

Expository Files

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EF 14.4 ~ April 2007

Front Page

Challenging the Atheist *By Jon W. Quinn*

An atheist is a person who does not believe in God. The word “atheist” is a compound word meaning “against God.” He or she believes that the universe came to exist by some natural mechanism rather than by the creative act of God.

Usually the atheist will say he does not believe in God because he cannot see Him. This sounds well thought out and reasonable. But can he explain the origin of the universe based on what he now sees? No, he cannot. No one has seen energy either being created or destroyed. No creation process, either natural or supernatural, has ever been observed. If one rejects supernatural creation because it has not been observed, then he must reject natural creation on the same basis. That leaves us with the embarrassing conclusion that nothing has been created and therefore nothing now exists, so why are atheists even having this conversation? The Bible tells believers to “always be ready to make a defense to everyone that asks you” to give account for what we believe (1 Peter 3:15). It seems that the atheist should at least do likewise.

Even atheists live by faith, though not faith in God. They believe in things they have never seen. Most atheists believe that George Washington existed, but not a one of them were around to actually meet him. To say that one does not believe in God because he has never seen Him is foolish and inconsistent. To cast off belief in God is to also admit that life is without

purpose because our very existence is just the result of blind, cosmic accidents randomly occurring and there is no answer to the age old question “Why are we here?” However, believers know that they exist as a part of a plan; that they have purpose and reason, and this is just the beginning of an eternally satisfying life extending beyond this world.

Who Is The Lord That I Should Obey His Voice?

Exodus 5:1-4

By Jon W. Quinn

When Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh, they had a message from God (Exodus 5:1). We often observe how foolish Pharaoh was for his response, which we will consider in a moment. It is true that his response was both foolish and arrogant. But before we consider it, try to put yourself in his place.

He was the great Pharaoh. His power was accepted far and wide. He was the most powerful man in the most powerful nation on the earth. He understood power in it's earthly forms; armies and chariots and gold. If there had been a vast army of warriors standing behind Moses and Aaron, then perhaps his attitude toward them and their God would have been different.

But to Pharaoh, the very idea of obeying a God he had never seen, a God of lowly slaves of shepherd stock, was ludicrous! And this Moses was not a very convincing speaker either. What does a leader of sheep know about leading men? And his brother Aaron is only a slave and the son of a slave. Neither Moses nor Aaron possess any quality that would impress Pharaoh.

So, how can a God who would send a shepherd fugitive and a slave to deliver His warning be revered by the powerful Pharaoh?

The Request and the Response

“And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.”' But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides, I

will not let Israel go.' Then they said, 'The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.' But the king of Egypt said to them, 'Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get back to your labors!'" (Exodus 5:1-4).

The Pharaoh asks, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice..." he is not seeking information. He is simply ridiculing the whole notion that he would be even slightly inclined to listen to such a God or His spokesmen. He is far more concerned in getting the peoples' minds focused back on who is in charge and that they better be getting busy.

Pharaoh's refusal to obey the Lord comes from His arrogance, and his arrogance came from his ignorance. By the way, one can often find the same thing today as the source of the problem when men and women live in rebellion against the Lord.

But for the sake of those who would honestly like to have Pharaoh's question, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice" answered, let's provide some answers.

Almighty

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.'" (Revelation 19:6). The Greek word translated "almighty" in this verse is used some ten times with reference to God in the New Testament. It means to be "all powerful" or "omnipotent." God is able to do anything and everything that is consistent with His purpose, will, and righteous character. There are things that are impossible for men to do, but not God. Jesus said, "The things impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:27).

God's divine power is seen in the creation. As we look into our world and the universe around it, we see the things God has made. Not only did He fashion and form it, He called the very molecules of matter and created the very forces of energy into existence from nothing (Romans 1:18-20). Perhaps had Pharaoh known and accepted that He was dealing with the Creator of all things, he would have had more respect for the words of Moses and Aaron. Certainly the same can be said for man today.

All Knowing

"Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure' (Isaiah 46:9,10).

There simply is nothing of which God is not aware. He knows from the beginning of a thing what the outcome will be. That which He proclaims to us concerning the past, present and future through His prophets is always accurate.

God had even told Moses and Aaron what Pharaoh's reaction would be to the request, and to each of the plagues that would follow. He knew the very heart of Pharaoh. Perhaps if Pharaoh had not thought of himself as so smart, and Aaron and Moses as so backwards, he would have had greater respect for the Lord's word. Again, bringing the point home to the twenty-first century, men today need to have a greater appreciation for the wisdom of God. To mock His word and refuse to be guided by it is no better than Pharaoh, and the outcome will be just as totally disastrous.

All Loving

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16). If we only knew that Jehovah God was "almighty" and "all knowing" it would be enough to respect what He has spoken. But there is more reason to do so. God has blessings for all those who fear Him from whatever nation on all the face of the earth.

Peter came to recognize that God desires men and women of every nation to come to Him through His Son, Jesus. He said, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him." (Acts 10:34-35). What an honor! The almighty, all knowing one desires to bless me and will welcome me to Him if I will fear Him and do what is right! He will not cast me out just because I am not of a certain nation, or because I am poor, or rich, or tall, or short. He will protect me and guide me to eternal blessings in His Son. And while those in the world are concerned about war and terror and ozone depletion and disease, fearful that these things may

bring joy to an end, while I, too, am concerned, I know they cannot take away my greatest joy and my best victory; the eternal one!

Pitching Tents Toward Sodom
(Genesis 13)
By Ethan R. Longhenry

As Abram (later Abraham) and Lot lived and prospered in the land of Canaan, we are told in Genesis 13:1-9 that the land could no longer support the flocks of Abram and Lot together. This situation required a difficult decision-- the type of decision that many face during their lives. Lot was given the opportunity to decide where he wanted to live. We can read of his decision in Genesis 13:10-12:

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar. So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom.

In economic terms, Lot made a good decision. He chose the land that would provide him the best chance for success-- the green land that provided great areas for pasture. There was only one problem with this land, as revealed in Genesis 13:13:

Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against the LORD exceedingly.

The land was good; its inhabitants, however, left much to be desired. Lot's decision would cost him greatly! Let us now consider the consequences of Lot's decision to live in the midst of an exceedingly wicked people.

Pitching his tents toward Sodom cost Lot dearly twice. Lot was not the only one to see that the land was good; it was also under the hand of kings from the east. These kings fought against the kings of the area of Sodom, defeated

them, and Lot was taken captive (Genesis 14:1-12). Had it not been for Abram and his forces, Lot would have lost everything and would have been a slave back in Mesopotamia (Genesis 14:13-16)! Later, when Lot received divine visitors as guests, he felt compelled to offer the Sodomites his own daughters to defile rather than the visitors (Genesis 19:1-8). The next day, Lot fled from Sodom as God rained fire and brimstone upon the city, and his wife turned into a pillar of salt when she looked back (cf. Genesis 19:17-29). While his wife made the decision herself to look back and disobey God, had Lot never been in Sodom in the first place, the temptation would not have been present!

Lot's ability to raise good children was rather compromised. Lot's daughters were married to certain men of the city; while we do not know how righteous they were, we know that there were fewer than ten in the whole city, and therefore it is doubtful that they were good influences (cf. Genesis 18:31-33). Furthermore, the fact that afterward they both made their father drunk so as to have children by him does not speak well of them (Genesis 19:30-38). Since Sodom was so saturated with sin, should we be surprised to consider that Lot's daughters were easily infected by it?

While we cannot know what was going through Lot's mind while he was in the cave after the destruction of Sodom, we can wonder whether he was reflecting back on that fateful day recorded in Genesis 13 when he made his decision to pitch his tents toward Sodom. If he had to do it all over again, what choice would he have made?

We can certainly sympathize with Lot's plight, for we ourselves live in a sinful world and have been called upon to live in the midst of sinners (1 John 2:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:9-10). It is not as if we have the opportunity to separate ourselves entirely from sinners; how can we be lights in darkness if we are only around the light (cf. Matthew 5:13-16)?

Nevertheless, many times we do have the opportunity to make decisions as to where we will live, and we ought to consider Lot's example when we do. After all, Abraham also lived as a sojourner in the midst of people who also were sinners, and yet he did not suffer nearly as much as Lot! The land was perhaps not as good in the rest of Canaan, but the people were not as exceedingly sinful and respected Abraham (cf. Genesis 23:3-6).

We may be called upon to choose between two habitations. One may represent a great financial opportunity, and one will easily be able to satisfy physical needs and to support the family. What if that place has no congregation of brethren of like precious faith? With whom will you associate? How will you teach your children righteousness? There may be another habitation, where one will perhaps not have the best opportunity, but one can associate with good brethren and at least gain the respect of the rest of the community. Is not the benefit to the family far more worthwhile than a bit more money?

Lot shows that it is possible to live righteously in the midst of wicked sinners. His sufferings, however, ought to show us that we need to diligently consider how our environment affects our family and their relationships with God. Let us take care not to pitch our tents toward Sodom to our own destruction!

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Love The Brotherhood ***1 Pet. 2:17***

Three words need our attention. These words are found in 1 Pet. 2:17. The words are: Love The Brotherhood.

What's Happening In First Peter?

The apostle Peter wrote this to Christians in the regions of Asia. They were living under intense abuse. These Christians, Peter calls “pilgrims,” and he acknowledges the suffering that was their condition in life. Verse 6 in chapter 1 tells us they were being **grieved by various trials**. The next verse says they were being “tested by fire.” Later in First Peter, the apostle says they were being reproached for the name of Christ (4:14).

Now when you are suffering persecution, because of the activity of your faith in Christ, **what do you need?** You need the comfort of hope. You need the assurance that your faith is well grounded. Something else you need is: admonitions to continue, with all the duties that faith demands! There is a common temptation to say to yourself: *I'm suffering, this is hard, so I will just ease up a little in my obedience.*

The apostle Peter, in First and Second Peter, never even comes close to saying that. To the contrary Peter tells these suffering Christians to **keep doing what is right**. Both his epistles might be studied around the structure of that theme: doing what is right, in spite of all the difficulty that attends doing right (see 1 Pet. 4:19).

He tells them in chapter one and two: Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and be holy. Lay aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy and strife. Abstain from flesh lusts which war against the soul.

The suffering Christians are to continue their obedience to Christ, in spite of their hard circumstances. In fact, the more you suffer, the more involved you should be in growth, in obedience, in worship and prayer (those are your tactics to defeat the enemy and stand in the evil day, see Eph. 6:10-18). Peter said, if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed. And at the end of his Second Epistle, Peter says – “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,” (2 Pet. 3:18).

So it remains true today that suffering is no excuse for disobedience. Whatever my circumstance – easy or hard – the activity of my faith in Christ ought to move on, upward and onward toward maturity.

In First Peter chapter two, there are all these imperatives, to be taken seriously by those persecuted Christians, and indeed – to be taken seriously by every Christian.

Part of that is 1 Pet. 2:11-17.

¹¹Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹²having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

¹³Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—¹⁶as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Wherever I live, Asia or Texas, this needs my attention. Whenever I live, then or now, I ought to learn this and live it. And, whatever the condition of my life – easy or hard; peaceful or stressful – I need to give myself to this discipline. I need to apply everything in this passage, and everything the New Testament says about the conduct of God’s people.

And part of this paragraph is the statement we’re going to study: Love The Brotherhood.

What Is “The Brotherhood?”

The answer is simple, but I want to caution us here. We need to think in terms of people, not organizations. It is not THE CONGREGATION-HOOD or *sisterhood of churches*. It is THE BROTHERHOOD; people!

Now at first, it may sound like I’m just being fastidious or picky. Bear with me; this is not a trivial or merely semantic distinction. The unit implied in Peter’s statement is not local congregations but individual people. They are your brothers. There is a difference between loving all local congregations that practice what you accept as sound doctrine, and loving individual people. The former is general, organizational, and can quickly become denominational. The later is specific, relational and scriptural.

So let’s all agree that Christians need to be participants with other Christians collectively in local churches. Those local churches should seek submission to the teachings of the New Testament in every way. Yes, that’s what the apostles taught. But when we think of “the brotherhood,” we need to think of individual people, not an impossible-to-identify collection of local churches.

Here’s the simplicity of this. If God is your father, you are related to every other individual who also has God as their father.

Brotherhood is based on childhood and childhood on common paternity. Our siblings in the faith are not local churches – but individual people, who have obeyed the same gospel we have obeyed.

This might well be translated: **love the brethren**. It is about individuals who belong to God. And this statement in 1 Peter is not limited to the brethren you know personally or locally. All who belong to God should be the object of our deepest, warmest affection. Love the brotherhood.

“Just as the Godhood is the three who are God, the brotherhood is all who are brothers. Jesus said to his disciples, ‘you are all brethren,’ (Matt. 23:9). ‘For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,’ (Gal. 3:26). Every individual in the world who has been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27) is my brother or sister. To love the brotherhood is to love each such brother or sister, whether known or unknown,” (Sewell Hall, Biblical Insights, March 2007).

Love

This is that well-known Greek word: *Agape*, but I should add, this is the verb form and it is continuous: **Keep loving your brethren**. It is what the scholars call, “the durative present tense.” You start this when you obey the gospel; then you keep doing this. It is affection for God’s people, initially and then maintained for life.

This is active goodwill that is sacrificially dedicated to that which benefits the recipient(s). You have in your heart, emotionally and practically and actively, the good welfare of other Christians. You consider them as your relatives, and you treat them as family.

Now it may help to stop and consider what this doesn’t say. It doesn’t say, **WATCH THE BROTHERHOOD**. It doesn’t say, **CONTROL THE BROTHERHOOD**. It says, love the brotherhood.

Have you ever considered, the only passage in the New Testament that uses this word “brotherhood,” tells us one thing: **LOVE** the brotherhood. It is not my responsibility to monitor or watch the brotherhood; far be it of me or any man, to have any desire to control the brotherhood. One thing we are told – **LOVE** the brotherhood.

Three specifics

1. In order to love the brotherhood – I need to get beyond unjustified first impressions. Many of us have been guilty of this, maybe every one of us. You see somebody for the first time, or meet somebody for the first time and immediately – your mind goes to work making judgments. All kinds of things become a part of this impulse. Ugly or not ugly? Rich or poor? Smart or not? Even, faithful to the Lord or not. This is done with no objectivity; no

time to know a person, and complete ignorance of the circumstances of their life. Most of us have done this; we have met a Christian and within minutes, we have put together an internal profile; an impulsive, subjective impression before we know the person.

So we are quickly building an obstacle, that makes it almost impossible to build a bridge (see this in Jas. 2:1-9). The problem is, a prejudiced, unjustified first impression that becomes an obstacle to just, genuine and loving treatment.

Give your brethren a chance; get to know the person who may be hidden behind the first impressions. I've met people I first thought were not smart, and they turned out to be wise. I've met people I thought were wise, and they turned out to be foolish. In each case, I didn't take the time to wait and get to know the person in reality. In both cases, it effected my treatment of the person. To love the brotherhood I must learn to get beyond the typical, unjustified first impressions.

2. Self-Sacrifice

The apostle John wants us to know this, as written in 1 Jno. 3:14-18.

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

There are some simple signs of affection, which – if genuine – are perfectly right and to be encouraged, but do not in themselves fulfill the full measure of brotherly love. To smile and greet your brethren with warmth, courtesy and hospitality. To shake someone's hand or give someone a hug. That kind of attention is certainly acceptable, and can be of service in our relationships with each other.

But let's not entertain the idea that these gestures somehow complete our obligation. The apostle John is telling us of the extent of brotherly love. Verse 16 requires no spin; it is not written in apocalyptic language. **“But**

this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

This is love for the brethren that finds ultimate expression in an act of sacrifice that is exemplified by THE SACRIFICE of all sacrifices. The question needs a lot of thought. I shake hands with my brethren; I greet Christians; I may give someone a hug and to the extent of my ability, I may write a check to help a brother in need. **All of that is fine – but I’m not yet to the matter at hand. Would I give my life for the good of my brother in Christ?** Let’s be clear, John says we ought to! This is not about dying for buildings or even an idea! NO, this is giving yourself, your life, for your brother. That’s what it means to love the brotherhood.

3. Hebrews 13:1 - “Let brotherly love continue.”

What happens sometimes is, we start doing something that is good and right, but we quit. We develop a right attitude, but do not maintain it. We start some right practice, but give it up. **We fail to continue; we lack consistency in character, and perseverance in what is right.** We may be guilty of becoming “weary while doing good,” as described by Paul in Galatians 6:9.

I’ve seen this in people, have you? People get mad about one thing, and turn against the whole church the rest of their lives. Something happens (it could well be, something that should never have happened; an offense, or some evidence of hypocrisy), and the response of the immature is, to turn against all brethren; to give up on everybody, and just quit. That kind of response shows petty immaturity, that is rooted in selfish, vengeful thinking.

But something else it does is, that kind of response to a problem is directly disobedient to Heb. 13:1. Some brethren may mistreat you, but that’s no reason to stop loving all of them or any of them!! “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart,” (Gal. 6:9).

Let me say it this way: If you have good attitudes toward your brethren now, there will never be a reason in the future to change those good attitudes!! Even if somebody turns out to be crooked – God doesn’t tell you to stop loving them!! And if a minority of brethren turn out to be apostates - still,

there is no reason ever to hate anybody!! This says, Let brotherly love continue; not start and stop.

1 Pet. 1:22 teaches us about this: *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.*

Three words, which are part of Peter's instruction for all Christians of all time: **Love the brotherhood.** Is your attitude toward others healthy, mature, godly? Is it true, that your fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, is fully expressed in your relationships with everybody in God's family?

John revealed the pattern, in 1 Jno. 3:18. *My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

One day, there will no longer be any need for preachers to admonish us about this. One day, God's people will be together in a place where love will prevail, and hate will not emerge. Do you want to go to heaven?

Certainty

Lk. 1:1-4

Warren E. Berkley

"Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed," Lk. 1:1-4.

When you need objective information on any subject, what kind of information do you want? You don't want to be misinformed. You don't want to sort through a dozen opinions. You don't want to be deceived or misled. You don't want mere media sensationalism. You want the truth. If

we seek to be informed on some subject, we value good information; we want the truth.

I believe, in the passage above, there were at least two people who had this interest, Luke and Theophilus. Luke wanted Theophilus to know “the certainty” concerning the things he had been taught. Theophilus – based on this reference and Acts 1 – sought to be informed correctly about those things that pertain to Jesus Christ. Both author and reader placed the highest value on the truth, a true account concerning Jesus Christ.

Only this gospel writer begins this way. Matthew begins with the genealogy of Christ. Mark simply gives his gospel a short introduction: “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” John begins with who Jesus Christ is. Only Luke begins with this prologue, which is very formal; a common literary way to begin a document and the emphasis here lies in accuracy, in certainty. This shows the highest interests in truth beginning with . . .

Luke’s Indication of Eyewitnesses

In 1965, a man by the name of Al Primo was the news director of a Philadelphia TV station, KYW-TV. In a highly competitive market, they were looking for some slogan or phrase to re-craft their news program. Al Primo created a format called, “Eyewitness” news. They implemented the new format, under the title, EYEWITNESS NEWS. The format quickly brought the ratings of KYW-TV up, and they surged past the longtime leader for first place. In 1968, Primo moved to WABC in New York and took the format with him. Today, all over the country, local TV stations use the catchphrase, **Eyewitness News**. {Nobody says that quite like Marvin Zindler in Houston.}

In the judicial system, especially in criminal cases, if Prosecutors have eyewitnesses they present their case with more confidence. If the eyewitnesses agree and there are several who report seeing the same thing, the verdict for conviction is assured. You will hear lawyers say that the more eyewitness they have, who give the same testimony – the better their case.

In the Bible, not long into the early pages of the Old Testament, you can see clearly the value of eyewitnesses. Under the Mosaic Law, you couldn’t just accuse anybody of anything. It was necessary to have evidence and eyewitnesses were highly regarded. Not only in the Mosaic code, but in Matt. 18:16 and in 2 Cor. 13:1, it says – “let every word be established.”

When the gospel of Christ was presented to the world, and as it was being written by inspiration, eyewitnesses came forward, who had witnessed not only the life of Christ and His death, but His resurrection!

The apostle Peter made this fundamental: “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him for the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain,” (2 Pet. 1:16-18).

There were some in Corinth who claimed, “there is no resurrection of the dead.” The apostle Paul responded to that: “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time,” (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

The apostles didn't just make up the gospel story. The resurrection of Christ didn't begin as a rumor, that became a tradition, defended by people who didn't know the facts. Eyewitnesses gave such powerful testimony to the facts of the gospel, men who opposed the gospel didn't deny the facts, they went after the messengers (see the book of Acts).

Simon Greenleaf, one of the greatest authorities on legal evidences, concluded and wrote many years ago: “It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had no Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.”

So it was that Luke wrote to Theophilus, that from the beginning there were eyewitnesses who confirmed and delivered the story of Jesus Christ. The testimony was, He Is Risen!

Our confidence can be the same today. Everything about our faith and practice today rests on the historical fact of Christ's Resurrection. The

meaning we attach to being a Christian; the purpose of our work; the strength for that work and the hope we enjoy.

It is like Peter said: "...His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," (1 Pet. 1:3).

Luke said to his friend: "it seemed good to me."

There is another passage in the writings of Luke using the same expression. In Acts 15:25, in the letter sent out by the apostles after the meeting in Jerusalem over issues of Judaism, it said: "...it seemed good to us..." I take that, not to imply any doubt, but to mean – something called for; spiritually good, necessary.

We have just observed, Christianity is a religion built on facts; notably, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. But those facts will never have the intended force, until it seems good to us to provide this information; to deliver the message to people.

Just as it seemed good to Luke, it should seem good to us to undertake the work of dispensing this vital information. {Now Luke was inspired by the Holy Spirit. One translation says, he "had perfect understanding of all things from the very first." While this includes his own information and research, there was oversight and guidance in writing that we do not claim, when we speak or write today. Yet, these inspired men who gave us the New Testament were not without volition or free will; they were compelled by sincere motive, to instruct people in the truth, and to teach Christians, that they might have certainty concerning the things of the gospel. }

Christians today need such will and motive. Does it seem good to you to speak to your friends and neighbors about the gospel of Christ? Does it seem good to you to tell people that Jesus is the Head of one church? Does it seem good to you to encourage people to read the Bible, to have the information that was sent to Theophilus? Does it seem good to you to pray for the furtherance of the gospel and participate to the full extent of your ability?

Luke was not just a writer. He was a man, not only who knew the facts – he was moved by those facts. I believe he knew of the sin that is the ruin of the race. He was convinced, Jesus "presented himself alive to" many witnesses, involving "many infallible proofs." He knew well the events of the Day of

Pentecost. It was his steadfast purpose, not only to understand the significance of what was happening – but to call upon others to believe and obey Christ.

It all seemed good to him and it needs to call forth our efforts, in our time, with good motive, accompanied by prayer and every resource we can apply to the work.

Then, I want us to see that phrase again, in verse 4:

“That you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”

I hope it is true of each one of us that we want accuracy; we want certainty about those things that pertain to Jesus Christ. Have you noticed in recent time, there has been a resurgence of interest in who Jesus Christ is? **But the loudest voices seem to have no idea who He is!!**

Every holiday season, the TV networks and cable news magazines present to their audiences the modern speculation, the recent findings, the buzz in the academic world about who Jesus of Nazareth really was. Men who are called “scholars” will get together and report their research and debate the revisionists’ questions. You hear about the DaVinci Code, the so-called Gospel of Judas and the various oral traditions.

It seems to me – when I watch and read about all of this – there is a strong element of about 50% imagination, and 50% unbelief. It is pooled unbelief, that finds enough popularity and financing to reach people.

Often, attempts are made to prove preconceived skepticism and that imprint of unbelief is so transparent, you know you are going to hear more folklore than faith . . . more fraud than fact.

Such was the case last month when James Cameron and the Discovery Channel tried to stir up another skeptical enterprise. You’ve heard, no doubt, about the Jesus Tomb. Based on poor statistical analysis; implicitly corrupt historical models, and I think – unholy desire to cash in, press conferences and a TV special propelled another fraud on the public.

I’m at the place where I don’t believe all these sensational claims require a detailed response. Let us do what Luke did and direct people to the accuracy

of the gospel. If you want to know The Real Jesus, He emerges from the pages of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Instead of trafficking in presumptions and fantasy listen humbly to the gospel accounts. Give yourself to a fresh reading of the Bible - - without the ideological framework of humanism and modernism, and skepticism.

You will find simple, powerful honesty and evidence you can get in touch with, without the exploitive academic credentials men glory in. Approach the text of Scripture with a good and honest heart. You'll discover one who "committed no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." He authenticated His power to forgive sins by giving a paralytic the power to walk. He predicted His own death and it all came to pass just as He said. He was a teacher come from God, and He practiced what He preached.

No one ever thought like He thought. No one ever claimed what He claimed. No one ever taught what He taught. No one ever lived like He lived. No one ever died like He died. And though His own family and His own men were not ready for it – He arose from the dead. The compelling evidence of that history, Luke says, can be known with certainty!

The heart of the gospel is that Christ died, was buried, and was raised to die no more. Great significance is place on this history in the New Testament. These facts mean we can be forgiven and live right; we can be saved. Do not be deceived by the sensational efforts of unbelievers because they cannot change history, and they cannot take from you what you have from God. Read your Bible, put the truth into practice, and know the certainty of these things.

To hear this material delivered as a sermon, see the audio file at:

<http://www.lhmcallen.org/Mp3s.htm>

The Eternal Nature of God, the Son

Special Topic

By Jon W. Quinn

In a publication put out by the Watchtower organization, the group's very unscriptural view of the nature of the Son of God is touted and the following statement is made: "Being God's first creation, he was with the Father in

heaven from the beginning of all creation. Jehovah God used him in the creating of all other things that have been created.” This view tells us that the Son is not deity, not eternal, and not the creator of all things, but rather of “all other things.” But how can He have been created if He was “with the Father in heaven from the beginning of creation”? If He was God's first creation, then He wasn't with God from the beginning of creation, but from after the beginning!

The Watchtower Bible and tract Society is the publishing arm of the Jehovah's Witnesses. While there are many unscriptural doctrines brought forth on its pages, we shall be considering the organization's false teaching about the nature of God, the Son., whom the Bible represents as eternal and possessing the nature, or essence, of God. He is deity, one of the Godhead, and possesses all the characteristics of Deity. He is worthy of our worship as God. He is the Creator of all, co-existent in eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The Son as Creator of All Things

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” (John 1:1-3).

This “Word” is described with a personal pronoun (“He”) showing that He is a person, and responsible for the creation of “all” (not “all other” as suggested by the Watchtower) things without exception. Apart from His creative acts, “nothing” has come into being. It also says He co-existed with God and was God from the beginning. He was not “a god” as Jehovah's Witnesses suggest. He was “God.” Later, the passage says He became flesh and dwelled among us (John 1:14). For more on His role in creating all things, see also Colossians 1:16).

Passages About God Applied to Jesus

There are many Scriptural references about God that are applied to Jesus, including assigning to Jesus names and characteristics which belong only to the true and eternal living God. This shows very clearly that Jesus is Deity by ascribing to Him things that can only be said of God.

Knowing the hearts of others. Who knows what is in the hearts of others? God does! The Scriptures say, “... then hear Thou in heaven Thy

dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest, for Thou alone dost know the hearts of all the sons of men” (1 Kings 8:39). Does anyone else other than God share this knowledge? No! God “alone” does. This means if Jesus knows the hearts of others, then He must be God! The Bible says, “But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man.” (John 2:24,25; see also Revelation 2:23).

The Lord God in the wilderness. The prophet Isaiah described the ministry of John this way: “A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.'” (Isaiah 40:3). Clearly, this has its fulfillment in Jesus as the Lord building His ministry on the work of John. The New testament confirms that this is so. “For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!'" (Matthew 3:3).

The “Lord of lords”. Who is the “Lord of Lords”? And how many “Lords of lords” are there? There is one and it is God. "For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords,” (Deuteronomy 10:17). Jesus, the Lamb, deserves and wears this title which may only be properly used of God. "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful." (Revelation 17:14).

Only Creator. Some would say that God created the first creature and then the creature created everything else. But the Bible says that God had no help from any creature in the work of creation. God says, “I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself, And spreading out the earth all alone.” (Isaiah 44:24). Did God create all alone, or did He have help. He says He did it alone. The Watchtower says He had help.

The foundation of the earth. Very clearly, in a prayer to God, the Psalmist credits Him with “laying the foundation of the earth.” Notice the 102nd Psalm, a prayer unto God. The later part of the prayer reads this way: "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days, Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old Thou didst found the earth; And the heavens are the work of Thy hands. Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing Thou

wilt change them, and they will be changed. But Thou art the same, And Thy years will not come to an end.” (Psalm 102:24-27). However, in the New Testament, we see very plainly that this all has reference to the Son of God (Hebrews 1:8-12). Of course, He is God!

The One who descended. The Psalmist spoke of a time when the Lord God would be among us. He wrote, “The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness. Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captive Thy captives; Thou hast received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell there. Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, The God who is our salvation. Selah.” (Psalm 68:17-19). Everyone understands that this is referring to God. It is a prophecy of what God, the Son will do (and now, has done, with his ascension). The New Testament explains, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.' (Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” (Ephesians 4:7-10). Clearly, Jesus is God.

Plan of Salvation

By Jon W. Quinn

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

(Acts 2:36-38).

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

Final Page

Warren E. Berkley

Two Things I Learned From W.R. Jones *Warren E. Berkley*

W.R. Jones, well-known Texas preacher, died the other day. It was not, however, being well-known that motivated him; it was being known by the Lord. I remember many things about W. R. Jones, all of them good and valuable to me. Two things remain vivid as I think about my experience with him.

He held a meeting where I was working (Mulvane, Kansas) back in the 1970's. It was my usual practice then, to bring a brief case full of work home every night. I would spend six to eight hours in the office at the church building during the day. Then pack up this brief case with incomplete sermons, class notes, bulletin articles to proof, correspondence, etc. Sometimes right after supper with my family, as soon as the table was cleared, I would open up this work for a couple of hours. We had two boys at the time, one not in school yet. During the meeting with W.R., I would walk out of the building after each service in the evening with this loaded brief case. On Friday night, as the meeting closed, we were standing around just outside the locked doors. I was giving W.R. my good regards and wishes. Before we parted, he pointed to the brief case and said, "you need to

leave that here.” We bid each other farewell. Immediately I knew what he meant and I made an effort to take his advise. He was telling me to spend more time with my family.

W.R. Jones was always impeccably dressed. He wore a suit and tie well, sometimes with a pocket watch attached to a chain dropped in his vest pocket. He was convinced that one should dress well when coming to worship, and he was convinced of the dignity of the pulpit. He was talking about this long before our society took a turn toward casual, worldly attire. Not everybody listened to what he said. But nobody ever saw W.R. dressed in anything less than his best, suitable for the occasion and accompanied by his own personal charm and old-fashioned gentlemanly ways.

*Here’s something typical of W. R.’s preaching. He wrote this in The Preceptor, June, 1999. This was part of an article entitled, **Three Simple Rules.***

“Let’s talk about the remedy for the ills of society. It is simple: turn back to God and His Word. But, this is not what a majority of the people want to hear. They don’t want to hear the Law of Christ preached, they don’t want to open the Bible and read it for themselves, and they don’t wish to discuss it with those who care about their eternal destiny, *but they want the problem solved.* Folks, we need to ‘back the wagon up.’ Let’s get back to the fork in the road and take the right path. Our nation is bypassing the things that make a nation great. God said in Proverbs 14:34, ‘Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people’.”