

Expository Files



Jon W. Quinn, Warren E. Berkley - Editors

April, 2005

Front Page 12.4

Faith, Not Fantasy *By Jon W. Quinn*

It was just another weekend service for churchgoers in the Milwaukee suburb of Brookfield when, without warning, they began to be gunned down by one of their own. When it was over, the gunman had killed himself and seven others. Most of us can only begin to imagine the grief and the struggling with questions that the survivors in the congregation as well as the friends and relatives of the victims left behind are wrestling with.

The Charlotte, N.C.-based Living Church of God is a denomination that grew out of a schism in the Worldwide Church of God, formed in 1933, and focuses on "end-time" prophecies. Herbert W. Armstrong was the founder, but divisions took place after his death. Today, the main group is evermore main stream, but some of the smaller factions have held on to the various doctrines of Armstrong, including that Great Britain and the United States are the focus of prophecy and made up of the ten lost tribes of Israel. The church believes in keeping the Sabbath as well as the dietary laws and festivals of the Old Testament.

But back to the tragedy. Since I live in the "Chicagoland" area, not far south, our local radio and television stations spent quite a bit of time with this event. I was in the car and listening to a local talk-radio program in which the rather conservative host was getting some flak. She had made that comment that anti-religious zealots would probably try to make some anti-faith statement using the tragedy. Sure enough!

I listened to one caller do that very thing. She was blatantly anti-faith and relished the opportunity to say so. She said, "Faith is nothing but fantasy and everyone needs their fantasy, I guess." When she was corrected by the host who told her that faith was not the same thing as fantasy she got rather hateful and said, "Call it what you want, its fantasy."

Just to clarify: Faith is not fantasy. Faith is belief. Fantasy is make-believe. Those are two different things. Faith is something everyone lives by. To say it is the same as fantasy shows a close-minded ignorance which is blind because it chooses to be. Faith, the Bible says, is "the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1).

A good illustration is that of a jury. Every jury verdict rendered in our nation is done so "by faith." It is the result of members of the jury becoming convinced that something they did not see was true. Juries base their conclusion on the available evidence which includes testimony of witnesses.

That is precisely what Christians base their faith on. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of the Lord" (Romans 10:17). We consider the evidence that exists for that which we did not see. We consider the honesty and reliability of the witnesses. We consider motive. We look at their lives to see if they lived like they believed their message. When they mentions people, places and events, we look into history to see if those people and places really existed and the events really happened.

And, what we find, is that the testimony is correct wherever it can be tested. History and archaeology support our faith. And that is why it is faith, and not fantasy.

God Makes No Mistakes
(Genesis 18:1-33)
By Jon W. Quinn

Anyone who understands the truth about God knows that God does not make mistakes. Not a one. Never.

But that is not to say that it does not appear to us that sometimes maybe He has. But it is our perspective that is limited, while God's is

infinite. In the final analysis, the mistake will always be ours, due to our limited knowledge and wisdom (Job 42:1-3; Isaiah 55:8,9).

If you were to think that only people that were unbelievers, or perhaps with only very weak faith, would ever question God's decisions, plans or deeds, you would be wrong. In fact, the foremost example of faith in the Bible is that of Abraham. But sometimes, even Abraham had questions in his mind about whether God was doing the right thing.

He handled his puzzlement correctly. He was, after all, a man of great faith. He did not foolishly charge God, or mock Him, or rebel against Him, or curse Him. That is what many have done, and are doing, even today. But he did have some serious questions. I think, if we were to admit it, we would all have to say the same thing. Sometimes it is difficult for us to understand why God did this or didn't do that. That puts us in the company of Abraham, as long as we handle our puzzlement the same way he did. We continue to live by faith even when we do not perceive all of the answers. Being in the company of Abraham is being in pretty good company.

God's Friend

“...and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God.” (James 2:23).

First, Abraham walked with God in his life. Whatever questions Abraham may have had from time to time were not the result of his being hostile in mind toward God. He was not a rebel against the King of all.

Abraham's attitude was always, “When God speaks, I will respond in faith.” He was quick to hear, not merely listen. In the New Testament, the Bible says, “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8). This was typical of how seriously Abraham took the word of the Lord. That is what faith is all about.

That is exactly what our attitude ought to be as well. We need to have that kind of reverence for the Lord our God. The Lord has spoken in these “last days” to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-3). In this message, revealed in the New Testament, we find the revelation of God's will, and ought to have just as much respect for it as Abraham had for God's word to him.

Abraham's Guests

“Now the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.” (Genesis 18:1).

There were three that came to Abraham. He was very hospitable to them, offering them shelter and food (Genesis 18:1-8). The Lord and two angels are the guests, though it appears that Abraham does not know that at first (see Genesis 18:16,17; 22,23; 19:1). He is just being hospitable. The New Testament tells us to be likewise (Hebrews 13:2).

As the guests were eating they inquired about Abraham's wife, Sarah. They promised that by this time the following year, despite her extreme age, she would have a son. Sarah overheard, and laughed at such an unlikely event. But the Lord responded, "Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." (Genesis 18:14; see vss. 9-15).

We would all do well to always remember that question when we have doubts or are dismayed. "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?"

Abraham - The Lord's Confidant

The Lord had decided to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their extreme wickedness. Their evil had constantly challenged God, and they had despised the opportunities granted to them to repent. Time was up!

Abraham had pleased God. The Lord expresses confidence in Abraham; "...since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." (Genesis 18:18,19).

Today, you and I can also be “friends of God”! Jesus said, "You are My friends, if you do what I command you." (John 15:14). It worked for Abraham, and Jesus says it will work for us as well.

God - How Could You?

The Lord had made the coming destruction of Sodom known to Abraham. Abraham was flooded with dismay. “And Abraham came near and said, 'Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?'" (Genesis 18:23).

Abraham had relatives living there. Once he had saved the city from a foreign invader. Not everyone in Sodom were corrupt, were they? Abraham is very disturbed by this decision God had made.

The reason is that Abraham had always believed that God was just. But this did not seem just to Abraham... to “sweep away the righteous with the wicked.” That does not seem fair to me either. But I know something Abraham does not know, at least not yet.

Abraham sums up his problem. He said, “Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:24,25).

Ultimately, Abraham found out the truth (Genesis 18:25-33). God was no tyrant. He already knew there would be no righteous souls involved in the destruction. God would be just, and Sodom would be destroyed. The Lord would not treat the righteous and wicked alike. Abraham's problem had been that he had not known all the facts.

Sometimes it is the same way with us. We do not know all the facts, all the end results and we do not have access to all the important information. When we lack all the answers, we choose to live by faith. We do not have all the facts, but the Lord does. We trust in our God to do what is right as we trust in Him for victory. God makes no mistakes.

The Mountain of the Lord's House

(Isaiah 2:1-5)

By Fred Shewmaker

"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow into it. 3 Many people shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law. And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. 5 O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the LORD." (See also Micah 4:1-5).

There are two ideas usually advanced regarding the reason these two passages are almost identical. One is that both prophets quote from an earlier source. The other is that one of the prophets took it from the other. However, some would have Isaiah taking it from Micah, others would have Micah taking it from Isaiah and still others are not certain who took it from whom, but one took it from the other. I prefer Peter's explanation of the giving of prophecy: "...prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (1 Peter 1:21). Thus Isaiah and Micah prophesied that which the Holy Spirit moved each of them to prophecy. Why should that be thought strange when we consider Matthew, Mark, Luke and John repeatedly wrote about the same things?

Isaiah is straight forward regarding the thrust of the vision. What he saw was concerning Judah and Jerusalem. What he saw was not for the present nor near future, but rather "it shall come to pass in the latter days." This is the only occurrence of the expression "latter days" in the prophecy of Isaiah. However, it is not the only place it occurs in the Old Testament. After defining the Hebrew word involved as meaning: "in the end of the days," THE NEW BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS-GESENIUS HEBREW-ENGLISH LEXICON makes this comment: "a prophetic phrase denoting the final period of the history so far as the speaker's perspective reaches; the sense thus varies with the context, but it often is the ideal or Messianic future." It seem to be generally agreed that Isaiah used it in reference to the Messianic age.

Many interpret “the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains” as a reference to the prominence upon which the temple was built in Jerusalem. However, in prophecy symbols generally have the same meaning although they may be applied to a variety of things. In the prophecy concerning Babylon in Jeremiah 51:25 the prophet wrote, “Behold I am against you O destroying mountain, who destroys the earth,” says the LORD.” ‘And I will stretch out My hand against you, Roll you down from the rocks, And make you a burnt mountain’.” A mountain as a prophetic symbol indicates either a kingdom or a government which amounts to the same thing due to the fact that a kingdom is a form of government.

Thus it seems proper to understand the meaning of Isaiah 2:2 is that the government of the house of the LORD shall have preeminence over all levels of human governments. This harmonizes with Daniel 2:44 which tells us about a kingdom which God will set up that never shall be destroyed and will break in pieces and consume the world kingdoms of the prophecy and shall stand forever. It also harmonizes with the depiction of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16).

The mountain considered is “the mountain of the LORD'S house.” Although it would be natural for one to imagine that Isaiah would think of the physical temple in Jerusalem, it should be kept in mind that the prophets did not always understand the things they prophesied (1 Peter 1:10 & 11). The New Testament gives another identity to “the LORD'S house.” In 1 Timothy 3:15 the apostle Paul wrote, “I write so you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God,....” Now consider the fact that the church is equated with the kingdom. In Luke 22:29 & 30 Jesus told His apostles, “...I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom,....” Paul wrote the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2) then in chapter 10 verses 14 - 21 warned them against idolatry and fellowship with demons, stating in verse 21 “you cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons.” Thus showing that the Lord's table is in the church and therefore the Lord's Kingdom. Of course this simply shows that those in the church are the citizens governed by the King of the Kingdom. In Isaiah 2:2 “The mountain of the LORD'S house” refers to the government of the church which now is the LORD'S house - the house of God.

“And all nations shall flow to it.” After His resurrection Jesus, having received all authority, commissioned His apostles to go make disciples of all the nations (Mt. 28:19). In Acts 1:8 Jesus told them, “...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Chapter 2 of Acts records the Holy Spirit coming upon them and from that point through the book of Jude we have a record of the fulfilling of the Commission which Jesus gave. The invitation of Jesus is: “Come to Me, all...” (Mt. 11:28 - 30). When the apostle Peter went to the house of Cornelius, he said, “...in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:35). And in Colossians 1:23 the apostle Paul wrote that the gospel “was preached to every creature under heaven....”

The fulfilling of the “many people” section of Isaiah 2:3 can be seen in the New Testament record of the establishment of the church on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem and then its growth and development as the disciples of Jesus, being scattered from Jerusalem by persecution, went everywhere preaching the gospel - the word of truth (Eph. 1:13). “Philip went down to the city of Samaria” (Acts 8:5). Philip baptized the Ethiopian nobleman “and he went on his way” home (Acts 8:39). Thus the gospel became known in Ethiopia. Then we learn of a disciple at Damascus (Acts 9:10). In Acts 9:31 we read about “churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria.” We then read about saints “in Lydda” (Acts 9:32). Next we are told of those in Sharon turning “to the Lord” (Acts 9:35). In Acts 9:36 - 38 we learn of disciples at Joppa. In Acts 10 and 11 we learn about the gospel being taken to the Gentile Cornelius. In Acts 11:19 we are told about those scattered by the persecution going to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch “preaching the word.” “...The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). In Acts 13:5 we read about Barnabas and Saul preaching at Salamis, Cyprus. The record continues to reveal the spread of the gospel as far as Rome and even Paul contemplating of going into Spain. Paul's contemplation of Spain does not necessarily mean that the gospel had not gone there. There were saints at Rome before Paul went there (Ro. 1:7 & 13). Indeed many from the various nations were flowing into the church.

The last part of verse 3 is a parallelism: “For out of Zion shall go forth the law. And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” The elements of this parallelism are reversed. The beginning of the first line corresponds with the end of the second line – “Zion” and “Jerusalem” mean the same. And the

end of the first line corresponds with the beginning of the second line – “the law” and “word of the LORD” mean the same. The law by which those who lived before Moses did not go forth from Zion nor from Jerusalem. Neither did the law of the LORD given through Moses go forth from Zion or from Jerusalem, but from Sinai. Therefore Isaiah prophesied regarding a new law. The prophet Jeremiah also prophesied regarding a new law in chapter 31 verses 31 - 34. There the prophecy is of a new covenant. However, in that prophecy is the statement, “I will put my law in their minds, and write it in their hearts.” That this prophecy has been fulfilled may be observed in Hebrews chapters 8 and 10. In the allegory regarding a desire to be under the law which is found in Galatians 4:21 - 31 plainly shows that the bondwoman woman and freewoman are symbolic of two covenants. The covenant from Mount Sinai symbolized by the bondwoman, but Jerusalem above which is the mother of us all is symbolized by the freewoman because we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

In Hebrews 12:18 - 24 we are informed that we have not come to Mount Sinai (vv. 18 - 21), but unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn ones and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. Observe the things mentioned both in Isaiah 2 and here. The fulfilling of the prophecy "out of Zion shall go forth the law. And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" actually began at literal physical Jerusalem. However, the things which we have considered indicate that the prophecy was not referring to physical Jerusalem, but rather “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”

Previously we noticed the spreading of the word of the Lord when those scattered by the persecution went everywhere preaching it. Now notice in Romans 10:17 that faith is by hearing the word of God. Then consider 1 Thessalonians 1:8 where Paul wrote, “...from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia, but in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out,....” The law which is the word of the LORD did not originate with the firstborn ones - the church, but the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Individually and collectively the firstborn ones have a responsibility to support the truth taught by Jesus Christ and those whom He authorized to speak for Him. In John 13:20 Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” And the apostle Peter wrote, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.” In fulfilling the responsibility to support the truth each one needs to remember

that a curse has been pronounced on anyone who preaches a perversion of the gospel (Gal. 1:6 - 9) which is the word of truth (Eph. 1:13).

Isaiah 2:4 “He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people.” It does not appear to be an coincidence that this immediately follows “out of Zion shall go forth the law. And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” It is indeed the word of God that will judge us “in the last day” (Jn. 12:48 - 50) and “we will be judged by the law of liberty” (Jas 2:12). Although these verse are often applied to the final judgment, it should be remembered that when Jesus spoke of “the last day,” He, like Isaiah, was speaking before the time of “the last day.” We are judged by the word of the LORD and the law of liberty according to whether or not we do what His word, His law requires. In Matthew 7:24 - 27 those who hear and do what Jesus has said will be judged to be wise and those who do not do what He has said will be judged foolish. After the Day of Pentecost, all who obey Him are judged recipients of “eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:8 & 9). “...In every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:35). That righteousness is revealed in the gospel (Romans 1:16 & 17). In that the Lord who day by day adds to the number those who are being saved (Acts 2:47), it is necessary to draw the conclusion that since Pentecost mankind has been in the last days and the judging of the nations has been and is taking place.

Certainly the New Testament rebukes many people. It rebukes every sinner and all have sinned (Romans 3:23). When a sinner in any nation takes to heart the rebuke of the word of God, repents and determines to “walk in His paths” and is brought near by the blood of Christ; Christ Himself is our peace who has made both one and broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity ... so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace (Eph. 2:13 - 15). This is symbolized by beating swords into plow shears and spears into pruning hooks.

By this time it should be obvious that the prophecy of Isaiah 2:1 - 5 is not about physical things, but rather about the future spiritual government, kingdom or church which is the house of God. It is not a prophecy foretelling the future of carnal nations. Those from every nation who flow into the house of God, come under the dominion of King Jesus and submit to His governing of them “shall not lift up sword against” those from formerly enemy nations who have found peace in Christ Himself through His blood. The enmity between them has been abolished. “They shall not learn war

anymore.” They are instructed: “if it be possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Ro. 12:18); “pursue the things which make for peace” (Ro. 14:19); endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3); “Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:13); “pursue peace with all...” (Heb. 12:14) and “seek peace and pursue it” (1 Peter 3:11). We need not look to the future for what is referred to as “the peaceable kingdom. It is here and has been here in fulfillment of Isaiah 2:1 - 5 since the Day of Pentecost.

In the conclusion of Isaiah's prophecy the house of Israel is urged to “walk in the light of the LORD.” On the Day of Pentecost the apostle Peter made the appeal: “...let all the house of Israel know assuredly (or believe confidently) that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). This is a plea for them to accept Christ as their king; submit to His dominion; be governed by His word - His law; dwell in His house; be at peace and “walk in the light of the LORD.” It was “this Jesus” who in John 12:46 had said, “I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.” “This Jesus” also is the one who said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Consider also Matthew 7:13 & 14 and choose Jesus - the light, the way of truth which leads to life. “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,”

Phil. 4:13.

Warren E. Berkley

If you just read the first part of this verse, it would immediately sound an alarm indicating arrogance: ***“I can do all things.”*** This was the spirit that attempted to build the tower of Babel. This was the downfall of men like Saul or the Egyptian Pharaoh. Many today – infected by humanism and without any trust in God - make the same claim: “I can do all things.”

But the next two words in the verse take this out of the context of arrogance altogether: “through Christ.” It is not a boast of self: “I can do all things.” It is, I can do all things ***through Christ!*** There is a huge difference. It is one thing for someone to say, “I can do all things.” It is quite different to confess, “I can do all things through Christ.”

To get the impact of this, stop and think about what you couldn't do without Him! You could not effectively and thoroughly know your lost condition. Without Him, you could not have adequate concepts of God. Without Him, you could realize no victory over sin. Without Him, we would all be a victim of the wrath to come. Jesus said to His disciples – “without Me you can do nothing,” (Jno. 15:5). In Ephesians 2:12 teaches – outside of Christ, we have “no hope” and we are “without God in the world.”

So with Christ – through Him; in our relationship of active faith in Him – we have strength we could not have any other way! Strength to adequately evaluate ourselves. Strength to know the difference between right and wrong (by faithfully applying His Word). Strength that comes through the remission of our sins. Strength in response to prayer we offer to God through Him. Strength of character as we follow His example and obey Him. This is strength in such abundance, we are able to do everything God wants us to do. “I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.”

“Of the strength which Christ can impart, Paul had had abundant experience; and now his whole reliance was there. It was not in any native ability which he had; not in any vigor of body or of mind; not in any power which there was in his own resolutions; it was in the strength that he derived from the Redeemer. By that he was enabled to bear cold, fatigue, and hunger; by that, he met temptations and persecutions; and by that, he engaged in the performance of his arduous duties...” (Barnes).

(This is from the two sermon series, **TEN VERSES YOU NEED TO READ BEFORE YOU DIE.** To access that, visit www.warrenberkley.com)

Working Out Your Own Salvation

John Hagenbuch

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I

may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”

- Philippians 2:12-16

If we want to be saved from our sins, there are things that we must do in order to receive the free gift of salvation. We must individually **work out** our salvation, as the apostle Paul instructs. This obviously is going to require obedience. The Hebrew writer said of Christ that, “...having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who **obey Him.**”” (Hebrews 5:9; Emphasis Mine: JH).

Salvation comes from the grace of God, but we can only receive this gift that God wants us to have when we obey His gospel, and this is how we begin to work out our own salvation. We must **hear** the word, for “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). We must **believe** that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. As Jesus said: “For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). We must **repent** of our sins: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30) We must **be baptized** for the remission of sin, as the apostle Peter taught, to: “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). And if we have done all of those things, we must **live faithfully** until we die, or until the Lord returns, making sure that we follow and obey *all* the commands of Christ: “Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son” (II John 9).

Taking care of your own salvation is not a selfish ploy; it is a requirement, and completely necessary if you are ever going to help others to have a right relationship with God. Jesus speaks about this in the sermon on the Mount:

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First

remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." - Matthew 7:1-5

What Jesus taught on this occasion is often misused in attempt to prevent any and all proper judging. But what Jesus is actually emphasizing here is the importance of getting your own act together first. In trying to work out our salvation in the midst of this "crooked and perverse generation" (Philippians 2:15), we must be careful in how we react to others. It is possible to lose our salvation because of the manner in which we react to the world around us!

The apostle Paul saw the need to be very careful when trying to save others; he wrote: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:27). A "castaway" in the spiritual sense is one who becomes unfaithful before the end of their life. How tragic it would be if, when we go around preaching to others the truth, we do it in such a way as to "disqualify" ourselves of God's grace! We can be more careful and "shine as lights in the world" if we do so with "fear and trembling."

The word "fear" in connection with God is not very popular today. A majority of this generation seems to have diluted the concept of the "fear of the Lord" to the point that there is no place for "trembling" in their definition of "fear." But Jesus certainly taught the "fear of the Lord." He said: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

We must have this proper spirit of "fear and trembling." Without it, it is unlikely that we will seriously make the effort to "work out our own salvation." This could very well be the reason why there is so much apathy and fruitlessness among God's people today! There are many unjustified reasons for such fruitlessness, but if we are in continual efforts of "working out our own salvation with fear and trembling," there is no question that we would be bearing much fruit for the lord.

John Hagenbuch
JnJHagenbuch@msn.com

Were You Predestined To Read This Article?

(Special Topic)
By Jon W. Quinn

The Bible teaches predestination. But it does not teach the kind of predestination that some say it does. John Calvin taught that God had already predestined each individual to either eternity in heaven or in hell. He had also predestined every action that everyone would ever take and every thought of the mind. Every plan and idea, every effort... everything was predestined and is controlled by God.

This has the effect of denying that we have free will at all. Calvin said, “Who does not tremble at these judgments which God works in the hearts of even the wicked whatever He will, rewarding them nonetheless according to their desert... God works in the hearts of men to incline their wills just as He will, whether to good for His mercy's sake or to evil according to their merits... Whatever things are done wrongly and unjustly by man, these very things are the right and just works of God.”

So, every action of man was predestined by God. All of your actions and mine were not the result of our will, but His will. The Calvinists call this the sovereignty of God. He makes every decision in His universe and we make none.

While the Bible definitely does teach “predestination” it does not teach what Calvin taught. The Bible shows we do have free will. God's sovereignty permits it.

The Bible's Teaching of Predestination

The Bible uses words such as “predestine” and “foreordain.” But it does not use them in the sense that Calvinism does. The Bible does not deny human free will in the matter, but rather affirms it.

“He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,” (Ephesians 1:5). What does this passage and others mean when referring to predestination?

The Key to the Puzzle

A key to understanding the New Testament is to understand the Old Testament. Consider one such particularly clear case of predestination in the

Old Testament. Since it was written “for our instruction” (Roman 15:4) we will try to learn about predestination from it and this will help us to clearly understand what the New testament says about it.

God made a promise to Abraham. “Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. '" (Genesis 12:1-3).

This is actually a three-fold promise. God promised to make Abraham into a great nation, to give him the land to which he was being sent and to bless the whole world through His descendant. This last part of the promise had reference to blessing the whole world through a Savior or Redeemer. The Savior of all nations would be of the descendants of Abraham. This was “predestined” by God. Nothing could change it.

Future generations would make this promise seem less and less likely to occur. Abraham's descendants would rebel. They would become idolaters, forsaking God. They would partake in the darkest of pagan rituals, even offering their own children as sacrifices to heathen Gods. They would persecute and kill prophets that God sent to them to call upon them to return. They would be destroyed as a nation and taken into captivity. But none of this would cause what God had predestined to fail. The Messiah would still come through the Hebrews.

After the fulfillment of the promise in Jesus some 1900 years later, the Scriptures state concerning such promises “...when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ.” (Galatians 3:15,16).

Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the promise. Nothing had been altered or set aside. God did exactly what He had predestined. Note that predestination did not refer to God predestining people to heaven or hell in eternity. It had nothing to do with predestining individual behavior, good or bad. Any Hebrew could choose to obey God or not. Predestination did not

make choices for individual Hebrews, it only foreordained that the Messiah would come through that group.

Application to Understanding Predestination in the New Testament

Reading through Ephesians 1:3-6 with this understanding of predestination helps us to see what is being said. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

A careful reading shows that it is not the behavior of any particular individual that is predestined by God, but a group has been predestined by God to be saved. It is up to you and me as to whether we will choose to be in that number or not. God has not predestined our individual choices.

The group God has predestined to become His sons are those who are “in Christ” (Vs 3) “In Him” (Vs 4) and “in the Beloved” (Vs 6). If I am in Christ, then I have been predestined to be blessed with spiritual blessings, to be adopted as God's child, to be holy and blameless before Him. There is nothing anyone can do to change this; if I am in the Son then these things are mine by predestination. But it is I who determines whether I will be in the Son or not. God made it possible, and calls upon me to make the choice (John 5:39-40; Romans 2:4-11; Galatians 3:26-29). And no, in answer to the question posed in the title, you were not predestined to read this article. You chose to do so freely.

The 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:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (ACTS 2:38)

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

Today's Neglect – Tomorrow's Emergency

Warren E. Berkley

What we neglect to teach today, we will have to teach tomorrow.

God's people are to be "fellow-workers for the truth," (3 Jno. 8). That calls for the commitment of the individual to the truth God has revealed in His word. It means in our work together in the local church, that truth must be our standard. And the home needs to be a place where parents lead children to believe and obey the truth.

In the absence of faithfully preaching and obeying the truth, what can happen? The Bible identifies the consequences:

- *"Tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine...," Eph. 4:14*
- *Being deceived "with persuasive words," and cheated "through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men," Col. 2:4,8*
- *Concerning "the faith," suffering "shipwreck," 1 Tim. 1:19*
- *Departing "from the faith," 1 Tim. 4:1*
- *Turning "aside to fables," 2 Tim. 4:4*

It is our solemn undertaking – as the people of God – to give up no truth for any man; to speak the truth in love, and teach the truth to the next generation.

Are we doing that? Are we faithfully engaged in the good work illustrated by Lois and Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14,16)? Are we teaching others “who will be able to teach others also?” (2 Tim. 2:2).

Here’s one way to focus our thoughts on this: *What we neglect to teach today, we will have to teach tomorrow!*

Someone will teach our children about divorce. Who will it be? Will they learn about divorce from their friends at school or the worldly portrayal of marriage and remarriage on television? Or will they hear it first from you, as you tell them: “...whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery,” (Matt. 19:9). What we neglect to teach today, we will have to teach tomorrow!

What do your children know about the Holy Spirit? Do they know who the Holy Spirit is and how He works through the Word (Eph. 6:17). Are we teaching the next generation about the gifts of the Spirit, in their temporary role of bringing to pass the New Testament volume? Do the young people where you worship understand that the modern charismatic claims have no biblical foundation? What we neglect to teach today, we will have to teach tomorrow!

Have we just stopped teaching about the work of the local church? Are we raising a generation without showing them what the New Testament says about the advancing denominational approach, unity-in-diversity, the sponsoring church, the social gospel, etc. Do our grandchildren understand that the things we learn in the New Testament constitute a pattern, and that we must do these things for the “God of peace to be with” us (Phil. 4:9). What we neglect to teach today, we will have to teach tomorrow!

“Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,” (Deut. 4:9).

