

On this national day of mourning for the tsunami victims, it is hard to believe that such devastation happened on Boxing Day. Yet it did happen, and the survivors have to deal with it every minute.

We have had plenty of other natural disasters, such as our current drought, the Canberra fires, the Ash Wednesday fires, Cyclone Tracy, Bangladeshi floods, earthquakes in Iraq and Turkey etc, yet this one is the worst in living memory.

I wonder how this one will be remembered in yrs to come. Once life gets on, and a generation or two pass by, how will school children in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and maybe Burma, remember Boxing Day 2004? Will it just be history?

I remember learning of World War Two at school. We covered the events that led to the war, the campaigns, the allegiances and defeats, and then how it ended in Europe and then the Pacific. It was presented as facts of history, and it was assumed that I would believe the facts.

Since then, I have sometimes wondered what my belief in those facts has had on me. I have read reports of others who've failed to believe the Nazi horrors, and have urged people to see the Nazis as much maligned do-gooders.

But if I had chosen to do Geography or some other subject, and not learnt anything about World War Two, would it have affected my life any differently now? I do not suppose it would be any different.

It is the same with many things we learn. How often do they get used? Eg Do you believe the world is round or flat? If you believe it is round, how has that affected you? If you have been overseas, did you go all the way around? OR did you come home by a similar route to the way you went? If you came home by a similar route, then a nasty flat-earthier could accuse you of hypocrisy. You say you believe the world is round, but you did not go around... you treated

the world as if it was flat.

Has anyone here gone all the way around the world? (If yes, good, what you believed was shown in practice) (If no, then we all must be those who believe without seeing).

In John 3: 16, after telling us that "*God loved the world that he sent his one and only son*", we are told "*that whoever believes in Him...*"

In order to properly access what God's love has achieved for us in the giving of the Christ, we are told that we need to believe in him.

So, what sort of belief does that mean? What sort of belief is needed?

Is it simply to do what I did in history, and blindly learn some facts and regurgitate them in an exam? Will God have a quiz for us as we are queuing up for heaven? Gordon, why should I let you into my heaven? David, on what basis do you think heaven is open to you? Lois, select from the following four choices... Ruth, what is the average velocity of the African swallow? (Note: God is not fooled by the trick question in Monty Python and the Holy Grail!)

To show us what type of belief we need, I want to take us back a further 900 years before Jesus. To an event in the life of God's people after the death of King Solomon.

In 1 Kings 12, Solomon's son Rehoboam made a choice which ended in a splitting of the united kingdom of God's people. The northern ten tribes formed the nation of Israel, while the southern tribes formed the nation of Judah. Rehoboam, king of Judah, wanted to wage war against the north. So he gathered 180,000 men and prepared to fight. 1 Kings 12:22-24 says: "*But this word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: 'Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah, to the whole house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, 'This is what the Lord says: Do not go up to fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.'"*

Reheboam now had a choice. Would he believe the prophecy from God and send everyone home, or would he go and fight? The way which he believed this would be very obvious. His actions would show if he really believed or not.

If he used my history type of belief, he could say, Yes, I know what you said, but so what! Let's go to war. But that would not be belief! That is disbelief! God said go home, he has purposed this split, and nothing Reheboam can do will change it. His belief would be very plain to see.

1 Kings 12:24 says *"So they obeyed the word of the Lord and went home again, as the Lord had ordered."* He believed God, and it showed.

However, in the North, the King of Israel was Jereboam. Earlier, Jereboam had been given another prophecy from God. God said to Jereboam in 1 Kings 11 :37-38 *"I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you."*

God promised that his descendants would be on the throne of Israel forever **if** he remained faithful to God. Jereboam was faced with another belief situation. Would he believe God and reap the benefits? OR would he not believe, and be rejected?

1 Kings 12 shows the sadness of a man who refused to believe. Instead of leading a second godly nation, he set up idols, created cultic sites, with non-authorized priests and turned the hearts of Israel away from God. His disbelief was evident.

Reheboam believed and it showed. Jereboam did not believe and it showed.

When God calls on us to believe in His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, our actions will show if

we do believe.

Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe he died for you? Do you believe he is reigning at His Father's right hand? Do you believe in him as Lord of your life? Do you believe He is the judge of the earth? Do you believe in him?

If you say yes, does it show? Not to show off! But the decisions you make, the actions you take, the thoughts you have, the motives for why you choose the way you do, your morals, your meeting with others of God's family who believe in him, are they reflecting that you really do believe in Jesus?

Or is your belief in him a mouldy history belief, that is powerless, ineffective and utterly worthless?

God's love for the world stirred him to give his Son.

Do you believe in him?