

“Believing *In* God” or “Believing God”?

Although the numbers are surely diminishing, in this part of the world (meaning *America*), a significant portion (if not most) of the population still “believes *in* God.” But what does “believing *in* God” really mean? **That...**

- **God exists only in the totality of the Universe (or Nature), rather than as the *Divine Personage*?** This is **Pantheism**, and if this is your concept of “God,” you believe *in* the wrong one. The God of the Universe “*made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them,*” Acts 14:15, but is **not contained** within His creation.
- **God exists and can be found and fellowshiped through many different *paths* that are all *equally valid*?** This is **Pluralism**, and blatantly contradicts the Bible. “*Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me,’*” John 14:6. Also note Ephesians 4:4-5, “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*” Pluralism may have become the most common form of “believing *in* God,” but its popular acceptance certainly doesn’t make it correct, cf. Matthew 7:13-23.
- **God exists, but is found through *reason* and *observation* of the *natural world* rather than by *revelation*?** This is **Deism**. The *natural world* certainly gives evidence of God and His creation of it, “*For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse,*” Romans 1:20. But the verses that follow show the limitations of man’s *reasoning* and *observation* skills regarding this evidence, “*For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures,*” Romans 1:22-23. Thus, “Deism” is, at its best, limited regarding “God” revealing His will to/for man by man’s perception, and at its worst, eliminates any and all *specific revelation* regarding man’s obedience to God.

You may have noticed that Pantheism, Pluralism, and Deism all have one thing in common: **they not only contradict the Bible, but they seek to eliminate it as being authoritative.** In essence, these false concepts of God remove the *obligations* of man to God’s Word, the Bible. After all, if “God” can be found in *Nature*, and “spirituality” (as a false concept of *fellowship*) is achieved through any one of multiple and equally valid paths, what need do we have of a *specific revelation* (the Bible) from Him? None- if any or all of these belief systems were accurate, and therefore valid. **But they aren’t.** They all contradict what God has *revealed* in the Bible about Himself, and what He *expects* of those who “believe” Him!

So by contrast, what does “**believing God**” then mean? *Believing* God is much more than coming to the *mental acceptance of His existence*. **It means:**

- That “***we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible,***” Hebrews 11:3.

- That ***“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work,”*** 2Timothy 3:16-17.
- That unless we are willing to *live in faith* by obeying God, our “faith” is vain. ***“You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ... You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone,”*** James 2:19-20,24.

“Believing *in* God” is just an acknowledgment of His existence in one *form* or another, and requires no action, **but also promises no spiritual future**. But, **“believing God” means to accept all that He reveals about Himself, all that He requires of us, and all that He says about the future *reward of the obedient* and *punishment of the disobedient* in His Word, the Bible** (see 2Corinthians 5:6-19)! Now, do you “believe *in* God,” or do you “believe *God*”? (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)