

PAUL'S GOOD METHOD

Luke recorded Paul's entrance into Thessalonica "where was a synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 17:1). Luke also provides us an insight into Paul's methodology: "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ" (Acts 17:2-3). There are four helpful things for us to notice in these two verses.

First, Luke said of Paul, "as his manner was." This indicates that Paul did his work according to a thought-out plan. He was not haphazard in his approach to evangelism. There was a synagogue in Thessalonica and the apostle took advantage of it. The Jews there were reasonable prospects for the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16 says that the Gospel was "to the Jew first"), so "he went in unto them." If we want to reach people for Christ today we must be like Paul and think about what we are going to do ahead of time.

Second, the text says that he "reasoned with them out of the scriptures." There are two necessarily interlocking things here: Scripture and reason. One cannot learn what the Scriptures teach without the use of reason, and reason left on its own without the guidance of Scripture will denigrate into infidelity. So Paul used them both. His method was not new. Isaiah appealed to God's rebellious children when he said, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). Our appeal to people today must be based on this divinely sanctioned combinations of reason and revelation.

Third, notice that the first word of Acts 17:3 in the KJV is *opening*. This word can be rendered "explaining." Paul explained the texts from what we know as the Old Testament which supported the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Remember that Paul had been uniquely prepared for his apostleship. He had intimate knowledge of Greek and Roman philosophical tradition (as is seen later in Acts 17 and in the letter to the Colossians), knowledge that he may have gained from his life in Tarsus. He also sat at the feet of Gamaliel and thus had been taught by one of the best minds in Judaism (Acts 22:3). He had studied his Bible, its context and culture as well as his own culture. He was equipped to explain the Scriptures to his hearers. Our lesson here is to prepare ourselves so that we can be the best teachers of the text that we possibly can. God expects it of us and therefore we can do it (2 Tim. 2:15).

Fourth, we see that Paul was alleging two important things. The word *allege* can be rendered "prove." One was that Christ "must needs have suffered." This was an important consideration for first century Jews. They had come to believe that the Messiah would be a powerful military and political figure who would rid Judah of Roman domination. They rejected the picture of the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. I would not be a bit surprised to learn that Paul used that very passage to show the sacrificial nature of God's Christ.

The second thing Paul proved was Jesus of Nazareth is indeed this Christ. We are not told which Scriptures he used but one can surmise that he would refer to the many Old Testament passages that fit His birth, life, death, and resurrection.

He would also have the opportunity to appeal to history. There was ample proof that Jesus was raised from the dead. There had been witnesses and some of them skeptics (e.g., Thomas). Many people were still available to verify the truth that He arose (cf: 1 Cor 15:1-8) including Paul himself.

This passage tells us a very great deal about religion, both the Truth and the counterfeit. Counterfeit religion asks-people to believe based on their feelings and even in spite of reason. The Truth relies on good planning, good preparation, reason, explanation, proof, and most of all, the Scriptures. It is the Truth, after all, that makes men free (John 8:32).

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BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

Volume 8

Number 31

August 5, 2007

A PUBLICATION OF THE BELVEDERE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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(Greater Augusta, GA area)

AN ALARMING PARALLEL?

The Bible is filled with examples of men following men rather than God. Here are a few cases:

- (1) The Tower of Babel (Gen.11).
- (2) The children of Israel at Mr. Sinai (Ex. 32).
- (3) The children of Israel's failure to go into the promised land the first time (Num. 14).
- (4) The rebellion of Korah (Num. 16).
- (5) The period of the Judges.
- (6) Jereboam, king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 12:25-33).
- (7) The arrest, trial and crucifixion of Christ.
- (8) Peter's snubbing of the Gentile brethren (Gal. 2:11-14).
- (9) The First Century Jews' rejection of the gospel (Acts 13:44-52).
- (10) Those brethren with "itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3).

Are we no different than those men of long ago? Many of our own brethren would rather hear an eloquent, charismatic false teacher than a Biblical call to repentance. They depart from the teachings of the Saviour to follow denominational doctrines because "it feels so good!" A preacher comes along who is clearly trying to subvert the churches of Christ and they call him "spiritual" because he titillates emotions. In a spiritual sense, is this any different from what happened at Mount Carmel? The end of apostasy is no less tragic. "But he answered and said, ***Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up***" (Matt. 15:13).

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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IS TEN COMMANDMENT LAW STILL BINDING? - PART FIVE

Last week, we closed with the authors' conclusion that there was no dispute over the seventh day Sabbath because "They all worshipped on God's holy Sabbath day, and none questioned that it was the seventh day of the week (Saturday)" indicating that our next article would see if such a statement can be justified from the Scriptures.

The first passage they quote is Luke 4:16. They do admit that this occurred during Jesus' early ministry and that He lived under the Jewish system. They then state: "Yet, in three and one-half years of ministry, not once did Jesus

even hint to His disciples that the Sabbath would be altered." This is where the authors make an assumption -- a false assumption -- that all of those who do not keep the seventh day Sabbath do not because it was changed to Sunday. Such is not correct. The Scriptures teach that the Sabbath was taken away- nailed to the cross - along with all of the law given through Moses (Colossians 2:14).

Jesus did more than "hint" to His disciples that the Law would be taken away when it was fulfilled (Matthew 5:18). Following their reference to Luke 4:16, the authors then quote Matthew 24:20 -- where Jesus speaks about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and tells the disciples to pray that their flight from Jerusalem would not be on the Sabbath. They conclude: "He acknowledged the Sabbath would remain in force." Such is NOT proof that it was "still in force" but rather that the unbelieving Jews were still keeping the Sabbath and would have the gates to the city locked. Their statement is merely an assumption since the text does not indicate that the disciples were keeping the Sabbath - they would need other verses to show that, and such verses cannot be found. However, there are verses that *can* be found which show that the disciples met for Christian worship on the first day of the week can be found (We will discuss this in our next article).

The writers' next effort at giving proof for Christians keeping the Sabbath is in reference to the statement by the Hebrew writer: "For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God*" Hebrews 4:8-9). This is, of course, a reference to Joshua and the conquest of the Promised Land. The rest that "*remaineth*" is a reference to the *heavenly* rest which awaits the people of God. The authors want the passage to speak of the keeping of the Sabbath day but such is to twist the very words of the text. The rest remains because it is not achieved in this life but comes in the next. The Hebrew writer goes on to state that Christians should labor to enter into that rest and not fall, as many did in the long ago through unbelief (v. 11). Thus, the context shows it has no reference to a weekly Sabbath keeping by Christians. The authors of the book now turn to looking at New Testament passages that mention law and -- falsely -- conclude that such references all have references to the Law of Moses. They state, "Where there is no law, there is no sin." While that statement is true, it is faulty reasoning to assume that the ONLY law mentioned in the New Testament is the Law of Moses. Paul speaks specifically of the "*law of Christ*" (Galatians 6:2). For the Law of Moses to no longer be in effect, or binding today does not mean that we are without law -- any more than the thirteen colonies were without law when they declared their independence from Great Britain. Law still existed, but it was no longer the laws of Great Britain that were bound upon the people; but rather it was the laws of the States -- many of which were identical to laws that were bound in Great Britain. Similarly, there are laws from the Law of Moses that are found as part of the Law of Christ. We are bound to obey those laws because they are part of the Law of Christ - not because they were a part of the Law of Moses.

The writers of the book under review, now turn to the words of Jesus: "*For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5:18-19). They want to place the emphasis on the nineteenth verse and ignore the phrase "*till all be fulfilled*" in the eighteenth verse. That phrase certainly means something! If the Old Testament Law were to continue until "*heaven and earth pass away*" then the phrase "*till all be fulfilled*" is superfluous and without meaning. But all words in Scripture *do* have meaning - Jesus is teaching that nothing of the Law should pass from the Law until it was all fulfilled. Who could fulfill that Law? Could man? No -- since all have sinned (Romans 3:23). The only One who could and did fulfill the Law was the sinless Christ. When He died on Calvary's cross He had *obeyed* the Law and not violated one "jot or tittle" of that Law as it was nailed to His cross (Colossians 2:14).

The authors also quote our Lord's words: "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15) and assume that He is talking about the *Ten* Commandments as they state: "Love compels Christians who learn the truth about the Law of God to keep the Ten Commandments." If Jesus was specifically referring to the Ten Commandments, then He gave no commandments of His own. However in that same passage, Jesus said: "*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you*" (John 15:12) -- and that commandment is not a part of the Ten Commandments. Furthermore, a study of the New Testament shows that there are *numerous* commands that our Lord gave - both personally and through the inspired writers of the New Testament. The authors state the need for "rightly dividing the word of God" which is a Scriptural admonition (II Timothy 2:15). However to do such one **must** recognized the difference between the Old Covenant and the New.

More to come.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett's mother, Kathy Treadway's mother and Bronwen Gibson's mother (Lavonne McClish) -- who has continued health -- related issues and who is undergoing pain management therapy; and Rachel Fitzpatrick's aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer. Jack Peebles is in Mattie C. Hall Care Center, 830 N. Laurens, Aiken, SC 29802. The phone number is (803) 649-6269. His room number is 407B. He is not doing well. Continue to keep Jack and Jean and their family in your prayers at this difficult time.

The Gibsons were not out Sunday, Jim had a stomach bug and Bronwen had burned her hand but they were able to be with us on Wednesday evening.

Myrtle Grimsley was not able to be out Sunday. However, she is doing better and has gone to visit her son.

Maomi's sister has been in rehab at Doctor's Hospital following a stroke the previous week.

Kathy Treadway's mother is in the Aiken hospital following a stroke early this week.

We extend our sympathy to Janice Wilson in the passing of her step brother. Ron and Janice attended services in Carrollton, GA on Wednesday.

Jennifer Wilson came home from Michigan on Thursday.

Kyle and Ellen Moses (the Chumbley's son in law and daughter) were with us Sunday. Kyle preached Sunday morning and presented an excellent lesson.

Stephen and Angela Chumbley were with the Chumbley's Wednesday evening having come down for a surprise visit for a few days before taking the children back to PA.

Making God Second Best

I'm always prompt to punch the clock;
I never miss a date;
But when I go to worship God,
I'm usually always late.

I wouldn't think of leaving work,
to visit brother Fred;
I just wait until Sunday comes,
And forsake the church instead.

I never miss a day at work,
Perfection's what I seek,
But I miss the worship of my God,
Once or twice a week.

I talk with people daily,
Of many subjects rife,
But I never mention Jesus,
Nor show Him in my life.

I spend extra on my family,
For things I can't afford.
But I don't remember, ever,
Giving extra to the Lord.

When your life on earth is over,
And they lay you down to rest,
How can He say to you, "Well done,"
If you've made Him second best?

Author Unknown