

WHERE IS GOD WHILE THE FOUNDATIONS ARE CRUMBLING?

By Danny Boggs

We're all worn out by the violence. One news account after another of senseless death and destruction hits us before we've worked our way through the last one. Our hearts break for the people experiencing it up close and personal. Our minds puzzle over the people who perpetrate it. Insecurity creeps in. Could someone run over us or our loved ones on purpose with a truck? Could our fun getaway be interrupted by gunfire? Could someone invade our peaceful place of worship with murderous intent?

If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? Psalm 11 answers: "In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, 'Flee like a bird to your mountain, for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart; if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?'" The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in

heaven; His eyes see, His eyelids test the children of man. The Lord tests the righteous, but His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. Let Him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulphur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the Lord is righteous; He loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold His face."

David suffered the terror of madmen. He was no coward. Voices of despair urged him to run away, to flee like a bird to a mountain. But he would not shirk his responsibilities, nor would he forsake his trust in the Lord.

Our culture suffers the consequences of a sustained campaign against the value of human life. The glorification of self-absorption has distracted us from the real needs of others. Murder of the most helpless has been sanctioned in the highest reaches of human government. People

have mindlessly and even eagerly been entertained by the bloodshed on the big screen and in the virtual world. It has come home to roost in our society and especially in the minds of deranged men. The one who has been a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44) seems to be having his way.

God is not pulling the strings. People are not puppets. To the core of His being He hates the wicked and the one who loves violence; He will make sure the havoc they wreak revisits them for eternity. Meanwhile, He can use the trials to fine-tune faith. God longs for the upright to behold His face; they will.

Where is God while the foundations are crumbling? The Lord is in His holy temple, on His throne in heaven. The end of the news report is not the end of the story. Take refuge in the Lord.

— Neosho, MO

ASHAMED TO BE ASHAMED

By Lewis Hale

Recently some gospel preachers were discussing problems plaguing our brotherhood. Much of the discussion centered on the fact that there is a concerted effort on the part of some to change the face of the church.

Some would alter the role of women in the church so that the ladies can have any role that the men do. Some would make the day of the week for taking the Lord's Supper to be optional. One "prison minister" serves communion to prisoners on Tuesday evenings. Still others regard the use of instrumental music to accompany our singing to be a matter of opinion and not a matter of faith.

Questions were asked regarding why these views were being spawned. Those professing the views claim they are the result of a new approach to understanding the scriptures. Someone suggested it was more likely that men

decided what they wanted to do then found an approach to the scriptures which they believe would allow their practices.

It was suggested that these views may be held due to a combination of factors. One suggestion seemed more significant to me than the others. Someone said that these brethren advocating a "new hermeneutic" have found our "traditional views" to be an embarrassment to them. They are embarrassed in the presence of the "pious unimmersed" when we preach that sinners who are not baptized are lost. They are embarrassed when we preach it is wrong to use instrumental music when singing in worship of God. *ad infinitum*.

I fear that the word "embarrassment" is not quite the proper word. It seems more to me that these people are ashamed. And Jesus

said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in the Father's and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:26.)

Someone long ago put it aptly, "I'd be ashamed to be ashamed." - Deceased

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." (Romans 1:16.)

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

Jonah: A Fish Story? Does It Matter?

By Joe Slater

Few Bible accounts meet with greater skepticism than Jonah and the whale. Even people who say they believe the Bible have difficulty accepting certain parts of it. Some claim the book of Jonah is just a myth, or perhaps an allegory or parable teaching a moral lesson rather than an actual historical record.

What about this? Was there really a man named Jonah? Did sailors actually throw him overboard during a raging storm? Was he truly swallowed whole by a gigantic sea creature in whose belly he lived for three days before being vomited out? In an age of rapidly advancing scientific knowledge, can reasonable, rational people believe such a thing? And does it really matter whether we believe a short little book nestled back toward the end of the Old Testament?

Scripture presents the account of Jonah as historical fact. It contains none of the marks of allegory, legend, parable, or myth. The very first verse identifies Jonah as "the son of Amittai." Similarly, the prophet Joel is "the son of Pethuel" (1:1), and Hosea is "the son of Beeri" (1:1). Only the most radical skeptics deny that Joel and Hosea were historical people. Jonah is also referred to as historical in 2 Kings 14:25 where king Jeroboam II "restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher."

Yes, it matters! Critics complain that the account of Jonah is just too far-fetched and outlandish to be taken as historical fact by modern educated people. But the Bible presents it as historical. Nineveh was a real city; the Assyrian empire was all too real, and an imminent threat to Jonah's people, the very real nation of Israel.

But Jonah lived over 2500 years ago! So who cares whether he was real, or just a story-book character who teaches us some good moral lessons? Friends, we had better care! Here's why:

Jesus of Nazareth treated the account of Jonah as historical. "A sinful and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here." (Matthew 12:39-41.)

Folks, if Jonah isn't historical, then Jesus loses all credibility. Our confidence in Him as the Son of God goes up in smoke! Jesus predicted His own resurrection from the tomb as a likeness of Jonah's exit from the belly of the fish. If Jonah wasn't real, then Christ's resurrection isn't real either,

THE TRUTH OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

By Milton Smith

Like all other Christians, there was a time in my life that I had to intellectually decide if the resurrection of Jesus actually took place. The reason this is such a critical question is because the entire claim of Christianity rests solely on this historical event. Paul himself conceded the fact that if our Lord's resurrection did not take place, Christianity is a false religion offering false hope. (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:13-19.) I, like so many others before me, had to weigh the evidence and determine whether or not I would commit my life to this claim. When I looked at the evidence, the choice was a simple one to make.

The lines of evidence that Jesus rose from the dead are many. The empty tomb must be seriously considered. Who opened the tomb? Jesus' followers had not the opportunity and his enemies had not the motive. Yet the great stone was rolled away and the tomb stood wide open. But not only this, the open tomb was empty. Jesus' enemies went to the "nth" degree to guard that tomb and make it secure, yet it was found vacated early that Sunday morning. But also the shroud was left behind inside the tomb. Robbers illegally entering that sepulcher to steal away the body would have been in a very big hurry to leave. So, why would they have taken the time to remove the shroud from the body? If Jesus himself did not remove this shroud, the reason for it being left behind remains a mystery. We are also told that the headband was rolled up and placed precisely and neatly by itself; it was not hastily removed and thrown to the ground but neatly folded. Whoever removed this headband was in no hurry.

Yet, if the tomb was opened and vacated but Jesus was never seen again, the claim of resurrection would have been less credible. But hundreds of people claimed to have seen the risen Christ. Some even testified that they ate and drank with him after He rose from the dead. Jesus' own apostles were persecuted and imprisoned (most were executed) for their claims, yet they never recanted nor repudiated what they had seen. The very existence of Christianity nearly 2000 years later - with those magnificent memorials such as the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day - cannot be brushed aside as irrelevant. All the facts mentioned above demand explanation. Only the resurrection of Jesus from that tomb agrees with every fact. I have always stood secure in my personal, life-changing decision to follow the One who obviously rose from the tomb.

— Tulsa, OK

OUR CRAZY WORLD

By Joe Dale Wilson

Wars have been fought and governments have issued laws to bring about peace and harmony between ethnic groups and tribes. It has not worked real well.

In heaven there are not going to be races and gender differences for we will all be like the angels. (Matthew 22:30.) God wants us to learn that now! Therefore God has given us a place where such beloved peace and harmony can be found. That place is Jesus Christ!

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both (Jews and Gentiles) one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.” (Ephesians 2:13-15, italics added for clarity.) “And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off (Gentiles) and to those who were near (Jews). For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” (Ephesians 2:17-19.)

I cannot change the race or gender into which I was born. Therefore, I cannot become less white as Coca Cola has told their employees to be. I can make sure that I have the attitude that Peter learned when he went to Cornelius’ house. “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” (Acts 10:34,35.)

All races and both genders are equal in Christ, even as the rich and poor and the educated and uneducated. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28.)

While many in our country seem to have lost touch with reality and are being totally silly, Christians should know that we respect all races and love our neighbors as ourselves. We need to be sane in a crazy world!
— Vernon, TX

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12.0)

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and we are, as Paul said, “of all men most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:19.)

No need to fear the day of judgment, either. If Jonah isn’t historical, then neither the threatened overthrow of Nineveh nor their repentance and survival means anything.

We can believe Jesus, or we can surrender to the critics who deny all things miraculous. What say you?

— Justin, TX

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

I ADMIRE KIND PEOPLE

By Dalton Key

From the wit and wisdom of Abraham Joshua Heschel: “When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people.” As I find myself getting older, I tend to agree.

Though in short supply these days, kindness has always been in high demand. Most of us are sadly much more enthusiastic with receiving kindness than in extending it - especially toward those who disagree with us.

I don’t have to agree with you. I don’t have to approve of the things you do, the positions you hold, or the associations you choose to pursue. But I do have a divine obligation to be kind to you. The inspired Peter says simply, “Be courteous.” (1 Peter 3:8.)

Where have we gotten the warped notion that difference in thought permits discourtesy in speech and contempt in conduct? Such ugliness was not learned from the Lord!

Christ was a walking, talking demonstration of “truth in love.” He never refused to speak with someone He disagreed with. He listened. He waited to hear the question before giving His answer. He never got into shouting matches with His enemies. He never started or spread ugly, unfounded rumors about others, even those who were actively working against Him. He never attempted to silence His critics by means of mean-spirited barbs, baseless accusations, or snarky jabs of sarcasm.

We would all do well to follow our Lord’s example.

To be right, both morally and doctrinally, is imperative; to be right in our treatment of others is no less important. Being long on scriptural argument provides no license for coming up short on scriptural attitude.

“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:17-21.)

May we all determine to be more like Christ, “speaking the truth in love,” (Ephesians 4:15), and less like the dog-eat-dog world seeking to shape us into its mold.

Yes, the older I get the more I admire kind people! Remember, it is never the wrong time to be kind.



SPEAKING WHAT WE BELIEVE

By Danny Tunnell

Jesus told his followers, “Have faith in God.” (Mark 11:22.) Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6.) What we speak by faith must agree with the word of God. (Romans 10:17.) Paul exclaimed, “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.” (2 Corinthians 4:13.) The God kind of faith calls those things which are not as though they were. (Romans 4:17.)

Throughout the Bible we have examples of believers speaking their faith first and then experiencing God’s blessings. In so doing they were not glorifying themselves, but they did glorify God. They walked by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7.) They spoke their faith first and then what they decreed with their mouth came to pass. (Job 22:28.)

Moses told Pharaoh, “Let God’s people go!” (Exodus 9:13.) First, Moses spoke it, and then it eventually happened despite Pharaoh’s resistance.

Think about the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4. This woman with God’s help was able to have a child. (2

Kings 4:17.) When the boy was older he went out into the fields to work with his father. He became extremely ill and later died. How did his mother react? She decided to go see the man of God, and she stated to him, “all is well.” (2 Kings 4:18-26.) It wasn’t that way when she left. The boy was actually dead when she left. But how did it turn out for her? After expressing her faith in the well-being of her son, the power of God through Elisha brought the boy back. (2 Kings 4:32-35.)

Think about the twelve spies of Israel in Numbers 13. Two of the spies came back from Canaan believing God’s promise that He would give them the land. By faith, Joshua and Caleb said, “Let us go up at once and possess it, because we are well able to overcome it.” (Numbers 14:6-9.)

David is called “the man after God’s own heart.” (1 Samuel 13:14.) Why? Largely because of his faith. Before David slew Goliath, he spoke his faith first. This young shepherd boy faced the giant who had been trained in military warfare since his youth. (1 Samuel 17:33.) David didn’t need King Saul’s sword and armor! David

had a sword Saul couldn’t see. It was David’s mouth and the words he spoke. After Goliath cursed him, David called him an uncircumcised Philistine. In other words, Goliath had no covenant with God. By faith, David said, “The Lord is going to deliver you into my hand.” (1 Samuel 17.)

Those that walk by faith are as bold as a lion!

The three Hebrews in the book of Daniel refused to bow to the king when the music was played. (Daniel 3:5,6.) They refused to bow down before any other god, only the God of heaven. (Exodus 20:3.) By faith they told Nebuchadnezzar, “Our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us,” and He did. (Daniel 3:17.)

Are we able to say this along with Paul? “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.” Faith in God’s promises enables us to see the outcome in advance.

— Miami, OK

BRINGING OUR NATION BACK TO GOD

By Bobby Dockery

The Bible insists that there is a connection between the moral vigor of a nation and the survivability of a nation. The strength of any nation lies in the goodness of its people.

“Blessed is the nation, whose God is the Lord.” (Psalm 33:12.)

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.” (Proverbs 14:34; Goodspeed’s Translation has: “But sin is a people’s ruin.”)

History is full of examples of nations which fell because they forgot God and failed to walk in His ways. Because of their national iniquity, God allowed Israel to fall to Assyria in 722 B.C. The wickedness of Assyria, in turn, led to their fall to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. The nation of Judah fell to these same Babylonians in 586 B.C., and, once again, God said it was because of sin. Mighty Babylon became so steeped in corruption

that God overthrew it in 539 B.C. Eventually Rome, the mightiest empire the world had known, collapsed when its burden of wickedness became too great to bear.

And America????

Righteousness is America’s greatest defense; sin is our window of ultimate vulnerability.

Do you love your country? Do you want to do something good for it? Then do all you can to help turn America’s heart back to God!

(As Alexis de Tocqueville once famously observed: “America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”)

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: ‘I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know,

my people do not consider.’ Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward. (Isaiah 1:2-4.)

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