

## WOULD WE HAVE BELIEVED THEM?

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. Wonder had we lived in first century would we be receptive to men like: John the Baptist; Peter; and Paul?
- B. Most say, "Of course, because we receive them now!"
  - 1. Maybe because it is socially acceptable
  - 2. Presented in a non-offensive manner
- C. How was truth originally presented? What kind of men? If we had been there, would we have believed them?
- D. Let's challenge our thinking along these lines.
- E. Imagine, then, would we have believed men like:

### DISCUSSION:

#### I. JOHN THE BAPTIST – A HARSH HERMIT

- A. John preached in wilderness, forcing people to come out to hear him. - Matt 3:1-2
  - 1. John's dress was camel's hair and a leather girdle.
  - 2. Diet of locusts and wild honey? - Matt 3:4
  - 3. Called religious people "brood of vipers"? Matt 3:5-7
- B. I seriously doubt we would have listened IF:
  - 1. We balk at travelling distance to Bible study
    - a. Some drive long distance and twice Sundays
    - b. Consider what Jesus taught in Matt 12:42
  - 2. We tend to judge people by the clothes they wear!
    - a. Affected by "Dress For Success" philosophy
    - b. God's perspective 1Sam 16:7; Jas 2:1-4
  - 3. Upset or offended when preacher points out faults!
    - a. Don't want negative sermons
    - b. Jesus demonstrated sometimes the occasion calls for strong measures Matt 23:13-15

#### II. PETER – ILLITERATE, HYPOCRIT

- A. His "country ways" demonstrated lack of formal religious training? Acts 4:13
- B. Denied Jesus three times Matt 26:69-75
- C. Hypocrisy once split a church Gal 2:11-13
- D. Unlikely we would have believed him IF:
  - 1. We expect a man to be formerly educated before we would want him as a preacher!
    - a. Some churches require preacher to have a degree to be considered acceptable
    - b. Wrong kind of learning can be dangerous 1Cor 1:18-29
  - 2. Not willing to give others another chance who fail us, especially more than once!
    - a. If Peter had been treated like fallen preachers today, would he have remained an apostle?

- b. Early church took to heart Jesus' teaching about forgiveness Matt 18:21-22; Lk 17:3-4

#### III. PAUL – NOTORIOUS PERSECUTOR OF CHRISTIANS

- A. Blasphemer, persecutor of the church 1Tim 1:13
- B. Not a fluent speaker 1Cor 2:3-4
- C. Physical appearance described "weak" 2Cor 10:10
- D. Doubtful we would have kindly received Paul IF:
  - 1. We hold a person's pre-Christian life against them!
    - a. Don't believe gospel's power to transform lives
    - b. Consider what it did in Corinth 1Cor 6:9-11
  - 2. We don't care to hear preachers whose sermon presentation lacks "polish!"
    - a. Many will not go hear young, inexperienced, or not eloquent
    - b. "Smooth words and flattering speech" can be used to deceive Rom 16:17-18
  - 3. Judge by physical appearance (size, weight, etc)
    - a. So people judged Abraham Lincoln at first
    - b. Remember God's perspective 1Sam 16:7

### CONCLUSION

- A. How we receive people today a strong indication as to whether we would have received such as John, Peter, Paul and even Jesus! Matt 13:54-58
- B. We would like to think we would have been quick to listen and believe their message, but might have acted different
- C. Important to look beyond messenger and how message might be presented, to the message itself
- D. The way to determine if we would have believed them is: HAVE WE OBEYED THEM TODAY? (Note Lk 16:29)
  - 1. May be speculation on our part to say we would have believed these men back in the first century.
  - 2. But one thing is sure; if we are unwilling to obey them today, we certainly would not have done it then!
- E. Will you obey what these inspired men taught and do it today?