 3. May have been blinded by preconceptions
 - a. Many had wrong ideas about the kingdom - John 6:15
 - b. His brothers had their own ideas as to what He should do - John 7:2-4
 - c. Easy to reject someone who doesn't live up to our expectations
- B. Lessons we must learn
 - 1. Do we let familiarity blind us to the truth?
 - a. Do we reject what a close friend or relative may tell us, especially since they have their own faults of which we are well aware?
 - b. Truth can be communicated by imperfect messengers - Phil. 1:15-18
 - 2. Do we let envy get in the way of truth? - Acts 13:45
 - a. Are we jealous that we might be wrong and others may be right?
 - b. Do we think that by admitting others are right, it somehow makes them better than us?
 - c. Truth and souls are too precious to let jealousy intervene
 - 3. Do we let preconceived notions block understanding of the truth?
 - a. Refuse to re-examine cherished beliefs?
 - b. Reject a teaching merely because we never heard it before?

- c. Truth requires a willingness to hear, and has nothing to fear from investigation - Acts 17:11

II. HOW THEY CAME TO BELIEVE

A. The reason for their faith

1. Jesus' brothers eventually became disciples
 - a. They were with the apostles after the Ascension - Acts 1:12-14
 - b. James, the Lord's brother, became a key figure in the church at Jerusalem - Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:18; Gal. 2:9
 - c. James and Judas wrote epistles - James 1:1; Jude 1
 - d. According to history, James and Jude were martyred for the faith; James was beaten to death with a fuller's club after being stoned, and Jude was hacked to death with a sword.
2. What changed them? The resurrection of Jesus from the dead
 - a. Jesus appeared to James - 1Cor. 15:7
 - b. The others may have seen Him on other occasions - 1Cor. 15:6
3. The significance of Jesus' resurrection
 - a. Miracles can be faked
 - b. Resurrection cannot

B. A blessing for us today

1. It is understandable that one might find the gospel story unbelievable
 - a. A man born of a virgin?
 - b. A man who was the Son of God?
 - c. A man who supposedly...
 - 1) Walked on water?
 - 2) Calmed storms?
 - 3) Fed thousands with a lad's lunch?
 - 4) Healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead?
 - 5) Was Himself raised from the dead?
2. Yet there is a good reason to believe the incredible story
 - a. The conversion of those like Jesus' brothers, who at first did not believe, but who were persuaded by overwhelming empirical evidence - Acts 1:3, 10:39-41
 - 1) Who never recanted their testimony in spite of persecution
 - b. What else can explain the transformation of Jesus' brothers?
 - 1) The same thing that transformed the disciples of Jesus
 - 2) "If the disciples were totally disappointed and on the verge of desperate flight because of the very real reason of the crucifixion, it took another very real reason in order to transform them from a band of disheartened and dejected Jews into the most self-confident missionary society in world history." (Pinchas Lapide, former Chairman of the Applied Linguistics Department at Israel's Bar-Ilan University, TIME, May 7, 1979)
 - 3) An Orthodox Jewish scholar concluded that a bodily resurrection could possibly have been that reason

- 4) The conversion of His brothers and others who first doubted should strengthen our faith in Jesus

Conclusion:

- A. The unbelief of Jesus' brothers serves as a warning
 1. How easy it is for one to be blinded by such things as familiarity, envy, and preconceptions
 2. How essential it is that we give others a fair hearing
- B. The unbelief of Jesus' brothers also serves as a blessing
 1. Their eventual conversion serves as strong evidence of Jesus' resurrection
 2. Heed the exhortation of one of Jesus' brothers - Jude 20-21