



April 2021

Editor, Keith Sharp

Designer, William Stewart



- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

In This Issue...

- **Question from Texas about Starting a School**
- **Caiaphas' Prophecy - Jesus Should Die Instead of Us** | *Pat Donahue*
- **The Bible and the Catholic Church (Pt 1)** | *Jefferson David Tant*
- **The Unchanging Christ In A Changing World** | *Jim Mickells*
- **Sticks and Stones** | *Mike Thomas*
- **Was The Sabbath From Creation?** | *William Stewart*
- **Matthew 24 (Part 5)** | *Patrick Andrews*
- **What the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares Does Not Teach** | *Sunday Adetunji*
- **Faith and Opinion** | *Keith Sharp*

Finally, brethren

WHATEVER THINGS

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

Question from Texas about Starting a School

Question

In Uganda there is a congregation when I was institutional i used mission funds to build a church building. They grew where they appointed 2 men as elders then added a 3rd. The elders were worried about the children attending denominational schools and being influenced with instruments and false teaching so they used the mud and stick and new building for a school. Later individuals sent funds to build temporary classrooms. The school is supported by individuals and fees from parents. No church funds were used with this. The children have chapel when school is in session thus the elders see it as protecting the children from false teaching. They also have converted some through this. There are no utilities so no church money tied to the school. But the elders feel they are as shepherds protecting the flock and feeding the sheep through church and education. Is this wrong among noninstitutional congregations? They don't try to force other congregations to do this. Give scripture to support conclusions please.

Answer

I appreciate the good question.

I commend these brethren for their determination to see that the children are properly taught. The question is not sufficiently clear, so far as the circumstances, for me to be sure what transpired and is transpiring.

I'll answer it the best I can in the light of how it seems to read to me.

First, it is indeed scriptural for an organization other than the local church to teach the Bible. In fact, any organization may provide for teaching the truth of God's word. The family has oversight (Ephesians 5:22-24; 6:1), pooled resources (1 Timothy 5:8), and a common work to be done (Ephesians 6:4); thus, it is an organization in the same sense the local church is (1 Peter 5:1-2; Acts 4:34-35; 1 Timothy 5:16). The father, as head of the family, is obligated to teach the children the word of God (Ephesians 6:4), and his wife is his helper (Genesis 2:18-24). Civil government, an organization, can provide for the teaching of the Scriptures (Acts 24:23-26; 25:13 - 26:29; 28:16-21). When I lived in New York I taught a weekly Bible class in the Jefferson County Correctional Facility [jail] by permission of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department. The Jefferson County Sheriff's department provided the place [a room in the county jail], and regulated the studies [time, number of prisoners, etc.]. I did the same in Arkansas two years ago in a state prison. Thus, any organization, including a school, may provide Bible teaching.

Whenever the church makes a donation, whatever or whomever receives the donation, enters into fellowship with the church (2 Corinthians 8:1-4; Philippians 4:15-16). The word "shared" (NKJV, Philippians 4:15) is a translation of the Greek term "koinoneo," meaning "to come into communion or fellowship with" (Thayer). Fellowship is the only tie there is in Christ (1 John 1:7). If the church donated the material to build a school building, it entered into fellowship with the school, making the school a quasi-church institution.

There may be other problems with the way these brethren are proceeding. First the only organization elders, in their capacity as elders, oversee, is the local church (1 Peter 5:1-4). If they assumed the oversight of a school in their capacity as elders, they have made this a work of the church, whether church funds are used or not. There is no scriptural authority for the church to provide secular education. The church is to teach the truth of the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:14-15; 2 Timothy 3:14-15). I would not object to churches teaching children or adults to read and sing, since these skills help edify them to serve the Lord (Ephesians 4:11-16; 5:18-19). But other secular subjects, such as mathematics, government, and secular history, have no role in edification.

My suggestion is that the elders allow the parents to choose someone or group of people to run the school, turn it over to them, and completely separate the school from the church. If this is what they are doing, I commend them.

Caiaphas' Prophecy - Jesus Should Die Instead Of Us

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

According to John 11:49-52:

"Caiaphas ... said ... consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Caiaphas was advising that Jesus should die for the Jewish nation - not just for their benefit, but Jesus die rather than, instead of, in place of them. He was thinking that if Jesus caused too much of an uproar, the Romans would come down hard on the occupied nation and there would be much Jewish bloodshed (verse 48). Caiaphas reasoned it is better that one man die instead of the nation as a whole.

Tim Haile taught this fact in a 4-27-17 email to me – "Caiaphas proposed that it would be better for one man (Jesus) to die 'for' the nation, rather than the entire nation perish." Bob Myhan taught this truth in his article on "Penal Substitution" (2-24-14) that said "It is true that Caiaphas wanted Jesus to die instead of or in place of Israel"

Now Caiaphas meant Jesus should die for the physical salvation of the Jews, but the text says God was prophesying through him and meant the Jews' spiritual salvation. So putting these two established truths together, Jesus was to die, not just for the benefit of, but also rather than, instead of, in place of the Jewish nation (and the Gentiles also, verse 52) – leading to their spiritual salvation. See the conclusive proof for the Substitutionary Death Of Christ?

The Bible and the Catholic Church | Part 1

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

It is well known that the Roman Catholic Church is the largest religious body in the world claiming to be Christian. There is no doubt that the Church has been responsible for many good things throughout its existence, and we are thankful for good that has been done. But there are some serious questions about some teachings and practices of the Church which we will examine in this article. We will examine the Church's teaching concerning the Bible. To begin, consider the following quotes from Catholic sources.

"Of all the advice that we can offer your holiness we must open your eyes well and use all possible force in the matter, namely, to permit the reading of the gospel as little as possible in all the countries under your jurisdiction. Let the very little part of the gospel suffice which is usually read in Mass, and let no one be permitted to read more. So long as people will be content with the small amount your interest will prosper, but as soon as the people want to read more, your interest will fail. The Bible is the book which more than any other, has raised against us the tumults and tempests by which we have almost perished. In fact, if one compares the teaching of the Bible with what takes place in our churches, he will soon find discord, and will realize that our teachings are often different from the Bible and oftener still, contrary to it" ("Address by the Cardinals in the Roman Catholic Church to Pope Pius III," preserved in the National Library of Paris, Folio #1068, Vol. 2, pp. 650-651).

"A rule of faith, or competent guide to heaven, must be able to instruct in all the truth necessary for salvation. Now the Scriptures alone do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe, not do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obligated to practice" (The Writings of Cardinal Gibbons, page 89.)

Now compare this with what the apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy: "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" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Notice what Paul wrote. He wrote "all Scripture," not just a few bits of it, was "profitable...that the man of God may be adequate..." Paul furthermore claimed that the Scripture was so perfect that it "equipped for every good work."

Yet the Catholic Cardinals said that the Scriptures do not contain all the truths that a Christian needs. Question: Whom shall I believe? The apostle Paul, or Cardinal Gibbons? Note what the apostle John wrote in Revelation 22:18-19:

"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."

That leaves no room for any additions!

So why would, as the Cardinals claimed, the reading of the Bible raise "tumults and tempests" against the Church? It must be because the Bible directly contradicts some teachings and practices of the Church. And further note that Paul claimed that those who read and studied the Bible would be "adequate, equipped for every good work."

"A competent religious guide must be clear and intelligible to all so that everyone may fully understand the true meaning of the instruction it contains. Is the Bible a book intelligible to all? Far from it; it is full of obscurities and difficulties not only for the

illiterate, but even for the learned" (The Writings of Cardinal Gibbons, pages 85-86).

If that is true, then how do we explain Paul's words to the Corinthian church. "For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end" (2 Corinthians 1:13) Then we have Paul's words to the Gentile Christians at Ephesus:

"if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:2-4).

There is no evidence that the early Christians were learned scholars, as the evidence is that they were common people. Yes, some things were difficult to understand. I found that to be true when I studied the Greek language, but the more I read and studied, the clearer the difficult things came to be. And so it is with the Bible.

Consider the fact that Paul was a trained scholar, trained at the feet of the noted Gamaliel. He wrote to the Ephesian Christians who had been Gentiles, who had no background in the Old Testament writings, yet Paul writes that they could understand what he wrote. If that was true then, what has changed that makes it impossible for the common man to understand what Paul and the other inspired writers wrote?

Here's a question: If it is difficult to understand things Holy Spirit inspired men have written, how are things improved so that we can understand things uninspired men have written as they interpret the Scriptures? That doesn't make sense. The apostle Paul gives the remedy when we find difficult Bible passages. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). That's the same tactic I used in studying my school courses.

Evidently the apostle Paul had confidence that common people could understand the Scriptures for themselves. When he came to Berea and was preaching there, he commented, "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

The Unchanging Christ In A Changing World

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

There is no doubt that you and I live in a world which is changing right before our eyes. In the almost 70 years of my earthly existence, I have seen major changes take place in a great number of areas. Growing up in Marion County in east Tennessee, my dad and both grandfathers were all coal miners. The house we lived in had no running water, obviously no indoor bathroom facilities, no air conditioner (unless you want to consider a fan as such), and a coal stove for heat. Most of what we had to eat was grown in the garden, very little came from the grocery store. Now there is city water, multiple bathrooms, central heat and cooling, and most of what we eat comes from Kroger.

Communication with others around the world happens in matters of seconds. There is Facetime, Zoom, etc. that not only can we speak with others, but we can see them as well. Farmers can plow and harvest hundreds of acres from the cab of an air-conditioned tractor. Wars are fought from behind computer screens, sending drones to accomplish the work it once took hundreds of men to do at great risk. In the medical field great strides have been made in the healing of all kinds of diseases, most surgeries are much less invasive and the recovery much quicker. Cars can now park themselves, and some can even drive themselves. Computers are now capable of some amazing feats. They have more memory, are faster, have more ability to store information, etc. My how things have changed!

Yet there are a great number of things which have not changed. Take for instance man. I had three attempts, by email, to scam me out a few hundred dollars in just one day this week. There are people who are greedy and willing to take advantage of others. Paul warned us that “the love of money is a root of kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). We continually see problems with drugs and alcohol, which are a plague in our society today. Sexual sins are rampant. Homosexuality, lesbianism, transgenderism, etc. are encouraged and promoted on T.V. and even the commercials have become disgusting advertising of such lifestyles. This same apostle called these sins works of the flesh, which if one continued to practice such, they would not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21). The list of sins which man can commit today is no different from the ones listed when the apostles wrote during New Testament times.

So, this tells us man has the same needs today as he has always had, the forgiveness of those sins. Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Jesus died on the cross, shed His precious blood, so all men could be forgiven of their iniquities (Romans 5:8-9; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Timothy 2:4). This blood must be applied before one can receive the benefits of it. When Peter was preaching to the Jews on Pentecost, who had put the Lord to death, they asked him what shall we do to be saved? They were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:36-38). It was in His death that His blood was shed (John 19:33-34), and it is when one is baptized (immersed in water) into the death of Christ, he comes in contact with the blood, and his sins are washed away (Acts 22:16). Notice how Paul describes this in Romans 6:3-6. The old man of sin is buried in the waters of baptism, there contacting the blood of Jesus (in a figurative sense), and then having been forgiven arises a new creature in Christ to walk in newness of life. Such action on the part of the sinner does not nullify the grace and mercy of God, but through faith gives access to them (Romans 5:1-2).

Jesus is still the same today as He was yesterday and will continue the same tomorrow. He still has all power and authority given to Him by the Father (Matthew 28:18). His law has not changed, and one must not add to nor take from it (1 Peter 4:11; Revelation 22:18-19). His feelings toward religious error have not diminished in the least (Matthew 15:19; Galatians 1:6-9). His church still belongs to Him and must follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament in how it is organized, the way it is to worship, and the work it is to be involved in (Matthew 16:18; Philippians. 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:15). He still feels the same way about sin, wanting us to put to death our earthly members (Colossians 3:5-10). He is still the only way one has access to God the Father (John 14:6). He is our Savior and Redeemer (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Peter 1:18-19). And He still has an immense love for all mankind, wanting to save them from their sins (1 John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9). What an utterly amazing Lord we have. Such is beyond our comprehension!

The great news given to each of us in God’s word is that our future can be immensely better than our past and also our present. Those who have been faithful servants will be able to enter the joy of the Lord (Matthew 25:21, 23), where there will be no more death, sorrow, suffering, pain, and sin (Revelation 21:4). This is a promise made to us by the unchanging Christ, who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18).

Sticks and Stones

Mike Thomas | Bowling Greek, Kentucky, USA

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words shall never hurt me” (Alexander William Kinglake, 1830). I wrestle with the wording of that famous rhyme. I believe the author was conveying the importance of ignoring insulting comments and how we should not let them cause us to quit, which is a very beneficial thought. Yet at the same time, there has to be a better way of expressing that message without saying “words shall never hurt me.” From what I can tell, words are just as painful as physical offensives and can often cause greater injury.

Solomon said it this way, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21). Whether it is a decision in court or a comment made in personal conversation, words have the ability to alter a person’s entire earthly life. Who among us can easily brush off an insulting comment or unjust criticism? Do we not lose sleep over it and wrestle with a spirit of bitterness in response

to it? Of course, we do. “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit” (15:4). We live and die emotionally by the things people say to and about us. All of this should remind us of the explosive power of our words and the tremendous ability we have to either build up or tear down people. Based on what we say and how we say it, we can be the difference-maker in compounding or alleviating someone’s burdens. We have that power! “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24).

Someone has said “words are things” because of the effect they have on our minds and direction in life. I can see the value of that statement. How many marriages have been devastated by hurtful words? How many teenagers have taken their life because of verbal assaults on social media? How many preachers have given up because of overcritical and unloving judgments? How many of us have never reached our potential because of the words we tell ourselves? It happens. Words are truly living, powerful things! And even though Solomon tells us to “not take to heart everything people say...For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others” (Ecclesiastes 7:21), that is often easier said than done. It is very, very difficult to dismiss disparaging comments. We can eventually learn to respond properly and overcome them, but not without intense struggle and prayer.

At the same time, our words have the remarkable ability to heal and strengthen. All it takes is a sincere compliment, an encouraging note, or a positive affirmation to change a person’s entire outlook. This is why I am fond of Barnabas – the name the apostles gave Jesus because of his sincere desire to encourage others (Acts 4:36). He found the right words to offer the struggling souls around him and demonstrated the kindness and humility of Christ in making the world a better place. This was especially true with his brethren. He was selected by the church at Jerusalem to go work with the newly established work at Antioch, with all of its racial diversity and infancy in the knowledge of Christ, to build it up and keep it going. Consequently, he “encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord” so that “a great many people” were added to the Lord (Acts 12:23-24). One person with a love for God and a genuine desire to serve others can influence an entire congregation for the better.

Do you want to increase your value as a member of God’s kingdom? Improve your words and find a way to build up people. Your worth will be greater than gold. And the best way we can enhance our speech is to be patient in our judgments and humble in our opinions. James said it this way, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20). Has someone insulted you or said something hurtful to someone you love? Be slow to speak, slow to wrath, and pray for the wisdom and humility to respond properly. Life is too short, and already too difficult, to let pride create further conflicts with others. Do as Jesus said and pray for your enemy (Matthew 5:43-48). It will heal all kinds of pain and possibly even open a door for opportunity for you to be at peace with them. If not, at least you have not let the impulses of the devil dominate your spirit. Remember, if Jesus could endure the insults and threats He experienced, you can endure whatever accusatory words are hurled at you. Namely,

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:21-23).

Thus, sticks and stones may break our bones ... but words can do so much more. I am not sure if Mr. Kinglake would appreciate that modification, but it certainly makes me more mindful of the power of words and how I should use them. Or as Solomon observed, “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health” (Proverbs 12:18). Well said.

Was The Sabbath From Creation?

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

A visitor to our web site asked:

The Sabbath was given at creation Genesis 2:2-3 before God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, so why don't the church keep the Sabbath?

Was the Sabbath really given at creation? Notice:

And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:2-3)

This text is certainly the basis for the Sabbath law which would be given at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:9-11), but the text itself is not the Sabbath law. It tells us what God did on the seventh day. It does not command Adam and Eve to observe the Sabbath, nor does it infer that God Himself did this on any subsequent seventh day. In fact, Jesus, having just healed a man on the Sabbath stated of Himself and the Father, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17). The LORD's rest at the end of the creation week did not become a perpetual day of rest for Him, nor is there any evidence in the book of Genesis that it was given as a statute for man at that time.

The first time the Sabbath is mentioned in the Bible is in Exodus 16. There, God gave instructions to His people regarding the manna. They were told to gather twice as much on the sixth day (v 4-5), but not immediately told why. On the sixth day, some gathered twice as much (v 22), others did not (v 27). The Sabbath is declared for the first time in Exodus 16:23, 25, 26, 29. It is evident from reading the text that the Sabbath command was a new experience for the people. Shortly thereafter, it would be recorded into their law at Mount Sinai.

If the Sabbath command was given at creation, surely Moses would have written something about Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, etc. keeping it. He didn't. In fact, in Deuteronomy 5, Moses wrote:

The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD... (Deuteronomy 5:2-5).

Seven verses later, as Moses reviewed the law with the people of Israel, he mentioned the command for them to keep the Sabbath day holy. It was given to them, not to their fathers before them.

Notice what is recorded in Exodus 31:

Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely, My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations ... You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore for it is holy to you ... the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever... (Exodus 31:13-17).

It is exceptionally clear that the Sabbath covenant was established between God and the Israelites and began after they were brought up from Egypt. It did not begin at creation and was not established with all creation. The idea that the Sabbath had been from the beginning of creation and that it was to continue to be observed by the church was strongly contested by prominent Christians in the second century AD, about 100 years after the time of the apostles. Both quotes are from Christian discussions with the Jews:

Moreover, all those righteous men already mentioned, though they kept no Sabbaths, were pleasing to God; and after them Abraham with all his descendants until Moses ... And you were commanded to keep Sabbaths, that you might retain the memorial of God. For His word makes this announcement, saying, 'That you may know that I am God who redeemed you.' (Justin, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, 150-165 AD, Ante-Nicene

*Let him who contends that the Sabbath is still to be observed a balm of salvation, and circumcision on the eighth day because of threat of death, teach us that the earliest times righteous men kept Sabbath or practiced circumcision, so were made friends of God ... Therefore, since God originated Adam uncircumcised, and inobservant of the Sabbath, consequently his offspring also, Abel, offering His sacrifices, uncircumcised and inobservant of the Sabbath, was by Him commended ... Noah also, uncircumcised - yes, and inobservant of the Sabbath - God freed from the deluge. For Enoch, too, most righteous man, uncircumcised and inobservant of the Sabbath, He translated from this world ... Melchizedek also, 'the priest of the most high God,' uncircumcised and inobservant of the Sabbath, was chosen to the priesthood of God. (Tertullian, **Answer to the Jews 2:10; 4:1, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, pg 153)***

The church is not subject to the Old Testament law. It was given to Israel for them to observe. There is not a single command to keep the Sabbath given to Christians; in fact, after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, we find that the Law of Moses was removed (Romans 7:1-7; 2 Corinthians 3; Galatians 3:22-25; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:13-17; Hebrews 8:6-13).

Sabbatarians generally claim that the day of worship was changed from the Sabbath to the first day of the week by the Pope or Constantine. There are a host of quotes from antiquity (Eusebius, Ignatius, Origen, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and more) predating both the establishment of the Catholic Church and the rule of Constantine which clearly demonstrate that Christians were worshiping on the first day of the week. But the true authority is the Scripture itself. As mentioned above, there is no New Testament command for Christians to worship on the Sabbath. In fact, there is one text which specifically tells Christians not to feel compelled to keep the Sabbath (Colossians 2:14-17). When we look for direction about what day Christians worshiped, we find two texts explicitly mentioning the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

The Christians were meeting on the first day of the week, and on that day, they were "breaking bread" (communion), sharing a "message" (preaching), and they gave "the collection for the saints." This was the day upon which they were worshiping. It was not a "Christian Sabbath" as some have called it, it is never referred to as a Sabbath in the Bible. The Sabbath (seventh day) was commanded of Israel in the Old Testament, not Christians in the New Testament.

Matthew 24 (Part 5)

Patrick Andrews | Conway, Arkansas, USA

From previous articles we have learned that Peter, Andrew, James and John were the disciples that asked Jesus the questions found in Matthew 24:1-3 (See Mark 10:3); questions pertaining to the destruction of the Temple buildings and His return.

In answer to their first question, as to when the Temple Buildings would be razed, Jesus gave them signs to look for that would precede this destruction. I've mentioned in previous articles that these various signs would cover various time periods and would be distinguishing into how close the destruction was drawing to its fruition.

The first of these signs that they were to look for is found in Matthew 24:4-8, in what Jesus calls, "The Beginning of Sorrows." These signs would herald the beginning of what would come later. Jesus prophesied that many would come and claim to be "The Messiah" and many would be deceived by their false claims. He also forewarned of civil unrest, geological upheavals, pestilence and famines in various parts of the world.

The second set of signs, Matthew 24:9-14, would be indicative that the destruction of the Temple of the Lord was getting nearer. The very first word in Matthew 24:9 is the word, "Then", which introduces not only a different period in time, but you will notice the evident shift of events that would follow throughout these years. Just for the sake of clarity, I hope you would agree that we could term this next time period as, "Nearer Signs of the Destruction That Is Coming."

Let me clarify something I wrote in last month's article. I said, "It's not going to be any foreign nation that is persecuting the Israelites...it's only Israelite against Israelite." I should have made it clear that the nations warring with other nations during the beginning of sorrows would be different than what was coming next. It would be no longer nation against nation, not even another nation against the nation of Israel, although that will come later.

Notice that other nations would still be involved in this period of time, but only one group of people was going to be affected. These nearer signs would be carried out in all nations, but the persecution that was coming would be inflicted only on those who were Christians. Christians were going to be persecuted in all nations. Persecution, death, and hate from all nations would be focused on God's people because they had named the name of Christ. All a person would have to do is read the book of Acts and they will see how Christians were hated in all parts of the world before the coming destruction of Jerusalem prior to 70 AD. As an afterthought I will add that persecution and hatred for Christians didn't end when Jerusalem fell; it's still with us today.

We now come to the final section of time that indicates that time has almost run out for Jerusalem, the Temple Buildings, and those people who neglected to heed Christ's warnings.

Matthew 24:15-35 is the conclusion of the answer to the first question, i.e. "when will the Temple Buildings be razed"? We can call this section of time, "Destruction Is Knocking on the Door." Christ actually uses the phrase, "...it is near; it is even at the doors."

In this section, notice another shift. Christ is no longer talking about how individual Christians are going to be hated and persecuted in all nations, but rather; the persecution would be from a different nation and their focus would be to destroy the nation of Israel, the people of Israel, and the religion of Judaism. I would imagine a lot of Christians were lumped together with this lot and suffered death not only because they were Christians, but also because they were Israelites.

Notice the indicators that were harbingers of the destruction that was knocking on the doors:

1. The "Abomination of Desolation", Matthew 24:15ff; Luke 21:20ff; Mark 13:14ff. This phrase deserves an article of its own, but just for now; let's use Luke's phrasing to understand what's going on once Rome starts knocking on the door.
Luke 21:20 ¶ And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.
2. Within this time period would also be a period of great tribulation; not necessarily toward Christians, but toward Israel and Judaism. Once the city was eventually cut off, the tribulation inside the city would begin. Josephus, who was a Jewish historian, tells of horrible acts of survival taking place inside the walls of Jerusalem. There are many atrocities, but one that stood out in my mind was when Josephus told of people who would cut open the dead to remove food that was in their stomach and then eat it themselves.
3. Immediately after the tribulation inside Jerusalem, the signs would shift from what's going on, on earth, to signs that would be in the heavens. I will tell you up front that these next few verses can be difficult to understand if you are not familiar with apocalyptic language in the Old Testament that foretold coming destruction on various nations.

I don't want to waste space explaining the similarities, but I would encourage you to read for yourself Isaiah 13:1ff. There are many passages like this in the Old Testament concerning the coming destruction

on a particular people, but notice with me just this one. Isaiah is prophesying against the destruction of Babylon, and Christ is prophesying about the destruction of Jerusalem, and they are both using the same phrases and typology.

God willing, I will pick up here next month and hopefully finish Jesus' answer to the first question concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.

I urge you to continue studying and praying and to keep heaven ever before your eyes.

What the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares Does Not Teach

Sunday Adetunji | Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke the parable of the tares of the field to the disciples (Matthew 13:24-30, 36). And the disciples asked Him to explain the parable to them, and He did as they demanded (Matthew 13:36-43).

But in the parable we noted that the servants of the householder (verse 27) had asked a question in verse 28 on whether he wanted them to go and gather the tares up. But he refused them to do as requested, that they should leave the gathering up of the tares until the harvest (verses 29-30).

If one just read the parable especially verses 29-30 of Matthew 13 for the first time, and superficially too, and have not read other Scriptures in the New Testament, one might be tempted to suppose that Jesus' words in Matthew 13:29-30 teach a restriction to the preaching of the gospel or teach His unwillingness to expose and rebuke sin ere "the end of the world" (Matthew 13:39, KJV). But the Scriptures reveal that this is not the case. For examples,

Christ's doctrine on how He wants an offending brother to be treated as seen in Luke 17:3ff testifies to the fact that His words in Matthew 13:29-30 do not teach a restriction to rebuking sin. Before apportioning reprimand to any one for any offence whatsoever, reason demands that the offender must of necessity be made to fathom his fault(s).

The carrying out of the Great Commission given by the Lord Jesus Christ (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16), by the apostles and evangelists in the Scriptures testify to this. But before mentioning the preaching of the apostles, let us hear first, Jesus' words after His resurrection in Luke 24:46-47:

"Then He said to them a'Thus it is written, 1and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and aremission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem....'"(NKJV).

The Scripture above informs us of what should be preached in Christ's name beginning at Jerusalem. The question is, How then can repentance and remission of sins be preached to people without making them know the things, that is, the sins you want them to repent of, and for which if they do they would receive forgiveness? So, you can see that Christ's words in Matthew 13:29-30 do not teach a restriction to preaching against sin.

In obedience to Jesus' instruction, beginning on the day of Pentecost, Peter, having said all he said from verse 14 to 36 of Acts 2, he replied to the people's question of verse 37 by saying in verse 38, "Then Peter said to them, a 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the 1remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (NKJV). And those who believed were baptized; and were added to them (verse 41).

Peter and John also told the Jews to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out (Acts 3:19). Asking the Jews to repent and be baptized (Acts 2: 38) and to repent and be converted (Acts 3:19) evidenced that Christ's words in Matthew 13:29-30 taught not a restriction to the preaching against sin.

The punishment of Ananias and Sapphira by God is an indication that Christ's statement in Matthew 13:29-30 does not teach the one "ministering the gospel of God" (Romans 15:16) to stop preaching the truth, or to stop rebuking or condemning sin (Acts 5:1-10).

The sins of the Jews that Stephen pinpointed depict that Christ's words in Matthew 13:29-30 do not teach a restriction to preaching against sin, whatever the sin may be – Acts 7: 9, 19, 24, 28, 39-43, 51-52; cf. Mark 7: 20-23; Romans 1: 28-32; Galatians 5:19-21; etc.

The rebuke that Peter gave Simon in Acts 8:18-23 means that Jesus' words in Matthew 13:29-30 do not teach a restriction to preaching the truth or condemning sin.

The reprimand Elymas the sorcerer received from Paul, the apostle, in Acts 13:8-11 shows that Jesus' words in Matthew 13:29-30 do not teach a restriction to rebuking a sinner whenever such is needed in the preaching of the gospel.

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 5; 6; 8; 10:1-22 clearly depict that Christ's words in Matthew 13:29-30 do not teach a restriction to preaching the truth; exposing and rebuking sins, and or judging.

Paul's words to the Thessalonians concerning walking disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12, 14), and his instruction to Titus on one who is divisive (Titus 3:10-11) are a clear evidence that Jesus' words in Matthew 13:29-30 do not teach the apostles, preachers, evangelists, etc. to stop the preaching of the truth; to stop rebuking sin in the church; and to stop judging the guilty in the congregation of the saints.

There are other instances of gospel propagation in the Bible after Jesus' words in Matthew 13:29-30 that show that these words of Christ never teach a restriction to preaching the word, but a few that are mentioned are sufficient.

The above presentation has elucidated that the parable of the wheat and the tares, especially, Matthew 13:29-30 does not teach a restriction to preaching "the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). Therefore, let those who, on their reading of Matthew 13:29-30 for the first time, and superficially too, may have thought, said, believed, and preached that Jesus' words in Matthew 13:29-30 teach one not to preach against sin, or judge (John 7: 24; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5) desist from such exercise. Let us study (2 Timothy 2: 15) to know God's will and do it, for failure to do so will only lead to being gathered together for burning by the reapers in the time of harvest. Therefore readers, believe the gospel, repent and be baptized, that you may be added to the church (Acts 2: 38, 41, 47); that is, the church of Christ (Romans 16:16).

Thanks and God bless you.

Faith and Opinion

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Once I drove over an hour to hear a preacher, When he got up to speak he announced he would prove that Cain was born before Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden. I wondered two things to myself: How will he do that and what does that have to do with my salvation? He spoke for an hour. When he got through two questions were on my mind: How can he prove his point and what does it have to do with my salvation? I would have done better to stay home and watch a ball game on TV.

He didn't differentiate between faith and opinion and preached his opinion. He treated his opinion as if it were the word of God.

Some treat their fallible, human opinions as if they were faith. Some treat the infallible faith as if it were opinion. Both fail to make the distinction Isaiah taught for the Lord:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways’ says the LORD.

*“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).*

What is the difference between faith and opinion?

Faith

- **Faith is God’s revealed will.** The faith “was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude verse 3). Paul preached the gospel that was revealed to him by Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12), but in doing so he proclaimed “the faith” (Galatians 1:23). The gospel is “the faith” because it produces faith in the hearts of those who hear and accept it (Romans 10:8, 17).
- **Faith determines fellowship.**
*“Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works” 2 John verses 9-11, **English Standard Version**).*

The word “greeting” is use in the sense of “welcome” (International Standard Version).

- **Faith is the basis of unity.** We are united on the “one faith” (Ephesians 4:5). We must “speak the same thing.” There should “be no divisions among you, but” you must “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). We cannot all agree on our opinions, but we can stand together on the faith.
- **We must judge others on the basis of the faith** (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).
- **Preachers must proclaim the faith.** Paul preached “the faith” (Galatians 1:23). He had “the spirit of faith,” thus he could claim, “I believed and therefore I spoke” (2 Corinthians 4:13). We must “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).
- **In fact, we must contend for the faith.**
“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude verse 3).

Opinion

The Greek word “hairesis,” from which we get our word “heresy,” is found nine times in the New Testament. In the **New King James Version**, the word occurs six times in the book of Acts, where it is always translated “sect” (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5, 14; 26:5; 28:22). In other books, once it is translated “factions” (1 Corinthians 11:19) and twice “heresies” (Galatians 5:20; 2 Peter 2:1). W.E. Vine, in his **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, observes that the term

“denotes (a) ‘a choosing, choice’...; then, ‘that which is chosen,’ and hence, ‘an opinion,’ especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects” (2:217).

Everyone, has opinions, things we think are true but cannot prove by the Bible. My opinion is that chocolate pie is better than pumpkin. You may disagree, but that won’t change my opinion. If either of us decides to teach his opinion and demand that others accept it, that is heresy. If we gather a following around our opinions and exclude those who disagree, we have formed a sect. If we treat our opinions as if they are the word of God and teach them as divine truth, we are teaching heresies (2 Peter 2:1).

- **Opinions are man’s thoughts.** Some think it is good to eat meat; some eat only vegetables (Romans 14:1-2). Some keep certain holidays; some do not (Romans 14:5). These are opinions.
- **Opinions must NOT determine our fellowship.** The one who eats meat should not look down on the vegetarian (or vegan), and the vegetarian must not condemn the one who eats meat (Romans 14:1-5).

- **We may have diversity in matters of opinion** (Romans 14:6, 14). We must be able to have meat eaters and vegans in the same congregation without conflict.
- **Opinions Must NOT be the basis of judgment** (Romans 14:13). Don't judge me for eating bacon and giving presents at Christmas, and I promise not to despise you if you abstain from one or both.
- **We must NOT preach our opinions** (Romans 14:22). I promise not to preach that we should eat catfish or shoot fireworks on the 4th of July, but you should not preach against these innocent practices.
- **And, we must NOT contend for our opinions** (Romans 14:22). The context demands that the word "faith" is used in a unique sense in this verse, that is, full persuasion in one's own mind that a practice is allowed. Here we must keep our faith to ourselves, but we must preach and contend for the one faith, the gospel (Galatians 1:23; Jude verse 3).

Conclusion

When I was a beginning preacher (a long time ago), I was in a home Bible study involving two gospel preachers, two Methodist preachers, and a young couple. The young woman asked, "Why do members of the church of Christ believe baptism is necessary for salvation?" The other gospel preacher quoted without comment Mark 16:16 - "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." One of the Methodist preachers replied, "That's just your opinion."

He didn't know the difference between faith and opinion. If I can put my finger on the verse that teaches it, that's faith. If I just tell you what I think, that's opinion. Never confuse the two.

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

[Click here](#) to forward this email to a friend

Meditate On These Things (MOTT)
2950 Hwy 5 S
Mountain Home, Arkansas 72653
US

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

vertical DELIVERED BY
response
Try It Free Today!