

Are You A 'Secret Service' Christian?

John 2.23-25

After the narrative of Jesus cleansing the temple, John tells us that many Jews at the Passover in Jerusalem saw His miracles and believed in Him. But wait! Some theologians say they didn't believe in the right way and therefore weren't saved. Really?! Let's clear up a misunderstood story.

- Did these Jews really believe in Jesus?
To "believed in/on" is how John describes saving faith
"Believe in His name" = same phrase as in John 3.18
'Sign faith' is real faith – then and now! (John 20.30-31)
- Why didn't Jesus 'entrust Himself' to them?
Entrust = 'put confidence in': Jesus knew the fickleness of men
Social pressure → secret believers (John 9.22; Nicodemus)
Not a politician trying to create a following! (Cf. John 6.66!)
- 'Secret Service' Christians...Then and Now
Secret believers avoid persecution (John 16.33; 2 Tim. 3.12)

Secret believers are saved, but miss out on intimate fellowship

This is 'real life' – now, and on into eternity!



1. Sadly, many pastors and church leaders today are guilty of confusing the gospel – the most important and precious truth God has given us! In a hundred different ways, they suggest that if you sin too much or in certain ways, or if you don't live a holy enough life...even if you believe in Jesus as your Savior from sin – you won't get into heaven when you die. Have you ever heard or read this? How do those who say this explain it? Are we saved *by faith*, but get into heaven by our works? How does this idea stack up with Scripture? If this is true, how confident are you that you will go to heaven?
2. In John 2.23 we read that "many believed in His (Jesus') name." In John, to "believe in Jesus" is a *very common* phrase. To understand what it means, check these references: 1.12; 2.11; 3.16, 18, 36; 4.39; 6.29, 35, 40; 7.38-39; 8.30; 9.35-38; 11.25-26; 45; 12.11, 42, 44, 46. What different things prompted people to believe in Jesus? Did any reason for believing make that person's faith in Jesus invalid? What did people receive when they believed in Jesus? Was anyone who believed in Jesus rejected because of how or why they believed?
3. The Greek word for "believe" (πιστεύω, *pisteuō*) can be translated trust, have confidence, or be persuaded. What words would you use to describe what "believe" means in John 2.23? This same Greek word is translated "entrust" or "commit" in John 2.24; how would you describe what πιστεύω means in this verse?
4. Many scholars and theologians say that the people who believed in Jesus in John 2.23-25 didn't *really* believe, because they just had "miracle faith" – they only believed in Jesus because He performed miracles. Read John 4.39; 9.35-38; 11.45; 12.11; were all these not saved because Jesus' miracles led them to believe? Why did Jesus perform miracles (Jn. 10.37-38)? Why are they recorded (20.31)?
5. Jewish believers in Jesus faced severe social repercussions, so many were 'secret believers' (Jn. 9.22; 12.42; 19.38); Nicodemus may also have been one of these. What causes people to be 'secret believers' today? Are you one? Why does it matter?